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The Pedagogy of the Fort:
Curriculum, Aboriginal-Canadian Relations, and Indigenous Métissage

by

Dwayne Trevor Donald



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ABSTRACT

This work focuses on the fort as a mythic symbol deeply embedded within the story of Canadian nation and nationality that teaches and naturalizes a divisive and dispiriting civilizational divide separating Aboriginal peoples and Canadians. I argue that this pedagogy of the fort, informed by colonial frontier logics, has been taught in Canada for many generations and severely circumscribes the ways in which the relationships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians are conceptualized. Building on these insights, I contend that universities, schools, classrooms, curriculum scholars, and curriculum documents typically replicate these fort teachings when considering the possible significance of Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems to contemporary educational contexts. This contention is supported through close examination of the curricular and pedagogical problem presented to the field of education as significant initiatives have been undertaken across Canada to appropriately and respectfully consider Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. I specifically focus on the responses of practicing and preservice teachers to recent social studies curricular initiatives undertaken in the Province of Alberta that emphasize Aboriginal perspectives. I interpret their problematic responses to these initiatives with reference to the inherited colonial terrain and received theories of Indigenism that typically inform teacherly considerations of curriculum and pedagogy today. I make the point that Indigenous scholars can also reinscribe these troubling divides when they frame their ideas in isolated and exclusionary ways. I argue throughout this work that the necessary next step in the struggle to decolonize involves an

interrogation and rejection of circumscriptive colonial logics—like the pedagogy of the fort—and the conceptualization of more complexly relational standpoints and intents. To foster such movement, I forward an interpretive sensibility and research standpoint termed Indigenous Métissage that focuses on insights derived from contextualized and place-based interpretations of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. I contend that the field needs more critical articulations of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy that honour the ethical imperative of human relationality and contest, rather than reinscribe, colonial frontier logics.

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Prologue

This work is the result of a personal and enduring preoccupation with place, identity, and belonging. As a descendent of the Papaschase Cree, a band whose reserve was expropriated by Canadian government officials in the 1880s,¹ I have inherited a dispirited legacy of Indigenous displacement, disenfranchisement, and marginalization. The band members were dispersed from their reserve lands and their communitarian connections slowly eroded. Family memories of this legacy focus mostly on survival amidst tumultuous change. Connections to Indigenous knowledge systems and wisdom traditions were severely weakened through this process. For me and my brothers, the generational effects of this disconnect manifested themselves in the form of an ambiguous, skin-deep, and merely generic understanding of the significance of being Cree. Even though we were born and raised on the reserved lands of the Papaschase Cree, and our father sometimes revealed his Creeness to us, we knew very little of the past that had so starkly influenced the lives of our ancestors and, in turn, our own senses of belonging.

In retrospect, I now realize that much of my adult life has been spent searching for clues that would help me better understand *how* this happened. However, in order to first recognize these clues and then trace, interpret, and connect them in insightful ways, I needed to be reeducated. Thankfully, the opportunity to be reeducated was gifted to me when I began teaching at Kainai High School on the *Kainai* (Blood) Reserve in southern Alberta, Canada in 1993.

¹ This reserve was located on land that is now a large section of south Edmonton. For more on this history see Donald (2004).

As a generic urban Indian teaching at a reserve school, I soon realized that, ironically, I was the one who had the most to learn.

The decade that I spent with the people of the *Kainai* community changed my life. I was gifted a beginner's education in Blackfoot wisdom traditions, spiritual practices, and philosophical foundations that continues on. The *Kainai* Elders and community leaders who have been most generously supportive of this reeducation process are Bernard Tall Man, Rita Tall Man, Frank Weasel Head, Joe Spotted Bull, Narcisse Blood, Alvine Mountain Horse, Delia Cross Child, Duane Mistaken Chief, Joyce Good Striker, Geraldine Soop, Ramona Big Head, and Carl Brave Rock. With their help, I have become much more critically conscious of the ways in which colonial logics and structures have oppressed Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems and continue to constrain their expression in the world today. I have also participated in and witnessed ceremonial and spiritual traditions that resist colonial power, assert a place-based form of sovereignty, and thus enact Indigenous philosophies. This critical reeducation in the *Kainai* context has been tremendously influential in my development as an educator and scholar. It has also enabled me to piece together a detailed family history that traces our affiliations with the Papaschase Cree and uncovers our deep ancestral connections to the place now called Edmonton. The *Kainai* people have unexpectedly nurtured the process of better understanding my Cree roots.

These life-changing experiences have occurred parallel to related inquiries

into the field of curriculum studies and the exclusion of Indigenous standpoints² and knowledge systems. My interest in curriculum studies was initially motivated by a desire to give back to the *Kainai* community. I wanted to be involved in the development of curricular and pedagogical approaches that were meaningful to them. However, I soon found that always assuming—by default—an established Eurowestern orientation to curriculum and pedagogy would necessarily frame Indigenousness in reductive and simplified ways. Studying the work of prominent curriculum scholars enabled me to see more clearly how deeply embedded their scholarship is within the foundational assumptions of Eurowestern intellectual traditions. I don't think that these scholars need to apologize for this. Writing and researching according to what you know is only natural and to be expected. Besides, the truth is that this writing and research has been quite influential in my own work. However, I have come to believe that if understandings of curriculum and pedagogy must conform to established Eurowestern orientations then contributions from Indigenous knowledge systems and traditions will necessarily be relegated to the stature of 'show and tell.' The challenge, then, is to expand and enhance considerations of curriculum and pedagogy so that different knowledge systems, including Indigenous traditions, can have a more prominent and meaningful influence.

² This concept of standpoint is informed by Novak (1978). More on this in Chapter One. The concept of Indigenous standpoint comes from Australian Aboriginal scholar Martin Nakata (2007): "An Indigenous standpoint...has to be produced. It is not a simple reflection of experience and it does not pre-exist in the everyday waiting to be brought to light. It is not any sort of hidden wisdom that Indigenous people possess. It is a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention of others. It is not deterministic of any truth but it lays open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes" (p. 214).

For various reasons, that are identified and explained in detail in the Introduction, I associate this challenge with the mythic stature of the fort in the Canadian West. I regard the fort on the frontier as a concept and organizing principle of Empire emanating from the very colonial processes that led to the dismemberment of the Papaschase Cree. I see the fort as an artifact that can help me better understand how and why Indigenosity has been stuck so long in ‘show and tell.’ I connect fort teachings to curricular and pedagogical tensions today. However, I also feel a complicated ambiguity towards these critiques. If the fort really is so deeply connected with the institutionalized oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, then why did my ancestors spend so much of their time living and working in and around them? How did they understand forts? The more I pondered these questions, the more I realized that the place of the fort—understood simultaneously as traditional gathering place, entrepôt, imperial site of exclusion, and manifestation of Empire—was more layered and complex than the critique alone could express. This is why revealing the ambiguous, tensioned, and complexly relational history of forts, and, by extension, Aboriginal and Canadian interactions, is a central aspect of this work.

These insights resulted from an inquiry process that avoided naming an explicit research methodology or theoretical framework at the outset. This hermeneutic stance was encouraged by my mentor and supervisor Dr. David Geoffrey Smith, but also resonated well with the particular commitments and priorities motivating me to research and write in the first place. The ambiguous and complexly relational standpoint that I brought to the field did not fit well with

most of the methods and frameworks that I encountered and studied. I found myself piecing together aspects of different ideas and influences and working them in ways that maintained the spirit and intent of what I wanted to say. As the inquiry process continued to move and flow, I increasingly felt a strong desire to speak, write, teach, and act with a spirit and intent that enabled me to assert Indigenous philosophies and ways while also drawing on the diverse influences and affiliations that have constituted my life. I wanted to find a way to hold seemingly disparate standpoints together without necessarily choosing sides.

I am convinced that decolonization in the Canadian context can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together. This conviction does not seek to overlook or invisibilize oppression and unequal power relations; rather, it engages with the troubling power dynamics at the site of the fort as the starting point for the creation of stories that circumvent their dominance. The storied response is intended to provide a more hopeful vision of what can be done to improve Aboriginal-Canadian relations despite the ongoing and oppressive legacies of colonial power.

The emphasis on a storied response as a way to address power comes from time spent with Elders. Over the years, I have heard Elders tell stories about the oppressive practices of residential school supervisors, Indian agents, missionaries, policemen, and various Canadian government officials. A prevailing ethic of these storytellers is that they rarely dwell on the exercise of power itself. Emphasized

instead are the actions taken by themselves or others to survive and persevere. They tell those stories so that power will not own them. They tell those stories so that young people today will see that they must also struggle to survive and persevere so that things will be better for their children and grandchildren. The important lesson here is that meaningful teaching and learning requires the creation of a pedagogical context that fosters an organic, life-giving, and life-sustaining form of hope. For me, then, working in the shadow of the fort, the key is not to dwell on its power, but instead to tell a story that undermines that power and articulates a hopeful vision of how to proceed.

One notable outcome of this lengthy inquiry process, and the piecing together of various priorities and commitments, is the identification of an interpretive sensibility called Indigenous Métissage that thoroughly informs and inspirits this work. Indigenous Métissage provides a way to hold together the ambiguous, layered, complex, and conflictual character of Aboriginal-Canadian relations without the need to deny, assimilate, or conclude. It is a sensibility honed amidst the tensioned ways that I am positioned within these relations as a man, father, son, brother, husband, student, teacher, researcher, and writer. It describes a particular way to pay attention to these tensions and bring their ambiguous and difficult character to expression through researching and writing.

Indigenous Métissage is specifically framed in this study as a research standpoint that focuses on insights derived from contextualized and place-based interpretations of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. However, I also see it as an overall sensibility for this work that cannot be selectively turned on and off.

Although I do provide specific place-based examples of Indigenous Métissage, I also employ those same sensibilities to organize, shape, and compose the other sections. The unifying ideas of the work—the pedagogy of the fort, colonial frontier logics, the Indigenous interpreter, the curricular problem of Indigenousness, and ethical relationality—do not appear out of a vacuum. Their structure and composition is directly and thoroughly informed by Indigenous Métissage. This is why Indigenous Métissage is the focus of the first chapter. It is the sensibility that guides the work by articulating a praxical way³ to decolonize Aboriginal-Canadian relations and recognizing the vital significance of curricular and pedagogical considerations in that process.

That said however, I am aware that this particular research orientation supports certain routes and stances that will be problematic to some. One example of this is the organizational structure of this work—how it proceeds. The structure is unconventional in the sense that it does not follow the usual dissertation patterns. I do not present a literature review chapter in the conventional way nor do I follow the usual patterns of argumentative reasoning. Diagnosing these irregularities after the bulk of the writing has been done, I can now identify some explanations for this. The most obvious explanation is that the purview of this study is very broad. The focus on the significance of the fort as a mythic sign necessitates some rather lengthy and detailed engagements with the history of colonial actions and the various logics and assumptions that stem from these. I

³ “Praxical thinking is marked by the dissolution of the theory/practice dichotomy and by an emphasis on the connection between agency and social change.” This definition is taken from the website of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture at the State University of New York – Binghamton. Find it at: <http://cpic.binghamton.edu/praxical.html>

dedicate the beginning chapters of this work to a general survey history of forts across historical contexts and make connections to colonial frontier logics and fort pedagogy as these pertain to Aboriginal-Canadian relations. It is necessary to begin the work with this broad survey to properly contextualize the origins of my thinking.

This survey-like approach, and the constant need to make macro-micro connections between fort histories, fort logics, colonialities of power (as Walter Mignolo [2002] names them), Aboriginal-Canadian relations, and curricular and pedagogical considerations, has shaped the creation of a manuscript that is visional rather than strictly comparative or argumentative. Thus, the guiding purpose of this work is not to dismiss or diminish the work of others, but instead to synthesize and make manifest a particular vision of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in Canada situated within the special context of teaching and learning today. I survey the field broadly, marshal the work of scholars that seems most useful and relevant, and build on their insights to make the necessary movement towards the vision. I do not mean to suggest that I am the visionary one that will correct and enlighten fellow scholars. My intentions are much more humble than that. I simply seek to locate and describe the standpoint from which I visualize, research, interpret, and write. The ability to do this has been a major revelation of this inquiry process. I hope that sharing this work with others will inspire and help them in their own engagements with Aboriginal-Canadian relations. This is the simple contribution I hope to make.

Some readers may also find the patterns of my writing style similarly problematic. Although these patterns are a natural outcome of how I think, they are also symptomatic of the complex nature of this inquiry. Evidence of this can be seen in the flow of the writing. The text does not proceed in a reasoned argumentative manner because I do not feel compelled to prove anything in a debate-like style. Instead, the writing involves a recursive kind of searching for points of affinity, connectivity, and insight. I prefer to repeatedly bring focus on ideas, concepts, assumptions, artifacts, and places and, metaphorically speaking, pick them up, turn them around and around, and write about the different possibilities and interpretations that emerge in a recursive manner. This approach is inspired by a hermeneutic stance which emphasizes the creation of meaning over simply reporting on it or assessing its relative worth. I do sift and weigh ideas, and compare different approaches and interpretations, but I express these insights in a nonlinear and relational way guided by the principles of Indigenous Métissage.

Some readers, especially Indigenous scholars, may also question the explicitly 'Indigenous' character and positionality of this work and the extent to which it adheres to the main tenets of Indigenous scholarship. Indigenous scholarship is typically rooted in a communitarian orientation focused on collective concerns and interests regarding language, land, Treaty rights, traditions, epistemological and ontological priorities, and the promotion of these in contemporary settings for the general benefit of Indigenous peoples. Since I am an Indigenous 'misfit'—unable to locate myself within a specific existing

community or advocate on their behalf—some will question the veracity of my claims. This ambiguous subject position is in contrast to most Indigenous scholars who are typically conversant in their tribal language, were raised in their home communities, and bring inherited traditions and insights to bear on their work. I am a much more loosely defined Indigenous scholar whose communitarian roots have dissolved over time. Present-day ancestors of the Papaschase Cree do have some loose affiliations, but the collective identity of the community is as removed as the reserved lands (Miller, 2006). I am affiliated with the *Kainai* community, but I am not *from* there.

I am from the city, born and raised amidst the turbulent difficulties of Aboriginal and Canadian relationality. Caught within this awkward ambiguity, then, I struggle to locate an Indigenous standpoint from which to speak, write, and act with conviction. Rather than seek to overcome this location, and thus reject family memories and histories, I immerse myself in it and attempt to bring it to expression in scholarly ways. This work demands a willingness to hold Canadian and Aboriginal standpoints together and recognize and comprehend the significance of their interconnectivity. I offer it to colleagues, both Aboriginal and Canadian, as a viable way to decolonize and reframe our understandings.

I realize that this position may be controversial to some. Probably the most problematic issue concerns the ways in which I portray the nature of historic, current, and future relations between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in the context of the fort. Emphasis on the interconnected character of these relations might be viewed as an indirect denial of Indigenous sovereignty and collectivity.

Some scholars may interpret this stance as a nuanced call for hybridized assimilation. Such a call would certainly be an affront to the tremendous visionary work of Indigenous scholars who have struggled enormously to assert Indigenous ways in the academy.

To be clear though, I do not wish to belittle Indigenous ways or detract from the work of Indigenous scholars. Instead, I build on these and express a vision for an historicized and decolonial reframing of Aboriginal-Canadian relations that places Indigenous philosophies and wisdom traditions at the forefront as guiding ethical principles. I envision a partnered and relational understanding of past, present, and future interactions that is guided by the interpretive sensibilities of Indigenous Métissage. Such reframing of the relationships as such does not preclude the possibility of continued tensions, turbulence, and incongruencies. Neither does it necessitate a reconciled and compromised position for the Indigenous. Rather, an ethical form of relationality recognizes and respects difference. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a standpoint arises. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference. However, until quite recently, Canadians have generally practiced an *unethical* form of relationality with Aboriginal peoples directed towards benevolent incorporation within Canadian nationality and citizenship. Canadians have tried to bring *their* Indians in from the wilderness. This form of relationality is unethical, and rooted in colonial frontier logics and fort pedagogy, because it fails to support the organic

continuance of Indigenous ways. It seeks to eliminate them. Ethical relationality, then, is an ecological curricular and pedagogical imperative that describes the spirit and intent of the vision so central to this work. It is the guiding ethic that grows from doing Indigenous Métissage.

**Introduction:
The Past as Ever-Present**

Appeals to the past are among the commonest strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions—about influence, about blame and judgment, about present actualities and future priorities. (Said, 1994, p. 3)

The roots of injustice lie in history and it is there where the key to the regeneration of Aboriginal society and a new and better relationship with the rest of Canada can be found.

(Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996)

What is the past? In Western Canada, consciousness of the past can be viewed as resulting from two main perspectives. The past is revealed and can be discerned in the landscape and geography, the trails that have become highways, the evolving architecture of the towns and cities, and the stories that people tell of living together in this place. In Western Canada, we are constantly reminded that the past is ever-present, just a few generations away and barely below the surface of our current cultural imaginings. In this sense, then, this past is palpable and readily available to those who are willing to pay attention to it. But, the Western Canadian past has also been mythologized. Myths are popular stories that people

tell about “origins and destiny, one progressing from primitive life to civilization, from the simple to the complex” (Worster, 2004, p. 26). One of the most common and persistent myths grows out of the drive to civilize and develop. The myth of Western Canadian development is a moralistic tale describing a struggle to conquer the wilderness, subdue the Indians, and inscribe some virtue on an otherwise virtueless place. In Western Canada, the North West Mounted Police are major players in the preservation and maintenance of this myth of development.

Every good Canadian understands the power of the *creation story* of the North West Mounted Police. A regiment of 150 troops, newly formed and trained, rode their horses west one thousand miles from Red River to establish law and order on the frontier (Francis, 1997, p. 30). They built Fort Macleod, the first North West Mounted Police outpost, in 1874. In that place, the myth of the civilizing role of the North West Mounted Police and the symbolic power of the Fort⁴ are both manifest representations of the past that live on today. In this small town, there is a re-creation of the Fort that has become a popular tourist attraction visited by thousands each year. Each summer, local high school students are hired to perform their version of the famous musical ride of the North West Mounted Police for the tourists, many of whom travel to Fort Macleod just to see this spectacle for the first time.

The residents of Fort Macleod have an ambivalent relationship with the Fort. Most are proud to live in a town with such rich history and deep connections

⁴ I will use this capitalized spelling of ‘Fort’ with reference to specifically-named forts or with reference to Fort as a mythic symbol.

to the mythic West. Most are glad that tourists spend their money in town and support the local economy. However, the Fort can also be a nuisance. Busy tourist traffic can be annoying in the summer. But the most bothersome aspect of the Fort is the nostalgic music that accompanies the musical ride and drones across the town each summer day. The music calls the residents to raise their heads eight times a day, recognize the tunes, and habitually hum the melodies in ritualistic acknowledgement of the mythic power of the Fort and the civilization of the West.

I used to live in Fort Macleod with my family. My son was perhaps the resident most taken by the ritual of the musical ride. When he heard the music, Kesho would rush to his bike and ride in the direction of the Fort as fast as he could. I would be forced to join him. There was something about crowding around the Fort with all the tourists that captured his imagination. Perhaps it was the feeling that we were all witnessing the past together. We would stand on the grass and lean against the fence, our fingers hooked in the links, while we watched the horses take the riders through their paces. I told family and friends that my son reacted so strongly to the music because he loved to watch the horses. Then, one day that summer, I discovered that the Fort and the musical ride were having a much deeper affect on him. He stated, with obvious hesitation, that he did not want to be an *Indian* anymore. Naturally, I was concerned and asked him what the problem was. "Indians always lose," was his reluctant reply.

The Fort as a Site of Inquiry

Forts are ubiquitous structures on the physical landscape of the West. One cannot travel very far in Western Canada without encountering either a community that began as a fur trading post or fort, a town or city that still uses the official title of 'Fort' in its current name, or an historic site of a fort re-created as a museum. Forts have become so commonplace—naturalized geographic and historic sites—that they have come to be viewed as innocuous meeting places inscribed on the mental topography of the mythic West much like buffalo jumps and river crossings. Forts have come to symbolize the beginning of official history in an area, the physical manifestation of civilization writ large on the landscape. These popular conceptions conceal the role of the Fort as an instrument of imperialism and economic exploitation, monument to colonial power and ambition, staging area for the dissemination and imposition of 'civilized' ways of being, and stronghold from which Indigenous peoples were actively displaced from their traditional lands. In the context of Western Canada, then, forts are symbolic of the ambiguous relationships connecting Canadians and Aboriginal peoples.⁵ Much of this ambiguity stems from differing perspectives regarding the

⁵ These labels were chosen after much deliberation. The term 'Aboriginal' is meant to refer to all people living in Canada who are of Aboriginal descent and identify themselves as such. Since the term 'Aboriginal' has legal and constitutional connotations in the Canadian context, I use it when making general references to issues that include Canadians and Canadian society. I use the term 'Indigenous' when referring to issues focused on relationships to the land and the unique perspectives and philosophies of First Peoples. Where necessary, I use the appropriate name for people from specific communities. 'Canadian' is meant to denote those people living in Canada who are not Aboriginal, mostly EuroCanadians, but also people from all over the world who have come to live in Canada. For the purposes of discussions like this, it is necessary to label different groups according to descent and genealogy, but I am also mindful of the ways that such labeling can unintentionally separate and split people. In using these labels, I also wish to acknowledge that people come from diverse contexts, and their experiences and frames of reference have much to do with how they participate in discussions such as this. These contexts, experiences, and frames of reference often overlap. Aboriginal people can obviously also be considered Canadian, though

meaning and significance of political and territorial sovereignty. Most forts were established at places already made significant by Indigenous peoples and came to be considered meeting places where partnerships and alliances were fostered. Later, when the fur trade waned and European immigrants began to flood into Western Canada, forts became administrative centers that facilitated the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands. Still later, forts were resurrected as museums and tourist attractions presumably celebrating an unquestioned version of Canadian history. The trouble with current representations of forts as museums and historic sites is that they adhere to the mythologized versions of the Canadian West that effectively cover over the many layers of historical interactions with Aboriginal peoples that brought the place into being. I believe that these official versions of Canadian history, and the gradual process of covering over Aboriginal presence and participation, have had significant influence on accepted notions of Canadian citizenship and identity taught in schools— notions that have excluded the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples. This exclusion and covering over has also come to define the terms according to which Aboriginal peoples and Canadians speak to each other about history, memory, and society. Goldie (1995) provides significant insight on this:

The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?

being Canadian is often only a circumstantial concern. Indigenous connections to the land and community are usually considered more important than allegiances to the Canadian nation.

There are only two possible answers. The white culture can attempt to incorporate the other, specifically through beaded moccasins and names like Mohawk Motors, or with much more sophistication, through the novels of Rudy Wiebe. Conversely, the white culture may reject the indigene: 'This country really began with the arrival of the whites.'

(p. 234)

I was unable to see the Fort and Canadian history in these ways until I began deep consideration of the significance of my son's words that day. To him, the Fort symbolized all the grandeur of the mythic West. Yet, at his young age, he also understood that the establishment, manning, and historical rendering of such forts have all been done at the expense of his Indigenous ancestors. This tale of winners and losers can be reduced to a fairly simple equation denoting a prevalent and largely unquestioned "moral syntax" (McMurtry, 2002, pp. 52-54): *European Global Exploration = Trade = Settlement = Cultural Diffusion = Civilization = Progress = Freedom = Economic Prosperity = Development*. A negative corollary attached to this equation is that any opponents to this moral syntax are considered to be against civilization, freedom, economic prosperity, and development, and therefore perceived as enemies who remain locked outside the realm of this version of the good life. A prevalent assumption associated with these beliefs is that these enemies are outside the demarcations of what is considered civilized and modern at their own fault, and they will rightly and justly suffer the consequences of opposing the powerful thrusts of modernization and development (Dussel, 1995, p. 64). Or, to state this conclusion more directly,

Indians always lose. As an educator working in Indigenous contexts, I have spent much time considering how such messages have been imparted in classrooms, teaching students to divide the world in these ways. Historical, social, and cultural understandings of the concepts of fort and frontier have become conflated with ways of organizing and separating people according to race, culture, and civilization.

The Pedagogy⁶ of the Fort

The gift of my son's words and teachings have framed this inquiry and inspired me to attend to the significance of the *storied* nature of the fort as a mythic sign on the Western Canadian frontier. The complexities of these insights manifest as curricular and pedagogical problems. For the purposes of this inquiry, curriculum is conceptualized as the stories teachers tell students about living in the world that explain their places in it. Pedagogy is considered the quality and character of the relationships fostered and supported through the process of telling these stories. I contend that the telling of curricular stories is never a neutral educational act because it is always done with pedagogical intent. For the most part, however, educators are not always explicitly aware of the quality and character of the pedagogical intent shaping their relationships with students.

Following van Manen (1999), I am particularly interested in attending to the

⁶ I am aware that this phraseology suggests affiliations with Freirean notions of pedagogy now most closely associated with critical theory and emancipatory pedagogical methods. While this inquiry has been influenced by this work, it is not my intention to prescribe a method for overcoming colonial frontier logics, but rather to critically examine the stories and teachings of the fort as curricular and pedagogical concerns from the standpoint of an Indigenous interpreter and relate these to stories told in school. Considered in this way, curriculum and pedagogy are enacted through the stories we tell children about the world and their place in it in relation to others. Curriculum and pedagogy are thus seen as united, one implies the other in terms of our relationships with the young.

storied nature of educational experience as a means for “distinguishing between what is appropriate and what is less appropriate for children and what are appropriate ways of teaching and giving assistance to children and young people” (p. 14). Building on these conceptual understandings, one of my main arguments is that a divisive and dispiriting curriculum and pedagogy, informed by colonial frontier logics and the mythic symbol of the fort, has been passed on to the young for many generations now. Unquestioned, this pedagogy of the fort has deeply influenced the assumptions we hold about classroom culture, teaching, learning, subject disciplines, knowledge systems, and Indigenoussness.

The main purpose of this inquiry is to focus attention on the ways in which the mythic sign of the fort has become a symbol of the development of the West that necessarily excludes all those seen as *outside* the fort walls – in this case, Indigenous peoples of Western Canada. The space of the fort has been claimed and expanded—geographically, politically, psychically, and ideologically—in the interests of a Canadian nation and nationality founded on correlated myths of modernity and colonial frontier logics. These myths work together to seemingly justify and maintain cultural and civilizational divides, and thus produce them as acultural and ahistorical representations of preexisting realities. Colonial frontier logics are those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations, which serve to naturalize assumed divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation. Schools and curricula are predicated on these logics and have both served to enforce epistemological and social

conformity to Eurowestern standards established and presumably held in common by *insiders*. Outsiders and their knowledges have been actively excluded from meaningful participation in Canadian public institutions like schools and universities. As I will show, the purpose of the fort, like the school or curriculum document, is given to us as an institutional *fait accompli* wherein significance and relevance is already decided despite the obvious storied human presence in both. Thus, the main contention stemming from this inquiry is that the daily operations of schools and classrooms are heavily influenced by colonial frontier logics and often replicate the pedagogy of the fort in troubling ways.

This contention is supported through close examination of the curricular and pedagogical problem presented to the field of education by Indigenusness. Indigenusness has lately become something of a problem in educational circles as significant initiatives have been undertaken across Canada to appropriately and respectfully consider Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. These initiatives, which call on educators, administrators, and students to reconsider their received understandings of Indigenusness, challenge the pedagogy of the fort and have the potential to destabilize colonial frontier logics. However, the positive potential for these initiatives is also delimited by the inherited conceptual frames, derived from the lengthy process of learning to divide the world (Willinsky, 1998), that many people still use to understand the meaning and significance of cultural difference. Organizing and conceptualizing knowledge systems according to colonial frontier logics recapitulates the familiar and seemingly irreconcilable antagonisms between premodern, modern, and postmodern paradigms, and thus

creates a relativistic epistemological trap that fails to provide any meaningful guidance on how to rethink these inherited divides:

The entrapment is easily observed in the Western academy, where the sciences and technology have metastasized into a universalist logic of instrumental reason, while the postmodern humanities' celebration of particularity has rendered a collapse for concern for anything beyond what individual experience can express, whether in the name of autobiography, story, nation, tribe, personal therapy, or phenomenology.

(Smith, 2003, p. 497)

Following Dussel (1993), I envision a hopeful future for Indigenous peoples founded on a transmodern spirit that works to rethink the significance of this trap through the assertion of "*a new way of living* in relation to Others" that is guided by the ethical teachings of Indigenous wisdom traditions⁷ (Alcoff and Mendieta, 2000, cited in Smith, 2003, p. 497).

Transmodernity, as described by Dussel (1993), is a project of liberation founded on the principle of "incorporative solidarity" that refers to the process through which established oppositional categorizations like primitive/civilized, colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, settler/Indigenous, Aboriginal/Canadian, and insider/outsider are recognized as intimately and mutually co-dependent, yet also ambiguous and contradictory, dualities that can be held in irresolvable tension (p. 76). Like Dussel (1995) and Turnbull (2005), I view such tensions as

⁷ For the purposes of this inquiry, Indigenous wisdom traditions are considered to be those philosophies and practices, generally common to Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems, that support particular theories of life and how it should be lived. When it is appropriate and necessary to be more specific, I will draw on my understandings of Blackfoot wisdom traditions. More on this later on in this Introduction.

potential sources of creativity that encourage multiplicity, complexity, and transdisciplinarity, not for the purposes of assimilation or furthering ‘post’ theories of hybridity, but rather to support the emergence of new knowledge and insights that turn on respectful attentiveness to the local knowledges and memories of those that have experienced the underside of modernity and concomitant processes of colonial takeover. In this inquiry, I endeavour to show the creative tensions of multiplicity, complexity, and ethical relationality through a transmodern interpretative sensibility and textual practice called Indigenous Métissage. The curricular and pedagogical spirit and intent of Indigenous Métissage is salient throughout this inquiry and operates as a standpoint—real, imagined, or otherwise—from which I interpret the unique challenges that Indigenousness poses to Canadian public policy in general and the field of education in particular.

Contesting and Deconstructing Fort Pedagogy

This very personal quest for understanding has thus fostered the conceptualization of a critical interpretive position and sensibility from which to make sense of these contentious issues. Indigenous Métissage has been conceptualized as a transmodern textual practice and interpretive sensibility that confronts and resists the pedagogy of the fort and colonial frontier logics by instead promoting renewed ethical terms by which Aboriginal and Canadian can speak and interact in public spaces. This critical social issue is now being acknowledged by governments and educational jurisdictions across Canada and has brought necessary attention to the critical role that Aboriginal peoples,

communities, and their diverse perspectives can and will play in the future of Canadian society. Such attentiveness and resultant initiatives suggest the need for transcultural understanding, but the possible successes of these initiatives are often squelched by the contentious terms by which these meetings are conducted. Such interactions are heavily circumscribed by colonial frontier logics and the pedagogy of the fort, and thus hampered by assumptions on both sides of stark and irreconcilable difference. These assumptions have had a heavy influence on the significance and relevance given Aboriginal peoples and their knowledges systems to Canadian public policy and historical evidence of these assumptions can be traced in curriculum documents. In curricular terms, the tipis and costumes approach has been tried for many years, but leaves teachers and young people with the unfortunate impression that Indians have not done much since the buffalo were eradicated. Attempts at the so-called *inclusion* of Aboriginal perspectives have usually meant that an anachronistic study of Aboriginal people is offered as a *possibility* in classrooms if there is time and only if people are still interested.⁸

In response to this indifference, many Indigenous scholars have strategically asserted difference as a key aspect of their work. They have conducted research for and with their communities, and written about this research with Indigenous readers in mind, as a way to reassert the organic spirit of culture and traditions as critical aspects of Indigenesness. These commitments

⁸ This statement is based on my familiarity with past Programs of Study in Alberta that neglected Indigenous perspectives, but were later supplemented with recommended resources that teachers might choose to use. Most avoided them. While working as a curriculum consultant for Alberta Education, I noted that the majority of educators did not take consideration of Aboriginal perspectives very seriously. Examination of Aboriginal issues was typically limited to social studies classrooms and usually only considered relevant in classrooms with high Aboriginal student populations. Thus, in this model, inclusion was connoted with a form of 'special' education rather than a more deliberate and meaningful part of Programs of Study.

and priorities have become the focus of most curricular initiatives undertaken by Indigenous peoples and their communities. In this sense, then, the assertions of culture and identity claims have become a crucial aspect of Indigenous scholarship, and have thus shaped a unique kind of leadership in the field of education. The power of this research is that it has aided in the process of healing in many Indigenous communities as the people begin to recover from tremendous change and upheaval, make sense of what has been given up in order to live in the modern world, and endeavour to repatriate languages, stories, and ways of knowing that were feared lost (McLeod, 2002, p. 35). What is troubling about this aspect of Indigenous scholarship is that it may also work against the goals of transcultural understanding and institutional change. Most Canadian scholars and teachers, unfamiliar with Indigenous perspectives, view such research as exclusive to Aboriginal peoples, and therefore assume that their interest and concern is discouraged and even unwelcome. The colonial insider/outsider binary, seen in mythic signs of colonial frontier logics like the fort, gets recapitulated in academic circles. Building on and reinforcing these influential national myths, universities, schools, classrooms, and curriculum documents typically replicate the divisive and circumscriptive character of the fort. We require cultural theories and forms of curriculum theorizing that traverse the divides of the past and present. I think that the transmodern spirit guiding the ethical and interpretive sensibilities of Indigenous Métissage provides a conceptual way out of this trap. It also provides renewed leadership regarding the ways in which Indigenous

perspectives can expand and enhance relevant curricular and pedagogical initiatives in particular and the field of curriculum studies in general.

These insights and priorities, in combination with the teachings provided to me by my son, have provided focus for this inquiry: **What is the significance of the fort as a mythic sign of colonialism that symbolizes Aboriginal-Canadian relations in Canada, especially in relation to pedagogy and curriculum?** This inquiry has been spurred on by two related influences. The first is a quote from Sto:lo author Lee Maracle (1992) who writes that

...we are plagued by our colonial condition. Inside the fort, Canadians seem to think [a meeting place] can be built despite the disentanglement of our land, our words, our very selves. Outside the fort, we hear laughter and feel we must shed our ancient selves, move away from our homeland and give up words. If Canadians are locked in the fort, we are locked outside of it. (p. 15)

Using the socio-spatial significance of the fort as a strategy for describing the dynamics of being inside or outside Canadian society is a provocative way to demonstrate the ongoing presence of the colonial past in contemporary Canada. The logic of colonialism has imposed a certain moral, cultural, educational, and historical syntax that encourages the reading of Aboriginal-Canadian relations as always tainted by the inevitable clash of separate and distinct worldviews that contrast markedly, and this fact, some would argue, makes them ultimately irreconcilable. From this standpoint, the colonial Other will always remain distinct and outside of civilization and progress. The irony of this view, as it

relates to the complexities of inside/outside, is that the fort is also the initial historic and metaphoric sustained meeting place of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians. How can the fort be a meeting place as well as a contentious site of exclusion?

In light of this ambiguity, some feel that it is an issue of public interest for citizens to engage in a “détente with history” (Green, 1995). This call implies that Canadians need to reread Canada’s colonial history, especially as it relates to Aboriginal peoples, and come to terms with its significance and implications for us today. The concepts of détente and rereading (Smith, 1999, p. 149) draw attention to the ways in which official versions of history misrepresent and deform notions of Indigeneity. Significantly, the existence of nations and worldviews prior to the configuration of the contemporary Canadian state in 1867 is romanticized, homogenized, and made irrelevant by prioritizing the ‘real’ history of nation building, which followed the establishment of European populations and political sovereignty in Canada. This mythical rendering of Indigenous nations is one way in which Canadians have avoided recognizing the less appealing aspects of their colonial roots. It has become clear, however, that such versions of nation reveal gaping narrative holes that must be filled with Indigenous perspectives before Aboriginal peoples can consider themselves citizens⁹ who feel welcome in their own land (McLeod, 2002, p. 37). We need to

⁹ I am referring to notions of citizenship framed and endorsed by Indigenous peoples and their communities. As these communities regain strength and vitality, the process of repatriating ceremonies and cultural practices continues. Through this process, various forms of Aboriginal citizenship are being asserted and lived by the people. For many communities, the end goal of this movement is self-determination rather than tacit recognition from Canadian government and society. Many Aboriginal people view the prospect of Canadian citizenship as uninviting. They do not wish to be citizens in those terms. They have their own notions of citizenship in mind.

identify the holes in the story of our country and note what has been left out.¹⁰

This is necessary, not to lay blame, but to repair the story. Doing so will repair us as citizens. ‘Holes’ in a story mean that passageways for new understanding still have a chance. How such insights can be related to Indigenous curriculum perspectives is one main purpose of this inquiry.

A second influence is an increasing awareness of the intimate connections my own family has to the history of colonialism and forts. Extensive archival research has revealed that many of my Métis ancestors performed various duties for fur trading companies and often lived inside or next to forts throughout the Prairie region. It has also become clear that many of my Cree ancestors maintained close familial ties with their Métis relatives and garnered much of their trade with the fur trading companies by supplying much needed food and other goods to the people who lived inside the walls of the fort. These *amiskwâciwiyiniwak* or Beaver Hills People (as they are sometimes called) maintained good working relations with the people inside the fort throughout the fur trading era. However, their relationships with the people in the forts became a problem when economic priorities in the West changed as the buffalo herds were killed off, fur trading waned, and waves of settlers began moving into the areas

¹⁰ This is not to simply reduce Indigenous histories and experiences to the role of ‘hole fillers’ that serve the needs of the national narrative. Indigenous peoples obviously have their own extensive histories and memories that are not subservient to Eurocentric versions. Rather, I draw attention to the concept of narrative holes in this way to make the point that the shared postcontact history of Aboriginal-Canadian relations is not typically told in a balanced way. The holes represent the places where official, mythologized, and institutionalized versions of Canadian history told in schools fail to acknowledge and comprehend the complexities of Aboriginal presence and participation. These stories are becoming more balanced and complex now that the narrative holes are being filled.

the Cree had always known as their home. The land that they lived on became more valuable than they as people (Donald, 2004).

This genealogical account and family history would be a fairly straightforward tale were it not for the fact that my *maternal* grandparents were the children of European immigrants who arrived in Canada in the late nineteenth century. What this means, of course, is that while ancestors from one side of my family were displaced from their traditional lands and suffering numerous hardships stemming from “spatial and ideological diaspora” (McLeod, 1998a), the other side was just settling in and beginning to enjoy the numerous economic and social benefits derived from colonialism. This intimate, co-dependent, and inside/outside relationship goes deeper still: my mother was raised on the very stretch of land that my father’s family was displaced from in the 1880’s. I was raised on this same land. I continue to live in this same place with my family today. My particular problem, in terms of identity, is that I have been led to believe that I cannot live my life as though I am both an Aboriginal person *and* the grandson of European settlers. As a citizen and aspiring academic, there has been considerable pressure to choose sides, to choose a life inside *or* outside the walls of the fort. It is for these very personal reasons that I am committed to problematizing and deconstructing the concept of the fort as mythic sign, as well as an actually occurring cognitive and socio-spatial reality that continues to shape the relationships between Aboriginal and Canadian. Thus, this inquiry is designed to explore the layers of history that characterize the places that I know as a way to more fully understand the transcultural possibilities these offer, and also as a

means of reconceptualizing the future of education and citizenship in Canada *in light of* Aboriginal perspectives on such places.

Theorizing the Conceptual Terrain of Colonial Frontier Logics

This project of repairing the story of the place we call Canada has direct implications on the field of curriculum studies and the theorization of the ways in which Indigenous perspectives can enhance and expand the field. In taking my first steps into academia, I have become acutely aware that this problem of separateness of Aboriginal and Canadian history, memory, and experience is also prevalent in curriculum studies. There is very little interaction between Aboriginal scholars and their more mainstream colleagues, perhaps because each group believes that their research and writing focuses on separate and distinct realities that do not implicate the others. It seems that the stories that we have been told in school have been elevated to the level of myth and directly impact the ways in which we interact with those outside our own identifiable group. These myths, told as history, characterize our institutions and prescribe the ways in which we organize knowledge and ways of knowing. I contest this denial of historic, social, and curricular relationality by asserting that the perceived civilizational frontiers are actually also permeable and that perspectives on history, memory, and experience are shared, interreferential, and co-dependent. In the context of this inquiry, I do so by providing an historical survey of selected forts that demonstrates the simultaneously permeable and impermeable character of the walls and fortifications. Building on these examples, I then assert that perceived socio-spatial cultural frontiers that are rooted in colonial frontier logics, such as

those that separate Aboriginal and Canadian, are similarly both permeable and impermeable to human interactions. The fluxic quality of openness or closure is dependent upon context, situation, and agency. The thematic throughline connecting these interpretive commitments is that *storied* versions of these interactions—stories deeply influenced by an ethical theory of relationality—best belie the naturalized frontier logics taught through the pedagogy of the fort. This critical move has direct implications on our notions of curriculum and pedagogy today.

What will be the spirit and intent of this movement? On what terms will this shift occur? This work has also been deeply influenced by a personal desire to locate a place for my research and writing. For an aspiring scholar like me, such positionality can be difficult to articulate. In some ways, I see myself as an interpreter, asserting and interpreting Indigenous perspectives for a broader audience to promote understanding and amelioration. This interpretive position is largely inspired by the life story of my Cree-Métis grandfather several generations back who gained renown as an interpreter and translator while living among the Blackfoot on the Western frontier (Jackson, 2003). In other ways, I feel a deep responsibility to work on behalf of the Indigenous peoples and communities that I know. Working through this ambiguity has held me to believe that Indigenous scholars, building on Indigenous ways of knowing enlivened by the Indigenous communities they know, are in a unique position to lead this movement and help set the terms on which this shift will occur. In the Indigenous communities that I know, historical consciousness is a primary component of citizenship. The spirit

and intent of this notion is to respect those that have gone before and honour them in our present lives through spiritual renewal and ceremonies. This ethic holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we conceptualize the future. It requires that we see ourselves related to, and implicated, in the lives of others. This cultural value, as ethical code, is salient throughout this work.

The particular positionality and ethical imperatives of this inquiry demand careful consideration of the specific research context under consideration. I have chosen to focus on forts as mythic signs for five main reasons. First, the lives of my Indigenous relations were very much related to the day-to-day operations of forts in Western Canada. Second, forts are both sites and symbols integral to the story of Canada that has been told in classrooms and textbooks for many generations. Thus, forts, schools, and curricula in the context of Canada are intimately implicated in the official stories of nation and nationality that circumscribe and delimit the relative significance of outsider knowledge and experience. Institutionally, forts, schools, and curricula cannot stand to admit both because such admission will trouble and thus destabilize established conventions and assumptions. Third, forts, as mythic signs, have contributed to the perpetuation of colonial frontier logics and reinforced the notions of impermeability and insider/outsider that have effectively excluded Aboriginal perspectives from official versions of Canadian history. Fourth, across Canada, former forts have been resurrected as museums that continue to tell a story of the nation unable to comprehend Aboriginal presence and participation. Fifth,

Aboriginal people tell stories of forts that belie official Canadian versions of those places. The fort, as a site of contention, is an artifact well suited to the research goals of rereading and reframing colonial interaction with reference to curriculum studies because it is also a site of engagement (Smith, 1999). The fort, as concept and place, offers clear opportunities to deconstruct colonialism as a shared condition. This shift in historical consciousness will have direct implications on our perceptions of the present and future of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Asserting relationality and interreferentiality through story will also trouble the ways in which these issues are discussed in schools.

The research approach best suited to meet these goals is Indigenous Métissage. I conceptualize Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility that imagines curriculum and pedagogy as relational, interreferential, co-dependent, and hermeneutic endeavours. Three related commitments make this sensibility *Indigenous*: it is informed by Indigenous wisdom traditions and notions of the significance of place; it focuses on Aboriginal-Canadian relations *indigenous* to Canada; and it centres inquiry on a specific contentious artifact that is rooted in a particular place in Canada. Throughout this inquiry, Indigenous Métissage is expressed as an interpretive sensibility and textual practice dedicated to revealing relationality, interreferentiality, and permeability. I also provide one specific example of Indigenous Métissage focused on rereading and reframing the artifact of the fort in the context of Edmonton by textually braiding historical perspectives of the place. Such rereading and reframing is an important transdisciplinary curricular move that will reveal the intimate and subtle relationships between

colonial frontier thinking and the stories we tell children about the world and their place in it. Forts, as mythic signs supporting certain pedagogical messages, have played a prominent role in fostering particular historical interpretations regarding the 'place' of Aboriginal peoples with/in Canada and their relationships with Canadians.

Forts as Mythic Signs

...it is clear that inherited landscape myths and memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with. National identity...would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated and enriched as homeland. (Schama, 1995, p. 15)

Fort Edmonton Park is a large historical interpretative site constructed along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River that had been designed to portray the growth of Edmonton, Alberta from fur trade fort to growing city. I spent a summer afternoon touring the site with my family. My memories of the place, derived from a childhood visit perhaps thirty years earlier, were focused on the impressive size of the pointed wooden stakes used to construct the exterior walls of the fort, as well as the height of the four corner towers. I remember peeking through the defensive slit holes of those corner towers and imagining what it was like for people to look at each through a tiny hole in a wall. I was conscious of these memories as we approached the open gates of the fort.

On the way, we encountered a small Indian camp occupied by Aboriginal actors presumably playing their ancestors during the height of the fur trade era. There was a grandma making beaded jewelry, a mother sorting through berries, a father fixing some snowshoes, some children playing, and a baby resting in a cradleboard propped up against a tipi. The tourists remained silent or spoke in whispers as they stood in the middle of the contrived camp, and only occasionally did someone approach an actor to get a closer look or ask a question. Perhaps they, like me, felt as though they were intruding on the personal lives of this museum family.

We left the camp and entered the fort. While we were touring the numerous buildings, I overheard someone say, “The Indians are dancing outside.” Curious, I followed them to a larger Indian camp constructed just beyond the walls of a different side of the fort. There were three tipis set up among the trees, two fires burning, some bannock and meat being cooked, singers sitting in a circle around their drum, and Aboriginal people in powwow outfits were preparing to dance. Visitors touring the park had left the confines of the fort and were crowding into the limited space to view the activities that were going to take place. I stayed and watched too, mostly because I was fascinated by the problem of making sense of the contrasts arising from the experience of being outside, inside, and then once again outside the walls of the fort. What I had traversed was “a crude social and spatial dichotomy” (Payne and Taylor, 2003, p. 10). In this reconstructed site, the outside was clearly an anthropological realm—an exhibit peopled by Indians. Inside was a more industrious place where Other people

laboured in the interests of civilizing a country and building a nation. These civilizational myths on display at Fort Edmonton Park on that day are not unique to that place. Rather, they constitute dominant and recurring threads of Canadian history and what it has meant to be a Canadian.¹¹

By using the term *myth* in this case, I don't mean to argue that the historical reconstruction that I witnessed at Fort Edmonton Park is false or inaccurate. Nor am I suggesting that a conspiracy plot hatched by EuroCanadian historians attempting to exclude Aboriginal peoples from the history of this country has duped us all. Instead, I believe that myths are actually truths about culture and conventional views of history that have both been deeply influenced by the stories of our country that we have been told in school. The truths are the idealized versions of history that are simplified and made coherent when we select "particular events and institutions which seem to embody important cultural values and elevate them to the status of legend" (Francis, 1997, p. 11). This is how versions of history become idealized and mythologized. Following the ideas of Barthes, we can say that "[m]yth takes a purely cultural and historical object ...and transforms it into a sign of universal value...it turns culture into nature. It is this duplicity of myth, a construct which represents itself as universal and natural, which characterizes its ideological function" (Allen, 2003, pp. 36-37). The point here is that official versions of history, which begin as cultural and contextual

¹¹ Peers (1995) has noted that virtually all major historic fur trade sites in Canada replicate this pattern of displaying Aboriginal people and Europeans on opposite sides of the palisades. "Interpretation at all reconstructions currently depicts a social and racial gulf between Europeans and Native peoples that denies the extraordinarily cross-cultural nature of the trade. Such separations reinforce the old dichotomy between the related concepts of European-civilization-history and Native-savagery-wilderness that is at the root of so much North American historical writing" (p. 108).

interpretations of events, morph into hegemonic expressions of the existing value structures and worldviews of the dominant groups in a society. Or, to paraphrase a proverb from the Hopi of the American Southwest, people who get to tell their stories will rule the world (Spaulding, 2004, p. 77).

In Canada, institutionalized versions of the history of Western Canada have traditionally been chronicles narrating the pioneering work of citizens first overcoming and then transforming the wilderness, thereby claiming it for the nation. People from all over the world immigrated to Canada and were involved in this endeavour. The common historical streams of Western Canada—the fur trade and the establishment of forts, Treaty negotiations, immigration, agricultural development, the Métis Resistances, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the growth of settlements, towns, and then cities—conjoin into one giant story with one significant moralistic message: civilization has been forged out of empty wilderness (Francis, 1997). Significant influence growing out of this message stems from the universalizing, naturalizing, and commonsensical perspective it promotes. To summarize, the civilization of empty wilderness, as a natural and inevitable result of proper human motivation and labouring, creates benefits and opportunities to all people. Who could possibly argue against the obvious and tremendous benefits derived from this process of civilization? Such are the myths that have shaped the historical consciousness of Canadians, especially in the West. Here I want to re-emphasize an earlier point. I am not suggesting that the historical events cited above did not happen or are inaccurate. What I am interested in is the process through which these events become

mythologized and, by necessity, actively exclude or discount alternative historical accounts, perspectives, or ways of knowing, and the ways and means by which this process has found curricular and pedagogical expression. To state it more directly, I am motivated by a desire to deconstruct these myths and show how Aboriginal peoples have been left *outside* of these accounts. In so doing, I hope to address the incompleteness of the dominant narrative in the service of re-mythologizing Canada on more ethical terms.

One basic and foundational Canadian myth is that forts were established and maintained in dangerous and wild places by courageous pioneers and adventurers who were working in the interests of building the nation and forging a nationality. In Canada, the wilderness and the naturalness of the Indian are valued, but there is also much pride in the ways the land was civilized and how civilization was *brought* to the Indians. The fort, as a colonial artifact, recapitulates the development myth of the Canadian nation by symbolizing this civilizing process—transplanting a four-cornered version of European development into the heart of the wilderness.

This metanarrative of the nation reduces a complex, braided, and multifarious history to a straightforward teleological tale. This reductive narrative weighs heavily on the consciousness of Aboriginal people and many Canadians, and continues to influence the ways in which we speak to each other about history, identity, citizenship, and the future. Summarizing Schama (as quoted on page 21), myths and memories comprise the inherited landscape we recognize and acknowledge as part of our identity and culture. These myths and memories,

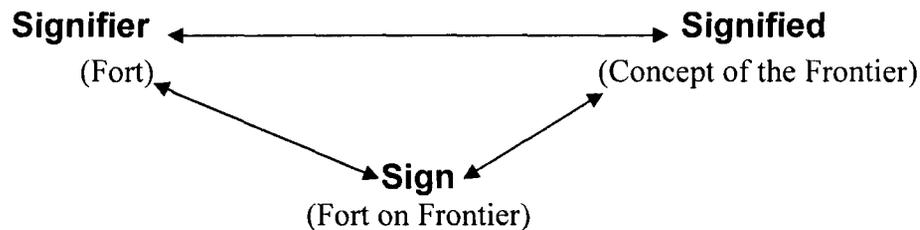
mapped as the topography of homeland, have long lasting influence through the centuries and shape the character of the institutions we choose to establish, maintain, and conventionalize—institutions like, say, schools. These myths and memories, idealized as truths, become part of official curriculum documents and find expression in the form of outcomes, goals, and objectives. Such curriculum common-sensibilities play themselves out in the day-to-day pedagogical interactions between teachers and students.

Structuring and Conceptualizing Fort as Myth

This inquiry is inspired by a desire to denaturalize and trouble such myths. The symbol of the fort on the mythological Canadian frontier is particularly fecund for exploration because the current museum form embodies the spirit of “exhibitionary pedagogy” left over from the era of high colonial engagements (Willinsky, 1998, p. 85). The public can revisit the past at these recreated historic sites and affirm their allegiances to the foundational myths of the nation. My personal familiarity with forts-as-museums has fuelled my desire to problematize them as semiotic signs. Reflecting on multiple visits to forts as a tourist, I became aware that, like Barthes (1972), “I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there” (p. 11).

Barthes, in *Mythologies* (1972), builds on the semiology of Saussure to articulate a semiological structure for myth as a way to “bring myth to order, to read it and therefore to provide the basis for a viable critique” (Allen, 2003, p. 45). Saussure imagined a science that would be able to read systematically all

human sign systems other than those found in linguistic sign systems. For Saussure, a sign is the product of an arbitrary, conventionalized, and institutionalized relationship between a signifier and a signified (p. 40). The signifier and the signified, then, come together to produce the sign. In this semiotic structure, the signifier is the “acoustic or graphic element” and the signified is the “mental concept conventionally associated with it” (Rylance, 1994, p. 35). To demonstrate, consider this Barthesian first-order semiological system applied to this study (Barthes, 1972, p. 115):



In this example, the signifier of the fort connotes the typical visual or graphic portrayal of forts—how they are imagined. This imagined fort depends on prior experience with forts in that we know how they are supposed to look, in an archetypal way. In the context of Western Canada, this signifier ‘fort’ conjures in many minds the signified concept of the frontier. Forts and fortresses are built to assert sovereignty over an area or people, to physically separate insiders from outsiders, and to provide surveillance over a border area. Therefore, forts are typically built in these overlapping, contested, and emergent areas we call frontiers. Finally, when signifier and signified come together as sign, the predominant image conjured is this imagined fort situated at its *natural place* on

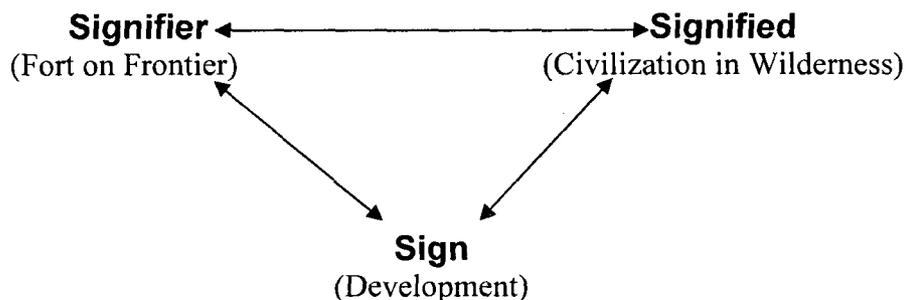
the frontier. The fort and the frontier, then, have a deep semiotic and symbolic association.

Barthes' key contribution to our understandings of mythologies comes through his theoretical tracing of the ways in which first-order semiological systems get co-opted by second-order semiological or myth-producing systems. "Myth acts on already existent signs, whether they be written statements or texts, photographs, films, music, buildings, or garments... Mythology takes this sign and turns it into a signifier for a new signified, a new concept" (Allen, 2003, pp. 42-43). Myth, then, transforms first-order meanings into second-order meanings. This transformation occurs as a result of the function of myth as an appropriative force. The myths on which a society's values and institutions are founded weigh heavily on the consciousness of its citizens, thereby motivating them to interpret and assimilate signs and symbols in ways that ensure their alignment with the mythic stories supporting their society. The significance of signs and symbols is seen in how these can reinforce adherence to foundational myths. Thus, Barthes' second-order semiological system does not work to deny, ignore, misinform, or mislead. Instead, it co-opts the first-order sign to confirm the stories that the dominant society tells itself.

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of statement of fact. (Barthes, 1972, p. 143)

Myth, as *metalanguage*, is a second language shaped by a desire to speak about first-order signs and symbols in ways that enable it to transform history into nature. (p. 129). However, Barthes reminds us that the first-order meaning is not completely forgotten. When criticism arises, myth can withdraw while pointing to the sign as simply an artifact in a literal or material sense. So, for example, one might argue that the fort is a symbol of colonialism deeply connected to foundational myths of Eurowestern society while another could respond that the fort is *just* a building constructed to meet the practical needs of people who lived in the past. This ability of the signifier of myth to operate on two levels makes it difficult to criticize. “This is precisely why myth is so important to the perpetuation and dissemination of bourgeois ideology” (Allen, 2003, p. 44).

Applying Barthes ideas to this study requires an articulation of the process through which a first-order sign is co-opted by a second-order myth-making semiological system. Recall that the previous diagram depicting a first-order semiological system produced a sign termed ‘Fort on Frontier.’ In the process of transforming this sign into the domain of mythology, then, an adaptation of Barthes’ second-order semiological system looks like this:



Barthes (1972) argues that myth raises the sign produced from the first-order semiological system (shown in the previous diagram) to a second-order level,

turning that sign into a new signifier for a new signified and thus a new 'mythologized' sign (pp. 114-115). This indicates that the myths of a society work on first-order signs by means of appropriation, adapting the original significance of the sign so that it agrees with the myths the society holds as natural and true. Consider, then, that the first-order sign 'Fort on Frontier' conjures images of a typical fort established on a perceived frontier. In light of the developmental myth of the West, however, the sign "Fort on Frontier" acquires deeper, mythological significance. This appropriated first-order sign, now as second-order signifier, becomes symbolic of the process through which wild and underutilized lands were civilized through European exploration, takeover, and settlement. The signified "Civilization in Wilderness" locates the conceptual place that the fort occupies in the mythological landscape of the colonial imaginary. The myth of Civilization, serving as an organizing and rallying point for modernity, is posted on the terrain in the form of the fort. The "Fort on Frontier" signifies the material manifestation of this process. In this example, building a fort on contested lands is a sovereign act motivated by the myth of modernity—a myth founded on the belief that the Eurocentric version of progress and development brings benefits to all (Dussel, 1995, p. 64). The key point here is that the fort, seen through the lens of myth in Canada, symbolizes, and is a sign, of the development of the West. The image and place of the fort in Canadian history becomes naturalized and universally acknowledged as a sign of civilized European influences in an area formerly controlled by uncivilized and premodern 'Indians.' The fort, then, is a

mythic sign that initiates, substantiates and, through its density, hides the teleological story of the development of the nation.

What Do Forts As Mythic Signs Teach About Relationality?

In making such claims, I am mindful of the problems associated with the application of a semiotic structure to a complex context. It seems rather presumptive and reductive to equate, in a structured and systematic way, forts with a myth provisionally termed ‘development.’ However, in many respects, this is exactly how myth shapes thinking on complex issues:

In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, without going beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because *it is without depth*...it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (Barthes, 1972, p. 143, italics mine)

Mindful of Barthes’ insight, I view this engagement with the zero-sum myth game wherein *fort = development* as an opportunity to explore the ways in which Aboriginal presence and participation in Canadian society has been, and continues to be, conceptualized. Myth denies the potential for Aboriginal presence and participation by repeatedly telling us a story without depth or complexity.

Ironically, however, it is the very density of a mythic symbol, its impenetrableness, which gives it power. I wish to dwell on the context created by such myth making and interpret its significance to contemporary curriculum studies. This is not done with the spirit and intent of insisting that forts can only

be associated with the myth of development. Forts, as historical artifacts, remind us of the past, but “there is no reason to assume that ...artifacts, are capable of serving only one symbolic function, and a good deal of reason to assume that they can mediate a variety of meanings, often simultaneously” (Beaudry, Cook & Mrozowski, 1991, p. 157). The one meaning, among many, that will shape this inquiry is the symbolic relationship between ‘Fort on Frontier’ and ‘Development.’

When I argue that the fort signifies colonial frontier thinking—the spatial, metaphorical, literal, and civilizational separateness of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians—I assume that unequal power relations, hegemony, and ideology are at work (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 233-238). Myth tells us in symbolic syntax that the walls of the fort are impermeable. With reference to the specific context of colonial history in Canada, as it has been interpreted by historians for many years, forts teach that there is a necessary gulf separating civilized from uncivilized. Inside the fort were industrious people working in the interest of building a new nation from *terra nullius*. The Indigenous people living outside the walls of the fort, due to their steadfast adherence to traditional ways, were unable to comprehend the changes brought to their lands and quickly got in the way of this vision of progress. Thus, the historical significance of forts has been interpreted based on this assumption that the Christianizing and civilizing impetus justifying EuroCanadian settlement was an inevitable result of superior peoples asserting their rightful claim to virgin lands occupied by primitive peoples. This teleological vision, akin to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, requires that all

peoples and events encountered conform to meet the needs of the story being written of nation and nationality. That vision, in this case, is ongoing economic development and progressive improvements in quality of life perceived as derived from God-given license and universalized democratic principles. The history of Canada has mostly been taught according to this teleological dream and the fort has become a mythic sign deeply embedded within this dream. The important point here is that this teleology has morphed into a national ideology that has shaped the institutions and conventions of Canadian society and operates according to an assumption of Aboriginal peoples as outside accepted versions of nation and nationality. More to the point, the high historical status given to the fort in Canadian history has been telescoped to the present context as a socio-spatial organizer of peoples and cultures that delimits *and* explains difference as irreconcilable. This, then, is the pedagogy of the fort.

The mythic character of the fort teaches us a troubling version of human relationality that operationalizes itself as a drive to incorporate and overcome difference. Fort pedagogy works according to an insistence that everyone must be brought inside and become like the insiders or they will be eliminated. These fort teachings and their curricular implications cannot be understood in isolation from the colonial takeover process and Eurowestern notions of civilization and development that descend from imperial capitalist ventures. The fort, as a central market place, teaches us that outsiders must be either incorporated or excluded in order for resource exploitation and development to occur in the necessary ways. Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems have been and continue to be

most directly affected by this incorporation and exclusion. The strange difference of Indigenusness is thus rendered incomprehensible to Canadian citizenship because it cannot be reconciled with the teleological dream of nation and nationality that has been propagated in schools for many generations. Schools reinforce this incomprehensibility and are thus complicit in the perpetuation of cultural divides founded on strange difference.

In recent years, the viability of this teleological dream has been troubled as public policy priorities have shifted from a focus on EuroCanadian perspectives to a more critical awareness of the need to balance the perspectives of people living in Canada. Yet, foundational institutionalized assumptions and conventions (shaped by mythic signs like the fort) persist. Evidence of this persistence can be seen in debates spurred by recent curricular initiatives across Canada that emphasize Aboriginal perspectives. Many practitioners in the field of education, from elementary to university classrooms, resist this emphasis on the grounds that Aboriginal perspectives remain isolated *outside* their knowledge and experience. This resistance is informed by a false faith in the universal applicability of Eurowestern intellectual traditions and knowledge systems. The assumed universalism of Eurowestern perspectives on knowledge, its production, and its purposes has so thoroughly shaped educational approaches and curricular assumptions that it is often framed as commonsense. Thus, the fort as mythic sign has taught, and continues to teach, the commonsense that is colonial frontier logics. However, the mythic symbolism of the fort can be potentially disrupted if we reread and reframe the fort as permeable, relational, and interreferential.

Therefore, the desire to reread and reframe foundational myths is directly linked to the desire to contest commonsense historical assumptions that continue to shape the terms according to which we speak to each other about cultural difference and the significance of the past.

The Vicissitudes of History

A central argument throughout this work is that Eurowestern historical interpretations of Indigenouslyness, signified by the fort, have fostered the creation of a colonial frontier logic that supports the isolation of Indigenous peoples with/in settler societies and excludes them and their knowledge systems from serious consideration on matters of public policy like, say, educational policy and curriculum. Following Collingwood (1999), I view the perpetuation of colonial frontier logics in contemporary times as symptomatic of the prevalence of a “common-sense theory of history” (p. 143). These commonly-held beliefs support the view that history is an academic discipline based on rigorous and objective analysis of selected authoritative resources (pp. 143-147). As such, the study of history is assumed to involve the identification of universal truths regarding the past through careful consideration of the traces of available evidence. “The common-sense view seems to be that the historian *first* discovers these traces (what they are) and *then* discovers what inferences can be drawn from them to the past” (p. 140, emphasis original). The historian’s job is thus assumed to focus on piecing together the past in a coherent manner so as to elucidate deeper meaning for others. In the commonsense view of history, then, we come to know the past in its true form and significance through the expertise of the historian. While this

view is not entirely false, it “suggests, without saying it in so many words, that ‘our’ only real connection to the historical past is the result of historical inquiry, whether we carry it out ourselves or are provided with it second-hand by reading the results of the historian’s work” (Carr, 1986, p. 2).

While much of the expert work of academic historians is valuable in making such connections, the commonsense authoritativeness given Eurowestern historical work has led to its conflation with truth and myth, and thus the discipline of history has been granted a particularly powerful and unquestioned role as universal arbiter of the relative worth of cultures and peoples. This study is dedicated to the open questioning of the assumed universality and objectivity of the discipline of history, especially as this impetus pertains to Aboriginal peoples of Western Canada. One of the central insights informing this critique is the belief that Eurowestern intellectual traditions have been distanced from the historical contexts and circumstances which produced them. Such historical amnesia has created a situation in which those intellectual traditions are dehistoricized—producing them as commonsense, natural, universally good, and timeless—and divorced from the cultural prejudices and assumptions that inform them. One of the symptoms of working and researching according to Eurowestern traditions is *not needing* to name the specific hermeneutic sensibilities employed in achieving an understanding.¹² This ahistorical and acultural stance has fostered the perception that Eurowestern intellectual traditions growing out of the Enlightenment offer special transhuman insights from “a transcendental vantage

¹² This is in contrast to researchers who choose to employ Indigenous sensibilities and must repeatedly explain and justify their cultural and historical frames.

of understanding,” as though its proponents have been providentially granted “a standpoint above history” (Pickering, 1999, p. 178). Foucault makes the argument that history has been so shaped in an effort to console ourselves with the belief that the past has unity, continuity, teleology, destiny, and thus higher meaning (Scheurich and McKenzie, 2005, p. 853). Following Gadamer (1979), I contend that this separation of Eurowestern traditions from the assumptions and prejudices that have shaped them has led to an inability to comprehend the historical and cultural Other in terms other than reductive (p. 153).

In this inquiry, I explicitly focus on commonsense views of history because I believe that it is this conceptualization of the significance of the past that most directly influences the thought and work of most educators today. Commonsense views of history and historiography held and taught by educators promote the view that the study and writing of history is only valid, unbiased, and accurate when it follows established Eurowestern conventions. Histories and historiographies that do not conform to these standards have often been dismissed as speculative *stories*. This most dominant form of commonsense historical understanding, deeply embedded within the Eurowestern academic tradition, continues to inform most curricular and pedagogical deliberations in the field of education. The majority of teachers continue to be reluctant to consider historical writings and perspectives that differ from established Eurowestern standards.

Such reluctance should not be surprising. Educators have been well-schooled in Eurowestern intellectual traditions which encourage the avoidance of effective historical consciousness, or critical awareness of the historical horizon

emerging from particular prejudices and assumptions, and thus fail to foster understanding of the significance of horizons outside of their own trajectory (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 272-273). The central epistemological and hermeneutical problem emerging out of modernity and colonialism is that “science or universal reason, contrary to the typical or dominant portrayal of these, has constantly, in a recursive fashion, rewritten its own story, although leaving that rewriting unmentioned” while also insisting that the Eurowestern story is not a story but instead a record of a much larger transcendental and transhuman enlightenment (Scheurich and McKenzie, 2005, p. 844). The formal knowledge that has become History is thus shaped by a complex array of irrational, ambiguous, contradictory, and explicitly cultural prejudices and assumptions that belie the seamless chronicle of ascendancy it purports to be (p. 847).¹³ Such epistemological and philosophical tendencies make it very difficult for teachers to comprehend curricular and pedagogical initiatives that promote engagement with knowledge systems and intellectual traditions different from their own.

While critiquing these commonsense views of history and historiography is important work, what seems more critical is the production of research that reveals, from a variety of specific perspectives, how these views came to hold the mythic power they do and the falseness of their claims. Contesting these powerful claims might be best accomplished by locating research within wisdom traditions that are usually considered at odds with Eurowestern traditions so as to provide

¹³ Although I am referencing an article on Foucaultian methodologies of archaeology and genealogy, I do not pretend to be making use of these approaches. Instead, I have found that Foucault’s insights have helped me better understand what it is that I am trying to do with this work.

and make salient a specific set of prejudices and assumptions that compose a meaningful means of address. Indigenous Métissage attempts to do this by juxtaposing commonsense historical perspectives with Indigenous historical perspectives. The ethical desire is to reread and reframe historical situations in ways that cause readers to question their own assumptions and prejudices as limited and limiting, and thus foster a renewed openness to the possibility of broader and deeper understandings that can transverse perceived cultural, civilizational, and temporal divides.

In making such contestations, however, it is important to be clear about what is at stake. History, as an academic discipline, has been framed as an objective exercise that demands that the historian set aside her biases in an attempt to discover and articulate what really happened in the past. The objectivity of an historian is perceived as possible through extensive training and expertise honed through intimate familiarity with relevant primary and secondary resources. The overriding belief is that the proper mental attributes will reveal the essential historical truth of the resource. According to this view, then, objectivity grows from learnedness in the discipline. The historian emulates the scientist in uncovering the proper answers to the right questions through sustained study, “find[s] a means of compelling nature to answer,” and thus puts in place another piece of the larger puzzle of human understanding of the world (Collingwood, 1956, p. 269). The expertise of the historian, like the scientist, is perceived as evidenced in the careful crafting of the question and the ability to answer it—and thus create new knowledge—in authoritative ways.

Thankfully, this idea of authority through objectivity has been extensively critiqued since the various 'post' movements gained prominence beginning in the 1960s. Postmodernism, to name one such movement, questions the assumed ability of modernist assumptions to represent and fully explain the world. Postmodernists are guided by incredulity toward the modernist grand narrative that asserts that Eurowestern intellectual traditions can be universally applied in all contexts to identify legitimate knowledge and guide social and institutional goals (Lyotard, 2002, xxiv). In the field of history, this philosophical shift has inspired, in part, an interest in *les petits- récits* set in specific contexts (often told as first-hand accounts) that strive for explicitly subjective accounts of historical events and make no claims to universality. This approach has been viewed by some as the most useful way for marginalized and colonized peoples to make public their own accounts of the past and contest the academic accuracy attributed to Eurowestern historians and their interpretations of the past (Klein, 1995).

While the historical work of the colonized and marginalized has been valuable in expanding the purview of historical understanding, there has also been a real danger that such work will degenerate into a postmodernism relativism, shaped by the current context of identity politics, wherein everyone's story will be accepted and legitimated as history. In this example, subjectivity (as postmodern navel-gazing) replaces objectivity as the new moral compass that recognizes no standards outside of its own. Ironically, the desire to participate in this way can actually work to further isolate and exclude colonized and marginalized peoples because their historical accounts can be conveniently dismissed as byproducts of

their own separate cultural preoccupations that fail to make any worthwhile claims in public spheres—beyond simply having the right to tell their stories. What is at stake in these deliberations over the significance of history, then, is the opportunity to shape the terms according to which historical interpretation is considered and historical agency recognized.

One key lesson derived from these debates is that, contrary to the commonsense view, the teaching and writing of history is never a neutral act. In fact, both practices are guided by prejudices and assumptions, both subtle and overt, which inform any interpretation of the past. This is an extremely contentious and complex issue. Over the past few decades some societies have been engaged in so-called “history wars” wherein proponents of nationalized and institutionalized versions of history have been challenged by those who have interpreted the past differently¹⁴ (McIntyre and Clark, 2004; Osborne, 2003; Granatstein, 1998; Windshuttle, 1997). In Canada, these debates are the result of the political, social, and cultural resurgence of Indigenous peoples and communities in the 1960s that inspired explicit challenges to accepted national historical narratives.¹⁵ This shift was part of a “deep rupture that opened in the 1960s in nearly all fields of history between an older historiography of politics, intellect, and progress and a new historiography of society, culture, and disconnection” (Higham, 2000). Some historians have classified the latter historiographic practice ‘revisionist’ in the sense that it is dedicated to the revisal

¹⁴ This debate has been especially contentious in Australia with reference to ‘Black Armband’ history as opposed to ‘White Blindfold’ history. See Brantlinger (2004) for a detailed overview of this debate.

¹⁵ For me, the most inspirational texts from this era are *The Unjust Society* (Cardinal, 1969) and *Halfbreed* (Campbell, 1973).

or reinterpretation of official versions of history through consideration of new evidence or renewed perspective. Although revisionist historiography is often dismissed as the deliberate falsification and distortion of historical facts to “serve partisan or ideological purposes,” it is clear that history becomes much more meaningful when our “[i]nterpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time” (McPherson, 2003, p.5). This is the main purpose of revisionist historiography.

In the Canadian context, revisionist historiography has fostered more complex understandings of Indigenous histories and the history of Aboriginal and EuroCanadian interactions.¹⁶ Historian Bruce Trigger (1986) traces the chronological development of the topic of Aboriginal history as a component of Canadian history and makes the compelling argument that negative, restrictive, and dismissive portrayals of Aboriginal peoples only began when they “ceased to be a living presence in the lives of Euro-Canadians, including those who wrote accounts of Canadian history” (p. 318). This was the era when the anachronistic and incapable Indian was invented and the pedagogy of the fort promulgated. The disappearance of Aboriginal peoples from the lives of most Canadians—and the pages of most historical accounts—fits well with the frontier thesis of progress and development because it confirmed EuroCanadian ascendancy in an empty land. Revisionist historiography in the Canadian context has thus focused on

¹⁶ See, for example, Dickason (1984; 1997), Brown (1980), Van Kirk (1980), Francis (1997), Milloy (1988; 1999), Christensen (2000), and Carter (1999).

demonstrating significant Aboriginal presence and participation across complex and changing social, economic, and cultural milieux.

However, as Lakota scholar Philip Deloria (2002) notes, historiography requires us to think about epistemology, philosophy, and how we know what we know about the past (p. 6). This statement reminds that the quality and significance given the past is directly dependent on the particular epistemologies and philosophies informing the consideration. In consideration of Indigenous histories, then, it is important to recognize that historical thinking is not simply limited to the colonial experience and interactions with settlers since contact. Nor is it limited to written accounts. Rather, Indigenous peoples have their own forms of historical consciousness—creation stories, Trickster stories, origin stories, oral histories, and various mnemonics—that form the heart of their own traditions. Such oral traditions have often been dismissed by proponents of Eurowestern history for their presumed inaccuracy and the lack of documented proof to legitimate the historical claims and contentions they present. This clash of traditions is a central part of the reason that most historical texts focused on Indigenous peoples have been written by non-Indigenous historians. The Indigenous have been *subjects* of historical study, but rarely and only recently have their own versions and accounts been taken seriously in such studies. Cavender Wilson (1999) calls into question the accepted practice of historians who have typically disregarded the histories of the very people they are studying:

Very few have attempted to find out how native people would interpret, analyze, and question the written documents they confront, nor have they

asked if the native people they are studying have their own versions or stories of their past that might be pertinent to their analysis. (p. 101)

This disconnect is symptomatic of the clash of differing epistemic and philosophic traditions that inform and shape understandings of the past and how it is to be recorded and remembered. Making explicit these traditions and better comprehending how they are foundational to prejudices and assumptions regarding the significance of the past are now key aspects of the growing dialogue between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians.¹⁷

Turning now to the context of this study, it is my argument that the colonial frontier logics of the fort and the resultant socio-spatial separation of Aboriginal and Canadian as insiders and outsiders are naturalized constructs of Canadian society that are passed down generation by generation in the form of an authoritative historical narrative. Canadian societal institutions and conventions are deeply imbued with this history. What is it that qualifies me to make such a contention? The history of my family has been markedly influenced by colonial frontier logics. The story of the Papaschase Cree cannot be understood in isolation from the history of the settlement of the Canadian West. As a descendent of the Papaschase Band, I feel a responsibility to study the historical record of the place called Edmonton and demonstrate the presence and participation of my ancestors in that history despite the starkly imbalanced power relations that resulted in their

¹⁷ Among other resources on these issue, most notably Turner (2006), McLeod (2007), Borrows (2004), and Canada (1996), I draw particular inspiration for this statement from the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) funded project led by Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax of the University of Alberta. This research involves the presentation of archival materials from the records of Oblate missionaries to First Nations Elders from the communities that were served by the missionaries. The research provides a provocative opportunity for the Elders to recount oral histories of events and juxtapose these with the records of the Oblates. One of the hopes of this project is “a new shared understanding of history” (Jones, 2007, p. 23).

disenfranchisement, displacement, dispersal, and the eventual dismemberment of the community. Indigenous Métissage is a guiding interpretive sensibility that enables me to do that without disowning my EuroCanadian relatives in the process.

Inspired by the ambiguous histories of my family, the kind of history promoted through doing Indigenous Métissage is dedicated to troubling the assumed accuracy of historical interpretations that support colonial frontier logics by emphasizing instead the historic and ongoing storied relationships that connect Aboriginal and Canadian. This is not to reduce Aboriginal and Canadian historical interpretations and historiographic practices to the quality of *sameness*. Rather, despite some significance differences, they are related, and rereading and reframing this relationality today is critical to renewing partnerships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians. Like Deloria (2002), I hope that the “search for common ground between distinctive historiographic traditions may yield insight into shared principles of history, bringing greater complexity into the creation of the stories we tell about the past” (p. 17).

It is for these reasons that this study is committed to a *storied* conception of history that is always connected to larger questions of human relationality, interreferentiality, and the terms according to which we can recursively reread and reframe the historical and current intersections of cultural groups usually considered at odds. While detailed and subjective histories of particular people living in specific socio-historical contexts can be valuable, these histories also need to be framed in ways that make them relevant to the larger questions and

apposite to diverse groups of people. The historical challenge is to write about the past in ways that enable readers to see themselves implicated in it. Such rereading and reframing of the past provides a context for revisioning the future. This perspective is rooted in a belief that all historical thinking is naturally informed by a value-system shaped by particular cultural traditions and assumptions. This view is supported by Carr (1964):

Every group has its own values, which are rooted in history... The abstract standard or value, divorced from society and divorced from history, is as much an illusion as the abstract individual. The serious historian is the one who recognizes the historically-conditioned character of all values, not the one who claims for his own values an objectivity beyond history. The beliefs that we hold and the standards of judgment which we set up are part of history, and are much subject to historical investigation as any other aspect of human behaviour. (p. 84)

This view has important resonance with Gadamer's notion of effective historical consciousness. For Gadamer (1975), effective historical consciousness is an ongoing recursive process of trying to better understand our present situation in terms of the prejudices and assumptions we have inherited as historical beings (pp. 267-270). In this case, though, prejudices are not negatively connoted, but are instead considered as prejudgments that enable us to make sense in the world.

Gadamer contends that all intellectual traditions are shaped by particular prejudices and assumptions that are rooted in historical experience. The job of the person trying to understand an historical situation is thus to maintain

consciousness of the ways in which these prejudices and assumptions determine the character of the questions they ask and the quality of answers they seek (Gadamer, 1975, p. 267). Gadamer's challenge to the person inquiring into an historical situation is not to avoid these prejudices, or attempt to overcome them, but to strive to maintain effective historical consciousness of their significance to the present inquiry. Consciousness of these prejudices and assumptions when attempting to understand an historical situation as a present concern constitutes a standpoint from which it can be interpreted. Hence, for Gadamer, understanding a situation in its historical fullness requires a standpoint from which a horizon can be imagined:

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point...to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within his horizon...the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition. (p. 269)

But the 'rightness' of the horizon and effective historical consciousness can never be fully achieved because humans, as historical beings, live constantly within history. We cannot isolate ourselves from it or it from us; history and living a life are thoroughly interconnected.

Historical inquiry is thus a process of understanding that links the past, present, and future in ways conceptualized as meaningful according to our

prejudices and assumptions. This understanding is given coherence and continuity by the character of our present standpoint and its direct ties to current realities. The challenge of the historian in writing meaningful history is to demonstrate how the vision of the past being articulated is infused with insights derived from the problems of the present. “The function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them” (Carr, 1964, p. 68). From this interrelationship is created a projection for an imagined future. While this theoretical relationship between past, present, and future seems to suggest temporal distance and linearity, and thereby frame history as an attempt to provide a bridge to a distant past, it should instead inspire a process-oriented view of history that calls us to see ourselves as participants in a complex continuity of tradition, custom, and lived experience that has been handed down in ambiguous forms. The task of the historian is to settle within this reciprocal flow and attempt to articulate that form of objectivity that enables her to see her own forestructure implicated in the process and provides the capacity to forward a generalization about an historical situation that has broad-based relevance (p. 123). History, to be meaningful, must focus on the significance of unique micro-events in relation to more generalized and generalizable macro-historical perspectives.

These views on the significance of history insist that the historian, just like the ordinary citizen, does not encounter ideas of the past as a *tabula rasa* onto which history is written. Rather, the historical past is there for all of us, although for most people the quality of this awareness may remain unconscious, pre-

thematic, and perhaps naïve (Carr, 1986, p. 3). Nonetheless, the important point is that the historical past operates as a normalized background that provides forestructure to the understanding we bring to present situations encountered in our daily lives. As we are born into society, we are contemporaneously born into history and tradition. Effective historical consciousness is fostered only when we begin to become aware of the historically-constituted nature of our experience and the historically-conditioned prejudices and assumptions that shape the ways we attempt to understand ourselves in relation to others.

However, my desire to assert relationality, permeability, and co-dependence in the shadow of the fort is not necessarily an attempt to make a claim on historical truth and construct a story that explains *what really happened* from an Indigenous perspective. To do so would be to make the same mistaken claims to Truth as the Eurowestern modernist historian. The version of historical truth informing this study is not universal or objective, but is viewed rather as a lengthy fluxic process of revealing and concealment (McLeod, 1999-2000, p. 39). Our prejudices and assumptions, shaped as they are by our inherited traditions, cause us to emphasize certain things and downplay or ignore others. Thus, any claim to truth emerges in a specific context as a temporary vision of how past, present, and future are coherently linked that is bound by the lived experience of the person making the claims. This inquiry is not primarily concerned with the identification of truth *per se* but rather with processes of historical understanding that honour and recognize that any version of truth is developed in the context of our personal relationships, as well as in relation to others outside of our own identifiable

cultural group. By doing Indigenous Métissage, I wish to demonstrate that a decolonized curriculum theory focused on renewed historical understanding, as it pertains to Aboriginal and Canadian, depends on a theory of intimate human relationality. Any version of history that denies human relationality is lacking effective historical consciousness.

Some historians have argued that meaningful historical inquiry that builds on effective historical consciousness is best achieved when it is guided by a logic of question and answer. Collingwood (1966), for one, contends that all good historical research begins with the articulation of a question that sets the historian off looking for evidence in the historical record that might help answer it (p. 137). Drawing from his experience with archaeology, Collingwood learned that a “well-defined question would call for some well-defined digging” (Hogan, 1987, p. 266). Inspired by this insight, Collingwood came to see the logic of question and answer as critical to historical hermeneutical work because it implies that historical understanding is an ongoing process of reassessment and revising of current understandings. He points out that any historical statement is a temporary report on the state of question and answer concerning the topic and that each generation raises new questions based on current concerns, thus gaining different perspectives on history and its significance (Collingwood, 1966, p. 138). “For that reason, the questioning process goes on, and history must be re-written by each generation” (Hogan, 1987, p. 269).

Collingwood's enthusiasm for the logic of question and answer influenced Gadamer¹⁸ in the writing of *Truth and Method* (1975) and his theorizing on the hermeneutic quality of historical understanding:

For an historical text [or situation] to be made the object of interpretation means that it asks a question of the interpreter. Thus interpretation always involves a relation to the question that is being asked of the interpreter. To understand a text [or situation] means to understand this question... We can understand a text [or situation] only when we have understood the question to which it is an answer. (p. 333).

If we accept the logic of question and answer as a process integral to historical understanding, it seems apropos to wonder if accepted versions of Canadian history that discount Aboriginal participation have been posited by historians who have asked the wrong questions. The use of the descriptor 'wrong' in this case implies that these historians have asked distorted questions that pretend to openness, but are actually so deeply rooted in unconscious presupposition that the answers come predetermined (Gadamer, 1975, p. 327). Guided by the distorted question, History becomes an exercise in confirming what the historian already holds as true.¹⁹ If, as I contend, the questions asked and the answers provided have been distorted by colonial frontier logics, and public perception of the historic and current significance of Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been delimited by this, then it makes good sense to begin to ask different questions that

¹⁸ See Hogan (1987) for a detailed overview of the influence that Collingwood's ideas had on Gadamer's work.

¹⁹ I would add that Indigenous historians can make the same mistake when they set out to prove the moral superiority of Indigenous history in contrast to Eurowestern history. Their question is distorted too because it coheres to the intellectual terrain established by colonial frontier logics.

demand different kinds of answers. These questions need to be formulated according to decolonial goals and in accordance with the concept of “ethical space” between Aboriginal and Canadian in order to instigate the processes of understanding necessary to traverse received colonial divides (Ermine, 2004). Simple informational answers concerning identity, culture, and history will not suffice here. What needs to be recursively worked out, in the form of temporary answers, are the terms according to which ethical space can constitute the character of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in Canada. This is what Indigenous Métissage is all about.

It is interesting to note that two well-respected writers and academics, Thomas King and Inga Clendinnen, both living and working in settler societies established on Indigenous lands, have recently forwarded similar conclusions in very public forums. In 2003, King, a Native American now living in Canada, was invited to deliver the Massey Lectures, a prestigious annual event in Canada in which a noted scholar gives a series of public talks on a current philosophical, political, or social concern. King (2003) titled his lectures *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* and weaves a complex series of stories into one unified story focused on the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples regarding oral stories, storytelling, literature, history, religion and politics, popular culture, and social protest in order to make sense of the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and their North American counterparts. Throughout these lectures, King continually supports and revisits his basic thesis that stories shape our perceptions of the world and form the basis of our ethical responsibilities to each other. In

giving lectures with titles like “You’re Not the Indian I Had in Mind” and “What Is It About Us That You Don’t Like?,” King gives poignant, ironic, and humorous depictions of the ambiguities of being Aboriginal in North America today and the specific ways in which some stories distort Aboriginal presence and participation. Emerging from and amidst this ambiguity is the belief that there are other ways to imagine the world that are shared through stories. King concludes his lectures with an insightful epigram: “Want a different ethic? Tell a different story” (p. 164).

This challenge seems to have also motivated Inga Clendinnen when she accepted the invitation to give the Boyer Lectures in Australia.²⁰ As an historian, Clendinnen (1999) focuses her lectures on the specific historical relationships linking Aboriginal peoples and Australians to the present. Working her way through the archival record for traces of these historical relationships, she reveals a preference for what she calls true stories. *True Stories*, which is also the title of her lecture series, are those stories that belie the possibility of a single, simple, and necessarily false Australian national narrative with a cornucopia of histories that give personal, often first-hand, accounts of what really happened in the past from a diversity of perspectives. With specific reference to the position of Aboriginal peoples with/in Australian society, both historically and currently, she sees the concept of true stories as a decolonizing move that offers the potential for repairing these relationships:

²⁰ The Boyer Lectures have the same prominence and purpose in Australia as the Massey Lectures in Canada.

But there remains a scar on the face of the country, a birthstain of injustice and exclusion directed against that people who could so easily provide the core of our sense of ourselves as a nation, but who remain on the fringes of the land they once possessed. I don't much care what the United Nations says about us, although I know I should. But when I listen to the stories of what we newcomers have done to the people we found here, generation by generation, in ignorance or malice or confusion -- then I do care. That is why I have tugged you through all this history. We need history: not Black Armband history and not triumphalist white-out history either, but good history, true stories of the making of this present land, none of them simple, some of them painful, all of them part of our own individual histories. (Clendinnen, 1999).

The idea of true stories, as a theory of history, requires an ethical imagination that enables us to see these stories as linked. What this means is that those forms of cultural difference that play a role in historical interpretation, and thus cause each to ask different questions and seek different answers, need to be viewed as necessary for the expansion of historical understanding rather than as differences to be overcome. Perhaps, more than anything else, the concept of true stories reframes the goal of historical understanding as a kind of phenomenology of the mirror in which we see ourselves reflected in those stories and this experience is not always comforting. Confronting true stories of the history of colonialism can be unsettling because “[c]olonialism is one of the great mirrors of our time: all those that look into the mirror tend to see the reflection of their own

preoccupations and views of the world” (Gosden, 2004, p.7). It is for these reasons that Indigenous Métissage focuses on the history of colonial relationships linking Aboriginal and Canadian.

What, then, is the significance of Aboriginal perspectives in telling the true stories of the history of colonialism in Canada through Indigenous Métissage? Following Sioui (1992), who forwards a method called Amerindian autohistory, I believe that Aboriginal people must begin to take responsibility for the historical interpretation of the archival record, specifically the correspondences between Aboriginal and Canadian found there, by following insights from their own culturally-rooted ethical imperatives associated with contextual concepts of the past.

Amerindian autohistory is an ethical approach to history, based on two premises. First, in spite of European appropriation of Native territory, Amerindian cultural values have influenced the formation of the Euroamerican’s character” [and society]...Second, history is not yet aware that studying the persistence of essential Amerindian values...is more important in relation to the *social* nature of historical science than are the frequent analyses of cultural transformations. (p. 21)

These premises imply that the reduction of an historical perspective to anachronistic conceptions of culture discounts the possibility that Indigenous peoples have viable theories of history, shaped by values and ideals of wisdom traditions, which inform the significance given the past. An acceptance of this assertion means that Indigenous peoples and their historical perspectives can no

longer be dismissed as errata relegated to the margins of the social imaginary. These necessary transitions can be facilitated by Indigenous scholars committed to serving as critical interpreters or guides who work according to the concepts of history that have been expressed here. In this study, the interpretation of the historical record according to ethical imperatives associated with Indigenous wisdom traditions focuses on archival records, academic articles, and books. While I recognize the value of oral history accounts in offering more direct and organic ties to the current concerns and perspectives of Aboriginal communities, specific oral accounts of the place now called Edmonton will not be part of this inquiry by reason of necessarily limiting the scope of this present work. I focus instead on the existing archival historical record to interpret the significance of Aboriginal presence and participation located there.

Indigenous Wisdom Traditions

Such critical interpretive work is inspired by the unfolding understandings of Indigenous wisdom traditions that are salient throughout this inquiry. As a high school teacher working in the context of the *Kainai*²¹ community, I frequently confronted ambiguity stemming from the desire to decolonize educational practices in institutions founded on principles of schooling shaped by colonial experience and the residential school era. Many Aboriginal teachers, survivors themselves of that experience, voice dedication to the preservation of language and traditional culture, but also struggle to rethink and overcome the conventions and assumptions that have shaped our ideas of formal schooling. I have witnessed

²¹ The *Kainai* people are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Their community, commonly referred to as the Blood Reserve, is located in southwestern Alberta. I taught at Kainai High School on the Blood Reserve for ten years.

and experienced these struggles to decolonize educational institutions and experiences in Aboriginal communities. Yet, this grand narrative of schooling and colonization only became real to me when I heard my son's words. His words provided special insight that guided me to attend to the everyday experiences and assumptions that I had overlooked. He taught me to pay attention. This may seem a strange admission to make in the context of scholarly pursuits and academic research, but Indigenous wisdom traditions often emphasize the reciprocal pedagogical relationships linking young and old. In stark contrast to the regular business of school where children must listen to adults most of the day, the general belief is that adults should listen carefully to children because they will often voice wise words that derive from deep memories of the time before they were born. They can speak the wisdom of the spirit world and offer insights that help remind us of our priorities and commitments.

Building on this provocative insight, I believe that attentiveness to the significance of Indigenous wisdom traditions is necessary to the field of education in general and curriculum studies in particular for two related reasons. First, past articulations of Indigenous curricular and pedagogical perspectives have promoted culturalist approaches²² that effectively separate specific cultural practices and expressions from the foundational philosophical traditions from

²² “Culturalism, in brief, refers to the use of particular anthropological notions of ‘culture’ by which ‘Indigenous culture’ enters the field as ‘already read’...culturalism incorporates the ideologies and discursive regimes of universalism, cultural racism, and cultural incompatibility in order to construct and perpetuate a ‘two race’ binary” (McConaghy, 2000, xi). Informed by this definition, I use the term culturalism to denote curricular and pedagogical positions that are founded on static notions of cultural authenticity and codified culture as unquestioned solutions to the problems faced by Aboriginal peoples in the field of education.

which they originate. Here I refer to the separation of vital philosophical and ontological teachings from the contexts and processes from which they originate and in which they make the most sense. This is one unfortunate result of a situation in which “theorists and practitioners alike have created and reified an ahistorical idealization of the indigenous self whereby...an ‘authentic’ indigenous self has been conflated with specific ahistorical assumptions concerning the nature of indigeneity” (Barcham, 2000, p. 138). When a teaching, such as the medicine wheel, gets reified and thing-ified as an isolated example of ‘culture,’ ‘spirit,’ and ‘identity,’ then the teaching is effectively divorced from the processes and commitments that give it depth, meaning, and life. This separation of philosophy and approach also stems from the inability of formal educational systems to recognize and admit philosophical traditions that are located outside of accepted Eurowestern intellectual conventions and assumptions (Kuokkanen, 2007). Stories chronicling the history of formal schooling—stories that are rarely told—also follow the pedagogy of the fort by not admitting outsider knowledge. The doors of the school, like the lone trading gate of the fort, operate like a filter of exchange value that only admits those outsiders who consent to follow established rules and conventions that best suit the needs of insiders. The Indigenous have been allowed to bring their *culture* into the school and the curriculum, but only in an extended and formalized show-and-tell form that does little to challenge the epistemological and ontological assumptions that undergird formal schooling as we know it today. Thus, the articulation and assertion of

Indigenous wisdom traditions would make explicit the particular challenges to the pedagogy of the fort that are imagined in this work.²³

Second, some of the main tenets of Indigenous wisdom traditions, as I understand them now, constitute a specific set of priorities and sensibilities—a standpoint—from which to address the educational field and point to some critical issues that require sustained attention. Emphasis here on the notion of Indigenous standpoint (Nakata, 2007, p. 213) is given with the intention of recognizing and honouring the philosophies and traditions that have grown from long-term habitation in a specific region of the world. Indigenous wisdom traditions, rooted as they are in intimate relationships with the land and the various animals and entities that inhabit it, provide insights into the energies and spirits that are enfolded within these connections. This conception of “enfolded knowledge,” as Willie Ermine terms it, supports a holistic view of the world based on local patterns of movement, flux, and renewal that are seen as part of a complex network of codependent relationships intimately linking all things together (Kaplan-Myrth and Smylie, 2006, pp. 22-23). Recursive participation in these fluxic movements and renewals is seen as the philosophical and spiritual ideal in this case because such actions serve to honour and respect the knowledge and knowing that grows organically from these relationships (Peat, 1997, p. 567).

²³ I believe that the most provocative challenges to the pedagogy of the fort in a university context are created through the regular enactment of Indigenous wisdom traditions. This belief is rooted in the curricular and pedagogical contention that meaningful teaching and learning requires an organic, dynamic, and balanced unification of insight and process. To state it more directly, what we want to learn cannot be separated from the processes we go through while learning. The work of Lorna Williams and Michele Tanaka (2007) at the University of Victoria is a beautiful example of what I have in mind here.

Although things have certainly changed with all that has happened to Indigenous peoples and communities in the recent past, I think those wisdom traditions still have a resonance precisely because we are still living in the places that have been inhabited for millennia prior to now. Thus, acknowledging and honouring this long-term habitation and the knowledge that has grown from it is a critical public policy move in Canada that will have direct implications on the quality and character of future partnerships linking Aboriginal people and Canadians. It is the ethical and relational commitments emphasized in Indigenous wisdom traditions that will foster and teach a specific form of historical consciousness among Canadians, and thus set the context for renewed partnerships. These teachings are the inspiration for the notion of ethical relationality—an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a standpoint arises. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference. It is with these ethical and relational teachings foremost in mind, derived mostly from time spent with *Kainai* Elders, that this inquiry proceeds.

This inquiry is also inspired by Neal McLeod's (1999-2000) notions of *nêhiyâwiwin*, Creeness, and Cree narrative memory as "a lived memory which is held in stories and relationships...Nêhiyâwiwin emerges from the individual lives that linger in the expanse of the collective memory" (p.37). At issue here is

historical consciousness. In Indigenous wisdom traditions, consciousness of the past is a foremost prerequisite for becoming a whole person. A person ignorant of the teachings of the past is pitied for leading a rudderless existence. They have not benefited from “good talks” (Akan, 1999). In this view, any consideration of the present and future must begin with a critical understanding of the role of the past in shaping the worldviews, responsibilities, and commitments we prioritize. This involves a complex interplay between individual experiences and awareness of the collective memories of the people. Rather than a nostalgic and unimaginative rehashing of traditional teachings, this process requires the individual to ponder the ways in which their personal experiences and stories interweave with the collective memories of the people. Elders help provoke this reflexive process by telling their stories. If Elders and their ways stir feelings of respect, then we will listen carefully to their stories and remain mindful of those insights when making decisions about how to proceed. The moral duty to remember in this way is based on a theory of respect and reciprocity for those that have gone before. Elders, because they themselves have listened and committed to the process, know the stories of the people.

Those who listen to their stories will be provided deep and reverential connections to the past. This does not mean that oral traditions are sacred and should be reified. That would suggest that Indigenous cultures are unable to comprehend cultural change seen in “the dynamic interplay of changing empirical knowledge as well as changing social values” (Battiste, 2002, p. 19). Instead, by telling stories that connect the past, present and future, Elders model a way of

being in the world that stresses the ability to synthesize new ideas and fresh insights. This is a practical skill honed in the interests of the tribal collective—an invocation of the past while simultaneously imagining possible futures. We are indebted to Elders for sharing these stories because storytelling, as a way of telling about the world and our place in it, is a genuine act of kindness and generosity. Stories are maps of human experience. In Indigenous contexts, stories are told to help us find our way. Thus, this notion of historical consciousness hinges on the image of an Elder backed by many generations of Elders who have each, in their time, told the stories. To disregard this long line of Elders is to deny the history of the people.

Some observers have questioned the veracity of a storied form of history.²⁴ These questionings concern the verifiable ‘truth’ of oral histories and the need to objectively evaluate such truth claims using authoritative forms of documented evidence. Critics cite evidence that oral traditions do not remain consistent over time and suggest that some storytellers might change their stories to support the claims of their communities (Borrows, 2004, p. 10). These arguments are clearly premised on an interpretation of Aboriginal cultural processes according to Eurowestern cultural and legal evaluative standards. This position ignores the possibility that oral history accounts are not intended as simple truth claims wherein the story told always directly corresponds with what people think actually happened. The Eurocentric legal preoccupation with ‘the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ is not a priority for Aboriginal cultures. Truth, as “an

²⁴ For a detailed background of this questioning in Canadian courts prior to the *Delgamuukw* decision see Borrows (2004) pp. 25-28.

ongoing process of revealing and concealment” instead emerges from the process of telling stories that detail the relationships linking people, places, living things, spirit, and cultured memories (McLeod, 1999-2000, p.39). Such stories undergo a cyclic and organic reinterpretation each time the relationship between teller and listener is invoked. This reinterpretation is necessary so that the teller can make sense his own life story concomitant with the collective memories of the people. The storyteller must first see the collective story and his own life story as mutually implicated before he can tell a story with appropriate cultural protocols and historical consciousness. Subjective experience expressed through story informs and reinterprets collective memory (Cruikshank, 1994, p. 408). Each telling adds another layer. From this process emerges a culturally specific form of truth. These forms of storytelling have been the way that Indigenous peoples, like the Cree and Blackfoot, have engaged with collective memory over many generations and survived tumultuous change. It is this notion of truth that nourishes the spirits of the people and sustains the culture.

Storytelling, as a culture-sustaining practice, constitutes oral tradition. However, oral tradition is more than just simply telling stories. What is at stake at a macro level is a cultural expression of historical knowledge. While oral history can be useful to provide a form of evidence to support identity and sovereignty claims, it is more importantly an ontological insight sharing intimations of ways of knowing and living (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 14). This raises the issue of what oral history does and how it is used. Cruikshank (1994), following Rosaldo (1980), argues that oral histories should not be treated the same as written historical

documents, which we tend to falsely regard as undistorted and evaluate postivistically, because the spirit and intent of oral histories is embedded in the context in which they are told (p. 409). For most Aboriginal cultures, this context arises from deep relationships with significant places in the cultural landscape that are mapped through oral histories. The people come to know the land and identify with significant places through the stories. The place-stories, as mnemonic triggers, locate and narrate the events of the land called home.

Aboriginal place-stories provoke an important question: What does it mean to live on the land that is called Canada? A place-story, as oral tradition, “anchors history to *place*, but it also challenges our notion of what a place actually *is*” (Cruikshank, 1994, p. 413, italics original). Stories that Aboriginal people tell about significant public places in Canada can trouble historic myths like the fort and prompt Canadians to question the depth of their understanding of the familiar places that they call home. Borrows (2000) argues that Aboriginal people have unique relationships to their traditional lands and “[m]any Aboriginal groups have well-developed notions in their philosophies and practices about how to recognize the land as citizen” (p. 332). He calls for an Aboriginal form of citizenship to be articulated, one that is attentive to the land and the stories associated with it. Aboriginal citizenship, rather than being isolated as a concern exclusive to Aboriginal people, “must be extended to encompass other people from around the world who have come to live on our land” (p. 329). Aboriginal people have a responsibility to teach others the place-stories as a way to reclaim citizenship and repatriate the land. Little Bear (2000) notes that this affiliation

with place-stories among Aboriginal people stems from ways of knowing focused on the relationship to the Earth as the place “where the continuous and/or repetitive process of creation occurs. It is on the Earth that cycles, phases, patterns—in other words, the constant motion or flux—can be observed” (p. 78). Anthropologist Keith Basso (1996), with reference to the culture of the Western Apache, explains the importance of place in these terms:

For Indian men and women, the past lies embedded in the features of the earth—in canyons and lakes, mountains and arroyos, rocks and vacant fields—which together endow their lands with multiple forms of significance that reach into their lives and shape the ways they think. Knowledge of places is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one’s position in the larger scheme of things, who one is as a person. (p. 34)

Clearly, then, significant places and the stories related to them are intimately connected to Indigenous wisdom traditions. What is important to note, however, is that many of these places became public property through the process of colonization and the building of the nation. Canadian sovereignty over the land, at the expense of the Aboriginal people, was achieved through the assertion of EuroCanadian notions of land use and ownership. To map the land, re-name places, and tell different place-stories is a sovereign act that fragments Indigenous worldviews. Thankfully, place-stories have been remembered and are still being told in Aboriginal communities across Canada. Now that there are increasing calls for decolonization at national and international levels (Battiste, 1998; Smith,

1999), Aboriginal people are beginning a process of repatriation – reclaiming the land, revisiting significant places, and retelling the place-stories. These actions personalize these places for those who visit them. They also reassert Indigenous notions of story, place and relationality as organic manifestations of citizenship with and responsibility to the land.

Prompting considerations of Aboriginal citizenship that are informed by place-stories offers opportunities for exploration of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives and investigation of the ways that these can be adapted to inform and vivify contemporary educational contexts. Rather than excluding Canadian perspectives, Aboriginal citizenship provokes an engagement with hierarchical notions of Canadian citizenship. Such an engagement causes both parties to ask themselves and each other what it means to share this land. Apart from demonstrating that Indigenous wisdom traditions and worldviews are salient and viable forms of knowledge, the primary value of place-stories is in the ways they teach us that how we imagine and conceive of places is an issue of historical consciousness. In the context of Canadian education, place-stories can help people reread and reframe their understandings of Canadian history. When they come to comprehend ongoing Aboriginal presence through place-stories, the story of the nation becomes layered and relational, and the civilizational divides of the pedagogy of the fort are revealed as permeable. Thus, consciousness of places is fundamental to deep social and historical understanding. Casey (1987) agrees, noting, “[h]aving been in places is therefore a natural resource for remembering our own being in the world. It is indispensable for knowing what we are (now) in

terms of what we were (then)” (p. 215). Vine Deloria (1991) captures the vitality of Indigenous notions of place with this statement:

...power and place are dominant concepts – power being the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe, and the place being the relationship of things to each other ...put into a simple equation: power and place produce personality. This equation simply means that the universe is alive, but it also contains within it the very important suggestion that the universe is personal, and therefore, must be approached in a personal manner. (p. 4)

Personalizing places through stories is one of the ways that Indigenous peoples remember their relations and connections to traditional lands. Teaching Aboriginal perspectives through the use of place-stories as an example of a ‘landed’ form of citizenship necessitates an acknowledgment that Aboriginal peoples still honour places made meaningful by earlier generations. It means that places are still inhabited by *muntou*—spiritual energy— and still have a story (Ermine, 1995, p. 104). But landed citizenship also requires an acknowledgement that such places have changed as a result of colonization and settlement. It means that such places are, paradoxically, both Aboriginal and Canadian.

One of the best examples of a storied mythic place in Canada that is defined by this kind of paradox is the fort. I have provided significant detail in this Introduction to support the thesis that the fort is a powerful mythic symbol that has taught and continues to teach a dispiriting and divisive curriculum and pedagogy that manifests as a colonial bifurcation of the world based largely on a

logic of insiders and outsiders. This colonial frontier logic, as I have termed it, has had a pervasive effect on established institutional conventions and assumptions in Canada, and the lasting influence of these effects can be seen in the daily business of universities, schools, classrooms, and curricular and pedagogical considerations today. Indigenusness has lately presented itself as a strange and vexing challenge to these institutionalized practices because they were designed after the fort, and are thus unable to comprehend outsider knowledge and experience in terms other than their own. Revealing this deeply colonial side of the fort is important critical work. However, critical work, to be helpful, must move beyond complaint and criticism. The paradox of the fort provides such an opportunity.

The paradox is that this darker side of the fort is also shadowed by an underside of the fort which embodies a more complexly relation story of the fort as meeting place that has been concealed. So, while the fort is indeed a mythic symbol deeply connected to the story of colonial takeover in Canada, it is *also* paradoxically and simultaneously an originary meeting place of Aboriginal and Canadian where relationships and partnerships were first negotiated. In many ways, these initial partnerships were mutually beneficial, but were usually ceremonially recognized and affirmed through local Indigenous protocols and customs. The occupants of the fort, as anxious insiders, knew that they depended upon friendly relations with local Indigenous groups in order to survive. The insiders of forts across the Canadian West were often quite willing to adjust to Indigenous protocols and customs because they deemed it necessary for their survival and ultimate prosperity.

Somewhere across space and time this more relational, permeable, and interreferential notion of the fort and its connected teachings was replaced by a more insidious version that has taken over historical consciousness. The perceived openness of the fort as a gathering place gradually morphed into a very violent form of closure as colonial power was asserted. It is the initial spirit and intent of the partnerships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian that were enacted in the context of the fort that I hope to renew through this inquiry. I do so by attending to the stories and remembrances of forts given by Aboriginal peoples in the historical record and using these to belie colonial frontier logics. Guided by the ethical priorities of Indigenous wisdom traditions and a transmodern spirit, I see special attentiveness to renewed partnerships as a possible way to hold Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives in tension, and spark more meaningful dialogue on shared educational policy futures and initiatives. Such qualitative relational shifts can help us all avoid the trap of circumscribed subject positions that are symptomatic of colonial frontier logics, and instead encourage a reframed focus on the significance of living together in ethical ways.

The Way Ahead: Recursivity and Circling Prey

In an article concerning the status of Indigenous knowledge in a decolonial era, Doxtater (2004) shares a story from Carl Sandberg regarding the position of the Indian versus the white man and their respective knowledge landscapes (p. 618). In the story, the white man draws a circle in the sand and tells the Indian that the circle represents what the Indian knows. The white man then draws another circle that encompasses the Indian circle and declares that the larger circle

represents what the white man knows. On cue, the Indian draws a massive circle in the sand that includes and dwarfs the two smaller circles and states that his circle shows where the Indian and the white man know nothing. Although this apocryphal story comes dangerously close to reinforcing the stereotype of the mystical Indian, I have found it useful in clarifying what I hope to accomplish with this work. In entering academia and the conflictual terrain of identity politics, I have found that camps of knowledge system adherents are easily located and identified. These camps tend to compete with each other on matters of truth and authority. As an Aboriginal scholar, it would be fairly easy for me to *fortify* myself within the Indigenous camp and defend those knowledge systems in opposition to competing forms of knowledge. However, to do so would be to relegate knowledge and its production to a simplistic compare-contrast exercise shaped by colonial frontier logics and geared toward dismissal of the other. This intellectual equivalent to drawing circles in the sand is a futile exercise when it is done merely to assert superiority and authority. What is more curricularly and pedagogically helpful in the current academic context is talking about circles of knowledge systems as complexly and organically interrelated.

This work has been inspired by the notion of overlapping circles of knowledge and shaped by a recursive process model of inquiry. The notion of process, as both *currere* (Grumet, 1992, p. 32) and pedagogy, is central to Indigenous ways of knowing because it prioritizes consciousness of the past and recursive engagement with the insights of those that have gone before. To tell the story of our lives, to talk of the past, is to link the past to the present and the

present to the past. From this process emerges the possibility for imagining a future. Committing to the process requires deep consideration of the responsibilities we have to respectfully remember those who stand behind us coupled with a constant rethinking and rearticulation of the life-stories we hold as real.

For me, this understanding of process is the intellectual equivalent of predators slowly and patiently circling their prey and remaining attentive to the context and landscape of their work as they gradually close in on their goal. It is also informed by significant time spent with Kainai elders, who have repeatedly reminded me of the importance of the past and committing to the process of coming to know. This emphasis on process and circling prey grows out of the belief that one must be a committed participant in the learning process by actively involving oneself in the events and ideas under scrutiny. So, for example, one would not search for information on a sweatlodge prior to constructing it; the learning is encompassed in the process of the building. In the spirit of this idea of process, Regnier (1994) refers to the “sacred circle” as an intrinsic part of Aboriginal ways of knowing, spirituality, and metaphysics. Using the sacred circle as symbol and metaphor, he articulates a theory of process pedagogy:

Process pedagogy, constructed fundamentally upon reality as process, views human experience as part of the whole movement of reality rather than isolated from it and others in it...In contrast to the self as isolated in continuing, separate, successive moments in time, self is the reiterative cycle of encounter, adjustment, and resolution...[The] teachings of the

Sacred Circle...are accounts of reality passed from generation to generation through legends, storytelling, and participation in rituals and ceremonies...Process pedagogy within the Sacred Circle view is based upon the movement of life to wholeness, connectedness, and balance. (pp. 131-134)

Taking inspiration from these reflections on the critical and insightful nature of process, I view this work as a commitment to attend to and interpret historic engagements between Aboriginal and Canadian in a cyclic manner. It is motivated by a desire to restore balance and relationality to the stories we tell children in schools. The intimate relationships linking Aboriginal and Canadian, and the encounters and persistent tensions implicating the powerful influences of modernity, colonialism, and Eurowestern thought, must be understood as a series of layers (McLeod, 2002, p. 36). The layers, symbolizing the sediments of experience and connectedness, come to shape the contested terrain of particular places and contexts where Aboriginal people and Canadians have a remembered and shared, albeit contested history.

To explore the layered and symbolic character of artifacts and memories that structure the terrain, and begin to consider the potential involved in rereading and reframing them, requires an overt consciousness of the process that, in turn, informs the act of research. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provides the following explanation of rereading:

The genealogy of colonialism is being mapped and used as a way to locate a different sort of origin story, the origins of imperial policies and

practices, the origins of imperial visions, the origins of ideas and values. These origin stories are deconstructed accounts of the West, its history through the eyes of indigenous and colonized peoples (p. 149).

She has this to say about reframing:

Reframing is about taking control over the ways in which indigenous issues are discussed and handled... The framing of an issue is about making decisions about its parameters, about what is in the foreground, what is in the background, and what shadings or complexities exist within the frame. The project of reframing is related to defining the problem or issue and determining how best to solve that problem (p. 153).

The prefix 're' is critical here because it signals a recursive research process. In this inquiry, recursiveness can be seen in the desire to attend to the layers of shared colonial experience that offer the potential for renewed partnerships between Aboriginal and Canadians. The layers of story, memory, and experience that distinguish a place like Fort Edmonton must be revealed and interpreted *genealogically* to show how they are related and descend from beginnings common to that place. Thus, the process of sifting through these layers requires that they be read against each other, that the covering layers be reconsidered in light of what is shown to be underneath, that the symbolic be reread and reframed to reveal the potential there is for acknowledgement of Aboriginal presence in Canadian society. I contend throughout this work that these insights have direct implications on the field of education and the commonsense conceptions of curriculum and pedagogy held by educators today.

This idea of working through layers of understanding recursively has significantly influenced the organization of the chapters of this work. The prey that is the false universalism of Eurowestern interpretation will be constantly circled and analyzed from a variety of perspectives to reveal how it came to exclude Indigenoussness as outside. This quality of recursiveness will be reiterated in each of the chapters that follow.

Chapter One details the qualities and priorities of the interpretive research sensibility and textual practice called Indigenous Métissage that thoroughly shapes and inspirits this inquiry.

Chapter Two considers the concept of the fort and frontier across historical contexts through brief case study consideration of the significance of Hadrian's Wall in Roman Britain, Chateau Gaillard in Normandy France, and Elmina Castle in colonial West Africa. These brief profiles are followed by a more detailed examination of the historical context of one major North American fort: Fort Michilimackinac, located in what is now called northern Michigan. The purpose of these historical surveys is to trace the development of colonial frontier logics derived from the fort and show the perpetuation of this logic to the present-day in the form of forts-as museums.

Chapter Three builds on this broad foundational understanding of the significance of the fort as a mythic symbol by providing a specific example of Indigenous Métissage focused on the artifact and place of Fort Edmonton, located in present-day central Alberta. I tell the story of Fort Edmonton as an Indigenous interpreter from that place who is interested in revealing the many layers of

Indigenous presence and participation hidden behind the façade of the fort. In telling this story, I demonstrate that the *place* where Fort Edmonton was built has significance to local Indigenous peoples that has been concealed. My purpose in including a specific example of Indigenous Métissage focused on Fort Edmonton is to show the ways in which the local micro particularities of Aboriginal-Canadian relations at that place—the everyday regularities— can be connected to colonial frontier logics and fort pedagogy.

In Chapter Four, attention is turned to the current context of identity politics and the ways in which fort pedagogy has influenced how Indigenousness is understood by Eurowestern intellectual traditions. To intervene in this conflict zone, I argue that Indigenous scholars have an opportunity to reinterpret—in overtly public ways—the significance of historic and current interactions of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in public places, and these interpretations are best guided by the ethical imperatives associated with Indigenous wisdom traditions. Following the spirit and intent of this interpretive responsibility, a major section of Chapter Four is dedicated to interpreting teacher resistances to Aboriginal perspectives in curricula and the problematic responses educators have to the assertion of Indigenousness in educational contexts.

Chapter Five focuses on the curricular and pedagogical responses that Indigenous scholars have given to colonial frontier logics. This chapter begins by considering how the concept of *Indian* has influenced the development of legislative and institutional conventions that have marginalized Aboriginal peoples and facilitated their ongoing exclusion and isolation. This notion of

exclusion continues to heavily influence curricular and pedagogical considerations. The necessary next step in the struggle to decolonize involves an interrogation and rejection of circumscriptive colonial logics—like the pedagogy of the fort— and the conceptualization of more complexly relational standpoints and intents. The field needs more critical articulations of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy that honour the ethical imperative of human relationality and contest, rather than reinscribe, colonial frontier logics.²⁵

A commitment to ethical relationality is necessary because it fosters a dynamic balance between human connectivity and the critical need to recognize and respect cultural, epistemic, ontologic differences and hold them in tension without the need to isolate, assimilate, or eliminate. In Chapter Six, I address the spirit and intent of enacting ethical relationality in educational contexts and provide some examples and possibilities that grow from it.

The Epilogue is a summation of what I have attempted to accomplish and articulate in this work. I also note some future research directions emerging from this work that I hope to pursue.

²⁵ This is not an original argument. It is inspired by the teachings of *Kainai* Elders and my work on métissage as a curriculum theory with Dr. Cynthia Chambers and Dr. Erika Hasebe-Ludt. Similar arguments can also be found in the works of Stewart-Harawira (2005a; 2005b), Smith (1999), Urion (1991), Turner (2006), Calliou (1998), Nakata (2002; 2007), and Maaka and Fleras (2006).

Chapter One: Indigenous Métissage

Yet all colonial people, both the colonizer and the colonized, have shared or collective views of the world embedded in their languages, stories, or narratives. It is collective because it is shared among a family or group. However, this shared worldview is always contested, and this paradox is part of what it means to be colonized...It is this clash of worldviews that is at the heart of many current difficulties with effective means of social control in postcolonial North America. Leroy Little Bear (2000, p. 85)

There is a famous story involving a Mistassini Cree hunter named François Mianscum who was asked to speak at a hearing regarding the construction of a huge hydroelectric dam in the traditional territory of his people in the James Bay region of northern Quebec. The manner in which this hearing was conducted was inappropriate for the Cree because its formality—courtroom style, with argumentative lawyers, intimidating judges, and court reporters recording every spoken word—made them feel uncomfortable and out of place in their own land. As an example, consider how the various Cree people, who were asked to speak at this hearing, felt when they were required to repeat the legal oath stating that they would ‘tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’ in the name of God while also holding their right hand on top of the Bible. The story goes that François Mianscum, when confronted with the dilemma of this oath and the added responsibility of swearing to it in the name of God, paused and then spoke with the translator. The translator then looked to the judge and

said: "He does not know whether he can tell the truth. He can only tell what he knows." (Richardson, 1991, p. 46).

This story teaches many lessons about Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Aboriginal and Canadian interaction is often punctuated by remnants of colonialism that continue to determine the ways in which people speak to each other. Tensions exist over the history of the land called Canada, the culture and identity of the people, and the sorts of rights and responsibilities that Canadians and Aboriginal peoples accept as fair and equitable. Although most meetings, like the one noted above, require clear communication and understanding, we have yet to achieve a state of respectful balance that could be considered a form of transcultural dialogue. While some may interpret the man's words as evidence of his lack of education or poor understanding of legal protocol, I see his response as a strategic reply subtly directed towards the arbitrary emphasis placed upon surety, objectivity, and truth in the legal oath. In short, then, there is tension regarding the spirit, intent, and meaning of the discussion. The tensions persist because the problems, paradoxes, and unequal power relations created by the process of colonization remain unresolved. Aboriginal peoples and Canadians have not yet figured out a way to speak to each other as partners, rather than as intimate enemies (Nandy, 1983). These colonial relationships linger and haunt Canadian society.

The resiliency and ubiquity of forms of colonial discourse in Canada makes it clear that it is reckless to consider colonialism an entirely historical subject trapped somewhere inside dusty, unused textbooks. Colonialism is a

current concern for many Aboriginal people living in Canada today. It is for these reasons that colonial consciousness and the assumptions that stem from it are a focus of this inquiry. It is only through sustained attentiveness to the shared paradoxical legacies of the colonial past, like the pedagogy of the fort, that more critical ethical and relational priorities will emerge and provide the necessary guidance on curricular and pedagogical considerations. In the opening quotation of this chapter, the eminent *Kainai* scholar Leroy Little Bear points out that colonial experience is always a shared experience connecting, sometimes awkwardly and paradoxically, colonizer and colonized in a relationship, but that the significance of this shared experience is also always contested and contentious. Little Bear (2000) goes on to make the point that “[n]o one has a pure worldview that is 100 percent Indigenous or Eurocentric; rather, everyone has an integrated mind, a fluxing and ambidextrous consciousness, a precolonized consciousness that flows into a colonized consciousness and back again” (p. 85). This insight gives promise that, in the ebb and flow of dialogue, discussion and critical engagement, Aboriginal and Canadian will begin to see that useful interpretations of various forms of colonial discourse require active participation from both parties. This point suggests mutual shared interest in improving the partnership. Departing from truth claims and, instead, telling what you know, seems like a good place to start.

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate an interpretive research sensibility and textual practice that is directed toward taking up this challenge by connecting Aboriginal and Canadian as an ethical concern, thereby resisting

colonial frontier logics, and imagining a more complexly interreferential role for Indigenous perspectives within the field of education. This sensibility, which I have termed Indigenous Métissage, has been conceptualized parallel with diverse and provocative processes of curricular inquiry that began in the mid 1990s in the *Kainai* community. Indigenous Métissage has thus been conceptualized circuitously and alongside inquiries into my own family stories and memories in relation to official Canadian history. These insights, coupled with my relationships with the *Kainai* community, provided unique and compelling stories that make provocative claims on curricular and pedagogical spaces normally reserved for simpler and less relational versions. Indigenous Métissage has thus emerged as a curricular and pedagogical sensibility that helps me interpret and express—tell— what I know firsthand of the colonial character of contemporary relationships linking Aboriginal and Canadian. It has been a “situated response” (Hermes, 1998). The overall goal is to resist colonial frontier logics and trouble the pedagogy of the fort by rereading and reframing Indigenous presence and participation through the telling and textualizing of more complexly relational stories of Aboriginal and Canadian interactions. The major assumption here is that repairing these stories in these ways will make a significant claim on Canadian public memory and bring about qualitative changes in institutional practices that continue to exclude Indigenousness (Kuokkanen, 2007). Indigenous Métissage contests the assumption of separate realities for Aboriginal and Canadian by fostering the creation of stories that implicate us all.

Métissage as Theory and Praxis

In working towards such goals, though, some specific explanations of the theoretical frameworks that support Indigenous Métissage are necessary.

Métissage, from which the Canadian word Métis is derived, is a word of French language origin, loosely translated into English as ‘crossbreeding,’ that originally referred to racial mixing and procreation as detrimental (Dickason, 1985, p. 21). Historically, especially with reference to colonialism, Europeans have regarded métissage as a damaging biological process that weakens gene pools and mongrelizes the human race to the detriment of us all. The desire was for the maintenance of racial purity (p. 21). More recently, métissage has been used to denote cultural mixing or the hybridization of identities as a result of colonialism and transcultural influences. Glissant (1989), in his seminal work *Caribbean Discourse*, analyzes the cultural hybridity of the people of the Caribbean and asserts that it is an expression of the sense of displacement, dislocation, and lack of collective memory experienced as a result of the history of slavery and colonialism. The intermixing of people from all over the world in the Caribbean region has caused, almost out of necessity, a reconciliation of the values of literate societies and repressed oral traditions (pp. 248-249). The result has been the growth and nurturing of a particular kind of métissage or cultural “Creolization” praxis and process that expresses an ongoing rapprochement between cultures and people usually essentialized and considered to be at odds (pp. 140-141). Glissant conceptualizes métissage as a process that requires a shift in thinking from a preoccupation with individual imagination and identity (*intention*) to an emphasis

on group consciousness (*relation*) (Dash, 1995, p. 91). This group consciousness can only be established if people are willing to negotiate and work past persistent racial and binary categories of difference that serve to essentialize and segregate identity. For Glissant, then, this notion of “creolization is an active, affirmative principle of cultural heterogeneity and innovation” (Zuss, 1997, p. 167). In the following passage, he theorizes the potential for *métissage* as a way to envision and embrace this heterogeneity as composite culture:

Cross-cultural Relating sweeps the world towards an enriched creolisation.²⁶ Those who live this condition are no longer (in their consciousness) pathetic victims: they are laden with an exemplariness. Beyond its experience of suffering, the community held together by creolising forces cannot deny the other, or history, or nation, or the poetics of self. It cannot but transcend them. (Dash, 1995, p. 97)

With this point, Glissant emphasizes that human relationality becomes an organic cultural process when we work to see beyond parochial and imposed understandings of self, history, and context.

In the field of education, Zuss (1999), following Glissant, ties *métissage* directly to autobiographical explorations of identity—life-writings—and “attempts to refigure subjectivity, representation, and agency...as ways and means to explore radical forms of difference and the expression of individual and collective agency” (p.86). Such acts of autobiographical *métissage* are textual strategies consciously dedicated to the depiction of heterogeneous subjectivities, origins, situations, and connections. “The pedagogic significance of *métissage* is

²⁶ Note that *métissage* is consistently translated into English as cultural creolisation.

in its placing emphasis on processes of hybridity and mutability inherent in any discourse, practice, or identity claim...in eluding the representational straits of categorization and the shoals of essentialist or nativist claims” (Zuss, 1997, p. 167). Zuss considers autobiographical métissage as one powerful way to contest exclusivist and divisive identity claims. The assumption is that life-writings achieve pedagogical and curricular worth when they are written in direct interface with the stories and contexts of others.

Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt & Donald (2002), also working with autobiography as a critical point of departure, have theorized métissage as a curricular practice that can be used to resist the priority and authority given to official texts and textual practices. This curricular form of métissage shows how personal and family stories can be braided in with larger narratives of nation and nationality, often with provocative effects. Thus, rather than viewing métissage as a solitary research and textual praxis, this form of métissage relies on collaboration and collective authorship as a strategy for exemplifying, as research practice and text, the transcultural, interdisciplinary, and shared nature of experience and memory. Métissage, in this example, calls for authors to work “collectively to juxtapose their texts in such a way that highlights difference (racial, cultural, historical, socio-political, linguistic) without essentializing or erasing it, while simultaneously locating points of affinity” (Chambers et al., 2008, p. 142).

My current affiliations with métissage as a research practice have grown out of my desire to make sense of the multiple influences at play in the *Kainai*

educational context. As a teacher at Kainai High School, I listened to the stories and memories of the *Kainai* people, witnessed the critical roles played by Elders, and attended to the tensions and ambiguities felt by the students. Rather than separately analyzing and interpreting the experiences of Elders, students, and teachers, I began to see their formal and informal interaction as a collective expression of larger curricular conversations regarding education, ways of knowing, and the stories young people are told in schools. Thus, the relational concept of stories linking Elder, student, and teacher became a way to conceptualize a new curricular insight in the Kainai educational context called *métissage* (Donald, 2003). With this *métissage*, I hope to invoke a renewed curricular focus on the cultural context of Indigenous communities manifested through the interactions of key players in the educational process. Placing the stories of the Elder, student, and teacher side by side provokes a collective wondering regarding the connectedness of history and memory. In the specific context of this study, organic discussions of culture, curriculum, and schooling are assumed to require and implicate, in diverse ways, the varying perspectives of Elders, students, and teachers. Through *métissage*, we are compelled to interpret their words and discern how they are related.

Thus, intimate relationality in specific contexts and the implicative nature of experience are key aspects of my version of *métissage*. For me, *métissage* is a research sensibility that mixes and purposefully juxtaposes diverse forms of texts as a way to reveal that multiple sources and perspectives influence experiences and memories. *Métissage*, as a research practice, is about relationality and the

curricular and pedagogical desire to treat texts—and lives—as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent. I explicitly connect métissage to the legacies of colonialism and the need for recognition of the mutual vulnerability and dependency of colonizer and colonized, insider and outsider, as well as the presumed primacy of “literate” societies over repressed oral traditions and storytelling. In this regard, I follow the suggestion of Said (1995), in articulating a ‘methodology of imperialism,’ to be mindful that when “we look back at the colonial archive, we begin to reread it not univocally, but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (p. 29, italics in original). This research orientation is only possible if, like Pinar (1979), we acknowledge that “in the singularity that is an individual alive on a certain day during a certain moment is a complex configuration of political, economic, and cultural forces” that can only be interpreted by immersing ourselves in and engaging with the ongoing relationships that constitute that particular context (p. 105). These are the research sensibilities and commitments at work in a paper exploring the life history of my great grandmother, a member of the Papaschase Cree, in the context of frontier Edmonton in the 1880’s (Donald, 2004).

For the purposes of my research, then, creating texts of métissage implies an attempt to describe the braided, polysemic, active, and dynamic character of our lives, experiences and memories that are all personal as well as collective, a desire to connect the micro to the macro. When I create texts of métissage, I want

people to read them and begin to question how they are implicated in the story told. I want people to read my writing and see that, while focused on the experiences of Aboriginal peoples, it is also about all of us. Thus, my version of *métissage* relies on purposeful juxtaposition of texts, historical perspectives, and voices to show how experience and memory often cross over cultural frontiers. *Métissage* begins with specific Aboriginal historical and cultural perspectives as initial points of inquiry, and works to expand the inquiry by showing how the process of colonialism has filtered and altered those perspectives until something is produced that the larger Canadian society recognizes and comprehends as theirs. The inquiry is intent on connecting these perspectives through juxtaposition and conceptualizing both as contributing to a more complex, reciprocal, and interreferential story of the place we call Canada. It is intended to facilitate decolonization of curriculum perspectives as these relate to Aboriginal people in Canada. Decolonizing education in this way requires specific curricular and pedagogical commitments from educators:

[T]hey will need to decolonize education, a process that includes raising the collective voice of Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices in our colonial history, deconstructing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic and emotional reasons for silencing of Aboriginal voices in Canadian history, legitimating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, recognizing it as a dynamic context of knowledge, and communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate. (Battiste, 2002, p. 20)

I choose to do this by reaching out to Canadians rather than reinventing an exclusive culturalist manifesto. In this sense, *métissage* is a way to reconceptualize and decolonize culture and historical consciousness in the context of teaching and learning today.

The act of doing *métissage* is initiated when we begin questioning the multiple conditions and contexts which give rise to memory and historical consciousness, as well as the character of the particular places and spaces from which they originate. By drawing on multiple sources and contexts, creating texts of *métissage* can provoke a collective wondering regarding the connectedness of history and memory. The wondering begins with the interpretations of the texts created by the researcher(s) doing *métissage*, but the implied hope is that readers and observers engaging with the texts will also begin fashioning their own understandings and interpretations of the texts of *métissage*. Following Murray (1991), a major assumption tied to doing *métissage* is that both reading and writing are autobiographical experiences that link reader(s) and writer(s) in the collective effort of making sense. When I write an interpretation and you read it, my story becomes part of your story. In this sense, doing *métissage* is a deeply hermeneutic endeavour focused on a reciprocal looping process of rereading, reframing, and reinterpreting historical perspectives, events, and discourses.

The usefulness of texts of *métissage* to the field of curriculum theory is in the ways that they can demonstrate connectivity. Most major curriculum projects in Canada dedicated to addressing Aboriginal perspectives have been couched in terms of inclusion, as though the ‘story’ can be added on at the end of the course

if there is still time and if people are still interested. To properly address Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum, Canadians need to rediscover the historical and current connections linking Canadians and Aboriginal peoples in Canada, even if these connections are not always pleasant to discuss. This implies that official renditions of history and society must be contested through a process of active and critical rereading as a way to reconsider what has been left out. This desire is part of a well-established trend among curriculum theorists in Canada who wish to articulate the “usually invisible relations” linking the people, places and ideas characterizing their inquiries (Sumara, Davis & Laidlaw, 2001, p. 150). Such curriculum theorizing can be seen as part of a growing challenge to curriculum theorists to “seek out or create interpretive tools that allow [them] to write and interpret who Canadians are, what we know, and where we want to go, all the while remaining cognizant of an important truism: there will be no single answer to these questions” (Chambers, 1999, p. 146).

However, in analyzing the theoretical foundations of *métissage*, I have come to realize that these are problematic because of their specific focus on the dynamics of colonial relations in African, Asian, and Caribbean contexts, as well as an over reliance on postcolonial theories of hybridity and mutability. What is needed is an Indigenous form of *métissage*, specific to Canada, and focused on the interdependency of Aboriginal and Canadian. To this end, in this chapter I explore the historical relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, how these legacies persist to this day, and explain the reasons that I have chosen to explicitly link my version of *métissage* with the history of colonialism in the Western

Canadian context—in an era that some have called postcolonial. I then argue that postcolonial theories of hybridity are ineffective and inappropriate strategies for rereading and reframing Aboriginal presence in Canada. Finally, I outline the interpretive and textual sensibilities needed for an Indigenous form of *métissage*.

The Colonial Binary

The legends, stories, histories and anecdotes of a colonial culture offer the subject a primordial Either/Or. Either he is fixed in the consciousness of the body as solely negating activity or as a new kind of man [sic], a new genus. What is denied the colonial subject, both as colonizer and colonized, is that form of negation which gives access to the recognition of difference. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 75)

How have the relationships between colonizers and colonized influenced the ways in which people in former colonial societies interact, communicate, and express life experiences and memories? As pointed out by Bhabha above, the colonial moment occurs constantly in the ways that such histories are portrayed as conflicts involving two opposing and irreconcilable adversaries. At those moments when the past is shown to have direct connections to the present, identity and subjectivity are reduced to a simple dichotomy: us versus them. As an example of the implications of this notion of the colonial moment, reconsider the story of my son. In order to make sense of the historicity of the experience of hearing him say that he did not want to be an Indian anymore, to make sense of the context and conditions in which this statement was uttered, I have to “understand the present really only in the horizon of past and future” (Smith,

1983, pp. 41-42). This means that my interpretations of *not wanting to be an Indian anymore* must be ever mindful of the ways in which perspectives on the past influence the present and our imaginings of possible futures. I am left to wonder how this particular form of colonial discourse came to preoccupy my son and cause him to reach this startling conclusion at such a young age. That he received some fairly clear messages about his identity and the choices available to him, despite attempts to shelter him, is convincing evidence that colonialism, as a logic and discourse, persists in Canadian contexts.

However, in order to proceed with this exploration of the contemporary significance of colonialism in Canadian contexts, some more global and theoretical understandings of colonial culture need to be considered. Or, to state the problem differently, what notions of colonialism inform this inquiry? Following Dirlik (1999), I view colonialism as the process through which “EuroAmericans²⁷ conquered the world, renamed places, rearranged economies, societies, and politics, and erased or drove to the margins premodern ways of knowing, space, time, and ...universalized history in their own self-image in an unprecedented manner” (p. 3). Important to understanding this process in this way is the realization that the drive to intellectually colonize the world was intimately connected to the economic and political motives more commonly considered when studying colonialism. It follows, then, that considerations of the tremendous impact of European ‘discovery’ and conquest of new lands on the creation of

²⁷ Although Dirlik does not explain his use of this term, I have included it in the quote because it works well with my interpretations of colonialism. By “EuroAmerican,” I mean to show that people working in the interests of Europeans and their kin who colonized *and* settled places around the world (most extensively in North, Central, and South America) were the main proponents and instigators of colonial activity.

Enlightened and modernist subjectivities are crucial to understanding the social and cultural ramifications of colonialism and modernity. Such cultural, social, and intellectual colonialism manifested itself in the European “will to know” the world through collecting, classifying, cataloguing, and exhibiting vast amounts of information about the colonized people and their lands (Foucault, 1981, p. 55).

This knowledge, based on difference, was an integral part of colonialism in that it was based on power. The power to collect, catalogue, exhibit, and textualize meant that knowledge or information that had been collected from around the world would be evaluated on European terms and assimilated to suit European and EuroAmerican social, cultural, and educational needs. This was essentially a monologue on the riches of the world and their usefulness to Europeans and their kin. There was no need to consider the ‘Other’ perspective that was part of this discourse on colonialism because it was assumed that European interpretations of the world were rational, objective, scientific, universally relevant, and beneficial to all. Growing out of this impetus was an educational imperative to “construct an encyclopedic mastery of the globe,” which became a model guiding European speculations on perceived new worlds, new peoples, new species, and unfamiliar ways of knowing (Willinsky, 1994, p. 613). Notions of citizenship and the purposes of education were united by the goal of coming to know the world according to this colonizer’s model (Blaut, 1993). As Said (cited in Willinsky, 1998) has observed, these attitudes resulted in a situation in which the “will to know” found expression as “power using knowledge to advance itself” (p. 51).

How was power disguised as knowledge advanced in this way?²⁸ The answer to this question lies somewhere deep in the consciousness of a culture preoccupied with the ethic of *telos* (> Gk. *teleos*, entire, perfect, complete, *telos*, end, goal) guiding notions of progress and development. If the “power-image” of progress—a civilizational process of steady material, cultural, and technological advancement—is one of the central myths of our times, then the two foundational value structures of progress, science and history, are essential to that projection (Ellul, 1975, p. 106). Faith in science grew out of the Enlightenment, which Hegel (cited in Dussel, 1995, pp. 19-20) describes as “the exit of humanity by itself from a state of culpable immaturity.” This view postulates that human immaturity can be overcome if people adhere to universal principles of reason. These principles gave birth to the scientific method, or the belief that the natural world and the universe, as well as the role of humans in it, could be investigated and discerned—discovered—through careful observation and experimentation. This use of reason empowers human beings with the ability to constantly improve life on earth.

The implications of this intellectual move are that spiritual and metaphysical understandings of the world came to be considered immature and unenlightened human responses. Prioritized, instead, were more *reasonable* and logical approaches, always with the ironic faith that phenomena in the world were ultimately knowable and explainable in this way if only the investigator employed the proper mental habits and sensibilities. Such truths, it was believed, were out

²⁸ The phrasing of this question is inspired by Smith (2006) who points out that most ‘post’ theory critiques of Eurocentrism fail to engage in deep inquiry on the question of *how*, and by what means, Europeans came to view themselves as the civilized and civilizing center of the world.

there waiting to be uncovered. Descartes, taking up this *Zeitgeist*, issued the maxim *Cogito ergo sum*, thereby declaring that the individual, privately working inside his own head, could think himself and all other beings into existence.²⁹ Reason, in this context, was seen as inherently liberatory as it frees humans from the constraints of unenlightened thoughts and traditions. This myth that reason is emancipatory is premised on “an elision of liberty into subjectivity, such that self-enclosure, in the strong sense of personal identity, becomes the character of modern Western man” (Smith, 2003, p. 495). This is how liberty, in the liberal tradition we know today, became an expression of individual free will and freedom a basic individual right.

Such values undoubtedly grew out of the tremendous upheaval that occurred in Europe as a result of the processes of colonialism. The flood of information about new people in new lands, and all of the wealth and new products produced, required new ways of making sense. This process of amelioration came with consciousness of the presumed *fact* that God was on the side of Europeans in this endeavour of discovery and reasoned investigation. In this view, the thrusts of modernity—the worldview that uses science, reason, and technology as benchmarks of truth and human achievement—are universally justifiable as God-given instruments of civilization, development, and progress. An important distinction, though, is that while modernity has traditionally been viewed as an independent European impetus that was diffused to the rest of the world, the meaning and significance of modernity should actually be interpreted

²⁹ I am indebted to Dr. David Geoffrey Smith for this interpretation of Descartes’ famous phrase.

according to a center-periphery model. It is worthwhile to quote Dussel (1995) at length on this distinction:

...Europe's centrality...is the outcome of its discovery, conquest, colonization, and integration of Amerindia...Modernity is the result, not the cause of this occurrence. ...the managerial position of Europe permits it to think of itself as the reflexive consciousness of world history and to exult in its values, inventions, discoveries, technologies, and political institutions as its exclusive achievement. (p. 12).

In sum, then, Europeans only came to view themselves as civilized and modern in contradistinction to the colonial Other. What this means is that modernity and versions of European virtue are dependent on and intimately connected to colonialism and cultural understandings of peoples living in colonized lands. Yet, it is precisely this intimate co-dependence, and the thorough influences of the colonized on the colonizers, that is denied in Eurowestern knowledge system traditions. These stories are not told. This denial of relationality has deformed the partnerships between colonizers and colonized and delimited the conceptual terms used to imagine a different kind of relationship for both. Thus, any project dedicated to conceptualizing and enacting decolonization must begin by taking note of the extensive ways in which the conceptual terrain has been so deeply marked and determined by these colonial experiences.

The Problematic Role of History

The interreferentiality of colonizers and colonized, denied in Eurocentric renditions of science, modernity, and progress, did not find articulation in official

versions of history either. Dussel (1995) connects this historical problem to the developmentalist fallacy (*telos*) and the influences of Hegel that inform Eurocentrism. Hegel, in putting words to a system that was already firmly in place, describes a philosophical structure that demonstrates how “the construction of knowledges which all operate through forms of expropriation and incorporation of the other mimics at a conceptual level the geographical and economic absorption of the non-European world by the West” (Young, 1990, p. 3). Hegel promoted the concept of universal history that represents the development and diffusion of reasoned consciousness emanating from Europe (the inside) to the rest of the world (the outside). Reasoned development does not come from simply gathering information as knowledge; rather, Hegel believed that human development and the advancement of cultures in general involves a process of discerning complex relationships and coming to a more sophisticated plane of thought which, in turn, deepens our comprehension of the complexities of the world (Houlgate, 1999, p. 95). This development is universal in the sense that it is premised on Hegel’s concept of human freedom. “Hegel understands history itself to be nothing other than the process of social, political, aesthetic, and religious change which is generated as human beings come to understand more fully and explicitly *that* they are free and what it *means* to be free” (p. 97, italics original). Thus, scientific understanding, reason, enlightenment and modernity—all intimately related to colonialism—can all be traced back to the growth of the ethic of freedom in European societies of that era. For Hegel, Europeans were more developed and civilized than Others in the world because they had embraced

freedom as a means to progress. This leadership in the world gave Europeans authority over History (with a capital H), mostly because they saw themselves as the ones making, provoking, documenting, comprehending, and interpreting history. “Building his own great wall against the barbarians, Hegel created semi-permeable time zones that fell between those in the civilized and historical West and those who are said to exist outside History” (Willinsky, 1998, p. 117).

In constructing his own distinct and foundational pedagogy of the fort, Hegel argued that all other histories and cultures in the world came to be measured and chronicled according to this European model of freedom and history. Of course, Europeans (the people with history) gave themselves the moral and civilizational authority to “write the history of those people without,” thereby systemically and philosophically denying such colonial Others historical accounts constructed in and on their own terms (Mignolo, 2000, p. 3). Eurocentric history became universal history in that European versions of historical events came to be seen as universally applicable and enriching to those Others who wished to develop and progress. Blaut (1993) argues that this orientation to history as a “tunnel of time” has been maintained to the present day, despite changing societal priorities and principles:

History and historical geography as it was taught, written, and thought by Europeans down to the time of World War II, and still...in most respects today, lies, as it were, in a tunnel of time. The walls of the tunnel are, figuratively, the spatial boundaries of Greater Europe. History is a matter of looking back or down in this European tunnel of time and trying to

decide what happened where, when, or why. “Why” of course calls for connections among historical events, but only among the events that lie in the European tunnel. Outside its walls everything seems to be rockbound, timeless, changeless tradition...*Outside* plays no crucial role and *Inside* is credited with everything important and everything efficacious. (pp. 5, 8, italics mine)

Taking up this metaphor of the tunnel of time, we can say that the endpoint of that tunnel was a Eurocentric version of progress and development. This, then, is the *telos*. This form of historical reasoning is founded on finalism³⁰—the desire to connect initial meaning with ultimate meaning, the beginning of the tunnel with the end (Morris & Stuckey, 2004, p. 2). The logic of finalism is used to posit Eurocentric notions of historical time and development. As a result, finalism cannot comprehend or acknowledge the legitimacy of outside interpretations and perspectives that do not conform to the same envisioned end.

Thus, History begins in dialectic with non-Europe. Eurowestern understandings of the world noted throughout this inquiry have been profoundly influenced and informed by colonial interactions. However, it must be carefully noted that colonial history is not often taught in this mutually dependent manner. Colonial history, from the perspective of the colonizer, is often concerned with bureaucratic government acts and the management of the times through

³⁰ Morris and Stuckey (2004) develop the idea of finalism from a passage of Todorov’s (1983) book *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. For them, Todorov’s finalism refers to a “communicative and historical form of reasoning aimed at closing interpretation, thwarting challenges to the existing order, and sustaining elements of social memory... At this level finalism might be understood as a set of fallacious communicative activities... a sort of post hoc rationalization” that enables a person to “interpret past, present, and projected future behaviors and events... so that everything finally ‘makes sense’—to such a degree that alternative explanations are foreclosed, even impermissible” (p. 2)

legislation and regulation. Timelines, or tunnels of time, are sketched to indicate how policy evolved. Dates and places are memorized as a way to test student knowledge of policy. This approach points to the métropole—the ‘home country’—as the source and direction of colonial policy, falsely discounting any actual relationships with the colonized.

Here we arrive at a foundational *trope* (>L. *tropus*, Gk. *tropos*, turn, way) of colonialism: the logic that the colonized are “gullible, hopeless victim[s] of colonialism caught in the hinges of history” who are unable to comprehend the processes of progress and development that have overrun their premodern ways of knowing and living (Nandy, 1983, xv). Of course, this logic falls in line with the belief that modernity, freedom, knowledge, and reason are possessed by Europeans and diffused from Europe out to the rest of the world. The colonized, caught in the proverbial wheels of progress, are not considered capable of crafting thoughtful replies or responses to this process, outside of those ideas and influences stemming from Europe. The possibility of an *Indigenous* participation is dismissed on the grounds that the colonized did not have the ability or means to respond in an intelligent manner that would originate from outside the realm of European teachings. The colonized have been considered marginal to and outside of the larger and more critical historical events that can be identified as civilizational steps on the way to development and progress.

This historical assumption has been largely debunked in recent times, but the problem of separate colonial realities remains. Many still assume that the historical experiences and perspectives of the colonized are their own separate

cultural preoccupation. We still desire to identify difference as filial (heritage and descent) rather than affilial— implying reliance upon relationality and affinity that traverses difference (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001, p. 25). This inquiry leans heavily on relationality and the belief that colonialism is a shared, and deeply intimate, condition wherein colonizers and colonized come to know each other very well.³¹ Thus, decolonization begins with recognition of the ways in which colonizers and colonized are mutually implicated in the legacies of colonialism. The maintenance of colonial frontier logic perpetuates the spatial and social dichotomy of inside / outside that continues to shape the ways in which we speak to each other about these contentious issues. It also shapes the ways in which these issues are framed as problems troubling educational contexts across Canada. Working through those legacies in sustainable ways requires a willingness to reread and reframe colonialism as a shared condition.

Colonialism in the Canadian Context

So, what then is the significance of the *colonial past* to contemporary Aboriginal reality? What relevance does the colonial past have to contemporary curricular and pedagogical considerations? Responding to these questions requires consideration of the specific strains of modernist, historical, and civilizational moral syntax that Canadians have inherited from Europe. Let us consider this

³¹ I am not suggesting that the means and processes through which Indigenous peoples and colonizers 'come to know each other very well' were harmonious or mutually beneficial. This intimacy is obviously deeply scarred by unequal power relations. My argument is that these unequal power relations do not preclude the possibility of knowing each other well, albeit often in dysfunctional ways.

sketch³² drawn in the context of Red River Settlement circa 1870:



Civilization and Barbarism, an 1870 drawing, embodied the entrenched Euro-Canadian attitude that Natives at best were irrelevant to newcomers' "progress." (Toronto Reference Library, *Civilization and Barbarism* by William George Richardson; Hind, ca. 1870. J. Ross Robertson Collection. T-33370)

This sketch, with the insightful title *Civilization and Barbarism*, embodies much of the spirit of Eurocentrism that was and is still prevalent in the Canadian context. Here we see a nineteenth century EuroCanadian perspective on the historical nature of progress as it relates to Aboriginal and settler relations. The artist, in working to capture the changing nature of the country, included many symbolic representations that still have surprising currency in Canadian society today. To begin, imagine that the road is like a timeline. The endpoint of the timeline, the town off on the horizon, is the teleological dream prevalent throughout Canadian history. The town, as an imagined end, symbolizes progress and development brought to a barren and uncivilized land. Note that the road leads away from the town, back in time and away from civilization. Those participating in the growth of civilization are separated from the deleterious effects of primitive influences by a civilizational frontier symbolized by the

³² This image and captioning information were scanned directly from Carter (1999).

bridge. It is only after crossing this bridge that the local inhabitants—‘the natives’—are encountered. The technological and modern connotations brought by the road and bridge to *terra nullius* are enhanced by the image of the settler traveling with a well-trained horse pulling a fancy wagon. Apparently, possession of technology and a modern understanding of the world give him the ability to freely travel up and down this road. The figure of the settler shows obvious comfort and acumen with the modern technology that clearly sets him apart from the static and bewildered figures of the Indians at the side of the road. Even the Indian pony appears puzzled by the rift.

This idea that Aboriginal people are outside of the main thrusts and themes of history, progress, and change is a recurrent theme in Canadian history. As we have seen, this model of interpretation cannot imagine Indigenous participation in nation building because it holds that Aboriginal peoples must assimilate or perish. There can be no other way. Here we arrive at another fundamental problem that confronts Canadian society today: how to reconcile these thrusts and themes with the undeniable, ongoing, and growing presence of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Up until recently, mainstream and textbook Canadian history—based largely on the myth of finalism— was written in a fairly neat and tidy way. Aboriginal people are afforded a presence in Canadian history to 1885, when the Métis Resistances were ‘stamped out’ and the lead rebels prosecuted. After that event, concerns of Canadian historians shift to the topic of

nation building, the Aboriginal ‘problem’ seemingly irrelevant or, at least, resolved.³³ The Indians, along with the buffalo, disappear.

Thus, Hind’s sketch examined above is really an outline of the story of Canada that children have been told in schools for many decades. This sketch, like the mythic sign of the fort, is steeped in a paradoxical national myth that simultaneously reveals and hides a fundamental truth about Canadian society. The primary message is that Aboriginal and Canadian do not interact, historically and currently, and that Aboriginal people inhabit isolated and mysterious corners of Canada, separate and distinct from the more civilized regions of the country. The ways in which Canadian colonial history has been taught has perpetuated colonial frontier logics, thereby limiting the possible roles available for Aboriginal people in Canadian society, and leaving many Canadians unable to comprehend Aboriginal citizenship and participation in the present. Teachers, confronted with the spectre of Aboriginal perspectives in their classrooms, are naturally finding it difficult to relinquish the more comfortable stories of Canada that they have been told and grown accustomed to telling. However, such discomfort is beneficial in this case, particularly when artifacts like this sketch help reveal the colonial character of Eurowestern philosophy. Such revealing “can create a critical space for indigenous voices in mainstream academia” (Turner, 2006, p. 9).

The point, then, is that the received story of Canada no longer makes sense. Conceptual holes have begun to show in the narrative (McLeod, 2002, p. 37). This is typical of societies struggling to come to terms with the realities of

³³ A trip to Rutherford Library on the University of Alberta campus, and a survey of the Canadian history books on the shelves, confirmed this view.

internal colonialism, wherein “the native population is swamped by a large mass of colonial settlers who, after many generations, no longer have a *métropole* to which to return. *Métropole* and colony thus become geographically coextensive” (Weaver, 2000, p. 223, italics original). Societies like Canada are unique in the world since settlers, mostly from Europe, migrated in large numbers to actively displace the original inhabitants. As migration numbers grew and incidences of Aboriginal displacement and diaspora increased, EuroCanadians were confronted with the problem of what to do with ‘their’ natives. Isolating them seemed to be the best solution at the time; “isolation is an important tool, and a devastating result, of colonization” (Daes, 2000. p. 7). The historic and ongoing isolation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada has created a situation in which they are systematically cut off from outside information and knowledge and repeatedly subject to dispiriting cultural myths that perpetuate the view of the Indian as incapable and, thus, “fortunate to have been colonized” (p. 7). This isolation, justified through a commonsense form of colonial frontier logics that serves to naturalize socio-spatial boundaries, continues to have a profound bearing on Aboriginal reality in Canada today, even for those who have never lived on a reserve.

These realities of internal colonialism, and consciousness of its importance in comprehending a reread and reframed history of Canada that assumes Aboriginal presence and participation, thus constitutes a significant biographical crisis to Canadians (Britzman, 2003a, pp. 1-2). If the story of the nation and personal ties to its growth are both founded on myths, then what sort of

interpretative guide is left? Very little scholarly attention has been given to this particular problem and the development of interpretative models that help us better understand the relationship of Aboriginal people to Canadian society and history (Morantz, 2003). The problem is that in the Eurowestern tradition, history and myth have conflated; hence History cannot be questioned because it is eternally tied to reified origin stories of nation and nationality.

In this interpretation the Indians have been assigned the role of a mere foil, an opposing and distinct element whose only contribution was to stimulate the energy and ingenuity of European dispossessors. This interpretation seems fallacious...because of the symbiotic interdependence that prevailed between the two societies...for well over two centuries.

(Jennings, 1975, p. ix)

It is for these reasons that this inquiry is committed to an exploration of the intimacy of the colonial relationship in the Canadian context. I believe that Canadians and Aboriginal peoples must come to terms with this shared history, and the often conflictual perspectives stemming from it, before significant social dialogue can occur. Public discussions on collective concerns like citizenship, education, socio-economics, quality of life, culture, language, and sovereignty, cannot happen on a partnership basis until this détente with history occurs (Green, 1995).

Can Postcolonial Theory Help?

In tracing the strains of colonialism that have come to bear influence in the Canadian context, I hope to bring clarity to the notion that a person's sense of

reality is perceived through and shaped by their socially and historically constructed ways of making sense (Leistyna, Woodrum & Sherblom, 1996, p. 336). The ways in which we speak to each other, the histories with which we identify, and the complex signs, symbols, and myths we live by, provide order to our lives and enable us to proceed with living according to these powerful assumptions and value structures. These forms of communication by which the world can be known constitute a discourse. In societies influenced by colonialism, perceptions of reality are often directly connected to the particular version of history considered most accurate and truthful, and thus most authoritative. Colonial discourse, then, is the exchange between individuals and collectives in a colonized society expressing their perceptions of reality, appropriate behaviour, versions of history, and values using heard and unheard, seen and unseen, written and unwritten methods of communication. This exchange always causes clashes, interactions, oppositions, responses, and conflicts, as well as intersections that can foster renewed understandings of the organic and messy nature of local knowledge exchanges. Colonial discourse theory “points out the deep ambivalences of that discourse, as well as the ways in which it constructs both colonising and colonised subjects” (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001, p. 15). Another familiar and damaging outcome of colonial discourse that has been noted throughout this inquiry “is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, 1986, p. 154). Whatever the goals of colonial discourse analysis, from victimhood of the colonized to the

impacts of the colonial process on European institutions and values, the unifying purpose seems to be a reexamination of colonial relationships in various contexts with the intent of tracing connections to the present era. Some call this project 'postcolonial.'

The field of study termed 'postcolonial' is typified by a remarkably heterogeneous academic purview which has evolved from the diverse motivations and commitments of the academics who situate themselves in this space. Literary theorist Stephen Slemon (1999) describes the heterogeneous character and purposes of postcolonial study in these terms:

It has been used as a way of ordering a critique of totalizing forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of 'class,' as a subset of both postmodernism and poststructuralism...as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings...as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of 'reading practice'; and...as the name of a category of 'literary' activity. (p. 45)

Such a diverse field of study, ambivalent in character and transdisciplinary in theoretical influence, has been awkwardly unified by the use of the term 'postcolonial' to designate a multifaceted concern for critical issues emerging from, through, and after colonial relations. As such, postcolonialism, as the third of the 'post' sisters (after postmodernism and poststructuralism) to emerge on the theoretical scene, implies a temporal and developmental designation to these issues intending, perhaps, to "underline a passage into a new period and a closure

of a certain historical event or age” (Shohat, 1992, p. 101). Postcolonialism, then, seems to be a field of study concerned with the aftermath of colonial rule and thus turns on the suggestion that colonialism, as an organizing ideology and logic governing relations between people, has ended. As with the other ‘post’ theories, postcolonialism is most commonly understood as a critical response to the assumed universal applicability of a master discourse (colonialism, in this case) to fully explain and interpret the diversity of human experience and understanding. As John McLeod (2000, pp. 10-16) shows, this critique of the colonial condition first found formal expression in the so-called Commonwealth literary fiction written most prominently by African, Asian, and Caribbean authors who, while usually educated and trained at European universities, found opportunities to write about colonial realities from the underside.³⁴ These works emerged during the era of colonial political independence movements that culminated with celebrated declarations of nationhood by formerly colonized peoples. Parallel with these developments was the theorization of the colonial experience in sociological, psychological, and cultural terms—often accompanied by a revolutionary call for the colonized to free themselves from the oppression of the colonizers. The powerful influences of these theorizations can be seen in the works of writers such as Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Edward Said, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, to name a few of the more notable figures from this era (pp.17-23). It is widely acknowledged that the theoretical works of such scholars have inspired many of

³⁴ The fictional works most influential in helping me understand this concept of ‘the empire writes back’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989) have been Chinua Achebe’s trilogy chronicling the generational effects of British colonialism on Igbo communities in Nigeria. These books, in the order that they were first published, are titled *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *A Man of the People* (1966).

the French 'post' intellectual discourses, led by such luminaries as Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard, which have, in turn, provided the theoretical frameworks for postcolonial scholarship as we understand it today. While attention to the historical development of the postcolonial in the context of academic discourse is useful, it is important to point out that the concept of *postcolonial* itself, and what it implies in terms of focus, still remains somewhat elusive. In general, though, and following Dirlik (1994), it seems worthwhile to identify three main uses for the term *postcolonial*: (1) a literal description of the lived realities of people living in former European colonies around the world; (2) a more general and global term descriptive of political and economic power dynamics in the world that replaces the term *Third World*; and (3) a conceptual term that guides transdisciplinary theoretical explorations into the significance of the colonial experience to diverse and contentious inter-cultural and inter-national interactions today (p. 332).

This last use, with its emphasis on orientations to the postcolonial as *cultural theory*, appears to have the potential to offer helpful insights into the colonial condition in the Canadian context, especially as this pertains to the relationships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian that are a focus of this inquiry. Based on this potential, some critics might assume that Indigenous Métissage is actually a postcolonial cultural theory reframed as an interpretive sensibility and textual practice. The extensive use of postcolonial scholarship in this inquiry, especially with reference to the concept of métissage itself, would appear to quickly confirm this assumption. This work has indeed been extremely influential to this inquiry and provided much needed theoretical frameworks that have

enabled a detailed and complex understanding of the colonial condition as shared by both colonizer and colonized. These theoretical lenses have provided critical insights that have guided the conceptualization of the pedagogy of the fort. However, it is absolutely critical to point out that most of the postcolonial theorists referenced here come from formerly colonized nations in Africa, Asia, or the Caribbean, and thus write and theorize with reference to particular colonial experiences in those areas of the world. It is also critical to note that an overwhelming majority of these postcolonial theorists are migrant intellectuals who live and work in Eurowestern institutional contexts, away from their home countries, and have been designated as “*comprador* intelligentsia” who mediate a trade in cultural commodities as a necessary part of their work (Appiah, 1999, p. 119).

I mention these issues to draw attention to the problematics of positionality created by adherence to postcolonial theories as a generalized interpretive framework when colonial experiences are so clearly contextually unique. While colonial dynamics *are* strikingly similar across contexts and locations, the assumption that postcolonial theory can anatomize the histories of Canada and India, for example, as congruent and equidistant to an imagined imperial centre seems colonizing in itself (Shohat, 1992, p. 102). One particularly prominent poverty of postcolonialism is that it is unable to fully comprehend Indigenes, as it manifests itself in layered colonial-settler colonies like Canada, Australia, and *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), mostly because Indigenous peoples are not a prominent concern in the home countries of the more influential

postcolonial theorists, but also because postcolonial theory generally dismisses deeply-rooted identity claims as illusory, thereby discounting Indigeneity as expressed and manifested through collective identity claims and organic traditions (Weaver, 2000; Hall, 1996; Bhabha, 1994, p. 1; Moreton-Robinson, 2003, pp. 28-32). Another conceptual poverty of postcolonialism is that it operates on the implication that colonial logics and structures have been diminished or replaced in (former) colonial societies (Cook-Lynn, 1997, 13-14; Shohat, 1992, p. 102; King, 1990). For Indigenous peoples living in the aforementioned colonial-settler colonies, however, such “postcolonial societies do not exist” (Battiste, 2000a, p. xix). Some Indigenous scholars working in Canada have instead co-opted the term postcolonial “to describe a symbolic strategy for shaping a desirable future, not an existing reality. The term is an aspirational practice, goal, or idea...used to imagine a new form of society” (p. xix). Similarly, Moreton-Robinson (2003) purposefully attributes action and ongoing process to the postcolonial in Australia with the use of the term *postcolonizing* “to signify the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonising relationship that positions us [the Indigenous] as belonging but not belonging” (p. 38). This strategy of theoretical co-option stems from dissatisfaction with postcolonial theory for its overlook and disregard of Indigenousness as a critical and viable subject position today.

Perhaps the most prominent *leitmotif* of postcolonial cultural theory, and the issue most problematic to Indigenous notions of identity and place, is the concept of hybridity as forwarded by the well-known theorist Homi Bhabha. His version of hybridity depends on a theory of ambivalence that refers to the unstable

and uncertain nature of identity formation in light of diverse influences and contexts typical of postcolonial societies. Such ambivalence renders any sort of identity claim temporary, contingent, promiscuous, and thus hybrid in character. Bhabha (1994) has argued that an “important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (p. 66). He believes that this concept of fixity—as it relates to race, history, and culture—creates colonial binary stereotypes of both the colonizer and colonized which often play a prominent role in colonial discourses. He also criticizes the attention paid to the stereotype by colonial discourse theorists who tend to focus their efforts on “the ready recognition of images as positive or negative,” and argues that, instead, an understanding of the “*processes of subjectification*” that bring about and propagate stereotypical forms of discourse would better help us understand and interpret “the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized)” (p. 67, emphasis in original). To this end, Bhabha promotes his theory of colonial ambivalence to the mixed messages, forms of authority, and confused notions of identity and place that constitute colonial discourses. In the effort to make sense of this ambivalent space, colonial subjects engage in acts of hybridization in which aspects of dominant and suppressed notions of identity, difference, culture, place, and discourse mix, subvert, and displace dominant norms and conceptions. According to Bhabha (1999), this process is important to recognize and interpret because of the change in focus it promotes:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent oppression of native traditions, then an important change in perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention. (p. 35, emphasis in original)

Colonial discourse, then, is not a process pitting colonizer against colonized in an agonistic struggle to either oppress or be heard. Rather, Bhabha sees this discourse as a coming together in the space in-between these two extremes, fostered by ambivalence, and working to generate hybrid forms of expression, interpretation, and understanding. For Bhabha, hybridity is a process that begins when the colonial governing authority undertakes to forward a specific identity theory of the colonized within a singular universal logic, but fails. In the process, though, a new form of identity is produced that is familiar, but also new (Papastergiadis, 1997). Bhabha theorizes that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from this process of interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized that serves to challenge the validity of any claim for authentic cultural identity. One métissage theorist has explained this attentiveness to hybridity as linked to the desire to articulate

new visions of ourselves, new concepts that allow us to think *otherwise*, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility of thought, of ‘clarity,’ in all

of Western philosophy. *Métissage* is such a concept and practice: it is a site of undecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages. (Lionnet, 1989, p. 6)

Postcolonial *métissage* embraces this hybrid spirit by acting as something of an antidote to essentialism and intervening in-between conflicted and conflictual postcolonial relationships with new conceptions of reality that subvert and contest commonly held notions, prejudices, stereotypes, and assumptions. Like hybridity, its main “goal is to undermine the assumption that boundaries may be drawn around nationality, ethnicity, and race on the grounds of cultural homogeneity” (Dirlik, 2002, p. 103). Hybridity, then, like *métissage*, is a cultural theory that contests the perceived civilizational divides that separate insiders and outsiders.

The theoretical zone wherein such hybridity is created is called the “third space” by Bhabha (1990). The third space is an unrepresentable interpretive enunciation that intervenes in-between the aged and tired antagonisms pitting developed societies and peoples with History against their character foils—the people outside of History and development (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). “It is in this Third Space between former fixed territories that the whole body of resistant hybridization comes into being in the form of fragile syncretisms, contrapuntal recombinations and acculturation” that are the result of the translation, interpretation, rereading, and thus re-presenting appropriated signs and symbols in a spirit of hybrid renewal (Wolf, 2000, p. 135). Importantly, Bhabha (1990) asserts that hybrid acts in the third space are constantly occurring and new

possibilities are constantly being revealed, but that the significance of this newness is often overlooked because people usually rely on outdated conservative and traditional principles to understand them (p. 216). The third space is seen as a theoretical subversion of this problem by instead emphasizing that cultural representations, though ambivalent in character, are continually engaged in processes of hybridity. Postcolonial cultural manifestations are actually products of hybrid transactional dynamics in the third space. For Bhabha,

the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity...is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom...The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. (p. 211)

The third space is thus a dynamic in-between zone wherein age-old colonial divisions can be transformed. As such, it appears to be a threat to colonial and neo-colonial authority and seems to offer the potential to contest colonial frontier logics and help reframe the pedagogy of the fort in more contextually hybrid terms. However, from the perspective of an Aboriginal person living in Canada, embracing hybridity as a panacea is rife with problems and must be undertaken with numerous caveats in mind.

Hybridity is placeless. What this means is that hybrid acts are occurring in various places all over the world, but the theory suggests that the specifics of these locales are unimportant. Hybridity has become a space, third or otherwise, that subverts place; it has become an abstract universal human experience, an Oneness that is both limitless and diverse in its effects. In other words, acts of hybridity, as theoretical concerns that shift our attention away from essentialist and foundationalist notions of culture and identity, promote an ongoing engagement with third spaces—the theoretical liminalities where people and cultures mix rather than the actual places where people live their lives. This points to one of the main problems postcolonial hybridity attempts to overcome—place-bound essentialisms of culture and identity. However, by pitting place-based cultures and identities against the logic of the hybrid and placeless space, the theoretical priority comes to be on the erasure of boundaries without recognizing that such boundaries are sometimes necessary to sustain viable forms of difference that honour the need for continuity and balance (Dirlik, 2001, p. 29). While hybridity must be placeless in order to transcend the local particularities of the Indigenous who continue to maintain place-based traditions, it must be acknowledged that this postcolonial preoccupation with contesting essentialisms ironically promotes the further colonization of places in the name of reified forms of postcolonial hybrid spaces. Thus, hybrid spaces, third or otherwise, comprise an abstract and static resolution of the problem of difference in naturalized boundaries that does not recognize the contradictions produced by hybridity, the ways in which hybridity produces its own structural contexts, and how those

contexts, themselves products of human activity, come to delimit the resolution of the problem it presents. (p. 28)

This message of fluidity, homelessness, and geographic placelessness is in direct opposition to Indigenous notions of place, traditional land, and spiritual connections to specific locations in the world (Grande, 2000, p. 482). This opposition is based on the idea of storied connections to the land and the belief that only people with families and histories from *elsewhere* would support hybridity and placelessness. There is much more at stake if your roots are located deep in a particular place. This is not to say that Aboriginal people deny the existence of hybridity or the possibility of complex subjectivity in their communities. Rather, it means that such notions must be historicized to fit the particular society and community under investigation to draw attention to the ways in which those notions are rooted and *placed* in a specific location.

Recognizing the sacredness of lands on which previous generations have lived and died is the foundation of all other sentiment. Instead of denying this dimension of our emotional lives, we should be setting aside additional places that have transcendent meaning. Sacred sites that higher spiritual powers have chosen for manifestation enable us to focus our concerns on the specific form of our lives. (Deloria, 1992, p. 278).

What this means for *métissage* is that it is not enough to simply mix texts as a way to show hybridity and multiple influences. Most so-called postcolonial literature already does this. It is not enough for theorists to embody “openness to otherness,” (Firmat, quoted in Kaup, 2002, p. 190) to create texts that assert “that

relation-identity must embrace the pain of oblivion to remain open to the creolization, ‘the unceasing process of transformation.’” (Glissant, quoted in Kaup, 2002, pp. 190-191). Instead, texts of métissage must be deeply historical and heavily imbued with clear relationships to specific places and communities. This will make them germane to the interests and priorities of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

A related point regarding the role of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is that, as colonial subjects, they have often been stereotyped as remnants of a dusky and distant past. Hybridity, then, could be seen as a way for Aboriginal peoples to reassert themselves in Canadian society by providing them the opportunity to occupy a “third space” of liminality in-between the colonial stereotypical binaries of savage and civilized, tradition and progress, reserve and city (Bhabha, 1990). However, such hybrid subjectivity is prioritized as worthy of celebration without realizing that these preoccupations amount to a fetishization of culture and identity in the third space at the expense of sustained deliberations on social power and difference (Slemon, 2001, p. 114). In this sense, postcolonial hybrid subjectivity becomes a universalized utopian concept through which culture can be celebrated. Postcolonial hybridity, evinced by the in-betweenness of Bhabha’s third space, becomes the new *telos*. A linear conception of Progress itself—moving from precolonial to colonial to postcolonial—implies that hybridity is the new endpoint and final arbiter of all contemporary cultural practice that might be esteemed as valid, meaningful, and sufficiently ‘new’ (McClintock, 1992, p. 85).

Obviously, then, this notion of Progress would necessarily discount Indigenous cultural practices that are directly tied to wisdom traditions. In postcolonial theory, notions of culture and identity that are rooted in particular places and histories are dismissed as overly nostalgic while relation-identity derived from hybridity is viewed as anticipating the future and celebrating the potentiality of the present as a necessary part of the process of becoming. This is the utopian postcolonial *telos*.

The utopian element in hybridity inheres in the notion that transnational cultures, which are discontinuous and unstable systems, can survive and are strong enough to neutralize disturbances from outside. Hybridity has a bad memory, because change prevails over permanence and continuity.

(Kaup, 2002, p. 186)

The problem with this universalizing teleological impetus called hybridity, as conceptualized in postcolonial studies, is that it allows for the lumping of all colonized peoples into categories of analysis in relation to colonizers, refusing to consider them in depth, thereby rendering the specific historical and political circumstances of various nations subordinate to the 'post' (Shohat, 1992, p. 102). In these ways, then, hybridity and postcolonial forms of *métissage* can be criticized for being dangerously ahistorical.

To promote this type of hybridity, even in theory, is problematic for Aboriginal peoples from a socio-political perspective as well because their position in Canadian society is dependent upon an historical recognition of their special status as the descendents of the original inhabitants of the land. This point

draws attention to the problem with many postcolonial theories of hybridity that deny the significance of the ongoing colonial relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the British Crown (via the Canadian government) and the very contemporary nature of colonial discourses in Canada. For the most part, these relationships are still governed by Treaty partnerships, the provisions of the Indian Act, and relevant sections of the Canadian Constitution, which all depend upon recognition of the unique identity status of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Turner, 2006). Notions of hybridity, by dismissing these critical issues of identity as irreducible, deny a fundamental reality of Aboriginality in Canada today, and therefore fail to grasp the unique colonial legacies faced by Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Instead, we are required to accept the assertion that deep-rooted expressions of culture and identity are essentialized fantasies; that cultural difference and differentiation are *only* the result of discriminatory practices and colonial authority (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114); that the concept of a sovereign individual from a unique community must yield to a hybrid subject from a pluralistic global community (Kaup, 2002, p. 186). Accepting these points in their entirety, however, amounts to an admission that Indigenous subjectivity has been thoroughly assimilated through colonial experience and can only be properly understood as anachronistic. Hybridity equals assimilation and thus sanctifies “the *fait accompli* of colonial violence” (Shohat, 1992, p. 109, emphasis original). This line of thinking necessarily discounts the possibility of Indigenous wisdom traditions and practices as critical to renewed ethical partnerships that can traverse the divides of the past. Ironically, then, the supposedly radical and liberatory

cultural theory of hybridity can actually be co-opted to serve the political interests of neoliberal reactionaries who wish to restrain all possibilities of difference within a commonsense logic of nation and economy.³⁵ “Indeed, hybridity in its abstraction serves not to illuminate but to disguise social inequality and exploitation, by reducing to a state of hybridity all who may be considered ‘marginal,’ covering up the fact that there is a great deal of difference between different marginalities” (Dirlik, 2002, p. 106). In Canada today, many Aboriginal people regard assertions of difference—seen, for example, in efforts to revitalize language and cultural traditions—as critical to their very survival. Organic conceptions of identity, deeply connected to traditions, are a key aspect of these acts for collective survival. As Shohat (1992) eloquently argues,

the anti-essentialist emphasis on hybrid identities comes dangerously close to dismissing all searches for a communitarian origins as an archaeological excavation of an idealized, irretrievable past...For communities that have undergone brutal ruptures...the retrieval and reinscription of a fragmented past becomes a crucial contemporary site for forging a resistant collective identity...Post-colonial theory’s celebration of hybridity risks an anti-essentialist condescension toward those communities obliged by circumstances to assert, for their very survival, a lost or even irretrievable past...“Hybridity” must be examined in a non-universalizing, differential manner, contextualized within present neo-colonial realities. The cultural inquiry generated by the hybridity/syncretism discourse needs re-linking to geopolitical macro-level analysis. (pp. 109-110)

³⁵ See, for example, Flanagan (2000).

As noted above, the trouble with Bhabha's notion of the third space is that it has been employed as a universalized cultural principle and used to understand the resistance and positionalities of all formerly colonized peoples in the world today, regardless of contextual realities. It has also been theorized with reference to the *postcolonial* dynamics salient in formerly colonized societies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In a country like Canada, where diverse immigrant communities from these former colonial societies have successfully established themselves, the concepts of hybridity and the third space can be helpful in interpreting the unique postcolonial tensions experienced by the members of those communities. However, to conflate the cultural experiences of these immigrant populations with those of Aboriginal peoples, and use the same conceptual tools to understand and interpret such unique and diverse experiences, is terribly reductive and impudent. While some Canadian theorists wish to move the academic discussion into the postcolonial realm,³⁶ Aboriginal people living in Canada remain mired in colonial constructs and legacies that continue to bedevil their communities. This condition of being stuck in colonial constructs and governed by colonial frontier logics is symptomatic of the pedagogy of the fort. It is, therefore, also a condition shared by Canadians. Any postcolonial-inspired attempts to move past these legacies without due attention to the historical and contextual realities of the colonial relationship in Canada will ultimately end in failure. How can you move past what has governed these relationships for generations? This moving past "reeks of unabashed ethnocentrism and well-meaning dismissal," and points to the deep-seated assumption that the concerns of

³⁶ See, for example, Sugars (2002) and Sugars (2004).

Aboriginal peoples have little relevance to Canadians (King, 1990, p.11). To overcome these shortcomings, we need a theory of *métissage* that can help us comprehend the intimacy of Aboriginal and Canadian partnerships in Canada—a theory that will help us all better understand the complex nature of the relationships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian and foster the creation of more ethical terms for extending these partnerships. This is different from the logic of official multiculturalism, which ensures that the relative worth of various forms of cultural expression will be filtered through Eurocentric notions of culture, identity and community, and also different from postcolonial theorizing of hybridity, which relies heavily upon an anti-essentialist discourse and strives toward perceived ‘newness’ through the displacement of place-based notions of tradition and collectivity. Although such theorists have important insights to offer, we need an Indigenous form of *métissage* that encourages theorists to pay closer attention to the particular character of colonial discourses in specific Canadian contexts. Such a theory needs to be able to comprehend and respect the *indigenous* quality and character of instances of cultural interaction.

Indigenizing Métissage

Postcolonial forms of hybridity and *métissage* are inadequate as theoretical tools for use in facilitating respectful transcultural dialogue in Canada. What is needed is a theory that demonstrates that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians have deeply historical relationships that continue to manifest themselves in ambiguous ways to the present day. We need a theory that recognizes cultural difference, but can also, simultaneously and paradoxically, remind us of the interreferential

character of those relationships. An acceptance of this interpretation of history, however, hinges on the recognition that “there is no *hors-Indigène*, no geopolitical or psychic setting, no real or imagined *terra nullius* free from the satisfactions and unsettlements of Indigenous (pre)occupation” (Findlay, 2000, p. 309). This recognition is necessary to counteract the consequences of the grand narrative of colonialism on Canadians and Canadian society, and the ways in which the knowledge systems, values and historical perspectives of Aboriginal people have been written out of the ‘official’ version of the building of the Canadian nation. This ‘writing out’ has led to a massive misunderstanding of Aboriginal perspectives on the part of the average Canadian citizen. So, how do we begin to engage with this problem without portraying all colonizers as evil and all colonized as victims? How can we reread history to show that the actual interactions between Aboriginal and Canadian were, and continue to be, more complex than colonial binaries can possibly recount? Following Findlay (2000), I suggest that an Indigenous approach, an interpretive sensibility conceived and developed in this place we call Canada, would work best.

I have several reasons for using the term *Indigenous* in combination with *métissage*. First, the kind of *métissage* I have in mind is focused on interpreting and reconceptualizing the historical and contemporary interactions of Aboriginal people and Canadians. The significance of these interactions will certainly be informed by Aboriginal values, ethics, and ways of knowing, but will not be specifically limited to those perspectives. Therefore, the use of the term *Indigenous* does not connote an exclusionary type of *métissage* done for, by, and

with Aboriginal peoples only. The term is used to draw attention to the idea that the kinds of interactions that I have in mind with this type of inquiry must be interpreted in a Canadian context.³⁷ In that sense, they are specific in origin or *indigenous* to Canada; they could not happen elsewhere.

Second, Indigenous Métissage is about particular places in Canada. There are sites across Canada that have contentious histories in that the stories that Aboriginal people tell of them do not seem to coincide with Canadians' perspectives on those same places. Hundreds of cities, towns, and communities across Canada today, for example, grew from forts that were built at places that have specific cultural, spiritual, and social significance to Aboriginal people, and Canadians living in those places do not and cannot have those same connections. Such affinities for significant places in the cultural landscape are often mapped through stories. Aboriginal people come to know the land and identify with significant places through such stories. One of the goals of Indigenous Métissage is to bring Aboriginal place-stories to bear on public policy discussions in educational contexts in appropriate and meaningful ways. I believe that such place-stories encourage people to rethink and reframe their received understandings of the place called Canada and thus better comprehend the significance of Aboriginal presence and participation today. When a specific place is conceptualized as uniquely layered with the memories and experiences of different groups of people who now live together, the possibility of those different groups facing each other in relational terms is enlivened. Based on this vision,

³⁷ Certainly, the Canadian context has many strong similarities with other settler societies around the world, especially in terms of the conventions and institutions governing the ways in which people interact. However, this study is not interested in such comparisons.

Indigenous Métissage purposefully juxtaposes layered understandings and interpretations of places in Canada with the specific intent of holding differing interpretations in tension without the need to resolve or assimilate. The goal is to resist colonial frontier logics and instead forward new understandings of the relationships connecting Aboriginal and Canada. It is for these reasons that place is a key aspect of Indigenous Métissage.

Third, to provide an aperture into the unique character and complexity of the particular place of concern in the inquiry, interpretations stemming from Indigenous Métissage are grounded in the use of a specific artifact that comes from that place. The artifact must be considered *indigenous* to the place in that it is perceived to belong there, naturally or characteristically. Artifacts are products of culture that are symbolic of added meaning or significance, “tangible incarnations of social relationships embodying the attitudes and behaviors of the past” (Beaudry, Cook, & Mrozowski, 1991, p. 150). Artifacts are imbued with meaning when human hands craft them, but also when humans conceptualize them as *storied* aspects of their world. A rock can be considered an artifact when it is fashioned into an arrow point. At the same time, a rock can also be considered an artifact if it is directly associated with a particular place and the history, culture, language and spirituality of a particular group of people (Christensen, 2000, p. 34). It is worthwhile to quote Holland and Cole (1995) at length here:

...an artifact is an aspect of the material world that has a collectively remembered use. It has been, and in the case of living artifacts continues

to be, modified over the history of its incorporation in goal directed human action....their material form has been shaped by their participation in the interactions of which they were previously a part and which they mediate in the present. They are, in effect, one form of history in the present. Their history, collectively remembered, constitutes their ideal aspect. (p. 476)

In other words, even though most artifacts are tangible, there are subtle and abstract meanings and concepts—metaphysicalities—inseparable from their physical matter that emanate from their history, their use, and the ways they are presently conceptualized based upon this history. I use *artifact* in a socio-cultural and historical sense to denote a vestige fecund with contested interpretations of culture and identity rather than in an archaeological sense referring to findings fit for museums that attempt to ‘capture’ and ‘define’ meanings of culture and identity.

Doing Indigenous Métissage involves interpretation of the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are both rooted in perspectives of colonial constructs and histories. They are simultaneously and paradoxically antagonistic and conjoined. In many ways, these types of contradictions and ambiguities are reflective of what it means to be an Aboriginal person in Canada today. Indigenous Métissage, as theory, enables a thoughtful engagement with these contradictions by providing a way to plan, conceptualize, strategize, and make cogent various forms of resistance to the logic of colonialism (Smith, 1999, p. 38). It is done not to overtly

oppose colonial frontier logics, but rather to circumvent those logics through the assertion of connectivity.

Braiding Indigenous Métissage

There are several metaphors that inform this research sensibility called Indigenous Métissage. These metaphors are helpful in bringing an imaginative conceptual language to describe the quality, character, and movement of the research process. The first has to do with the image of the fort as Maracle (1992) describes it. The metaphor of the fort is powerful because it conjures up so many conflicting images of colonizer and colonized, the duality of insider/outsider, and the differing relationships to land and place. Yet, the fort represents commonality of place for both Aboriginal peoples and Canadians as well, even though they have differing perspectives on its significance. More compelling for me as a researcher is the prevalence of the fort in the consciousness of the average Canadian. Almost every major city in Canada has some nostalgic rendition of an historic fort that has been resurrected as a *celebration* of colonial history. You won't find many Aboriginal people visiting these places; they remain outside. The walls of the fort are symbolic of the perceived divide separating Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives. Deconstructing the fort through Indigenous Métissage will help lessen this divide.

The second is *pentimento*,³⁸ a concept borrowed from the study of painting that I have chosen as a metaphor for the problem of historicism.³⁹ The history of

³⁸ Pentimento: the phenomenon of earlier painting showing through the layer or layers of paint on a canvas. (Canadian Oxford Dictionary)

Indigenous peoples before and after contact with Europeans has been ‘painted over’ by official versions of history. In that sense, we can say that an attempt was made to displace or replace Indigenous history and memory (as the history of Canada) with a new ‘painting’ of a new civilization. The Indigenous ‘painting’ was not considered to be a useful or viable portrayal of the new brand of Canadian society that was emerging. It became a separate and distinct item in an isolated part of the museum of Canadian history. However, Indigenous history and memory has begun to show through in the official history of Canada, conceptual holes in the historical narratives have become obvious, and this has caused many to look more closely to see what has been missed. This kind of rereading of history is predicated on the desire to recover the stories and memories that have been ‘painted over.’ Pentimento implies a desire to peel back the layers that have obscured an artifact or a memory as a way to intimately examine those layers. The idea of pentimento operates on the acknowledgement that each layer mixes with the others and renders irreversible influences on our perceptions of it. Doing Indigenous Métissage, then, involves peeling back these layers to reveal what has been concealed and interpreting the significance of what has been uncovered.

The third metaphor that brings unity to this research sensibility is the idea of researcher as the weaver of a braid (Chambers et al., 2008, p.p. 141-142). Staying true to the intricate layers of colonial constructs suggested by the first two metaphors guiding this interpretive inquiry, the fort and pentimento, the weaver as researcher would produce a textual braid or *bricolage*, “that is, a pieced-together,

³⁹ “Historicism—and even the modern, European idea of history—one might say, came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody’s way of saying ‘not yet’ to somebody else” (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 8).

close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). The act of weaving a textual braid through Indigenous Métissage provides a means for researchers to express the convergence of wide and diverse influences in an ethically relational manner. “This braid addresses the question: What does métissage look like” (Chambers et al., 2008. p. 141)?⁴⁰

While the spirit and intent of Indigenous Métissage is rooted in ethical relationality exemplified through braidedness, it is also true that the ‘look’ of the braid will reflect the particular research context under scrutiny. The weaver of the braid must remain mindful that each research context must be explored and evaluated based on the particular character of the situation. The *bricolage*, then, is a braided and emergent construction created by the researcher “that changes and takes new form as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). The textual quality of the braid emerges as the researcher engages with the artifact and place that inform the inquiry, makes decisions on issues that need closer attention, and decides how best to interpret the significance of the character of the inquiry to the interests of ethical relationality

Indigenous Métissage thus emerged as a research sensibility and theory best suited to address the imaginative language of the metaphors. The deconstruction of the fort as a mythic symbol suggests a traverse of the fortified boundaries of inside and outside—to turn the *outside in* and the *inside out*—and

⁴⁰ Although Indigenous Métissage has a different focus and purpose from that of my métissage mentors and friends, I wish to maintain affiliations with the aesthetic qualities of the research praxis.

have Aboriginal and Canadian face each other. Revealing the quality and character of the historical and current relationships linking Aboriginal and Canadian involves a peeling back of the many layers of artifact and place that have been concealed. The textual braid can then be woven once the various layers and standpoints have been laid bare, anatomized, connected through interpretation, and juxtaposed. This is how these three metaphors interact to inform and create Indigenous Métissage. One prominent goal of this process is to attend to the complexities of colonial and neo-colonial engagements in a reciprocal manner, and find ways to write about those complexities using a language that sparks shifts in historical consciousness and fosters ethical relationality.

These goals imply a transdisciplinary focus. To be ‘transdisciplinary’ in research focus means to be responsive to the various contextual research challenges that arise by being *open* to diverse research approaches and possibilities (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Doing Indigenous Métissage requires dedication to the reciprocating interpretive process and attentiveness to insights that arise from it. In this sense, then, Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method. What is required instead is careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told. Artifact and place provide apertures into these stories and their associated discourses. These are critical starting points that offer abundant opportunities for deep interpretations that can be reread, reframed, and then braided in diverse ways. The focus on particular artifacts associated with specific

places causes researchers to closely consider the contextual complexities of Aboriginal-Canadian relations because, by their very nature, they are conspicuous aspects of our shared society.

Attending to the difficulties and complexities of these relationships by revealing the braided quality of understandings promotes an ethical form of relationality that is able to acknowledge and comprehend difference. Thus, rather than reinscribing the Aboriginal as passive victim of change, I wish to demonstrate Aboriginal presence, participation, resistance, and agency in the events of the past. These are survival stories that give life back to those of us living today. To properly honour them from Indigenous pedagogical and philosophical standpoints, I tell these stories guided by ecological understandings of connectivity and renewal. In doing so, I am not intending to invisibilize the severe power imbalances between Aboriginal and Canadian. Rather, I wish to take up the principle of ‘we-are-in-this-together-ism’ in an organic manner. The braid accomplishes this for me.

A central aim of Indigenous Métissage is to *reconstruct* understandings of the colonial constructs people (including the researcher) hold so that, “over time, everyone formulates more informed and sophisticated constructions and becomes more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). The researcher becomes a “passionate participant” in the deconstruction, reconstruction, and juxtaposition of contentious versions of historical realities by engaging in the process of interpreting and braiding standpoints identified through the research (p. 115). Through this process, the

meaning of an historical situation or context, derived from an artifact rooted in a particular place, “accumulates only in a relative sense through the formation of ever more informed and sophisticated constructions via the hermeneutical / dialectical process, as varying constructions are brought into juxtaposition” (p. 114). Thus, Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility closely affiliated with a hermeneutic understanding of lived experience and historical consciousness.

The Role of Hermeneutics in Indigenous Métissage

In a hermeneutic inquiry, these perspectives I have been calling Aboriginal and Canadian are considered horizons. A horizon is a range of vision that enables people to view all that can be seen from that position tempered, of course, by all the prejudices, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, traditions, and histories that influence how we see things (Smith, 1993, p. 196). In this sense, a horizon can be considered a standpoint from which a person views a situation. “Yet, it is important to note that our horizon is not closed or shut off from the horizons of others because no one is ever completely confined or constrained by his present prejudices” (p. 196). Rather, prejudices are pre-judgments necessary to make our way through everyday thought, conversation, and action (Gadamer, 1975, p. 240). Gadamer argues that our prejudices help form our personal identity and affect how we view the world as historical beings because they reflect our understandings of our place as members of a family, society, culture, and community (p. 245). If we cannot understand and identify our own prejudices and assumptions, we are unable to understand our personal standpoint or the standpoint of someone else. Understanding our own prejudices and assumptions,

and the philosophical and intellectual traditions that inform them, enables us to better understand the standpoints or horizons we bring to an interpretive encounter with difference.

It is precisely this encounter with difference that Gadamer identifies as the true work of hermeneutics. He argues that it is impossible for us to identify our prejudices and recognize new ways of seeing things without a situation or exchange that provokes us to question our understandings (p. 266). To be provoked in this way does not mean that our own horizon must be abandoned and replaced by another. “On the contrary, a dialogical encounter of questions and answers is a fusion of horizons” (Smith, 1993, p. 196). In Gadamerian hermeneutics, this concept of fusion describes movement that occurs when we are open to the horizon of another person, a text, or a situation because this openness instigates a broadening of our original horizon to include the one we have encountered.

However, despite this seemingly benevolent dialogical openness to difference, Gadamer’s principle of fusion of horizons has been critiqued by some theorists, most notably John Caputo (1987), as a conservative framework that actually supports the systematic assimilation and incorporation of difference within a well-established superstructure. According to Caputo (1987), Gadamer reveals his strict adherence to tradition and the idea of eternal truth—informed by his scholarly attachment to Eurowestern philosophies—in his conceptualization of the fusion of horizons (p. 111). This overreliance on tradition suggests that Gadamer is not really very interested in a hermeneutics that supports provocative

interpretive engagement with difference. Rather, his philosophical hermeneutics, and the fusion of horizons, can be considered overly ethnocentric (Hoy, 1991) in the ways that it recentres and thus perpetuates the dominance of meta-philosophies that descend from philosophers like Plato and Hegel. The fusion of horizons prescribes a clean and fairly instrumental process for the ‘digestion’ of difference under the guise of dialogue:

If anything, hermeneutics...has curtailed the call of the other by means of a Hegelian metaphysics of identity which is too quick to assimilate the other to the same. In hermeneutics the idea is to effect a fusion of horizons between the same and the other. It is a philosophy of digestion which is always interested in assimilating the other, making it part of its substance. (Caputo, 1988, p. 67)

The key implication stemming from this critique is that Gadamer’s overreliance on Eurowestern philosophies in the conceptualization of the fusion of horizons has resulted in a theory that interprets the significance of difference from the standpoint of those in power. This suggests a tidy theory for the preservation of existing ideologies and hierarchies—a theory that only ‘speaks’ Greek or German.

This problematic dynamic underlying the concept of the fusion of horizons contrasts with the intentions of Indigenous Métissage. In working to bring together the standpoints of Aboriginal and Canadian in a provocative interpretive engagement, there is the very real potential that the act of ‘bringing together’ could result in the incorporation of the Aboriginal *story* within Canadian *history*. The purpose of the engagement could be seen as the reconciliation of difference

through the expansion of the Canadian national narrative to *embrace* Aboriginality. The gradual negation of Indigenusness could be considered a necessary outcome of such exchanges. In this scenario, the inclusion of difference and openness to the other are positions that both serve the interests of the Canadian nation and nationality. The point here is that “[i]n the fusion of horizons, there is a tendency to gloss over the heterogeneities and abysses that confront us” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 281). Missing from this version of interpretive engagement is attention to the unequal power dynamics at play whenever Aboriginal-Canadian relations are at issue. Those relationships are deeply historical and thoroughly suffused and circumscribed by the “coloniality of power” and the “colonial difference” (Mignolo, 2002, pp. 81-85). Any meaningful endeavour directed towards interpreting the significance of these relationships cannot ignore their conflictual epistemological, ontological, and ideological roots. Nor can it be denied that the wisdom traditions and knowledge systems that inform Indigenous standpoints have a complex and critical vitality that belies simple appropriation and assimilation. Also missing is acknowledgement that deep interpretive work of this nature is rarely neat, tidy, and reducible to a predetermined process of fusion.

Following Caputo (1987, p. 1) and Jardine (1992), I think that meaningful and provocative interpretive work requires a commitment to a hermeneutic that is focused on the “restoring of life to its original difficulty.” This is in contrast to more prescribed and instrumentalized solutions to perceived problems that are directed towards management and incorporation, such as the fusion of horizons.

The difficulties and ambiguities associated with interpreting the significance of life and living in relation to others cannot be explained away with static models. Hermeneutics is a form of radical thinking suspicious of prescribed solutions that seeks to engage with difficulty and ambiguity—“the fix we are in”—by remaining right in the midst of tensionalities rather than searching to rise above or move beyond them (Caputo, 1987, p. 3). It is this desire to remain amidst the messiness and difficulties of a situation or context that creates opportunities for new knowledge and understanding to arise:

The returning of life to its original difficulty...is a return to the essential generativity of human life, a sense of life in which there is always something left to say, with all the difficulty, risk, and ambiguity that such generativity entails. Hermeneutics is thus concerned with the ambiguous nature of life itself. It does not desire to render such ambiguity objectively presentable...but rather to attend to it, to give it a voice.

(Jardine, 1992, p. 119)

Rather than working to remove ambiguity, hermeneutics works to interpret and give voice to the difficulty and ambiguousness of life itself. The hermeneutic call to immerse oneself in the complexities and ambiguities of a given situation or context of engagement requires deep attentiveness to the centrality of history, culture, tradition, and philosophy in producing standpoints of interpretation. It is a provocative call to come to better understand the ‘fix we are in’ that eschews foreclosure and conclusion. Emphasized instead in the call to hermeneutic inquiry is organic recursive engagement with “life as it is lived, with a desire to

understand the same, interpreting it in a way that can show the possibilities for life's continuance" (Smith, 1999a, p. 47).

Researchers confronted with these challenges require a certain kind of hermeneutic imagination that fosters careful attentiveness to the conditions which make it possible for them to "speak, think and act" in the ways that they do (Smith, 1991, p.188). Hermeneutic imagination helps us make sense of ambiguity because interpreting culture demands a creative ability to speak across disciplines, cultures, and boundaries. There are no direct methodologies that can describe how this moving across can occur; we must rely on our own skills of interpretive imagination and creativity. However, Smith (1991) does identify four requirements that must be attended to by researchers engaging in interpretive work. The first is the development of a deep attentiveness to language and its uses, "to notice how one uses it and how others use it" (p. 199). This requirement expresses the need for critical awareness of the historical nature of language and the realization that there are multiple layers and assumptions associated with words and their uses that must be considered when using and choosing them. Second, researchers must act with a deep sense of the "basic interpretability of life itself" so that they can "meaningfully deconstruct what is going on and propose alternative, more creative ways of thinking and acting" (p. 199). Third, hermeneutics requires researchers to interpret their chosen research context in light of the ways in which they themselves are implicated in how the research is carried out and interpreted.

This means that hermeneutical consciousness is always and everywhere a historical consciousness, a way of thinking and acting that is acutely aware of the storied nature of human experience. We find ourselves, hermeneutically speaking, always in the middle of stories, and good hermeneutical research shows an ability to read those stories from *inside* out and *outside* in. (p. 201, emphasis mine).

The fourth and final requirement of hermeneutic inquiry is that researchers work to create meaning through their interpretations rather than simply reporting their findings. To require such meaningful interpretations places added emphasis on the importance of the skilled weaver of the textual braid who employs certain sensibilities in order to make meaning tangible and palpable rather than valid or reliable. This imaginative creativity of hermeneutic inquiry stems from the desire to provoke new ways of understanding and meaning making, not to bypass tradition and historical consciousness, but instead to reengage with these in light of the present context and shared interpretations of the world (p. 202).

Indigenous Métissage is very much inspired by a hermeneutic dedicated to “restoring life to its original difficulty” (Jardine, 1992; Caputo, 1987, p. 1) that is informed by the four requirements outlined by Smith (1991). Hermeneutic attentiveness to the original difficulty of life fits well with this inquiry because past and present relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians are *difficult* (> from O.Fr. *difficulte*, from L. *difficilis* "hard," from *dis-* "not" + *facilis* "easy"). The central difficulty and unease of this relationship stems from the displacement of Indigenous peoples in their own lands and the systematic attacks

on Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life justified under the guise of progress, development, and the spread of universalized liberal democratic values. The severe power imbalances that enabled Canadians to assert their own forms of sovereignty over Indigenous lands and unilaterally enact legislation designed to assimilate and eliminate Indigenousness have had very damaging effects on Indigenous peoples and their communities. These difficult stories have not been told in schools or publically acknowledged by Canadians until very recently. At the heart of the lovely story of the Canadian nation and nationality, then, is a deep denial of the physical, epistemic, and ontological violence committed against Indigenous peoples and their ways. This denial makes it difficult for most Canadians today to understand the complexities of the relationships today. Heavily influenced by the settler story of freedom, progress, equality, equity, and opportunity, as well as the prominent international reputation Canada enjoys for these same reasons, most Canadians are unable to comprehend the difficult and ambiguous character of Aboriginal-Canadian relations today. The contradictions at the centre of this relationship must be acknowledged and deconstructed before meaningful movement towards decolonization can occur.

The task of interpreting the difficulties and contradictions of Aboriginal-Canadian relations, and making this interpretive work relevant to questions of curriculum and pedagogy today, requires “hermeneutic imagination” (Smith, 1991). Indigenous Métissage is an imaginative interpretive sensibility conceptualized amidst these difficulties. Through careful attention to language and its uses, I name, identify, and deconstruct colonial frontier logics and fort

pedagogy as troubling and problematic. I identify the fort as a mythic symbol and colonial artifact that embodies the difficult contradictions at the heart of the Canadian nation and nationality. The fort is the context and place of this inquiry because it is variably and simultaneously understood as a gathering place and site of exclusion. When I identify this artifact and place to begin this inquiry, I must also be willing to interrogate the reasons behind those choices so that I remain conscious of the influences of my own standpoint on the character of the inquiry. So, for example, I present an example of Indigenous Métissage in Chapter Three that is focused on the historical, curricular, and pedagogical significance of the place now called Edmonton and the artifact known as Fort Edmonton. In doing so, I remain aware of my personal experiences and memories of forts as motivating factors. The fact that I am able to see myself and the history of my family implicated in this inquiry, however, should not detract from my desire to make meaning of it. Rather, I have a responsibility to engage with the problem of interpretation from the specific standpoint of my subject position as an Indigenous person with deep roots in the Edmonton area.

To do so, I looked through archival records of Fort Edmonton, Hudson's Bay Company records, official government documents, photographs, drawings, diaries—searching for examples of difficult Aboriginal-Canadian relations that could be interpreted with hermeneutic imagination. Meanwhile, I also consulted documented Aboriginal accounts (most commonly in the form of narratives, oral histories or interviews that have been compiled by both Aboriginal and Canadian

historians) to better understand Aboriginal perspectives on those same issues. Informing my interpretations of these written sources were various stories of the place called *amiskwâciwaskahikan*,⁴¹ Fort Edmonton, and Edmonton that I have heard. These three strands stood alone, for the research moment, as parallel perspectives. What eventually emerged from this research process were particular points of tension between Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints that offered abundant opportunities for insightful interpretation. I deconstructed these standpoints and related tensions by doing *pentimento*—peeling back the layers of meaning—and paying close attention to the language, assumptions, and colonial constructs that were uncovered. Then, I reconstructed this research context by purposefully juxtaposing the perspectives and connections emerging from the inquiry into the significance of artifact and place. This is done to facilitate a textual encounter between Aboriginal and Canadian through juxtaposition of standpoints that affords a provocative interpretive engagement. By proposing through interpretation more creative ways to understand such encounters between Aboriginal and Canadian, Indigenous Métissage can help restore artifact and place with renewed vitality and significance for both parties. They will begin to hold them in common.

During the recursive process of deconstructing and then reconstructing an interpretive account of this type, I trace the hermeneutic circle many times. Such interpretive movement has “no natural starting point or endpoint” (Ellis, 1998, p. 16) and involves a constant interplay between the “specific and the general, the

⁴¹ This is the Cree word for the place now called Edmonton. It translates as ‘Beaver Hills House.’ Prior to the establishment of the fort, Cree people referred to this same location as *pehonan* or “waiting place” (Coutu, 2004, pp. 64-67; Meyers and Thistle, 1995, p. 415).

micro and macro” (Smith, 1991, p. 190). What fuels the movement around the hermeneutic circle is the desire to understand.⁴² It is the tension created when someone fails to understand somebody or something—a negativity of experience—that generates the desire to find out more about that situation. According to Gadamer (1975), the work of hermeneutics is based on the “polarity of familiarity and strangeness ... in regard to what has been said: the language in which the text addresses us, the story it tells us” (p. 262). The true home of hermeneutics, then, is the space in-between the familiar and the strange and in the interpretation of the experience or feeling that things were not as they were assumed to be (Carson, 1986, p. 75). This realization inspires questions:

It is clear that the structure of the question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions. The recognition that an object is different and not as we first thought obviously involves the question of whether it was this or that. The openness that is part of the experience is, from a logical point of view, precisely the openness of being this or that. It has the structure of a question. (Gadamer, 1975, p. 325)

The hermeneutical priority of the question emphasized by Gadamer addresses the experience of living in the world with others because when we ask questions, we inevitably instigate and sustain conversations with others regarding the individual and collective experiences of being-in-the-world. This conversation is both

⁴² The concept of the hermeneutic circle that informs Indigenous Métissage has also been heavily influenced by *Kainai* Elders. Bernard Tall Man once gave me the following advice: “*Okki, amoyi ahkootsiitapiiyoop*. We’ll use the circle. Here we’ll visualize. We’ll visualize what I’m gonna be doing in the future. I’m gonna think about how I’m gonna go about it. Then there’s gonna be movement. Then we’ll see it. That’s initiative. *Sapataniip ni kiitsipoowasin iis sapahtaaniip*. We didn’t just talk about it. We’re being initiative. I learned it from the elder. That’s why I use the circle” (Donald, 2003, p. 140)

dialogical and cyclical in that it is an exchange that generates and renews interpretation and understanding. Such is the nature of interpretive inquiry.

Indigenous Métissage is instigated by a heightened critical consciousness of a particular negativity of experience surrounding Aboriginal-Canadian relations—that things are not as they were assumed to be. The assumptions associated with colonial frontier logics and the pedagogy of the fort promote a constrained conceptualization of the world. In doing Indigenous Métissage, I seek to deconstruct these assumptions and reveal their origins. I then move on to the task of rereading, reframing, contextualizing, and juxtaposing Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to foster a more ethically relational understanding of what passes between them. This is difficult work that cannot be reduced to a simple task of talking to those different from us as a way to expand our horizon and thus *arrive* at better understanding. Proponents of emancipatory notions of dialogue have advocated for dialogues across difference on the grounds that such encounters will enable participants to more deeply understand different ways of seeing and knowing the world (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 94). The major assumption here is that dialogic encounters with difference provoke us to reflect on our own ways and thus bring about qualitative changes in our selves. As Ellsworth (1997) argues, however, there is a danger that the notion of dialogic engagement across frontiers of difference will be reduced to “communicative dialogue”—a self-reflective understanding of difference that really only serves to confirm that which is already held as true (pp. 92-95).

This self-perpetuating dynamic dominates communicative dialogue because conscious self-reflective understanding does not require movement outside of an already established standpoint. It serves to re-centre it. Mirroring the dynamics at play with the fusion of horizons, communicative dialogue merely serves to incorporate difference within a preexisting hermeneutic horizon:

The structure of address in communicative dialogue allows me to subsume whatever difference there is between us into conscious, self-reflexive understanding.

And so, what is guarded against by the rules that structure communicative dialogue is the breaking of a continuously *conscious* discourse. What is guarded against is the interruption of the unconscious, the unmeant, the unknowable, the excessive, the irrational, the unspeakable, the unhearable, the forgotten, the ignored, the despised.
(Ellsworth, 1997, p. 95)

The one who refuses to answer communicative dialogue's call to participate in its continuation, and refuses on the grounds that there's been a rupture, a break in common ground or common interests—that one must be excluded. That one has broken the rules of reciprocity, commitment, and participation—the rules of continuity. That one has refused the authority of communicative dialogue. (p. 107, italics original)

With these critical insights, Ellsworth draws attention to the hegemonic drive of dialogue wherein the rules of the game are already decided. The potential, authority, and purpose of an encounter with difference are directed towards

maintaining continuity of existing structures and conventions. “The only thing that can break the logic of the dialogic relation is a refusal to agree to an initial, neutral, innocent understanding” (p. 93).

This critique of communicative dialogue is relevant to this inquiry because it raises some serious questions about the dynamics at play whenever Aboriginal and Canadian face each other for the purposes of generating new knowledge and understanding across perceived frontiers of difference. Commonsense logics perpetuate and naturalize a hegemonic form of neutrality that invisibilizes and avoids the tensions and discontinuities that arise. Anyone who tries to bring the ignored or forgotten to the forefront of these dialogic engagements can be easily dismissed as irrational and irreverent. The rules of the dialogic game severely constrain the terms by which people are permitted to speak and thus they serve to forestall the possibility of rupture. It is this conservative dynamic that enables the perpetuation of colonial frontier logics and fort pedagogy. And yet, in the practice of bringing together Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints by doing Indigenous Métissage, I clearly put faith in the creation of a textual form of dialogue that can produce new knowledge and understanding.

What are my intentions in doing so? Ellsworth (1997), following Felman (1987), provides some direction on this by forwarding an analytic form of dialogue that takes into account the difficulties, ambiguities, and discontinuities that trouble any attempts at dialogical engagement. Analytic dialogue is founded on the belief that these troubles cannot be bracketed out or transcended above in the dialogic process. “History, politics, religion, personal or social prejudices,

tradition...do not arrive, uninvited from elsewhere, to derail the efforts of those who would otherwise be able to commit to the ongoing process of coming to an understanding” (Ellsworth 1997, p. 122). Rather, they constitute the very character of the process. Analytic dialogue demands an acknowledgement and analysis of the deeply influential roles played by the past, power dynamics, prejudice, and assumption in the formulation of an interpretive stance.

What gets “analyzed” then, in analytic dialogue, is the route of a reading. How did you/we *arrive* at this interpretation, without knowing it—maybe even without desiring it? How have your/our passages through history, power, desire, and language on the way to this interpretation become integral parts of the very structure of the interpretation—of our knowledge? (p. 125, italics original)

This call to trace and retrace the route of an interpretive reading is also a call to face the discontinuities and complexities that shape and inform an interpretive standpoint. It is a bold assertion that there is no neutral, linear, transcendent, or innocent route to interpretation and understanding. Instead, the route is difficult, messy, and often contradictory.

Indigenous Métissage instigates and fosters an analytic form of textual dialogue by placing the power dynamics of coloniality at the forefront of interpretive work. Doing Indigenous Métissage requires sustained inquiry into the nature of Aboriginal-Canadian relations by bringing focus on detailed contextual histories of particular artifacts located in specific places. I contend that tracing the interpretive routes followed in reading these contextual histories provides ample

opportunities for interrogation of the histories, logics, traditions, assumptions, and power dynamics at play. Texts of Indigenous Métissage dwell with the difficulties and ambiguities of Aboriginal-Canadian relations and often cause readers and listeners to realize that things are not as they assumed them to be. The intention, then, is to inspire readers and listeners to examine the routes of their own interpretations—to see themselves implicated in the stories told—and make critical connections to teaching and learning today.

In doing Indigenous Métissage, I take responsibility for the articulation of an Indigenous interpretive stance on matters of curricular and pedagogical significance. This particular stance is inspired by a desire to articulate the critical role of the Indigenous interpreter in public contexts. While it is true that in settler societies like Canada today, Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems offer unique insights regarding the significance of living in particular places, these insights are often framed as only good for Indigenous peoples and their communities. Possibilities for teaching and learning across perceived frontiers of difference are severely constrained by this assumed exclusivity. This approach is yet another remnant of colonial frontier logics and the insistence on separate realities for Canadian and Aboriginal. I believe that Indigenous interpretive standpoints, informed and guided by wisdom traditions, provide profound guidance in support of rereading and reframing Aboriginal-Canadian relations in more balanced and relational terms.⁴³ We need a hermeneutic that honours the

⁴³ This statement is inspired by a sentence from Stewart- Harawira 's (2005a) influential book *The New Imperial Order* in which the author contends that interpretive work makes possible the continuance of life. "It is precisely at this moment of possibility, I maintain, that indigenous ontologies and cosmologies have a profoundly important contribution to make" (p. 51)

interpretive position of the Indigenous and also supports critical engagement with Eurowestern perspectives in ways that assert the relational and public character of these engagements. Indigenous Métissage strives to do this by recognizing and juxtaposing difference, holding it in tension without the need to resolve it, and thus making a complex and transmodern statement.

Importantly, though, such interpretive work does not imply the abdication or weakening of an Indigenous subject position—the elimination of an Indigenous standpoint from which to address issues of concern. On the contrary, this work makes the Indigenous subject position more profoundly present and necessary. It is true that Indigenous peoples and cultures have undergone significant change as a result of interactions with newcomers to their lands and their participation in more global conversations. However, this does not mean that the unique cultural, political, social, and historical standpoints of Indigenous peoples have been erased or incorporated as a result of these changes. McLeod (1998b) theorizes the unique position of Indigenousness in Canada in political terms:

The interpretive location of the subject must be taken seriously if we are to arrive at an adequate political ontology. Many impulses in mainstream culture, including liberalism, have attempted to undermine the historicity of Indian lived experience. The self has often been constructed as an abstract entity, cut off and alienated from its historicity. This is of no detriment to members of the mainstream culture because their historicity...is assumed as a backdrop to abstract, theoretical discussions.

To the Indian, however, such a set of assumptions can be very damaging to forming true democracy and just will. (pp. 69-69)

As McLeod suggests, liberal democratic ideals—made manifest in cultural concepts like communicative dialogue and the fusion of horizons—become eminently problematic when the terms for engagement are falsely universalized. In this case, then, cultural difference is not seen as problem to be overcome or a horizon to be fused.

In sum, then, the hermeneutic that informs Indigenous *Métissage* is very much affiliated with the desire to acknowledge and address the complex difficulties that characterize Aboriginal-Canadian relations. One of the more salient difficulties of this work is the possibility for the recognition of cultural difference while simultaneously emphasizing ethical relationality. How can we be simultaneously different and related? Here I rely upon Australian Aboriginal scholar Martin Nakata (2002) who calls the intersection of Eurowestern and Indigenous knowledge systems the “Cultural Interface.” For Nakata, the daily lived realities of Indigenous peoples are circumscribed by the tensionalities and ambiguities of this intersection. What is critical for him is not the attainment of some form of cultural authenticity in response to this ambiguity, but instead recognition of this reality and the assertion of an Indigenous standpoint from which to understand and interpret the contentious intersections that take place at the Cultural Interface.

If we conceptualize the fort walls as a medium of Cultural Interface, and we recognize these walls as simultaneously permeable and impermeable, and then

extend this concept to argue that the future of Aboriginal and Canadian is indeed tied together, then we need to think carefully and collaboratively about the historic and current significance of these relationships. These collaborations need not conform to some hybrid ‘third space’ of compromise and reconciliation, or a fusion of horizons, but instead make use of a context-specific interpretive position, informed by wisdom traditions, from which to speak on the issues under consideration. In the context of this inquiry, then, these critical Indigenous interpreters are the “word warriors” so central to Turner’s (2006) vision for a critical Indigenous philosophy. They take responsibility for asserting Indigenous perspectives in public contexts without denying ongoing relationships with others who have come to live on their lands. Indigenous Métissage is one such interpretive approach. It takes seriously the notion of the Cultural Interface and the critical position of the Indigenous interpreter.

Telling a Story

Once the interpretive process has reached a certain point, I use hermeneutic imagination to braid together a story that relates how, in an indirect way, Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints are interreferential, co-dependent, and yet simultaneously rife with the power dynamics of coloniality. Such stories embrace the spirit of a renewed pedagogy of the fort by demonstrating that relationality and cultural difference can be productively held in tension. This is done by telling a story that braids parallel perspectives together to show that our individual preoccupations with certain artifacts, places and colonial constructs are really part of a larger collective and difficult understanding of those concerns. In

this sense, then, such stories not only describe actions, but also transformations. “The line which a story follows is not straight, logical, step by step. It varies from life to life. Most often, it zigzags, as if seeking out the spot for a breakthrough” (Novak, 1978, p. 53).

These sorts of concerns with narrative forms are characteristic of a larger movement towards new forms of narrative research in education that are informed by postmodern sensibilities (Casey, 1995). To be postmodern, in terms of story, means to find foundational, unified, linear and monological versions to be inadequate as a means for describing human experience and meaning making. As Novak (1978) points out, we, as storytellers, can impose a structure or predetermined script on a story as though it were an abstract principle that could be memorized and replicated (p. 65). Writing such stories indicates a desire to describe or capture an ultimate truth stemming from a unified conception of culture, history and human experience with strong links to a certain grand narrative. In this sense, then, writers relating such stories simply *re-tell* dominant narratives, albeit in their own words and in a different context. However, to do this is to render the story inorganic. A story produced from the process of rereading and reframing “must be fresh, unique, singular. Above all, it must spring from inner sources of creativity and expression ... [from a place] ... full of invention, surprise, and originality” (p. 65). Writing stories in this way restores human agency to narrative forms and chronicles the construction of free spaces or place of interchange (Casey, 1995, p.214).

To attend to human agency in story means to contest grand narratives and the condition of 'already read' by writing what you know about people, how they make meaning in their lives, and the ways that they express these understandings. When researchers come to view themselves as storytellers, they become conscious of the ways in which their autobiography influences their understandings of people and how they make sense of their lives and experiences. This is what it means to possess a sense of the "collective self" or the "collective subjective" (Casey, 1995, pp. 220-222).

In order to create the kind of story I have been describing, the writer, as researcher, must occupy a standpoint from which he can see himself in the collective and the collective in him. A story—to put it another way—is a linking of standpoints. A standpoint is not a theory. It is the subjective context in which a theory is held. It is a sense of who. *Who* specifies the direction in which the theory looks, establishes the way of perceiving required for it, supplies the imaginative context and uneasiness out of which the theory grew, shapes the judgments and actions which follow. *Who* is to a theory what blood and air are to a human being. A standpoint is the *who* at a given point in time. A story links these points in time. (Novak, 1978, p. 53)

A standpoint is like a perspective that is a manifestation of the particular subjective reality of a person. Who this person is, in term of their history, experiences, memories, prejudices and cultural practices, specifies the distinctive character of their standpoint. Novak's concept of *who* offers important insights,

but also must be expanded beyond a singular preoccupation with identity to include the particular context from which a researcher addresses and interprets. Who cannot be separated from where.⁴⁴ A person confronted with a negativity of experience will be unable to bypass these senses of *who* and *where*. However, researchers know that who we are is always in a state of flux as long as we remain open to the standpoint of another; this openness creates the possibility that our sense of *who* can be transformed through encounters with difference. This is why story and narrative are so powerful to the human consciousness. We are drawn into a story by the desire to make meaning and transform our sense of *who* and *where*. The story we hear has the potential to become part of our own story and change our lives.

These intertwined concepts of standpoint and story have critical points of affinity with the goals of doing Indigenous Métissage. From the standpoint of an Aboriginal person living in Canada, the task of facilitating transcultural dialogue between Canadians and Aboriginal people has been tainted by colonial constructs and legacies. Canadian society is so deeply suffused with this history of colonialism that we fail to see, like a fish swimming in water, how markedly are daily practices of living together are determined by it. Thus, any inquiry focused on Aboriginal-Canadian relations must reconceptualize the colonial past as a present concern. This is one reason that I have chosen artifact and place as critical starting points when doing Indigenous Métissage—articulating an understanding of them will inevitably require a tour through contested colonial terrain.

⁴⁴ This statement is informed by Chambers (1998), who theorizes a topographical orientation for Canadian curriculum theory based on the question “Where is here?” It has also been influenced by Blackfoot Elders and notions of place-based citizenship.

Interpreting a perspective on artifact or place will also require a researcher to develop a sense of *who* has formed the perspective, *where* the perspective is situated, under what circumstances, and according to which values, prejudices, and assumptions it has gained currency.

Doing Indigenous Métissage requires work with artifact, place, and context in the hope that a story will emerge that will need to be told. To weave this story requires a provocative juxtaposition of Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to bring about a shift in the critical consciousness of writer and reader, storyteller and listener. Such relationality needs to happen in theory because it has not been perceived and appreciated in the daily interactions and practices of living together in this place we call Canada. It has been concealed by the pedagogy of the fort. We must first reread and reframe colonial constructs in order to see more clearly the language and logics that has clouded our thinking. Such theorizing will help deconstruct the colonial frontier logics of inside/outside and facilitate meaningful reconstruction through curricular and pedagogical engagements in educational settings across Canada. Only then will the stories linking Aboriginal peoples and Canadians revitalize relationships with a common sense of place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described a research sensibility termed Indigenous Métissage. Indigenous Métissage leans heavily upon hermeneutic sensibilities and Indigenous wisdom traditions regarding the significance of human connectivity and place to trouble the commonsense perpetuation of colonial frontier logics, reply to the dominant version of the pedagogy of the fort, and reconceptualize

Indigenous presence and participation in the place now called Canada. The creation of Indigenous Métissage as research sensibility is very much rooted in “situated response” to the context of my lived experience as an Aboriginal person with mixed allegiances and affiliations (Hermes, 1998). In striving to make sense of the story of my family and position myself in ways that do not deny its difficulty, ambiguity, and complexity, I have come to understand that the stories of my ancestors—both Aboriginal and Canadian—have become my story. Indigenous Métissage is thus a very personal and deeply contextual response to this ambiguity. The fort, as mythic symbol, delineates the commonsense divisions that deny permeability and discount the significance of telling stories that traverse these divides. In this sense, then, attentiveness to the familial significance of the fort and the interconnected stories of my ancestors has fostered the creation of Indigenous Métissage. A major assumption of this work is that rereading and reframing the past as shared will foster renewed ethical partnerships in the present and renew hope for the future. The next chapter will begin with a focus on the concept of the fort across historical contexts with the purpose of showing how the idea of the fort, as we have come to understand it in Canada, has deep roots in European history and colonial experience. This will involve a brief survey of some selected forts and fortresses from around the world with a particular focus on colonial activities. Also included is a more detailed profile of Fort Michilimackinac (located in present-day northern Michigan) that provides a deeper understanding of the significance of the fort in the North American context. The main point will be that colonial frontier logics and the pedagogy of

the fort are not recent phenomena, but have grown out of cultural interactions and historical interpretations associated with colonial activities over several centuries.

Chapter Two: The Concept of the Fort Across Historical Contexts: Tracing Colonial Frontier Logics

Throughout history, humans have tended to build walls around their living places as a means of protection from attacks and raids from enemies. Whether simple or more refined structures, forts were constructed around the world by people with the intent of discouraging those outside the walls from trespassing on the lives of those living inside the walls. The most fundamental idea of the fort (>Fr. and L. *forte*, strong) is to create a stronghold or fortified place to enable its inhabitants to live peacefully in safety and security. This emphasis on the safety and security provided by these fortifications fuelled a preoccupation with architectural solidity that could ensure that the walls remain impermeable to outside influences. This perceived surety also seemed to enable control of the interactions of people and deny human relationality. In this conceptualization, then, well-fortified walls signify cultural impermeability and amount to defensive measures against the potential influences of the outsiders on the realities of the insiders. As we have seen, over time the semiotic power of the fort on the frontier has become a naturalized and purified mythic symbol that reaffirms the teleological story of the progressive development of Eurowestern civilization brought to borderland wilderness. This story has particular currency in the Canadian context today and its influences can be seen in the institutional, epistemological, and societal conventions and assumptions that currently regulate relationships between Aboriginal and Canadian. In these ways, what is usually

considered Canadian is recursively fortified against outside threats posed by those who typically dwell on the margins of this teleological dream.

So, although the pedagogy of the fort can be considered as originating in the defensive architectural measures associated with fortifications, those earlier preoccupations have morphed into defensive measures taken to assert sovereignty over colonial lands and, in the process, relegate Aboriginal peoples to the margins of Canadian society and history. Aboriginal peoples and communities emerge from this process as excluded extras, the dislocated and dissatisfied tribe, forever clinging to tradition to their detriment and haphazardly communicating misguided conceptions of reality. This rendering of Aboriginal peoples as marginalia, errata, and the unfortunate detritus leftover from processes of progress and development, has also played a significant determining factor in curricular and pedagogical considerations. Until very recently, Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews have been kept to the margins of curriculum documents and texts, mostly because they have been considered *outside* worthwhile intellectual endeavours. The philosophical spirit and practical intent of recent curricular initiatives involving Aboriginal perspectives will only be realized by facing, rather than moving past, these intellectual legacies.

It is for these reasons that this inquiry focuses on colonial frontier logics and the pedagogy of the fort as major influences in curricular and pedagogical considerations of Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews. Aboriginal peoples and Canadians will be unable to move forward as partners in shared endeavours until the assumptions and prejudices associated with these two

governing influences are confronted and reframed. In working toward this curricular and pedagogical goal of respectful and meaningful cultural engagement, I have come to believe that contesting the mythic power of the fort must begin with revisiting the fort and interpreting its significance, in various contexts, from an Indigenous standpoint. Following Nakata (1998), the assertion of a critical Indigenous interpretive standpoint is deemed necessary in the context of this inquiry because, if we wish to “understand our own position better and ultimately act to improve it, we must first immerse ourselves in and understand the very systems of thought, ideas and knowledges that have been instrumental in producing our position” (p. 4). We need to better understand how Indigeness has been produced and positioned through the colonial process.

The fort, as mythic symbol and site of contention, offers an opportunity to uncover the complex and ambiguous character of these contentious intersections. The challenge is to reveal, and hold in tension, both the dominant version of the pedagogy of the fort that teaches about frontier divides and the more braided version of the pedagogy of the fort that teaches about human connectivity. Indigenous Métissage constitutes a provocative response to this challenge by fostering a focus on Indigenous interpretive replies to situations viewed as unbalanced, unjust, unethical, or in need of rethinking and the purposeful juxtaposition of these replies with Eurowestern master narratives. While one storied version of the fort conforms to meet the needs of the Canadian nation and nationality and emphasizes the impermeability of the walls, there are also versions of the place of the fort remembered by Aboriginal peoples that belie canonical

versions and tell a much more relational story. The hope is that the revealing of these tensions will provoke ethical processes of engagement that will produce new knowledge and understanding, and thus foster complex curricular and pedagogical conversations inspired by Nakata's (2002) notion of the "Cultural Interface."

To make some movement toward these goals, this chapter focuses on the development of the idea of the fort across diverse historical contexts. The purpose of this focus is to provide a detailed interpretation of the significance of the fort, as a Eurowestern cultural concept, that can help us better understand the symbolic power of its current manifestations in Canadian contexts. In the interests of historical consciousness, then, it is useful to consider the historical development of forts in the context of European culture and values as they developed in the centuries prior to the colonization of North America. A brief exploration of the construction, location, functionality, and enduring symbolism of forts from different historical eras and contexts will enable a broader appreciation of the cultural significance of forts in Canada today. What follows, then, are some brief summary comments on the general significance of forts or fortifications from around the world. To provide specific context to this summary, I will consider three specific examples of forts that are associated with Eurowestern culture and influence: Hadrian's Wall located in present-day England that was ordered constructed by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 122; Château Gaillard that was built in present day France in the year 1196 under the direction of Richard Lionheart; and, Elmina Castle located on the Gold Coast in present day Ghana and originally built and occupied by the Portuguese beginning in 1482.

Following these brief considerations of the historic development of the concept of the fort, I will then focus upon the detailed history of one prominent fort in North America established at a significant Indigenous gathering place by Europeans who did so in hopes of expanding and enhancing their trade networks: Fort Michilimackinac, located in what is now called northern Michigan. More detailed considerations of Fort Michilimackinac are necessary because the history of this site provides more regional and pertinent insights into the pedagogy of the fort, but also because such details allow for the complexities of various contested versions of the fort to be revealed and held in tension. This also allows for attentiveness to the place-based priorities of Indigenous wisdom traditions and Indigenous Métissage.

The goal in revealing these parallel versions is to emphasize the simultaneously permeable and impermeable status of the fort walls. This fluxic nature of openness and closure offers provocative insights toward understanding the significance of cultural difference in the context of transmodern curricular and pedagogical considerations and efforts toward decolonization. I will close this chapter with consideration of the modern-day manifestation of these forts as museums and significant sites of public education that pose unique curricular challenges to educators and policy makers.

Fort Walls as Both Permeable and Impermeable: Some Historic Examples

The concept of the fort on a frontier, and the struggle to impose order and civilization in the West, is often viewed as a uniquely North American experience pitting cowboys against Indians. It is important to remember, however, that the

idea of the fort, and the related frontiers and boundaries, were not invented in North America. Forts, as we know them today, are a legacy of colonialism, an inherited landscape from Europe. The reality is that all over the world, in diverse contexts, there are thousands of examples of different kinds of forts that were built on perceived frontiers. Forts were first constructed on frontiers to meet the basic security needs of large groups of people. However, forts were not built solely for defensive purposes. Throughout history and across contexts, forts have also often been used as military staging points to facilitate the invasion and takeover of nearby lands, or in the interests of exercising and maintaining authoritative control over conquered peoples and lands. Often, such military incursions are motivated by economic interests, and so forts have also commonly been developed as trading entrepôts (> Fr. *entre* - inter + Fr. *poser* - to place)—meeting places where those from inside the walls can safely trade with those who live outside the walls.

Despite this diversity of reasons for their construction, it seems that most forts, as historical artifacts, have served as actual and metaphoric meeting places of peoples usually considered to be at odds. The meeting place is where people living inside the walls interact with people from outside the walls. As meeting places, forts have been conceptualized as structures positioned on a spatial and cultural frontier. The etymology of the word *frontier*, and its many contextual meanings, is useful to consider here. Current understandings of frontier have developed from the classical Latin word *fines* and the French substantive *fins*, both of which refer to “a strip of land and the border region of a country” (Febvre,

1973, p. 208). By the Middle Ages, however, the French *frontière* had come to denote at least two more specific meanings: one referred to the architectural façade of a building and the other was the frontline of troops facing the enemy in battle formation (p. 208). The act of making a front, *fait frontière*, was eventually transferred from architecture and military matters over to the act of delimiting spaces and boundary limits: “A fortified stronghold or a town equipped with ramparts presents a front to the enemy in the same way as a troop of soldiers in open country” (p. 209). By the seventeenth century, the French *Dictionnaire Universel* defined *frontière* as “[t]he extremity of a realm or a province which an enemy is faced with when it wants to enter” (p. 210). By this time, Europeans had become increasingly aware of issues of sovereignty as these related to their nations and the often-violent competition for control over contested lands and colonies around the world became a major preoccupation. Thus, “[f]rontières of a different type appeared when larger and more complicated states were created and found themselves to be in contact with populations that refused the order, peace and material or moral civilization which the larger states stood for” (p. 211). Sovereignty over these new lands and peoples was asserted by making maps and exercising the power to decide where the lines and frontiers would be drawn.

Where the mapmakers drew the lines was also considered the moral frontier separating ‘us’ from ‘them,’ civilization from the wilderness. With reference to the processes of European colonialism, especially in the North American context, the frontier has been imagined as the forward moving line of civilization advancing into empty or underutilized land sparsely populated by

primitive peoples. Some historians have even gone so far as to equate the frontier process with the development of American social, political, and economic values that continue to manifest themselves in the world today (See, as examples, Turner (1893) and Billington (1971). Consider this cause and effect chart:

<i>frontier</i>	<i>democracy</i>
free land / settlement	individualism
savagery / civilization	practicality
margin of civilization	coarseness
political border	egalitarianism
community building	economic mobility

(Klein, 1997, p. 17)

The key point here is that there is a highly influential belief that the influence of the frontier on American national consciousness has produced, or brought into effect, many of the democratic traits and emphases important to the nation. The unique traits of American democratic intellect (listed in the right-hand column) owe their origins and development to the deeply felt experience of living on the frontier (listed in the left-hand column) for many generations. To put the point simply, we cannot understand historic and current actions of the United States without understanding the significance of the frontier to their national consciousness.

While the idea of the frontier has certainly had a remarkable impact on the development of the United States and American nationalism, others contend that not just America, but “most of modern Western European civilization [which would include countries like Canada, Australia and *Aotearoa* (New Zealand) that were settled by Europeans and conform to Western European institutional

traditions] as we know it, with its characteristic capitalism, democracy, and individualism, is the product of world frontiers that opened up to Europe when its peoples began to go adventuring across the oceans” (Careless, 1967, p. 70). In the Canadian context, much more attention has been paid to the intimate relationship between the frontier in the colonies and the colonizing métropole back in Europe. In this view, while the métropole receives resource wealth and cultural influences from the frontier, the frontier itself is dependent on its metropolitan centre for capital, the organization of communication and transport systems, and the marketing of its products (p. 80). But this dependency is not limited to purely economic concerns. The frontier, symbolized by forts constructed on the borderland between civilization and barbarism, also facilitates the gradual importation and penetration of metropolitan social, cultural, political and moral values into *terra nullius*. As more and more land and resources are claimed in the economic interests of the métropole, these related values are slowly inscribed on the land. The land and its uses are increasingly defined according to metropolitan understandings of sovereignty, development, ownership, and citizenship. This one-way flow of power and influence gradually extends the original four walls of the fort outward, engulfing the cartographic frontier, until the colonial takeover process is complete.

Yet, the moral and civilizational frontier—a sort of cultural ditch—endures. There are several assumptions that must be upheld in order for this frontier to be maintained. First, it must be believed that the colonized, the cultural Other, those from outside the walls, adhere to an antiquated way of living that is

incommensurable with the new society that has been developed. They must adopt and conform to the values of the dominant society—assimilate—or suffer (Dussel, 1995, p. 64). Second, it must be believed that the colonial power asserted and expressed through the takeover of the land is deeply connected to a teleological vision of the world endorsed by a Christian God (Smith, 2005). In other words, the colonizers were destined to displace the original inhabitants from their homes in the interests of spreading civilization, spurring development, and ensuring proper usage of the land and resources. This process is viewed as the inevitable result of superior peoples (colonizers) coming into contact with inferior peoples (colonized). Third, it must be believed that the moral frontier, as a cultural and civilizational boundary line, is essentially impermeable. Those from the outside remain isolated from the realm of the insiders *until* they make a conscious decision to abandon their primitiveness and adopt a civilized lifestyle on the inside. For the most part, though, regular movement across this frontier is not tolerated because that would suggest mixed loyalties and allegiances. A simple maxim summarizing this view comes from the contemporary frontier logic of American President George W. Bush (2001): “Either you are with us, or you are with [our enemies].” While it would be fairly easy to dismiss the words of President Bush as symptomatic of the contortions required to meet aggressive American foreign policy goals, it is more critical to trace the origins of this logic and better understand its ubiquity and cultural currency in contemporary contexts. What, then, are the common understandings of the significance of the fort on the frontier that have been passed down over many centuries? To begin an

exploration of possible answers to this question, I provide a brief survey of select forts and fortifications: Hadrian's Wall, Chateau Gaillard, and Elmina Castle.

a. Hadrian's Wall

It is perhaps most appropriate to begin this brief survey with a focus on the history of the Roman Empire since it is considered one of the historical foundations of the Eurowestern world, and studying its history and characteristics is still viewed by many as an important component of a thorough and proper education. Many generations of secondary and post-secondary students have studied the art, literature, philosophical teachings, political insights, civic affairs, and military accomplishments of the Roman Empire. This long tradition of intellectually rigorous scholarship is founded on the idea that the success and longevity of the Roman Empire was a seminal human achievement that must be acknowledged and examined as pivotal to the creation and comprehension of modern European culture, conventions, and institutions. One of the major lessons derived from such study is that the Romans, by conquering barbarism and spreading their more refined cultural influences, carved civilization out of wilderness. Here we can refer to Edward Gibbon (1887), author of the classic study *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, for illumination:

In the second century of the Christian Æra, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most *civilized* portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence

of *laws and manners* had gradually cemented the union of the provinces.

(p. 17, emphasis mine)

Note that Gibbon uses the term *frontiers* to indicate the border areas separating Roman civilization from barbarism that were dutifully monitored and patrolled by Roman soldiers. If one of the main achievements of the Roman Empire was the conquest of barbarian lands, then we can safely assume that the expansion of the Empire and the civilizing of people living there caused a heightened consciousness of the concept of the frontier in the minds of Roman citizens and soldiers. The prominence of frontier consciousness grows out of the whole organizing principle of an Empire—the drive to secure sovereignty over lands and resources at the expense of those considered outside of its existing boundaries. The desire is to expand the boundaries and incorporate more and more people and resources into the realm of the Empire. Thus, for Roman soldiers and citizens, the frontier was the place where the work of empire building was done. However, “Romanization... [the] general process of introducing Roman culture to the provinces” that were conquered “was, at all times, designed to benefit Romans, not the inhabitants of the frontier” (Drummond and Nelson, 1994, pp. 172-173; 181).

During the first centuries of its rise to power, the Roman republic (which preceded Imperial Rome), continually expanded its frontiers, power, and influence in all directions from Rome until, by 100 B.C.E., it controlled most of the territory bordering the Mediterranean Sea and had made major advances into Asia Minor (Addington, 1990, p. 32). Just over two hundred years later, the

Roman Empire achieved its maximum expansion with control of additional territories in present-day Europe stretching from the Black Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west (p. 41). Remarkably, the Roman armies under Claudius successfully invaded and occupied Britain beginning in C. E. 43. It was in Britain, however, that the Roman leaders began to realize that the constant drive for expansion had become logistically unsustainable. The frontier, originally conceived as a border zone delimiting the temporary limits of advance and conquest, was now being considered in more permanent terms. When he became Emperor in C.E. 117, Hadrian immediately began instituting a policy of peace with the goal of establishing and maintaining stable and controlled frontiers—“a final frontier between Rome and Barbary” (Breeze and Dobson, 2000, p. 15). It was Hadrian who first ordered the construction of a wall approximately eighty Roman miles long across the island of Britain to separate the Romans from the barbarians.⁴⁵

The permanent frontier line that Hadrian’s Wall eventually established was originally noted as a temporary phase line marking the northern advancement of Roman armies as they continued the conquest of Britain in C. E. 79. As the Romans advanced, they built forts along the various phase lines as a means of fortifying and securing lands they had conquered (Divine, 1995, pp. 51-53). Hadrian’s Wall was constructed between forts of one such phase line, linking them as a permanent fortified frontier. The completed Wall had milecastles or small forts every Roman mile and signal towers every third of a mile in between.

⁴⁵ I am paraphrasing a sentence from *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, “the sole surviving Roman comment on the reason for the building of Hadrian’s Wall” (Breeze and Dobson, 2000, p. 1).

In light of these structural features, there has been some speculation regarding the strategic intentions of Hadrian's Wall. There were probably many reasons. The Wall certainly must have proclaimed the inescapability of Roman power and sovereignty to the recalcitrant people living to the north of it. In this vein, then, the Wall also provided security from attacks and raids for the conquered people and Romans living to the south of it. In a more day-to-day sense, however, the Wall provided the Romans with a means of maintaining surveillance of local populations and controlling their movements, as well as making communication (regarding incursions and enemy movements) along the frontier line quick and easy (de la Bédoyere, 2001, p. 77).

However, despite these attempts to create Hadrian's Wall as an impermeable fortified barrier physically separating barbarism from civilization, the Wall was actually permeable. Evidence of this permeability can be seen in the *vici*—small civilian towns that sprung up on the edges of the military zone occupied by the Roman soldiers and officers. These frontier towns, although often sites of brutal oppression and violence by soldiers against civilians, “had much to offer the bored soldier with a little money in his pouch...a conveniently close location for the soldiers to let off steam...gamble and drink...[and] meet with local women” (Fields, 2003, pp. 58-59). In this exchange, the local populations were also exposed to Roman ways. The Romans typically built horse racetracks, theatres, temples, and trading posts near their forts, and these few buildings eventually grew into frontier towns that provided substantial economic opportunities to the local population (Drummond and Nelson, 1994, p. 10). Of

course, local women were attracted to these settlements, “and marriages between such women and the soldiers...soon began to weave a network of interrelationships between the men of the fortress and the local population” (p. 130). Veteran soldiers would retire and live with their family in the neighbourhood of their camp. Soon, their sons would join the legion. “In the course of time, the army of the frontier came to be composed almost entirely of Celtic troops recruited from the native population of the frontier” (p. 10). The concept of a frontier, although clearly demarcated by Hadrian’s Wall, was not maintained through human interaction and relationships. The civilized insiders had gotten mixed up with the barbarian outsiders. They traded, intermarried, and lived together. Perhaps, in the final analysis, the Wall stands today as a symbolic reminder of the futility of building walls between peoples, cultures, and civilizations.

b. Chateau Gaillard

In the annals of British history, the year 1066 is a date much recalled by school children as a major turning point in the affairs of the English people. In that year, the Normans, descendants of Vikings living in the northeastern region of France, crossed the English Channel, invaded England, and claimed the English crown for their King William. The Norman victory at The Battle of Hastings in 1066 created the possibility that England and Normandy could be united under one powerful monarchy. However, numerous regional squabbles over territory, successional disputes, ambitious intentions of rebellious dukes and barons, as well as the opposition of French monarchs to the consolidatory power

of such a monarchy repeatedly thwarted a stable unification of England and Normandy for almost one hundred years. Finally, in 1154, Henry Plantaganet (Henry II) was crowned King of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, count of Anjou and Maine at Westminster Abbey, and a united Anglo-Norman state was created (Barber, 1978, p. 27).

Henry ruled over his territorial possessions for thirty-five years, but frequently found his sovereignty over these areas challenged by his legitimate and illegitimate sons. The most famous of Henry's sons, and the most aggressive of his heirs, was Richard. Richard's accession to the English throne was complicated, however, by his decision to commit to participate in the Third Crusade. Refusing to renege on this promise, Richard spent the first year of his rule establishing law and order in his domains, ensuring security from aggressive and hostile neighbours, and fostering a system of alliances that would maintain Plantaganet authority until he returned (Turner and Heiser, 2000, p. 80). The anxieties of the newly-crowned English King were greatly mollified when the French King Philip Augustus, a rival most interested in gaining possession of Normandy, also committed to the Third Crusade. The two monarchs agreed to honour all territorial holdings and embarked on the Crusade together as allies (p. 81).

It was during that Third Crusade that Richard I established his reputation as a skilled and courageous military man that caused chroniclers of the time to give him the famous moniker 'Lionheart.' After leading Christian forces to victory in the Third Crusade, Richard I left the Holy Land and sailed for home.

When he finally arrived back in his lands, he learned that his brother John had been conspiring with the French King Philip Augustus to conquer his territorial holdings in Normandy. In one typical example of this subversion, John had unilaterally ceded Château de Gisors to Philip Augustus, thereby surrendering a major stronghold and protector of Norman lands to his brother's rival (Warner, 1968, p. 126). Recognizing that his rule over a united Anglo-Norman kingdom was in serious jeopardy, Richard Lionheart began to strategize ways to forestall the ambitions of Philip Augustus and consolidate control over his Norman possessions.

One significant outcome of this strategizing was the planning and construction of Château Gaillard. Richard Lionheart knew he had to replace Château de Gisors with another fortress that would protect Normandy from further French incursions. In looking for a site for this new château, the English King focused his attention on the Seine River, recognizing this waterway as the main route of invasion into Normandy from France (Warner, 1968, p. 126). He was convinced that a strategically sited fortress would protect the Norman capital city of Rouen, ensure control over traffic flows on the Seine, and thus control the travel of enemy troops and supplies into the territory.

The site that Richard Lionheart chose for his new castle was the summit of a ninety metre cliff that towers above the Seine River and the towns of Great and Little Andelys. The long promontory, isolated on three sides with deep valleys and steep slopes, provided a commanding view of the entire valley formation (Barber, 1968, p. 126). Recognizing that the landscape allowed for only one

possible approach for attackers, Richard I designed a castle that would make the best use of the tactical advantages provided by the unique location. Richard Lionheart was apparently a student of Roman military technology and showed particular interest in the construction and defense of military fortifications (p. 125). He carefully studied and noted the designs of fortresses he visited during his participation in the Third Crusade and learned much from Muslim influences regarding siege warfare and castle design while in Palestine. Melding these influences with his own ideas and goals, Richard I created a unique design, effectively mixing old with new, for his Château Gaillard or 'cheeky' castle⁴⁶.

Construction began on the site in 1196. Château Gaillard, built in the shape of a ship, consisted of three baileys or wards, one fortified section enclosed inside the other (DeVries, 1992, pp. 241-242). The angled bow of the ship formed the outer ward and its walls were the first major fortifications attackers would encounter when assaulting the fortress. The outer ward itself was isolated from the two inner wards of Château Gaillard by the moat and only connected to the middle ward at the tower level by a narrow, zigzagging bridge. The middle ward was the largest section of the fortress that included a well, chapel, latrines, and supply storehouses. This was where the besieged would live in the event of an attack on Château Gaillard. If besiegers of Château Gaillard managed to breach the defenses of the outer and middle wards, they would then be confronted by the impressive and imposing structures of the inner ward, as well as the innermost

⁴⁶ Richard called his new castle 'Gaillard,' a French word often interpreted as 'saucy' or 'cheeky' that more correctly describes something that is 'bold' (Gravett, 2004, p. 22).

tower or keep. The inner ward, also isolated by a deep dry ditch, was surrounded by a unique, oval-shaped, and corrugated curtain wall that was 2.5 metres thick.

One does not need to be an expert in military fortification technology to realize that Richard I had designed a very impressive fortress. Determined to defend his Norman territories from French takeover, the English King had combined his understanding of European fortification technology with his exposure to Muslim influences to create a state-of-the-art defensive structure. Château Gaillard was a masterpiece of concentric design in which the four sections of the complex supported each other. Although the fortress was intended mostly for defensive purposes, it also occupied a strategic position from which to block any attempted invasion of English territories by French armies, and its concentric design suggested that any siege of Château Gaillard would be lengthy, costly, and probably futile. The fortress appeared to be impenetrable.

Ironically, the myth of Richard's impermeable castle lasted a mere seven years. On March 6, 1204, after a lengthy siege, King Philip Augustus' forces captured the reputedly unconquerable fortress of Château Gaillard a short five years after its completion. With the capture of Château Gaillard, Philip Augustus seriously diminished English control of western Normandy and began a process that eventually led to the unification of Normandy with France. Although the fortress was occupied by French forces several times during the Hundred Years War, and re-captured by English forces more than once, its strategic importance was never again as high as it was in the early thirteenth century (DeVries, 1992, p. 242). In an ironic twist of its story, Château Gaillard, an expensive fortress to

build so highly regarded for its supposedly impregnable defensive design, had its stout walls reduced to crumbled pieces that local Capuchin Friars reclaimed and used to repair their church and convent.⁴⁷ Such a reduction of formerly formidable walls reminds us that any attempts to consolidate a territory as the exclusive domain of insiders will undoubtedly end in failure. Despite the most determined intentions and innovations of Richard Lionheart, his famous fortress was quickly revealed to be surprisingly permeable.

c. Elmina Castle

The history of the coastal settlement of Elmina, located in present-day Ghana, encapsulates the shift in European focus to exploration, contact with previously unknown lands and peoples, trade, and colonization better than any other site in Africa. This history centres on the fluid, dynamic, and interdependent relationship between the Europeans garrisoned inside the fortress that came to be called Elmina Castle and the African and mulatto residents of the adjacent town of Elmina. Each group benefited in different ways from the wealth and various economic opportunities generated by trade in this region of West Africa that the Europeans called *El Mina* or the Mine and, later, the Gold Coast because of the large amount of gold found there.

Of course, the specific character of these relationships changed over the years according to the priorities and intentions of the various stakeholders. The Portuguese established the fortress in 1482, focused on the gold and ivory trade, and fostered alliances with local peoples. Later, the Dutch captured Elmina and

⁴⁷ Apparently, this information is referenced on display boards viewed when touring the ruins of Château Gaillard today. See the website: <http://www.ifp.uiuc.edu/~smallik/cycling/france/notes/gaillard.html>

eventually began a lucrative trade in slaves and textiles that lasted for over 200 years. Then, in the late nineteenth century, the British inaugurated a new phase in the European relationship with Africa when they purchased Elmina from the Dutch and used the fortress as a base to facilitate their takeover of the entire region. Throughout this varied history, however, there is significant evidence that the walls of Elmina Castle, the oldest European-built structure in the tropics, were quite permeable, despite the formidable façade of the fortress and the intentions of its occupants.

In the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors were the best geographically positioned and boldest of the European explorers. Their boldness was perhaps bolstered by their superior ocean navigation skills and the persistent support of the Portuguese monarchy in their financing of voyages of discovery. Taking these factors into account, it is not surprising that the Portuguese were the first Europeans to navigate through the difficult winds and currents spawned by the Sahara Desert, sail further south, and establish trade relations with people living in settlements along the West African coast. By 1470, the Portuguese had located several sheltered bays suitable for anchorage and found people eager to exchange their gold and ivory for European products. Trading from ships was considered safe and secure, but the Portuguese soon realized that a fortress on land would offer significant advantages for their trade. “A fortress would serve as a deterrent to other European traders and also would allow for the accumulation and storage of goods prior to a ship’s arrival” (DeCorse, 2001, p. 21). It would also establish

permanent commercial contacts with the people living in the region and foster a greater, and more profitable, volume of trade.

So it was that *Castelo de São Jorge da Mina* was built under the supervision of Portuguese officials in 1482. “The site was chosen...after careful investigation of the whole coastline by an officer whom the King of Portugal has sent with instructions to build a castle at the most suitable spot” (Lawrence, 1963, p. 103). The chosen location of Elmina Castle was deemed suitable for several reasons. First, the geographic features of the site were uniquely advantageous for security purposes—a narrow rocky peninsula bordered by the Gulf of Guinea on two sides and the Benya River Lagoon on another. The clear advantage provided by this site was that attacking armies could only approach from the western side of the peninsula (Decorse, 2001, p. 51). Second, there was an established African settlement on the peninsula that would help foster trade relations and provide much needed labour. Third, there was an abundance of quarriable rock on the peninsula that would be used to construct the fortress (p. 21).

Once this site was chosen, Portuguese officials began organizing for the construction of a fortress. A contingent of six hundred men were loaded into twelve ships laden with crafted and itemized timber, stone, tiles, bricks, and large quantities of a ready-made mixture of cement (Lawrence, 1963, p. 104). Such careful planning and preparation was done to facilitate the speedy construction of the fort. This large scale importation of packaged European architectural know-how aided in the claiming and construction of a four-sided space for the Portuguese on the West African coast. The prelude to construction was an

extensive greeting ceremony wherein representatives of the Fante and Portuguese struggled to achieve a shared understanding of plans and intentions associated with the building of a fort (Vogt, 1979, pp. 22-24). After lengthy negotiations and much gift-giving, the local leader finally gave reluctant consent to the building of a fort, and soon Portuguese workers began preparing the foundation for the fortress from the numerous rock outcroppings at the site (Ward, 1966, pp. 68-69). This construction did not go unopposed. The rock that the Portuguese masons and stonecutters were working had a spiritual, and perhaps sacred, significance to the local people (Vogt, 1979, p. 26). They attacked the Portuguese to halt the construction, and several men were wounded on both sides until tensions were temporarily reduced by more Portuguese gift-giving. Even though they had managed to negotiate a temporary peace, the Portuguese commanders realized that their security on the site was tenuous. They ordered their workers to build the fortress as quickly as possible to provide some refuge in case of another attack. A one story protective curtain was constructed in twenty days (p. 26).

When the more formidable version of *Castelo de São Jorge da Mina* was finally completed a few months later, the fortress was surely an impressive sight along the West African coast, especially juxtaposed with the small homes and shops that comprised the adjacent African settlement. The rectangular shaped fort was designed to withstand attack from sea and land. Huge cannons were mounted in a commanding position atop an artillery platform on both the north and south corners of the fortress. The south cannon defended the fort from land attack along the peninsula; the north cannon was positioned to fire on any ship attempting to

enter the bay. However, despite the imposing character of its fortifications, the Portuguese recognized early on that their economic success was intimately connected to the good relations that could be maintained with the local people. From the beginning of this relationship, it was the people living in the Elmina settlement—outside the walls of the fortress—who acted as mediators, negotiators, and translators, thereby facilitating trade relations between the Portuguese and communities located in the West African interior.

Historians generally acknowledge that the Portuguese at Elmina had little influence or control beyond the range of their cannon and that they were almost entirely dependent on the goodwill of the coastal peoples living in the settlement (Ward, 1966, p. 74). Of course, the residents of Elmina settlement also benefited from their unique role in the trade and, over time, the community developed into a type of self-governing republic that often operated independently and according to its own interests and priorities. A few examples will help clarify this point. Some thirty years after the founding of the fortress, the Elmina people were already serving in an integrated military unit with the Portuguese. By the mid sixteenth century, residents from the settlement were being regularly recruited by the Portuguese to join the garrison inside the walls to help defend the fortress from attacks by neighbouring tribes (Blake, 1977, p. 100). Then in 1570, in one startling example of a complete shift in policy, the residents of Elmina joined in a siege of Elmina Castle because the Portuguese had attacked their allied tribes as retribution for trading with French and English ship merchants (p. 176). The Elminans employed yet another strategy against the Portuguese on several

occasions, abandoning their town to demonstrate their dislike for Portuguese trade policies, taxes, and tolls (DeCorse, 2001, p. 17).

This active defiance of Portuguese authority was obviously injurious to trade, and the Portuguese usually acted quickly to restore good relations. Maintaining a cooperative partnership was important to the Portuguese also because so many of their men were tied to local African women through domestic, martial, and familial relations (DeCorse, 2001, p.36). These relations were so intimate that most of the Portuguese men lived with their families in Elmina town when they were not on duty (Lawrence, 1963, p. 120). From these unions, a significant and influential mulatto population grew and prospered in Elmina settlement. So, while the Portuguese certainly profited much from their trade monopoly on the Gold Coast and the strategic location of *Castelo de São Jorge da Mina*, the local African population played an active role in shaping the context of their interactions with the Europeans and profited themselves from their unique positionality.

Such profits from trade were noticed by European rivals, and eventually Portuguese control over the Elmina region was challenged. The Dutch were the most aggressive of the challengers and eventually captured Elmina Castle in 1637. The Dutch wanted Elmina Castle because they saw it as a major foothold on the West African coast that would enable them to take advantage of the expanding slave trade. Soon after their takeover of Elmina Castle, the Dutch began establishing their own trade monopoly in the area. First priority, however, was the reinforcement and protection of their prize. This attempt to construct impermeable

walls was ironic in light of the Dutch dependency on the residents of Elmina settlement for their tenure and prosperity. Of course, such prosperity was shared, and the residents of Elmina town recognized the benefits of their unique position as trade facilitators and mediators. This privileged position as the exclusive trade agents for the Europeans gave commercial prosperity to the Elminans, but also brought jealousy and enmity from neighbouring African communities (Ward, 1966, p. 96). This isolation from surrounding communities further accentuated the independent spirit and in-between character of the Elmina townsfolk. Here arises more irony: residents of independent Gold Coast states like Elmina actually encouraged and aided in the maintenance of forts to ensure that the Europeans stayed on the coast (rather than expanding trade inland and usurping their mediating role) and well-armed garrisons could defend them in case of attacks from rivals (p. 88). So, while the Dutch went to great lengths to strengthen the walls and defenses of Elmina Castle, the Elminans viewed the walls as uniquely permeable to their needs and priorities. They continued to pursue political and economic policies which served their particular needs as a community, moving between enemy and ally to the Dutch depending on the circumstances. This dynamic relationship continued and became so intimate that, by the end of the eighteenth century, most of the employees of the Dutch West Indian Company working in West Africa, and the entire garrison at Elmina Castle, were of African or mixed European-African descent (DeCorse, 2001, p. 36).

One significant outcome of this lengthy relationship between the Dutch and Elminans was the emergence of mulatto middlemen who took advantage of

the perennial need for negotiators and brokers between the African tribes in the interior and the Europeans stationed in the castle. Positioned at the confluence of cultures like the Métis involved in the fur trade in Western Canada, the Elminan mulattos maintained familial connections with their African relatives while also gaining certain benefits of employment in the fort, education, and financial assistance from their Dutch fathers (Feinberg, 1970, p. 24). Eventually, as mulatto population and influence grew, they formed a unique social group at Elmina. The emergence of this class was facilitated by a Dutch colonial law which required Dutch men to take their illegitimate children back to Holland with them or provide financial support for their care and a Christian education (DeCorse, 2001, p. 37). A further requirement was that “a communal house would be built in Elmina for all such children to be brought at the age of five or six years, where they would be separated from both the Africans and the Europeans...to be educated in the art of letters...economics, and some crafts, as well as in the making of plantations” (p. 37). Although the majority of mulattoes at Elmina were illiterate soldiers or labourers and did not garner such special treatment, there were a few with prominent Dutch fathers that were educated in this way and granted special status as *vrijburgers*—free citizens. One such *vrijburger*, Jan Nieser, gained wealth and status as a slave, gold, and ivory trade broker, as well as an unparalleled reputation as a mediator and peacemaker between the Dutch and Africans. In 1813, after Nieser had helped the Dutch quell a garrison mutiny, one Dutch chronicler of the times complained that the Dutch general at Elmina

Castle ruled *under* Nieser (Lever, 1970, p. 258). Perhaps this shift in power is one of the symptoms of permeable fort walls at Elmina.

Despite this permeability, the Dutch still maintained control over a profitable trade for over one hundred and fifty years. However, the slave trade gradually became unprofitable for them and the Dutch began considering the sale of Elmina Castle to the British in the 1850s. However, when the people of Elmina settlement learned of this, their leaders sent a long letter to the Dutch king reminding him of the lengthy relationship between the Dutch and Elminans, and their desire to remain in partnership with the Dutch (DeCorse, 2001, p. 29). The Dutch held off on the sale of Elmina until it was tendered to the British in 1872.

The British marked their era of colonial rule in the Elmina region by bombarding and destroying Elmina town as part of their efforts to control the troublesome Asante army and assert their sovereignty over the territory (Ward, 1966, pp. 270-272). Thus began the European move inland from colonial forts and the beginning of colonial rule in West Africa. From 1873 to 1957, the year of Ghanaian independence from British rule, Elmina Castle was used as an administrative centre for colonial rule. This dramatic change in European objectives and concerns, guided as it was toward the assertion and imposition of European political, social, cultural and economic ideals at the expense of African ways, belied the connections and interactions of previous centuries. Symbolic of this change in policy, and the colonial desire to construct impermeable walls, was the abandonment of Elmina town after its bombardment. No rebuilding was permitted on the peninsula adjacent to Elmina Castle after 1873. "The area in

front of the castle was filled with rubble and leveled for use as a parade ground, first by the British military and later by the Gold Coast police force and the Ghana police” (DeCorse, 2001, p. 45). The British attempted to sweep away centuries of intimate and permeable interaction with their own brand of order and discipline exercised through colonial rule.

d. The significance of forts and fortifications across historical contexts

In what ways do the histories of these diverse forts and fortifications enhance understandings of the pedagogy of the fort? The forts and fortifications briefly profiled here serve as case studies that test the viability of the theories of the fort and colonial frontier logics that I forward in this inquiry. These theories have been conceptualized and honed in the context of Western Canada from an Indigenous standpoint. If, as I argue, the pedagogy of the fort and colonial frontier logics are organizing paradigms of cultural interaction and difference that have been passed down to Canadians and Aboriginal peoples in the form of Eurowestern intellectual traditions and assumptions, then it makes sense to trace the descent and development of these propensities.

In attempting to do so, I have cast the net widely, looked elsewhere, and purposefully brought focus on three seemingly unrelated forts and fortifications to demonstrate that the mythic power of the fort traverses contexts. Although the profiles are admittedly simplified versions of the complex histories of each context, and any grandiose generalizations are thus problematic, I have drawn on the histories of these fort and fortifications to show that each was simultaneously permeable and impermeable in its own contextually unique ways. As we have

seen, forts, as architectural creations, are naturally designed with the hope of impermeability for purposes of safety and security. Certainly, this was the case with Hadrian's Wall, Chateau Gaillard, and Elmina Castle. However, the semiotic power of the fort, when conflated with colonial frontier logics, also teaches us that fort walls are always impermeable to outsider influence and that insiders can unilaterally determine the quality and intent of any human interactions that they permit. Through modernist and colonialist processes and interpretive frames, this power has become an organizing principle of human relationality that is institutionally perpetuated through the pedagogy of the fort. To contest these logics, I have endeavoured to reveal the permeability of the walls of each fort profiled here. The point is not to replace a theory of impermeability with permeability, but rather to emphasize that such forts and fortifications are, simultaneously and paradoxically, both permeable and impermeable. We can understand human relationality in the same ways. I now focus on the specific contextual histories of Fort Michilimackinac to further demonstrate this point.

Fort Michilimackinac

During the so-called Age of Exploration, the time when Europeans began 'discovering,' 'exploring' and colonizing previously unknown (to them) regions of the world, significant efforts were made to claim sovereignty over an area and maintain presence and influence to solidify those claims. Such sovereignty, decreed to stave off opposing claims by rival nations, was often first asserted through trade relations and partnerships with local Indigenous peoples. As seen in the example of Elmina Castle, these trade agreements often resulted in the

construction and manning of one or more trading forts in the territory of the local peoples. These forts served Europeans as both trading entrepôts and military strongholds. In the interests of empire-building, then, the forts fostered the development of European commercial interests, facilitated sovereignty over an area, and protected territories from rival takeover. And, if circumstances permitted, forts could also be used to stage attacks on rival armies and gain even more territory. Thus, the imperial project—the lengthy competition for exclusive access to resources and territory—most often began as the playing out of negotiations with various Indigenous groups (hopefully) at the expense of European rivals. Such negotiations and competitions were often extensions of rivalries between European nations that had intensified over many centuries. Rivalries that began in Europe eventually expanded in scope and scale to encompass most regions of the world, thereby entangling the colonized and their lands in the process.

Although initially there were several European powers vying for power and control in North America, the French and the British, and their settler kin, eventually became the two main contenders in the colonial competition for ultimate sovereignty in that part of the world.⁴⁸ The French established and maintained a stronghold in the St. Lawrence River region while the British began their early colonial ambitions on the northeastern seaboard of the present-day United States. Both factions gradually expanded their influence westward in

⁴⁸ For the purposes of this discussion, North America will denote present-day Canada and the United States. Although Mexico is considered a geographic part of North America, the country has a very different history and distinct culture that distinguishes it significantly from its North American neighbours. Since the early sixteenth century Mexico has been firmly controlled by the Spanish and their Mexican descendents.

pursuit of land, influence, alliances, and fur trading opportunities. The strategies that each side used to accomplish these goals were significantly different.

The French, by the 1670's, had established an extensive and viable fur trade network in the Great Lakes Region that was augmented by frontier trading forts that usually accommodated a limited numbers of workers and a few Jesuit missionaries. French frontier policy, spearheaded by the labour of the *coureurs de bois*, emphasized safe and equitable trading opportunities, political and commercial alliances with local Indigenous peoples through intermarriage, as well as civilizing and Christianizing duties (Dickason, 1984, pp. 21-25). From the French perspective, forts served as meeting places where these activities and goals could be facilitated; “[e]ach fort functioned like a medieval castle as an administrative center for a native dependency or province” (Jennings, 1975, p. 101).

In contrast, British forts in the frontier were more overt extensions of military goals and colonial policy. While the British also maintained strong alliances with various First Nations and were also heavily involved in the fur trade, in general they were much more interested in establishing control and territorial sovereignty over areas that were deemed desirable for settlement prior to constructing a fort there. When the British moved westward, they did so in large numbers with the intention of displacing the local Indigenous peoples from their lands in order to make way for their own people (p. 97). Thus, the Indigenous peoples involved with the fur trade during this era had to come to terms with the various consequences associated with dealing with either side and,

if possible, balance these consequences with their own specific interests. As the competition for control and sovereignty escalated, however, the separate interests of Indigenous peoples were usurped as their lifeways became more and more vitiated by the colonial ambitions of the newcomers. They found themselves increasingly embroiled in the colonial conflicts between the French and British in North America.

The French and British employed strategies for their westward expansion of their trading networks that were largely determined by the geographical positioning of their separate colonial holdings. The French fur traders, centred in Montreal, followed the waterways connected to the St. Lawrence to move west. In this vast Great Lakes region, the French *coureurs de bois* established trade relations with various Indigenous peoples including, among others, the Anishnabi, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Miami, Illinois, Cree, Shawnee, Wyandot, and Chippewa in the area⁴⁹, and constructed fur trading forts throughout the region. Eliminating the need for middlemen, the *coureurs de bois* made the canoe journey from Montreal to the northern Great Lakes region heavily laden with trade goods, engaged in trade with Indigenous peoples at the forts, and returned a year or more later with the much-prized furs (Innis, 1999, p. 59). Thus, the French relied on the *coureurs de bois* to facilitate the trade. Their forts and influence grew in the Great Lakes region as the trading networks of the *coureurs de bois* moved gradually north and west.

⁴⁹ Many of the groups had recently moved into the area from further east, having been displaced from their lands by British military activities and the aggressive actions of the Iroquois and their allies.

Viewing the situation from the eastern seaboard of North America, the British counterstrategy that made the most sense was to establish a fur trading enterprise at Hudson's Bay. With the creation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, and the construction of forts in that region, British officials hoped to attract Indigenous traders to their posts at the expense of the French. They believed that Indigenous peoples living in more northerly locations in the Hudson's Bay region would trap in greater abundance and trade higher quality furs that would, in turn, garner higher prices in European markets (p. 48). Hudson's Bay Company officials believed that these advantages would enable them to outdo the French in the fur trade competition, and ultimately gain political and economic control of North America.

For a one hundred year period, beginning around 1670, this intense competition for fur trade supremacy was most highly contested in the northern Great Lakes region—the zone where French and British influence frequently overlapped. The history and culture of Fort Michilimackinac, a fortress strategically located by the French along the southern shore of the Straits of Mackinac, offers significant insight into the imperial intentions of the British and French, and the resultant effects that their actions had on the lives of the local Indigenous peoples. Built in 1715, the initial primary purpose of the fort was not military, but rather as a link in the French trading post system that stretched from the St. Lawrence River system to the western edge of the Great Lakes. Of course, the French did not choose the site of Fort Michilimackinac independent of the local Indigenous peoples. As with most forts, the site for construction was chosen

because it was *already* a significant meeting place and crossroads for goods and people. For centuries, Indigenous peoples have seasonally gathered on the Straits of Mackinac to take advantage of the great abundance of fish, game, perennial produce, and agricultural opportunities available there (Scott, 1985, p. 11).

The Straits are a natural meeting place because the narrowness of the waterway funnels water traffic and makes for a short crossing by boat for those travelling by land. The site is also unique in that it is at a point where the waters of Lake Huron and Lake Michigan mingle. Access to Lake Superior is also in close proximity. Over many centuries, the place, by virtue of its location in the center of the Great Lakes waterway, became a significant gathering place where offerings were made and the people renewed their relationships with the Creator. According to *Anishinabi* tradition, the name *Michilimackinac* refers to the peoples that lived on Mackinac Island (in the Straits) many centuries ago. The Michilimackinac peoples were attacked and decimated by the Senecas, and only two of them survived. The Ottawa named the island *Michilimackinac* to commemorate their allies and relatives that once lived there. Europeans later misinterpreted the Ottawa place name as “large turtle,” falsely assumed that it referred to the shape of the island, and used the name to denote the whole region, as well as the fort that was eventually constructed on the south shore of the Straits of Mackinac (Blackbird, 1887, p. 20).

Although construction of Fort Michilimackinac did not begin until 1715, French presence in the Upper Great Lakes began some sixty-five years earlier. “Between 1650 and 1715, the Upper Great Lakes area underwent a rapid

settlement by French missionaries, traders, and soldiers” (Stone, 1974, p. 5). Two French explorers and traders named Groseilliers and Radisson made the trip from Quebec to the Lake Superior region in 1654 and returned with many high quality furs. These initial trading exchanges established valuable alliances between the French and the local Indigenous peoples, and motivated the French to further expand its trading influences into the region. In 1671, a Jesuit mission dedicated to St. Ignace was established on the north shore of the Straits of Mackinac under the leadership of Father Marquette. While the mission was obviously intended to bring Christianity to the Ottawa, Chippewa and Huron, the post itself slowly evolved into an important trading centre and French military outpost (p. 6). In response to British intrusions in the area, the French established Fort de Buade adjacent to the mission in 1689. Then, in a strange shift in policy, the French King Louis XIV ordered the Upper Great Lakes region closed to the fur trade because of an oversupply of furs on the European market (pp. 6-7). As a result, the inhabitants of St. Ignace Mission and Fort de Buade were ordered to return to Quebec. Both posts were abandoned by the French by 1705.

Five years later, however, French officials realized the errors of this policy of withdrawal, recognized the strategic importance of maintaining a strong presence in the Straits of Mackinac, and initiated plans for the reoccupation of the region (Stone, 1974, p. 7). In 1712, a veteran French captain named de Lignery was sent to the Straits from Quebec to renew alliances and trade relations with local Indigenous peoples, and reassert French sovereignty in the region. This decision was in response to Fox and Iroquois incursions into the region with the

support of their British allies. Under the direction of de Lignery, several hundred soldiers, along with an assortment of labourers, carpenters, and artisans, eventually assembled a rudimentary stockaded fort on the south shore of the Straits of Mackinac, directly across the Straits from the location of the previously occupied St. Ignace Mission and Fort du Buade (Petersen, 1968, p. 3). This specific fort was apparently deemed necessary to secure the Indigenous peoples of the region from further attacks, counteract the expanding trade influences of the Hudson's Bay Company in the region, control the unlicensed activities of the *coureurs des bois*, and create a focal centre from which French fur trading could be expanded further west (Stone, 1974, p. 8). Thus, the small garrison stationed at Michilimackinac served primarily an economic purpose in the Upper Great Lakes—their main jobs being the protection of traders and ensuring the free flow of goods and furs across the Straits (Peterson, 1984, p. 46).

Thus, Fort Michilimackinac, a fortified entrepôt that demarcated the northwestern edge of the French Empire in North America, was established to protect the economic interests of the French and, by association, their Indigenous allies. The initial version of the fort that was constructed under the direction of de Lignery was put together rather hastily and resembled a trading compound more than a military outpost (Scott, 1985, p. 25). It seems that the first priority of the French officer was the raising of defensive walls to ensure some security for the inhabitants of the settlement. That security came in the form of a picketed stockade that was roughly square in shape and small in size—measuring approximately fifty by twenty-five metres (Stone, 1974, pp. 8, 313). The stockade

walls were set and secured into trenches that varied in depth according to the elevation of beach gravel beneath (p. 313). This irregularity is symptomatic of the fort's location on the beach and its close proximity to the water's edge. The small, square stockade was designed with elevated bastions armed with brass cannon on each of the corners, although correspondence from the time reveals that the occupants of the fort did not receive cannon balls until a few years after the cannon were put in place (Heldman and Grange, 1981, p. 17). Inside the walls of the early French fort, the workers constructed a mission house, two guard houses, and a twelve metre long barracks for the military personnel stationed at Michilimackinac. The earliest version of Fort Michilimackinac was indeed a bare bones structure that served very practical purposes.

If we recall that Fort Michilimackinac was established in response to some clear security needs and trade demands, it should not be surprising that the place soon became very popular with the French, Indigenous peoples, *coureurs de bois*, and the emerging Métis peoples of the region. Although the resident population, because of limited space, remained relatively small, the entrepôt attracted more and more people as the successes and profits of the trade grew. The increasing importance that Fort Michilimackinac played in the fur trade inevitably led to increased population within the walls of the fort, and this demographic fact necessitated some major rebuilding of the settlement over the various stages of its progressive growth. This growth was so significant that, “[b]y 1760, the area within the stockade had been increased nearly three times its original size after

expansion of the stockade perimeters and the construction of additional structures” (Stone, 1974, p. 8).

With each rebuilding, the defense became more formidable and the stockade was lengthened on all sides, thereby significantly increasing the living area inside the walls. By 1744, the palisade walls had been heightened to approximately three metres above the ground and reinforced with cedar posts (Heldman and Grange, 1981, pp. 24-25). A unique aspect of this expansion was the practice of building new palisade walls around the settlement without removing or deconstructing the old perimeter walls. These walls within walls created an added line of defense, and the space between the walls—the so-called *chemin de ronde* (sentry beat)—came to be perceived as a transition zone between inside and outside regularly patrolled by sentries on all four sides (p. 24). In the 1749 version of Fort Michilimackinac, a sentry box was constructed at each corner and these were connected to redesigned bastions. These bastions were notable for their diamond shape which afforded defenders the opportunity to provide flanking fire in defense of opposing bastions that came under attack (p. 24). Eventually, after several additions and renovations, the walls of Fort Michilimackinac formed a uniquely angled hexagonal shape that significantly enhanced the ability of its inhabitants to defend against attacks (Petersen, 1968, p. 8).

This enhanced safety and security, coupled with the economic prosperity of the place, made Fort Michilimackinac a desirable place to live. This desirability attracted more and more residents and living conditions became somewhat

crowded by the 1730's, with approximately forty private rowhouse residences, many with adjoining garden plots, constructed and maintained within the confines of the fort walls (Heldman and Grange, 1981, p. 21). If we approximate the number of residents, soldiers, itinerant *coureurs de bois*, and clergy and add these numbers together, we can estimate that as many as one hundred people lived together inside the walls of Fort Michilimackinac during much of this era (Scott, 1985, p. 30). The daily nutritional needs of this many people could not be met through reliance on the supply canoes from New France or dependence on trade of foodstuffs with the local Indigenous people. To meet their needs, most families staked out and fenced off a plot of land where they could grow various vegetables to supplement their diets and ensure enough to eat through the winter months (Petersen, 1968, p. 24). This supply of vegetables complemented the significant amounts of wild game and fish that the people also ate with regularity. Based on bone evidence, archaeologists have reported that approximately sixty per cent of all meat eaten by the French was wild, and thirty-five per cent of all bone fragments found were fish (Petersen, 1968, p. 25). As the years passed, cattle, pigs, and chickens were also raised for food, and were often kept in pens next to the owner's home. Later, when the population living inside Fort Michilimackinac grew and space became increasingly limited, some residents may have established garden plots and animal pens just outside the walls, although this practice may not have been very common during the French era (Scott, 1985, pp. 41-43).

In contrast to the agricultural landscape, the social and cultural landscape of Fort Michilimackinac had a much more pronounced inside/outside character to

it. The significant population growth noted above was mainly due to the intermarriage and procreation of French men and Indigenous women. Peterson (1984) notes that from 1698 to 1765 roughly half of all recorded marriages at Fort Michilimackinac were those involving French employees of the fur trade and Indigenous women from local communities, and the successive generations of Métis peoples reared from these unions (p. 48). The reasonable conclusion, then, is that the large majority of residents at Fort Michilimackinac during the mid - 1700's were Métis (p. 49). Sleeper-Smith (2000) has studied the pivotal agency of Indigenous women, often married into or descended from Franco-Indian alliances, in creating a unique social context in the western Great Lakes region and leading the way in creating a stable and economically secure community. The central role played by these women resulted from the economic and social changes brought by the fur trade and the clear need for cultural mediators to facilitate and enable adaptations.

Thus, intermarriage quickly became recognized as a strategic political, social, and economic move wherein relationality would ensure mutual benefits. The Canadien men married into a vast kinship system that provided them huge advantages in the trade and their wives gained authority, prestige, and benefits for themselves, their families, and their communities (Sleeper-Smith, 2000, p. 424). While the women maintained their tight connections to their families and communities, and usually incorporated their French Canadien husbands into this social context, there was also recognition that their children were a unique mixture of French Canadien and Indigenous influences. These Métis children who

were raised at Fort Michilimackinac were conversant with both European and Indigenous cultures and, therefore, belied the insider/outsider colonial logic implied by a naïve reading of the significance of the fort walls (pp. 440-441). The complexity of these mixings resulted in the emergence of the Métis as a distinct cultural group that had its beginnings in the fur trade context of the western Great Lakes and the intimate familial connections linking Indigenous and Canadien. This idea that kinship effectively traversed the walls of Fort Michilimackinac and revealed their permeability is evidenced in the pure scale of intermarriage during this era and supported by archival and archaeological evidence showing that the production of subsistence items like foodstuffs, clothing, tools, utensils, and building materials were all borrowed or adapted from local Indigenous customs and practices (Peterson, 1984, p. 41).

This mediated and balanced social, cultural, economic milieu was disrupted when the British captured Quebec in 1759. In the fall of 1760, French officials at Montreal signed letters of capitulation and officially relinquished sovereignty over Canada to the British. Their military defeat and resulting capitulation precipitated a negotiated withdrawal of French forces, as well as the dissolution of colonial infrastructure from New France and contested territories in the Great Lakes region. This process of transferring colonial power to the British was formalized by the Treaty of Paris of 1763. What this meant for the Métis and Indigenous peoples living in and around Fort Michilimackinac is that their decades-old trading and kinship systems slowly dissolved as their French relatives, trade partners, and allies had their supply lines from New France cut and

replaced by British trade networks. Although the British continued to operate the fort as a major trading post, their takeover marked a notable shift in colonial policy and precipitated a major movement of Canadiens and their Métis families away from Fort Michilimackinac to Red River Settlement around present-day Winnipeg⁵⁰ (p. 51).

The Indigenous peoples of the Fort Michilimackinac region, particularly the Anishnabe, Sauk, Odawa, and Chippewa, were less willing to move. They resented the unilateral British takeover of their traditional lands and viewed British policies as threatening and harsh. They began to see the growing numbers of settlers that accompanied British soldiers to military outposts as major threats to their sovereignty and control over their traditional lands (Steele, 1994, p. 235). In the minds of the Indigenous peoples, the possibility that these threats were real was confirmed by the obvious disrespect the British showed them. With the French, they had established a cordial, diplomatic, and reciprocal trading protocol that emphasized gift giving and honourable credit arrangements. The trading relationship was ritualized and balanced in ways that enhanced and confirmed their partnerships beyond simple economics. In contrast, the British ignored these protocols and rituals and asserted fur trade guidelines much more focused on capitalist and entrepreneurial opportunities and profit as the single most important objective (Schmalz, 1991, p. 66-67). This shift in policy caused the Indigenous people in the western Great Lakes to become understandably suspicious of British

⁵⁰ These people are the descendants and founders of the Métis culture and communities indigenous to Western Canada.

intentions in their lands.⁵¹ As early as June, 1761, British officials noted that various Indigenous leaders were complaining about the “coolness and indifference” shown them and wondering if the British had designs to forcefully takeover their lands (Parmenter, 1997, p. 624). It seems that various British attempts to assert impermeable fort walls were being questioned and contested.

Quickly realizing that much was at stake with this shift in policy, the Indigenous peoples of the western Great Lakes region united to oppose British sovereignty over their lands. They began a series of attacks and sieges on forts in the region. In 1763, as part of this larger resistance movement against the British, a group of Chippewa and Sauk staged a game of lacrosse on the plain beside Fort Michilimackinac. There are several reasons that lacrosse was chosen as the vehicle for this complex ruse. First, lacrosse was known as the “little brother of war” by the people of the region and there were striking similarities between preparations and rituals for lacrosse and war (Cohen, 2002, p. 72). Second, the Chippewa and Sauk realized that the British were unfamiliar with the specific cultural connotations of lacrosse and guessed rightly that the fort soldiers would be necessarily distracted by the game (pp. 72-73). Third, the Chippewa and Sauk chose to stage the game on the King George’s birthday, knowing that the British would be flattered by the gesture and much rum would be drunk in celebration of the event (pp. 67-68). About thirty-five British soldiers were stationed at the fort at the time this particular game was staged (Parkman, 1994, p. 334). As anticipated, discipline and security were relaxed on this day and the soldiers

⁵¹ This is not to suggest unequivocally that the French were more benevolent colonizers. They just did the business of colonialism differently from the British.

allowed some freedom to take in the game as spectators. The soldiers were surely well-entertained by the scene as hundreds of young men engaged in an intense, fast-moving, and violent game that lasted several hours. Until, as if by accident, the lacrosse ball was thrown over the wall and landed inside the fort. The players ran after it through the open gate:

Inebriation and a sense of trust made the British less cautious, explaining why many soldiers left the fort unarmed. The celebratory atmosphere also kept them from questioning the long overgarments worn by Chippewa spectators despite the heat of the day, and the noise around the playing field prevented them from distinguishing Chippewa calls that coordinated a planned attack. The British did not see the Chippewa supporters hand knives and clubs to the players who dashed into the fort. (Cohen, 2002, p. 68)

The trick worked, the players gained unopposed entry to the fort, killed most of the British soldiers, traders, and officials, and plundered the trade supply stores. The French and Métis at the fort on that day were not harmed.

Reports of this surprise attack made its way to British officials further east. In response, they sent a brigade of canoes and boats to Fort Michilimackinac to assert British sovereignty in the area. When the soldiers beached their boats on the shore at Fort Michilimackinac in September 1764, they were greeted by a Jesuit priest, a few Indigenous people, and a French trader named Parant who handed the commander the keys to the fort (Havighurst, 1966, p. 74). The gesture of handing over the keys must have seemed ironic as the gates of the fort stood wide

open, an obvious and lingering reminder of Indigenous resistance to British colonial sovereignty in their traditional territories. Surely following orders to reassert fort walls, the British soldiers ceremoniously hoisted the military ensign on the flagpole and immediately began extensive renovations and rearmaments (p. 74).

Although the British officials were eager to restart the lucrative fur trade at Fort Michilimackinac, they realized that they needed to rethink their trading practices and protocols. First, as safety measures, regulations were enforced that barred any Indians with firearms from the fort and outlawed any Indian women from staying inside the fort overnight (Havighurst, 1966, p. 93). Second, the British commander at Fort Michilimackinac adopted the French practice of gift-giving as a strategy for establishing respectful balance in the trading relationship. In 1767, the Commander Rogers hosted thousands of Indigenous people from all directions who pitched their camps on the shores of the Straits and participated in the grand council he had called. “Rogers smoked, feasted and couniled with his visitors...and there were repeated trade councils to bind all the tribes to British commerce. After many speeches, Rogers spent a whole day doling out blankets, guns, powder, lead, ornaments, tobacco...” (p. 84). The people apparently left this grand council well-satisfied with their new relationship with the British and were quite happy to trade their furs at Fort Michilimackinac in the years following the meeting.

British officials eventually deemed Fort Michilimackinac rickety, poorly positioned, and too vulnerable to attack, and in 1781 they abandoned the post in

favour of a more defensible position on Mackinac Island in the Straits (Havighurst, 1966, pp. 96-98). The newly named Fort Mackinac, although connected to the old and abandoned Fort Michilimackinac, would become known as a significant place in its own right in the context of American history and military struggles against the British, Canadians, and Indigenous peoples for ultimate sovereignty and control in the Great Lakes region.

Despite this varied and compelling history as a place, the location on the Straits of Mackinac is most infamously associated with Indian treachery perpetrated during the surprise attack by conspiring lacrosse players on the King's birthday. Historians have pointed to this event as evidence of the bloodthirsty nature of Indians and emphasized the honourable intentions of British colonists—bringing civilization to the wilderness—who were innocent victims of Indian savagery and deception (Parkman, 1994; Henry, 1966). This interpretation supports the imposition of colonial frontier logics as a necessary step in the civilization process. The integrity and security of the fort walls at Michilimackinac was compromised when the place was turned inside out by the Indian attack. Civilization was directly threatened when the walls became permeable. The irony of this interpretation is that the attack was specifically designed to reveal permeability and trouble the British belief that they could unilaterally determine the future of their relationships with the Indigenous people of the region. The lacrosse game *cum* irruption belies colonial frontier logics and demonstrates that the myth of impermeability is untenable in light of day-to-day human relationships.

Forts-as-Museums: Colonial Frontier Logics on Display

Despite some obvious thematic similarities, the fort profiles that comprise this chapter focus on the unique historical, social, and cultural contexts in which each structure was constructed, utilized, and maintained. So, rather than comparing each context, the purpose of the profiles is to present a deeper exploration and consideration of the mythic meaning of forts and fortifications from a global perspective, with special reference to forms of historical consciousness shaped by European intellectual and hermeneutic traditions. The deeper explorations create depth understanding that, in turn, enables a more complex critique of mythic renderings of forts and fortifications derived from colonial frontier logics.

When we come to comprehend the depth of human relationality present at a place, it becomes clear that the perceived frontiers are arbitrary and that the walls are also permeable to those relationships. However, the possibility of depth understanding is occluded by grand narratives of History, Truth, and Nation which inform and determine popular conceptions of these places. Popular conceptions are most powerfully honed in classrooms in which curricular and pedagogical perspectives—stories we tell children about the world—conform to teleological evaluations of human progress that reinscribe civilizational divides. Thus, these forts and fortifications are most noted for their educative potential and the intellectual curiosity they can provoke in those who recognize their significance against the broad backdrop of human history and experience. As sites of public memory, forts and fortifications are provocative examples of the ways in

which prominent tourist destinations provide citizenry with opportunities to imbibe mythic versions of national historical narratives (Peers, 1996, pp. 49-51).

It is normal for societies to conventionalize and institutionalize commonly accepted versions of their shared history. This is one way in which such knowledge is shared from generation to generation. The cultural phenomena of forts-as-museums only present as a problem when we recognize the ideological connotations associated with such representations and the colonial frontier logics they reinforce. “The hegemony of modern nation-states, and the legitimacy which accrues to the groups and classes that control their apparatuses, are critically constituted by re-presentations of a national past” (Alonso, 1988, p. 41). In teaching about the terms of interaction with those deemed different from ‘us,’ forts-as-museums tell a civilizational story necessarily from the perspective of the builders of civilization, the civilized, the insiders. The power of the mythic symbol of the *fort as History* is reinforced when citizens make the pilgrimage to the fort-as-museum.

If we consider Hadrian’s Wall and Château Gaillard today, we see that these pilgrimages often take the form of guided educational tours.⁵² As an historic site, Château Gaillard seems to receive relatively scant attention, perhaps because of its ‘ruined’ condition and the ubiquity of more impressive castles in France. In contrast, Hadrian’s Wall is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that offers extensive educational programs for tourists of all ages. On the official website, there is a

⁵² Several private tour companies in France offer a visit to Château Gaillard as part of their package. The town of Les Andelys is closest to the site of the castle ruins and often sanctions such tours for the economic benefits that they bring. For an example, see the website: <http://www.chateaux-france.com/chateaugaillard/>. The official government website for Hadrian’s Wall is located at: <http://www.hadrians-wall.org/>.

section specifically dedicated to education and community that provides links to resources and lesson plan ideas for teachers. Noteworthy is a file from the website called 'Links to Learning' which itemizes the specific ways that class visits to various sections of Hadrian's Wall can be connected to particular subject areas of England's National Curriculum syllabus "from art to science, music to geography, English to mathematics" (p. 1). Interesting, too, is a program titled 'Living History' that offers students opportunities to participate in a realistic historical drama as costumed participants with a stake in the outcome (p. 1). Unnamed are the particular hermeneutic commitments that have been employed to arrive at a version of historical truth that is prioritized in these so-called 'realistic encounters' with history.

All histories, whether spoken or written, are produced in an encounter between a hermeneutics and a field of social action which is symbolically constituted, even though at the time of the action, the meanings embedded in practice may not be clearly or fully evident to the consciousness of actors. (Alonso, 1988, p. 34)

The disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, and history most prominently inform the interpretive process concerning Hadrian's Wall and provide scientific and objective surety that what really happened there is captured by the experience of 'Living History' as unmediated reality. These disciplines interpret knowledge according to philosophical and intellectual traditions that have the power and authority to find expression as natural and commonsense conclusions derived from reasonable consideration of the "raw data" and "hard facts" (p. 37). There is

no need to name the interpretive frame informing our perceptions of ‘Living History’ because it is perceived to be universally applicable and accessible.

This tension over hermeneutic sensibilities employed with reference to forts-as-museums has been more conspicuous in the context of Elmina Castle as contemporary tourist destination. Bruner (1996) provocatively juxtaposes Ghanaian views of Elmina with those of African American ‘tourists’ who make the pilgrimage to the former slave fort in hopes of better understanding the history of slavery and the significance of their African roots. In general, Ghanaians seem to view Elmina’s fort-as-museum potential in terms of tourism and the related economic benefits and opportunities that could be brought to the area in the form of tourist dollars. Bruner argues that Ghanaians have a more fluid and dynamic view of the long history of Elmina Castle since its construction in 1482, are generally less concerned with the history of slavery, and less inclined to view the slave trade as tragic (p. 292). In sharp contrast, African American tourists view the castle as “sacred ground” because of its connections to the slave trade and the enslavement of their ancestors (p. 291). For many, Elmina Castle, as the place of last contact with Africa before enslavement and diaspora, is much more than *just* a tourist stop. It has become a powerful site of sombre pilgrimage.

Thus, African Americans resent any renovations, upgrades or ‘cleaning up’ that the Ghanaians may suggest to make this the Elmina fort-as-museum more tourist friendly. While Ghanaians wish to capitalize on international interest in *their* historic site, there is significant pressure to represent the history of the place in ways most acceptable to tourists. There is a certain irony in the ways in which

these paradoxical views manifest themselves in the contemporary context, especially in light of the complex colonial history of Elmina Castle and its dynamic relationships with the residents of the surrounding settlement:

The local people, the residents of Elmina, were not to go beyond the castle wall and were restricted from entering the castle grounds ... this was to keep the locals from defecating in the area around the castle and on the beach, and also to protect the tourists from being hassled. Elmina residents are only able to enter the castle as tourists...the Elmina people have again been separated from the castle, their castle, which has been completely dedicated to tourism. The local people are not only excluded from their local tourist site but have become the objects of tourism themselves, for the tourists look at and photograph the people as well as the sites.

(Bruner, 1996, p. 298)

In this example, the power to interpret and represent the regional and universal significance of Elmina Castle is clearly at stake. The hermeneutic potential expressed by the local people about the place is usurped by colonial and neo-colonial logics. Even though African American tourists value sites like Elmina as places of homecoming, the socio-spatial experience of fort-as-museum reasserts insider / outsider thinking and reteaches contradictory and discrepant lessons about exclusion, isolation, and civilizational divides.

The key argument here is that forts-as-museums are historic and pedagogic sites that perform culture by putting core institutional values and beliefs on display (Peers, 1996, p. 44). A significant historic site like Colonial

Michilimackinac has extensive and powerful opportunities to solidify those values and beliefs in the minds of those who visit the place. Colonial Michilimackinac, the current title given to the reconstruction located at the site of Fort Michilimackinac, has been deemed a National Historic Landmark in the United States, and is one part of a much larger tourist complex called Mackinac State Historic Parks.⁵³ Colonial Michilimackinac is a reconstruction of the fort from the 1770s that emphasizes British military presence, along with remnants of French and Métis habitation at the settlement during that era (Peers, 1996, p.101).

The current version of Colonial Michilimackinac was completed in the early 1970s and includes impressive palisades that enclose twelve reconstructed buildings including rowhouses, officers' quarters, traders' storerooms, a church, and priest's residence (Peers, 1996, p. 101). Site administrators, perhaps noting some holes in the historical narrative, made it known that they wished to expand their historic park and consulted with Native Americans in the late 1980s on how best to represent Native American presence at the site (p. 102). The consultants recommended that a period encampment be developed outside the walls of the fort. By the mid 1990s, though, only one such encampment had been created, and it is does not appear that any other additions have been made since.

Peers (1996) suggests that the development and representation of Native presence at Colonial Michilimackinac may have been hampered by a combination

⁵³ Mackinac State Historic Parks also include Fort Mackinac, Mackinac Island State Park, Historic Downtown Mackinac Island, Historic Mill Creek, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse. Information on each of these sites can be found at the website: <http://www.mackinacparks.com/>. The section of this official website dedicated to Colonial Michilimackinac provides extensive links to educational resources, lesson plans, and field trip opportunities, as well as a detailed explanation of the ways in which the fort-as-museum connects to the Michigan Curriculum Framework Standards for Social Studies across grade levels.

of lack of funding, limited numbers of capable Native American interpreters, as well as tensions over interpretations of the history of the place and the roles played by Native Americans over the years (pp. 102-103). Tensions are especially heightened during the annual reenactment of the surprise attack on the fort in 1763 that is organized by members of the local historical society.

This event, which is held after a parade and in front of large vocal crowds, involves non-Native people dressed as Ojibwa “warriors,” tomahawking and scalping others dressed as British soldiers; the whole thing is rather cartoon-like [“scalping” involves lifting wigs and there is much pantomiming]. (p. 104).

Apparently, this event is still being celebrated annually.⁵⁴ Although it is surely understood as harmless fun by the participants, it presents some rather sobering realities on the contentiousness of colonial divides, and how these are continually retraced in public places such as forts-as-museums.

Conclusion

This chapter is concerned with understanding the historical and cultural processes that have led to the creation of the fort as a powerful mythic symbol. I have reached far and wide to uncover these processes and better understand how the fort came to hold the mythic power it does. Although the forts and fortifications profiled here were chosen arbitrarily from many other possible choices, and the profiles themselves are admittedly and necessarily reductive, I

⁵⁴ For evidence of this, see the website: http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-18835_18896-118383--,00.html

hold that they provide relevant insights into the development of the concept of the fort on the frontier.

For the purposes of this study, a notable aspect of the historical and cultural significance of forts and fortifications is their usefulness to European imperial endeavours that began in the late fifteenth century. As best seen in the examples of Elmina Castle and Fort Michilimackinac, colonial forts were typically constructed at gathering places already made significant by local Indigenous peoples. The significance of these places shifted as the forts developed into major trading entrepôts where partnerships between the European newcomers and Indigenous peoples were negotiated and reworked over time. In both examples, the fort was a manifestation of the growing political, economic, and socio-cultural relationships between métropole and colony that brought both benefits and harms to those involved in the trade. The forts came to be understood by local Indigenous peoples as gathering places that often housed their relatives and brought tangible benefits to them. However, the forts were also understood, simultaneously and ambiguously, as sites of exclusion where European power was asserted more and more imperiously as time went on. The fort slowly became a guiding and organizing economic, political, and socio-cultural principle for the burgeoning Empire. This contention will be revisited and further developed in the next chapter where I provide a specific example of Indigenous Métissage that focuses on the significance of the place now called Edmonton and the artifact that is Fort Edmonton.

Chapter Three: Fort Edmonton: “Where It Went Wrong”

In the Cree language, the Northwest Resistance, a time of open military conflict between Cree and Métis groups and Canadians in the early spring of 1885, is known as *e-mâyikamikahk* or “where it went wrong” (McLeod, 1998a, p. 58). The Cree people refer to these events in this way because they denote the time of dramatic change in their relationships with the Canadian government, changing as it did from a predominantly peaceful and cooperative partnership to violent confrontation. Although these confrontations originated among Cree and Métis peoples living in the region known today as north-central Saskatchewan, there was considerable fear among settlers on the Canadian Prairies that these events would inspire other Indigenous groups to join in a general uprising. This sense of panic led to the refortification of the palisaded walls of Fort Edmonton, the general armament of hastily formed militias, and the decision of large numbers of families to seek shelter and safety within the walls of the fort. (Silversides, 2005, pp. 68-69).

One prominent resident of the time, however, took his cues regarding any impending dangers from the habits of the Aboriginal peoples who were camped around the fort at the time. Frank Oliver, founder and editor of Alberta’s first newspaper *The Bulletin* and considered one of the founding fathers of the city of Edmonton, recounts his reaction to the news that a state of war existed in the neighbouring Saskatchewan territory. Oliver (1955) notes that since his arrival in Edmonton in 1876, he had grown accustomed to Indian encampments around the fort and the nightly sound of beating drums:

Between comings and goings there was always a group of Indian tents near the fort; and without exception for night after night, winter or summer and year after year, the drum sounded and the dance or gambling was kept up until early morning. It was a permanent and prominent feature of the life of Edmonton. (p. 4)

When a telegram relating the events of the Cree and Métis uprising was received in Edmonton on March 27, 1885, Oliver surmised that the community was not under threat as long as the Indian tents remained and the drums could still be heard. He recalls lying in his bed that same night and gladly listening to the drums (p. 12). However, the next morning the tents were all gone and the drums were no longer heard. Despite numerous indications that the conflict that was the Northwest Resistance would spread to the Edmonton area, the community of Edmonton was spared any violence or bloodshed, and life soon returned to normal for the residents. Normal, that is, with the exception of one notable difference: the Indian drums were no longer heard. According to Oliver,

...the night the drum-throb ceased in Edmonton marked the end of the old way and the beginning of the new. It was the end of the road for the Red Man. His dominance had ceased; the land of his fathers was no longer his. The Indian drum has never since been heard in Edmonton. (p. 15)

For Oliver, writing retrospectively in 1929, the silencing of Indian drums in the aftermath of the Northwest Resistance signified a poignant *fait accompli* to the Indian problem. After 1885, the Canadian people could focus on the task of building a nation out of wilderness. For the Cree and Métis, *e-mâyikamikahk*

speaks of the time when their relationships with the newcomers got out of balance as the interests of the settlers gained precedence over their basic needs. Where this relationship also went wrong, and where the power relations were most out of balance, is in the stories that were told. Cree and Métis narratives of past relationships were ignored in settler culture and gradually displaced by a EuroCanadian version of the past and present that also imposed a version of the future. This imbalance can be seen in educational contexts today in the form of the pedagogy of the fort and colonial frontier logics. The Cree and Métis did not imagine things that way.⁵⁵

It is important to remember that the violence of the Northwest Resistance was sparked by the disregard of the Canadian government for Métis land rights, as well as a documented plan among Indian Affairs officials to subjugate the Cree by reducing or withholding food rations and government assistance in the form of agricultural instruction and tools that were guaranteed through the Treaties (Tobias, 1991; Carter, 1999, pp. 138-140; Goyette and Roemmich, 2004, pp. 134-136). The Cree and Métis involved in these conflicts acted in desperate hope of asserting some control in tumultuous times. Their socio-economic dependency was precipitated, in large part, by the severe disruption to Aboriginal ways of living caused by settler advances, smallpox epidemics, and the eradication of the buffalo herds from the Prairies. The political, social, cultural, and economic devastation wrought by these troubles began to intensify in 1869-1870. During

⁵⁵ The Cree and Métis were obviously not the only Aboriginal groups affected by this shift. All Aboriginal peoples in Western Canada felt the consequences of these changes after 1885 as the workings of the reserve system and Indian Act legislation began to more directly influence their daily lives (Carter, 1999, pp. 161-168).

that year, the Hudson's Bay Company sold its vast tracts of land holdings in Western Canada to the Canadian government without consultation with Aboriginal peoples, the decimated buffalo herds could no longer be found in the Edmonton area, and the people on the Prairies suffered through the last major smallpox epidemic in the region.⁵⁶

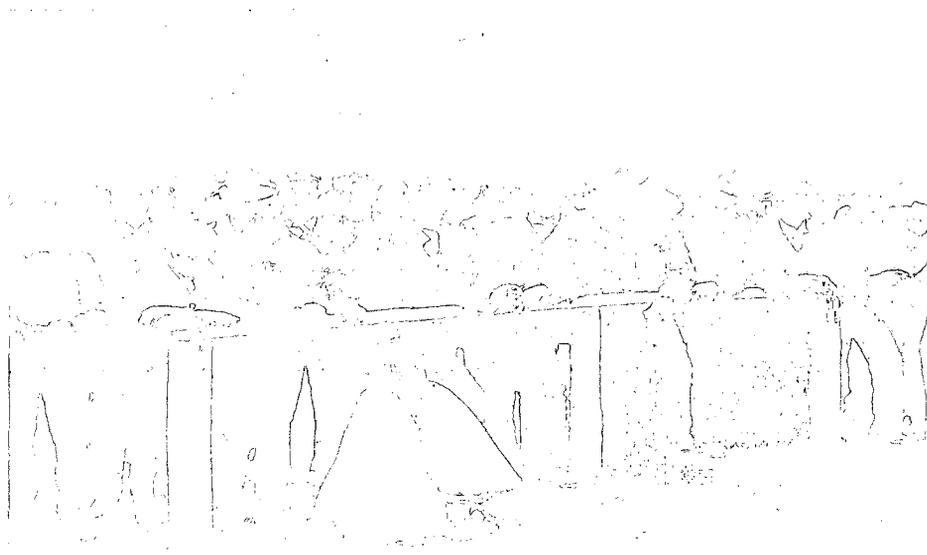
For millennia prior to these desperate times, Indigenous peoples on the Prairies lived largely according to seasonal patterns followed in accordance with the demands of living on the land. The patterns of these movements were based upon thousands of years of accumulated intimate knowledge of the territory, the various resources that were available at certain sites at particular times, and the best and most secure sites for extended residential camping. Archaeologists have suggested a model of Indigenous land use and resource procurement on the Prairies called logistical procurement. "In a logistical procurement strategy groups moved from a relatively permanent residential camp to smaller temporary camps (occupied for more than one day) to exploit resources" (Pyszczyk, Wein, and Noble, 2006, p. 33). The significance of this insight is that it confirms that Indigenous lifeways prior to newcomer arrival and settlement were not random, nomadic, or primitive. Logistical procurement and seasonal movements were founded on a fluid political structure comprised of affiliated small bands that moved throughout shared territory, shared the resources, frequently cooperated in endeavours of shared interest, but lived separately in smaller units for most of the year to ensure environmental and ecological sustainability (Christensen, 2000, pp.

⁵⁶ According to some estimates, the smallpox epidemic of 1870 killed half of all First Nations people in the Alberta region. See Goyette and Roemmich, 2004, pp. 112-118.

15-16). Individual bands were led by chiefs who were given the authority to make decisions regarding the location and harvesting of resources, the movements of their band, and the maintenance of safety and security, but members were not always strictly bound to support or follow these decisions. If they wished, they could always pack up their belongings and join another band (Mandelbaum, 1979, pp. 105-106). The dynamic connections linking the political, social, cultural, and economic practices of Indigenous peoples prior to newcomer arrival demonstrate the vitality of their lifeways and the specific ways that they were intimately attuned to living well on the land. In order to live well in this context, the people created a governance system, based on their social and cultural sensibilities, which maintained their relationships to affiliated bands and was necessarily fluid and responsive to the seasonal movements so essential to their survival and prosperity.

The arrival of fur traders and the establishment of fur trading forts in the Prairies added a new and welcome aspect to this seasonal cycle. Indigenous peoples interested in trading would typically collect furs and make desired products like pemmican throughout the fall and winter seasons. They would then trade these goods at the forts in late summer once the boats arrived from York Factory (on Hudson's Bay) laden with goods manufactured in Europe. These trade supplies would sustain them for the year and the cycle would continue. The reciprocal nature of these early exchanges suited the interests of the Indigenous peoples involved in the trade and markedly enhanced their material quality of life. However, as resources like the buffalo began to dwindle, seasonal resource

procurement patterns were disrupted, and economic circumstances began to change. The fort became less a part of a seasonal cycle and a much more prominent part of a dependency cycle. As resources became harder to find and seasonal cycles broke down, the governance systems were subsequently weakened. The result was that Aboriginal peoples began to congregate more regularly around forts in the hopes of securing ways of sustaining themselves. Thus, the phenomena of Indians camping outside the fort for extended periods of time, as described in Oliver's account, is a relatively recent occurrence that has had wide reaching influence. Through the accounts of traders, settlers, and travelers after about 1870, an image was produced depicting bewildered, hungry, lazy, and destitute Indians hanging around the fort looking for handouts. The currency of this image was accentuated by the photographs taken during that era, like the one⁵⁷ shown below:



This image of the primitive and uncomprehending Indian, absolutely unable to adapt to civilization and change, sits in stark contrast to the burgeoning

⁵⁷ This image was scanned directly from Silversides (1994).

population of amused settlers crowded in behind him. This photograph visually confirms Oliver's recollective conviction that the old ways of the Indian had ended in 1885 and a new era had begun in the West. According to this vision, this new era would be led by *Homo Oeconomicus* (Economic Human⁵⁸), a suggested evolutionary stage of human development that theorizes human beings as primarily motivated by the individual pursuit of material wealth based on rational, opportunistic, and calculating propensities (Faber, Petersen & Schiller, 2002, p. 324). What this means, in practical terms, is that there is widespread belief that the governing philosophical principles of market capitalism are universally beneficial to the individuals and societies who embrace them. Thus, in this example, market logics would become institutionalized and the society would be run as subservient to the market (Polanyi, 2001, p. 60).

This vision of development was applied to the Canadian West with remarkable fervor. As the so-called 'empty lands' were opened to newcomer settlement and exploitation, the logic of the market became the central institutional and ideological crux of the frontier society. It was believed that each settler could earn a fair share of the wealth if the proper habits and attitudes were employed. These pioneering characteristics of *Homo Oeconomicus* would forge the expansion of British society, morality, and industry into the Canadian wilderness and enable the Canadian nation to assume its critical role as the inheritor of the British Empire in North America (Owram, 1980, p. 127).

⁵⁸ *Homo Oeconomicus* is most often translated as 'Economic Man.' However, the term *homo* actually refers to the human species as a whole and not just 'man.' See Persky (1995) for more on this.

To all intents and purposes the Canadian expansionist viewed the North West as a social *tabula rasa*, 'where the very rudiments of the social fabric have yet to be made and laid.' In one sense this was a very exciting prospect: the physical opportunity for well-being and economic power was paralleled by the opportunity to build a society more closely approximating social ideals that had been done before. Canada had a chance to create a social order equal to the prospects of the vast land which it would dominate. (p. 135)

When this settler impetus, manifested in the form of *Homo Oeconomicus*, is understood in the context of colonial frontier logics it becomes easier to comprehend the transition of the fort from meeting place to administrative centre for the spatial and ideological displacement of Aboriginal peoples. While Oliver's self-assured declaration of the end of the Indian is easily dismissed today for its cold ethnocentrism and short sightedness, it is worthwhile to wonder about the intellectual and social hangovers from this era that continue to influence the ways in which Aboriginal peoples and Canadians interact today. This call for collective wondering is especially important now that the drums are beginning to beat loudly again in Edmonton as the Aboriginal population grows and Aboriginal peoples begin to assert their perspectives in public places. They have returned in the thousands to live, study, and work at the original meeting place that became known as Edmonton. The undeniable presence and participation of Aboriginal people in places like Edmonton raises the curricular and pedagogical challenge to reconceptualize the story of Canada in ways that recognize and respect them as

the descendents of those who have lived on this land for a very long time. The very recent image of the Indian hanging around the fort can no longer be used to circumscribe Indigenoussness.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to bring forward a specific example of Indigenous Métissage that is focused on the place of Fort Edmonton on the frontier landscape of Western Canada. I first provide an historical context and general overview of the various versions of Fort Edmonton that were established at different sites along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. Although earlier versions of Fort Edmonton were constructed along the river further downstream from the present site of the city of Edmonton, I focus on the contextual character of forts established at sites located within the present day city limits of Edmonton. Following this section on the various locations of Fort Edmonton, I proceed with a specific example of Indigenous Métissage focused on the place now called Edmonton. Beginning with the foundational understanding of the mythic significance of the fort that has been argued thus far in this work, I weave a story of the place that centers on the prominence of the fort as an ambiguous cultural artifact that is simultaneously a site of contention and meeting place for Aboriginal and Canadian.

This story proceeds in a non-chronological manner and weaves a series of related incidences to demonstrate that a unilateral theory of fort impermeability is untenable in light of the historical record and the remembrances of both Aboriginal and Canadian. The telling of this story is guided by relational sensibilities of the “ethical space” (Ermine, 2004) previously articulated in this

work, as well as by a desire to express an Indigenous form of historical consciousness that asserts a critical amalgamation of past, present, and future. The implicit and unifying curricular and pedagogical point throughout will be that deep attentiveness to place-based forms of citizenship and the layeredness of experience and memory offers provocative opportunities for engagement of *Aboriginal and Canadian that resist and subvert the pedagogy of the fort and colonial frontier logics.*

Locating Fort Edmonton

The impetus for the location and establishment of Fort Edmonton was directly connected to the corporate rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company for control over the fur trade in Western Canada. Fur trade competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and various rival companies had been significant since the London-based financiers established the Company in 1670. As mentioned in the section on Fort Michilimackinac, the Hudson's Bay Company and their Montreal-based competitors each had distinctive ways of conducting the business of the fur trade, and this difference had a marked influence over the nature of fur trade expansion into Western Canada. Notable economic tensions arose when, in the wake of the British conquest of North America after 1763, Hudson's Bay Company officials mistakenly assumed that the new political situation would put their fur trading enterprises on a much sounder footing. They did not anticipate that the extensive fur trading network established and fostered by the Montreal-based voyageurs

would still be viable and that there would be people willing to aggressively pursue it.

The monopolistic desires of Hudson's Bay Company officials were quickly challenged by mobile fur traders who travelled westward on the rivers and took their trade directly to their Aboriginal trading partners on the Prairies. These new competitors were a serious threat to the Company:

Many of the French canoemen and interpreters remained, but they were now supported in Quebec, Montreal and Michilimackinac by the capital of businessmen from Britain and the American colonies. Loosely organized in a series of fluctuating partnerships and syndicates, the new traders could call on the credit facilities, quality trade goods and marketing techniques of the London business world, and they presented a more serious commercial threat to the Hudson's Bay Company than the French had ever done. (Williams, 1983, p. 35)

This loose affiliation of corporate partners would eventually merge into a consolidated consortium in 1783 as the North West Company. The initial successes of the North West Company were based in their willingness of their traders to ply their trade along the river routes and expand the fur trade into untapped territories while their Hudson's Bay Company rivals adhered to their old policy of waiting for the Indians to bring furs to their forts stationed along the Bay. "Yearly they advanced further up the North Saskatchewan until by 1778 they were wintering on the river halfway across the prairie towards the Rockies" (Francis, 1982, p. 37). Numerous reports from Hudson's Bay Company

employees of the time complain that the 'Canadian' traders had managed to conduct trade upriver at the very heart of Indian country, had taken the best quality furs, and thus significantly reduced any motivation among the Indians to make the long and arduous journey to the Bay to trade (pp. 35-37). Those that did still make the trip to Hudson's Bay only brought second-grade furs to trade for goods that could not be acquired from the North West Company traders. Thus, by the 1770s, it became clear to Hudson's Bay Company officials that their old style of conducting business was no longer viable.

After some initial disagreements over the wisdom of committing to an inland trade policy, Company officials in London finally directed their employees stationed on Hudson's Bay to begin establishing trading posts at various suitable sites along the North Saskatchewan River and its many tributaries. This momentous decision instigated a new era of competition that would continue for the next five decades and have a profound effect on the history of Western Canada and the interactions between Aboriginal peoples and the newcomers. Cumberland House was thus established some seven hundred miles by canoe from Hudson's Bay and a few days river travel west of the present-day site of The Pas, Manitoba at a place called Pine Island Lake (Williams, 1983, p. 36). After this initial foray, it soon became clear to both companies that the Saskatchewan River system provided the most direct access to the abundant fur trading opportunities with the Aboriginal peoples of the Prairies. This river system thus became the focus of their corporate competitions as each company strategized to outdo the other by being the first to establish posts in new areas and thus garner lucrative

trade relationships with the people indigenous to the territories they were entering. This sense of corporate competition intensified as both companies continued to establish new posts as they moved further west. This competition precipitated a series of relatively rapid leap-frog movements in which each company tried to move west ahead of the other until the supply and manpower lines of both were stretched so thin that, out of necessity, they came to rely upon each other for mutual safety and local resource procurement (MacGregor, 1967, p. 18).

This is the context in which the first Edmonton House was established in 1795. A Mr. Shaw of the North West Company, hoping to catch his rivals unprepared, had crafted a secret plan to build a new trading post further upriver from their Fort George post at a place called the Forks situated at the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Sturgeon Rivers near present-day Fort Saskatchewan. This move was deemed desirable because the area around Fort George had been trapped out and the new fort would be constructed in “a rich and plentiful Country, abounding with all kinds of animals” (Morton, 1929, p. 1). William Tomison of the Hudson’s Bay Company soon discovered that his rivals had made this move and quickly led his men upriver to the site of the new North West Company post of Fort Augustus where he supervised the construction of their own trading post right next door.

This first Edmonton House, completed in December 1795, consisted of two log houses; the main trader’s house was sixty feet long, twenty-four feet wide, and seventeen high while the second, a so-called “men’s house” had less than half the square footage of the first (Kidd, 1987, p. 8). Both buildings were

roofed with pine sticks covered with turf and outfitted with parchment windows (p. 8). It seems rather ironic that Tomison would order the construction of a new trading post right beside Fort Augustus when the new frontier territory offered so many other suitable sites for locating a post. Yet, officials and workers with both companies realized that their isolated position on the Prairies made them quite vulnerable to attack from Aboriginal peoples. Both groups believed that their mutual safety and security would be enhanced if they supported each other in times of trouble (MacGregor, 1967, p. 20). This unwritten policy of mutual security was quickly put to the test during the construction of Edmonton House when a large band of Gros Ventres with a reputation for impetuosity appeared on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan opposite the site and signalled that they wished to trade. The appearance of this band apparently sparked considerable fear among the traders since their adjoined trading houses were not yet enclosed by picketed palisades—"merely log Houses in a Square Shape with a gate between the two Houses"—and therefore openly vulnerable to attack (Morton, 1929, pp. 2-3). On this occasion, though, the Gros Ventres were only interested in trade and the exchanges were carried out peacefully.

This scare was enough evidence to convince the traders that their movement into the Edmonton area had brought them into a new geopolitical context in which the traditional territories of allied and antagonistic Aboriginal groups overlapped. The location of trading posts in the Edmonton area placed the traders in the midst of a fluid conflict zone:

The Edmonton area, in particular, was a crossroads of sorts for the original inhabitants. Both sides of the North Saskatchewan River, and south to the Battle River, were controlled by the Cree Nation. South and east of that the Assiniboine or Stoneys held sway...South and west of the Red Deer River were the lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy...and the Tsuu T'ina/Sarcee. The confederacy...were sworn enemies of the Cree, and when they came into contact, sparks always flew. Adding to the mix were wandering bands of Saukteaux, Dene/Chipewyan, and Atsina/Gros Ventre...All were understandably hostile to the white intruders, and all would play a part in the history of Fort Edmonton. (Siversides, 2005, p. 1)

Soon after the encounter with the Gros Ventres (or *A'aninin*, as they call themselves), the men of Fort Augustus and Edmonton House constructed a common palisade comprised of fifteen foot high pickets set in a trench that encircled both trading posts and the companies gladly got on with the business of fur trading (MacGregor, 1967, p. 21). By all accounts, it was a prosperous trade for both companies in the years that followed. Despite the location of the forts in a conflict zone, with the very real potential that their intentions for peaceful trade would be disrupted by violent confrontations involving the Aboriginal groups in the region, peace prevailed and the area around the posts was fulfilling its promise as a region of abundant resources and lucrative trade opportunities. While the trading was taking place, the workers inside the forts continued to erect structures that were deemed necessary to the proper functioning of the post. Added was a mudded hut for the smith and his forge, sixty foot flagstaff, fur press, an ice house

for long-term storage of provisions, various warehouses, and one or more watchhouse bastions on the south side of the complex to enable careful surveillance of approaching trading parties (Kidd, 1987, p. 9-10).

However, by 1798 it became clear that the area around Fort Augustus and Edmonton House was becoming trapped out and the firewood supplies were rapidly dwindling (MacGregor, 1967, p. 23). Both companies needed to relocate.⁵⁹ Both trading operations were accordingly moved upriver some twenty miles to a suitable site situated today at the very centre of the city of Edmonton at a place known as Rosedale Flats. This site was likely chosen by the companies for several reasons, all of which are tied to its geographic and historic significance as a traditional gathering place. First of all, the forts were located on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River within close proximity of major river crossing sites for both summer and winter travellers. Since crossing the deep and powerful North Saskatchewan River was a dangerous endeavour even under the most favourable conditions, the location of these safe river crossing sites was well-known to Indigenous peoples prior to the establishment of the trading forts at the site. As a result, the site became a place where people would gather seasonally to trade, visit, conduct ceremonies, and renew alliances. The decision to construct their forts at this site was obviously a move of cardinal importance for the traders because it positioned them in the midst of a place already well-established in the seasonal cycles of the diverse groups of people indigenous to the region. Second,

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that these abandoned forts were burned to the ground by some Blackfoot men (Silversides, 2005, p. 6). Their specific motivations for doing so are hard to discern with surety, but we can assume that they were expressing their displeasure with the move, as well as the nature of their relationships with the traders.

the north riverbank at the site was relatively low and therefore quite accessible for boat loading and the transport of goods between the forts and the landing (Coutu, 2004, p. 91). This is no small consideration when one recalls that there were huge bales of furs and weighty trade goods—guns, powder, shot, hatchets, kettles—that needed to be transported between the river and store room inside the fort. Third, the location on the north side of the river, opposite steep banks on the south side, afforded advantageous views of any parties approaching from the south. This made any surprise attacks from groups approaching the fort from the south—the direction that the most threatening groups usually came from—very unlikely since they would have to descend the steep banks and then cross the river before they even reached the fort. Fourth, the site was located on an elevated floodplain with fertile soils surrounded by a thick forest that supported an abundance of natural resources. It was an ideal place for camping in the summer and a well-sheltered site in the winter (p. 88). This particular location was also in the vicinity of the Beaver Hills in the traditional territories of the *amiskwâciwiyiniwak* or Beaver Hills People of the Cree, and thus Edmonton House came to be known to the Cree as *amiskwâciwaskahikan* or Beaver Hills House. Although there are no specific details of the architectural character of these trading forts, reports from the time indicate that the structural pattern of the original Edmonton House / Fort Augustus amalgamation was closely replicated (MacGregor, 1967, p. 24).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ There is some controversy regarding the location of these versions of Edmonton House and Fort Augustus. Coutu (2004), for one, believes that the North West Company officials located Fort Augustus about one kilometer further upriver from the Rosedale Flats site where the Hudson's Bay Company officials built their Edmonton House. Although neither interpretation has been conclusively verified, I have decided to go with the most common version that the two trading forts were built side by side.

Despite its ideal geographical characteristics, the location of the amalgamated entrepôt at the place now called Edmonton positioned the traders in the midst of a less-than-ideal simmering conflict zone that would soon erupt in periodic tensions and violence. The founding of North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company trading operations in the Edmonton area would spark a new era of territorial conflicts between rival Aboriginal groups that would eventually entangle the traders themselves. The most direct explanation for these heightened tensions is that the establishment of trading posts in this overlapping region of the Prairies undermined previous trade relations and balances as the people felt compelled to compete for control of resources, land, and retain exclusive access to valued trade items (Milloy, 1988, p. 36). The Edmonton House and Fort Augustus trading forts, as major meetings places, were often the places where rival groups would confront each other. The traders, who naturally wanted the peoples of the region to just focus on peaceful trade, often found themselves trying to mediate such disputes. Unfortunately for them, this mediation was sometimes interpreted as choosing sides and they drew the ire of their Indigenous trading partners by taking such actions.

Although tensions were sporadically violent in the Edmonton House and Fort Augustus area during this era, violent clashes between the Blackfoot and the Cree (with their Assiniboine allies) intensified during the summer of 1806 and much bloodshed resulted (Binnema, 1992, p. 77). For several months, the region was a very dangerous place to live and this reality had some significant repercussions on the lives of the Blackfoot, the Cree and Assiniboine, as well as

the traders stationed at the forts (pp. 77-78). For safety purposes, the Cree and Assiniboine abandoned the Plains and avoided the trading posts. The Blackfoot apparently had the Plains to themselves, but also avoided the trading posts for the same reasons. The traders obviously suffered economically from the lack of trade during these months but, more critically, they were also cut off from the regular sources of provisions that were their main source of food (p. 78). Living amidst such instability and conflict, the fort traders eventually found themselves embroiled in the heightened tensions as horse stealing also intensified and the valuable stocks of the forts became an easy target. In response to this crisis, the traders began to exact frontier justice, in the form of whipping and execution, to punish captured horse thieves, and the affected Aboriginal groups quickly responded to this policy with retaliatory attacks on the forts (Coutu, 2004, p. 129):

By 1810, officials from the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company wisely decided to abandon their various beleaguered posts scattered throughout the region and reestablish themselves in more peaceful territory downriver approximately one hundred kilometers from Edmonton at the confluence of White Earth Creek and the North Saskatchewan River.⁶¹

By most accounts, however, this decision to relocate at this particular site, though safer, was poorly conceived and the potential for success undermined by the unpredictability of local circumstances. Apparently, the initial plan of the traders was to establish separate trading posts for each tribal collective and then persuade each group to only trade at a particular post so that peaceful trading

⁶¹ These abandoned buildings were also burned down soon after this move (MacGregor, 1967, p. 30).

could resume and commercial aspirations could be met (Binnema, 1992, pp. 83-85). In devising this plan, however, the traders forgot to consider the interests of the Indigenous peoples upon whose commercial activities they were so dependent. The relocation of the partnered trading posts did reduce the threat of violent confrontations between different tribal factions, but this was mainly because they were situated too far north for the Blackfoot to conveniently visit (p. 85). They were not willing to travel that far. This reality, along with some unpredictable seasonal environmental and climatic factors—deep snow, grass fires, and mild winters to the south of the posts—created a situation in which Indigenous traders rarely visited the posts and the buffalo herds became increasingly difficult to find in the region (p. 85). “HBC factor Bird concluded in September 1812 that there was an almost total lack of Indians that summer, and that as a result no furs or provisions of consequence had been acquired” (Silversides, 2005, p. 9). This new locale was indeed safer, but it appears to have been too far off regular trade routes, and thus the traders suffered economically and materially from the resultant isolation.

The impact of this move on the operations of both trading companies provides some compelling evidence that the Indigenous groups of the Edmonton region had considerable influence and control over the quality and character of their trade relations with the newcomers. Those living inside the fort walls were shown to be rather vulnerable to the decisions and actions of the outsiders. As a consequence, the traders, perhaps in recognition and respect of this co-dependent relationship, decided to move their twin trading forts back to the Rossdale Flats

area in the spring of 1813. They rebuilt their basic structures—trade houses, store houses, cooking areas, and living quarters—at this site, and once again decided to construct a common wooden stockade with rudimentary elevated corner bastions for purposes of shared defense (Clark, 1971).

Returning to the site of so much past turmoil was surely unsettling for the traders, but the obvious geographic, victual, and commercial superiority of the Rossdale site must have convinced them that it was their best move. The traders had come to appreciate the richness of the Rossdale site and also must have better understood why local Indigenous peoples had gathered at the Rossdale site for millennia prior to their arrival in the region. For one, it was situated in a unique transition zone between the prairie and woodlands that afforded relatively easy access to diverse food sources (Silversides, 2005, p. 9). Another benefit of the site was that it was located on a floodplain and repeated springtime flooding over many millennia had produced fertile soil there. In the annual report for 1815, Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor James Bird reported a substantial yield of vegetables and grains from the large company garden planted adjacent to the palisades on the east side of the fort (p. 9). The procurement of foodstuffs was certainly an important consideration for the traders that afforded them a measure of comfortable autarky, but their primary concern was the promotion of the fur trade and the expansion of their commercial profits from the trade. With respect to these endeavours, both companies seemed to have benefitted from their relocation to the Rossdale site as trading slowly began to increase after 1813. However, both companies also suffered from the cutthroat competition that was exacerbated by

their proximity, and their clientele frequently took advantage of this situation by playing the traders against each other. Such competitions sometimes resulted in heightened tensions between the groups during this era (MacGregor, 1967, p. 31).

Curiously, however, these animosities at this sometimes contentious site, whether involving First Nations, European, or Métis, seem to have been forgiven when faced with the problem of the interment of the dead. Based on our understanding of the significance of the Rossdale Flats as a venerable gathering place for Indigenous groups millennia prior to contact with Europeans, it can safely be assumed that a burial ground existed at the site prior to the establishment of trading forts there (Coutu, 2004, p. 104; Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral Histories Project Research Team, 2004, *passim.*). From 1801, the year that fur trade forts were first constructed at the Rossdale site, this tradition was carried forward as a cemetery was established on the Flats to the north of the forts which was apparently viewed as common burial property by the diverse groups of people who gathered together at the forts (Silversides, 2005, pp. 9-10). Coutu (2004) conducted extensive analysis of burial records in Fort Edmonton journals from 1800 to 1883 and estimates that approximately three hundred people were interred in the cemetery during that period (p. 235). Interestingly, while the majority of these people interred in the fort cemetery were Hudson's Bay Company employees and their families—sixty per cent of whom were Métis—there is also ample evidence that the Hudson's Bay Company took responsibility for the proper burial of Indigenous peoples who died while visiting the trading posts (pp. 236-237).

The significance of these burial records is that they demonstrate that the various versions of Fort Edmonton were remarkably cosmopolitan places that housed and attracted a motley assemblage of people with diverse backgrounds and interests. This reality contradicts the architectonically solid cultural and civilizational distinctions taught through the colonial frontier logics of fort pedagogy. It also contradicts the assumption, supported by several generations of Canadian historians, that the development of the West was essentially a commercial endeavour. This assumption has been challenged by new generations of historians who instead view the fur trade as a complex network of social and familial relationships that established “many tender ties” connecting the various cultural groups together (Van Kirk, 1980). Recognizing and respecting these relationships became a necessary and integral part of commercial activities during this era. The interment of the dead in shared burial grounds, as at the Rossdale site, reflects these complex ties and demonstrates that the palisaded walls of the various versions of Fort Edmonton were also uniquely permeable to these relationships.

As both Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1980) argue, and as noted in the profile of Fort Michilimackinac, it was First Nations and Métis women who nurtured and maintained these ties through marriage, mothering, and the performance of various duties vital to the success of the trade. While such intermarriage brought tangible benefits to both the European traders and their First Nations and Métis relations, it must be acknowledged that it was these women living, working, and raising their children inside the walls of Fort

Edmonton who gave life, literally and figuratively, to the place now called Edmonton. This critical role became especially prominent in 1821 when the North West Company amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company and HBC officials identified the consolidated Fort Edmonton as the central location for their fur trading operations in the west:

From this point on, Fort Edmonton was no longer just about the fur trade. The added responsibilities brought with them added economic activities. In particular, the post would raise horses and sled dogs; provide food for the brigades; manufacture and repair steel and iron utensils, traps, knives, stoves, horseshoes, screws and nails, and most other hardware items; and leading the way in a new commercial era, construct the York boats used for increased river traffic. (Silversides, 2005, p. 15)

The division of labour required to perform these many tasks followed fairly traditional lines. In general, European and Métis men were employed with blacksmithing and boatbuilding. First nations and Métis men were contracted as hunters to supply the occupants of the fort with much needed fresh and dried buffalo meat and fish (MacGregor, 1967, p. 37). They were also employed by the Hudson's Bay Company to maintain and guard the Company's huge horse herd (Coutu, 2004, p. 174). The work of the women⁶² of Fort Edmonton—apart from birthing and raising future Company employees—involved the production of pemmican, the making of clothing, moccasins, and snowshoes for the Company employees, garden maintenance and harvesting, berry picking, and most of the

⁶² The women who lived and worked in Fort Edmonton were all First Nations or Métis (Silversides, 2005, p. 24). Very few European or Canadian women lived in the Fort Edmonton area until large numbers of settlers began to move to the region in the late 1870s.

cooking and cleaning at the fort (Coutu, 2004, p. 167). Their inherited skills in the production of pemmican were especially vital to the success of the Hudson's Bay Company because their employees relied on this high-energy food source during long trips or extended stays at isolated outposts.

The knowledge of these women working and mothering in these ways inside the fort walls surely affected the views their First Nations relatives had of the significance of the fort and their affiliations to it. Evidence of these attachments can be seen in the story of a very threatening attack on Fort Edmonton in the fall of 1826 by a large party of Assiniboine warriors that resulted in several deaths. In the wake of this attack, while Company employees began the work of repairing, reinforcing, and enlarging the forts walls and bastions, a large group of Cree and Métis peoples returned to Fort Edmonton from the plains and camped just outside the palisade for several weeks (Coutu, 2004, p. 158). While we can guess that this group acted to reestablish peaceful trade relations in the territory, we can also safely assume that they wished to protect their relatives—particularly the women and children—inside the fort from further threats and harm. In general, then, the daily operations of Fort Edmonton during this era can be characterized as intimately dependent on the cooperative activities of insiders and outsiders most often instigated and fostered by First Nations and Métis women.

This balance of daily operations at Fort Edmonton was once again severely compromised as a result of situational circumstances when a huge flood inundated the buildings and palisades on the Rossdale Flats in 1829. Although

seasonal flooding at the Rossdale Flats was not uncommon, the severity of this particular flood caused the residents of Fort Edmonton to wonder if it was a wise decision to establish their entrepôt on the floodplain. Chief Factor Rowand decided that the site was no longer suitable for addressing the expanding needs of the Company in the region and soon began construction of a new fort on a high and prominent bluff overlooking the river on the north side at a location directly west of the Rossdale site. He was determined to construct a new fort that was large enough to accommodate all staff and their activities and impressive enough to reflect its growing prominence as the central focus of Hudson's Bay Company operations in the West (Silversides, 2005, p. 19). While past versions of Fort Edmonton were basic ramshackle assemblages of log cabins that were haphazardly and temporarily pieced together and encircled by a high fence, the designers of this new fort took the time to construct a much more impressive enclosed, unified, and consolidated structure.

The fort was constructed in a roughly trapezoidal that apparently conformed to the angular contours of the bluff it was situated on and enclosed an area estimated to be ninety by sixty-metres (p. 19). The most prominent architectural feature within the palisades was the so-called Big House, the large three storey residence of the Chief Factor and his family that boasted painted galleries, a large gathering hall, and glass windows—all extravagant rarities in the frontier context. Based on descriptions written by visitors to the place during this era, this new fort was widely considered to be an impressive and imposing structure that seemed to signal the beginning of a new era in the region. Such

impressions are best revealed through the notes written by visitors like Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson in 1841:

Edmonton is a well-built place, something of a hexagon in form. It is surrounded by high pickets and bastions, which, with the battlemented gateways, the flagstaffs, etc., give it a good deal of a martial appearance; and it occupies a commanding situation, crowning an almost perpendicular part of the bank... The fort, both inside and outside, is decorated with paintings and devices to suit the tastes of the savages that frequent it. Over the gateway are a most fanciful variety of vanes; but the hall, of which both the ceiling and the walls present the grandest colors and the fantastic sculpture, absolutely rivets the astonished natives to the spot with wonder and admiration. (MacGregor, 1967, p. 41)

The Catholic missionary Father Lacombe arrived at Fort Edmonton in 1852 and recounted these particular remembrances of the fortress to a biographer:

The palisade, twenty feet in height, was of stout trees split in half and driven into the ground—the whole strengthened by binding timbers. Around this, compassing the entire Fort the sentinel's gallery ran, and at the four corners the peaked roofs of bastions rose, with the iron mouths of cannons filling the port-hole.

Massive riveted gates to which the steward alone held the keys gave entrance to each side of the courtyard... In the middle of the palisaded enclosure the Big House stood, and on the grassy plot in front of it two small brass cannons mounted guard. (Hughes, 1911, pp. 46-47)

These martial and aesthetic features, alongside the more practical storehouses, work areas, trading rooms, living quarters, and livestock stables essential to the daily operations of the Fort, constituted a busy and multifaceted new Fort Edmonton capable of accommodating a typical resident population of approximately forty men, thirty women, and eighty children (Kalman et al., 2004, p. 51). Expansions in mercantile activity brought commercial prosperity, and the Fort soon became a lively and industrious place that was considered the most civilized and appealing entrepôt on the Prairies at the time.

The establishment of Fort Edmonton at a commanding position high on the banks above the North Saskatchewan River did indeed inaugurate a new era for the Hudson's Bay Company and the region. The decades after 1830 were the golden age of the fur trade on the Canadian Prairies, a time when the Hudson's Bay Company prospered and maintained a fur trade monopoly and control over an expanding commercial network that tied together diverse groups of people in co-dependent relationships. However, as the years went on and more newcomers moved to the region, the political and economic systems began to change rapidly and the co-dependent balance was lost. During the 1850s, the lifestyles of people in the Fort Edmonton region gradually underwent a "Great Transformation" from a communal-style economy toward a private property system based on emerging forms of liberal economics and industrial capitalism (O'Riordan, 2003). As the significance of the land, resources, and people of the region began to be measured according to these emerging understandings of industry, sovereignty, and property, previous co-dependent relational balances were subverted and a very

violent form of epistemic enclosure—colonial frontier logic—was operationalized in the name of development.

As we have seen, the zero-sum equation wherein *fort = development* found expression on the Canadian Prairies during this era and justified the ‘Great Transformation’ as ordained and necessary. This civilizing impetus gained momentum and power as more and more settlers arrived in Edmonton and gradually expanded beyond the walls of the fort to encompass and redefine the traditional territories of the local Indigenous people. As a result of these changes, the trading centre of Fort Edmonton gradually became obsolete as a bustling frontier town grew around it. In 1906, the Alberta government purchased Fort Edmonton and the surrounding area from the Hudson’ Bay Company. It wanted the site for a new provincial legislature. Construction of the legislative buildings was completed in 1912. For three years, the dilapidated buildings of the Fort and the brand new Alberta Legislature stood side by side. It became clear that Fort Edmonton, having successfully initiated and facilitated the transformation of the prairie landscape and the assertion of civilization in wilderness, had become an anachronism in the new Edmonton. The Fort was finally deconstructed in 1915.

The Layers of Fort Edmonton: An *amiskwâciwaskahikan* Métissage

In late August, 2005, about one thousand people gathered on the Rossdale Flats to witness a reburial ceremony hosted by the City of Edmonton. I was there with my extended family to participate in the event. The sun was intensely bright against the clear blue sky on that day and it brought such heat that even the shady areas were uncomfortable places to inhabit. As I stood in the shade of a large tree

in the centre of the park in downtown Edmonton where we had all gathered, it occurred to me that maybe the sun was punishing us all for waiting so long to rebury the remains of our ancestors. Perhaps *Ihtsipáitapiyo 'pa*—the Source of Life—was reminding us not to act with such bad manners and remember our responsibilities to each other. I was thinking about this when we slowly began moving out of the shade and to our places so that the ceremony could begin. The remains of six bodies, and collected skeletal remains from numerous uncovered burial sites, had been placed in eight pinewood caskets that were each draped with a Pendleton blanket and decorated with flowers. My Dad, my brothers Dana and David, and I were assigned to carry the casket and remains of the only child of the group to be reburied. We grasped in our hands the ropes looped around the casket, lifted as one, and slowly moved toward our spot in the procession behind the Métis cart and horses, moving carefully so that the flowers and blanket would not fall. With the sounds of drumming and singing echoing across the Rossdale Flats, we slowly made our way toward the temporary stage where the formal ceremony and speechmaking would take place. We set the casket on the stage in front of the assembled witnesses and took a seat amongst them. My body was taken over by the heat of the sun and soon sweat rolled down my back. My seat became sticky. It was hard to concentrate on what the people on the stage were saying.

The ceremony was held at the location of the Fort Edmonton burial grounds that were established back in the early 1800s. Hundreds of people associated with the Fort in some way had been buried there over the years. The strange thing about the history of this cemetery is that the people living in

Edmonton pushed aside the remains of the people buried there as the frontier city began to grow and expand (Kalman et al., 2004, *passim*). The land on the Rossdale Flats, including the cemetery, became more valuable than the remains of the people who had been buried there. This shift in sentiment began in the late 1880s as the Rossdale Flats became a much busier gathering place as more and more newcomers came to the settlement. During this time, the Flats were used as a landing site for a ferry service that brought people and goods across the river. In the summer months, it was a hub of activity. A few years later, private land owners began establishing small farms and business operations there. A little later, the people living in Edmonton began using the Flats as a community gathering site for celebrations and fairs. A racetrack and sports field was constructed and maintained there. By 1901, a railway track was laid down that traversed the Flats. The tracks were laid to support the general transportation needs of the growing town, but also to enable the construction and fueling of an electrical power plant located right next to the river.

In a few short decades, the Rossdale Flats became a very different place and the cemetery an afterthought. In the summer of 1905, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier spoke of these tremendous changes at a ceremony held on the Rossdale Flats to celebrate the creation of the province of Alberta and the capital city of Edmonton (Owram, 1979, pp. 374-377). Given this ceremonial blessing, the settlement continued to grow at a rapid rate. In 1915, a bridge was built across the North Saskatchewan River and the Rossdale Flats were the north side landing of the new crossing. Traffic and economic activities increased as a result. As the city

grew and attracted more people, opportunities were created, and power demands increased. The power plant had to be expanded many times to meet these demands.

By the late 1950s, the change to the landscape was so dramatic that most people who drove their cars on the expanded roadways crossing the Rossdale Flats would not have known that the large traffic circle next to the power plant grounds was constructed at the approximate centre of the Fort Edmonton cemetery (Kalman et al., 2004, p. 148). This was true despite the fact that the burial grounds were well within the living memory of many long-time residents of Edmonton. Those that did know were apparently caught up in the development of the city and forgot that proper care and respect for the remains buried there was necessary. As development continued, and various excavations were carried out on the Flats, bodily remains were uncovered and either relocated to local cemeteries or scattered. Finally, in 1966, archaeologists from the University of Alberta examined a burial exposed by construction workers and recovered six bodies that were studied and then stored by the Department of Anthropology. It is interesting to note that the stage that Prime Minister Laurier stood on while delivering his speech back in 1905 was situated almost directly above the location of these six bodies and that one of the bodies found was buried with two medicine bundles, a bird bone whistle, and some other items (Coutu, 2004, p. 113). The University of Alberta would store the remains of these six people for five decades before they were finally offered for reburial at the Rossdale site.

When the speechmaking finally ended, and we received the signal to continue with the reburial ceremony, we brought the caskets down from the stage and continued the procession to the burial sites. The gravesites were dug into the earth on a small patch of grass and trees that had survived between the road and fence of the power plant. We were just a stone's throw from the riverbank. After shuffling past the other gravesites, we carefully lowered the casket into the designated grave. I stood solemnly watching alongside my Dad and brothers as the other five caskets were each lowered in turn. All present crowded around as prayers and last rites were offered. We each sprinkled a handful of dirt on the caskets to bring the ceremony to a close. I paused and lingered over the casket I had helped carry. Since it held the remains of a child, I wanted to recount a few silent prayers for one so young. I thought it might help.

The reburial ceremony was held at a site that has been recognized and respected for millennia as a ceremonial place. Standing next to the gravesites on that day, I could face west to view the golden dome of the Alberta Legislature and imagine the palisades of Fort Edmonton rising about the bluffs of the North Saskatchewan River for the first time back in 1830. Turning north, I could scan the natural and urban landscape of the Rosedale Flats spread out beneath the downtown core of Edmonton. Facing east, I could look beyond the old power plant and picture the first two ramshackle versions of Fort Edmonton located on the Flats next to the river. Then, turning to the south, I could imagine groups of people following a well-wore trail down the steep valley toward the crossing spot on the river. The centrality and suitability of the site has made it a notable

pehonan or “waiting place” for a very long time (Coutu, 2004, pp. 64-67; Meyers and Thistle, 1995, p. 415).

The particular *pehonan* now called Edmonton was a significant gathering place along an extensive trail system that existed well before newcomers from Europe began arriving on the Prairies (Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral Histories Project Research Team, 2004, p. 97). This is how Brings-down-the-Sun, a *Piikanikoan* or Peigan Blackfoot man, described the trail to a friend back in the late 1800s:

There is a well known trail we call the Old North Trail. It runs north and south along the Rocky Mountains. No one knows how long it has been used by the Indians. My father told me it originated in the migration of a great tribe of Indians from the distant north to the south, and all the tribes have, ever since, continued to follow in their tracks. The Old North Trail is now becoming overgrown with moss and grass, but it was worn so deeply, by many generations of travellers, that the travois tracks and horse trail are still plainly visible. (McClintock, 1968, p. 434)

This trail system, called the Old North Trail by some and Wolf’s Track by others (Coutu, 2004, p. 69), converged at the major river crossing spot now known as the Rossdale Flats. This trail junction, as a significant crossroads, was a major gathering place where people from the north and south of the river would come together seasonally to trade, visit, renew relations, and participate in ceremonies. Such *pehonan* were situated at various places along the river systems throughout the Prairies, and there seems little doubt that European traders coming into the

region saw the great importance of these gathering places and established their forts at these locations to tap into existing seasonal gathering traditions and maximize their profits (Meyer and Thistle, 1995, p. 431). Once these trading relationships were established, the forts became an integral part of the seasonal gathering tradition and, in recognition of the continuity and fluidity of this cultural adaptation, important ceremonies of renewal continued at those sites.

These ceremonies are noted throughout the Fort Edmonton journals kept by Hudson's Bay Company employees throughout the fur trade era. The journals record that hundreds of people from many different regional Indigenous groups came together at the Rossdale Flats *pehonan* to dance, feast, and participate in traditional ceremonies like the *M'teogammik* lodge, sweat lodge, goose dance, and thirst dance (Coutu, 2004, pp. 113-114; Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral Histories Project Research Team, 2004, p. 97). These ceremonies continued right into the 1880s and were of repeated interest to the main writer of the Edmonton Bulletin newspaper⁶³ who sarcastically wondered, in one particular account, if some local "lacrosse boys" would be spiritually punished for removing and cutting up the sacred centre pole leftover from a thirst dance ceremony (Oliver, June 23, 1883). As time went on, and more newcomers arrived in the area, it seems that the shared ceremonial significance of the place was forgotten and a very different form of sovereignty was invoked.

However, prior to this shift, we know that the initial partnerships connecting Indigenous peoples and newcomers in the Prairie context were

⁶³ See the July 8, 1882, June 16, 1883, and June 14, 1884 issues of the *Edmonton Bulletin* to read details of these accounts written by owner Frank Oliver.

negotiated through trade at the forts and ceremonially confirmed through various protocols and gift giving exchanges (Dempsey, 1972). What this means is that Indigenous peoples on the Prairies did not view their visits to fur trading forts as solely economic in purpose and intent. The Indigenous people who came to trade at forts on the Prairies during this era were certainly interested in the economic benefits trade could bring to them, but this interest was not motivated purely by profit or issues of supply and demand (Rotstein, 1970, p. 123); rather, they were also interested in renewing and furthering partnerships with the traders who lived there in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual benefit. These various aspects of trade were seen as a unified ceremonial process that was necessary to maintain good relations. This desire is easy to understand when it is remembered that the forts were established at traditional gathering places where relationships were seasonally renewed through trade and ceremony. That is how such *pehonan* were understood at that time. The forts, and the people living in them, were naturally blended into this non-market system of trade.

We can note the ceremonial aspects of this trade in one account left by a Métis employee of the Hudson's Bay Company who lived at Fort Edmonton in the 1850s (Erasmus, 1976, pp. 45-48). In this particular example, which followed established protocols, the ceremonial process began with the arrival of two messengers at the gates of the fort ahead of a large group of Blackfoot who would arrive the next day. These two envoys offered tobacco to the chief factor of the Fort, passed on a message from their leader announcing the intention to trade, and smoked a pipe with the chief factor to show peaceful intentions. The next day a

large procession of people, horses, and dogs crossed the river and camped west of the Fort. The following morning, a fine horse heavily laden with furs and hides was led by the chief to the Fort gates. He was accompanied by some guards and a group of singers who sang as they moved toward the gate. When this group reached the gate, they paused, held their guns toward the sky, and fired them. At this signal, two cannons located on the bastions of the Fort were fired in rapid succession. With these guns symbolically emptied, the gates were swung open. The chief factor welcomed the Blackfoot visitors, accepted the horse and load as gifts, and escorted the group to the trading house inside the Fort. There, the chief was given a suit of clothes, a stove pipe hat with a red feather, a Hudson's Bay Company medal, a very large roll of tobacco, a keg of rum, and a generous amount of ammunition and powder for his gun. Upon receiving these gifts, the Blackfoot chief made a lengthy speech and his counterpart, the chief factor of the Fort, replied with the help of a translator. With these good relations renewed through a balanced exchange, general trading began and lasted for a few days until the group decided to move on.

In this example, which was quite typical of trade exchanges during this era, we can see that forts were perceived as common gathering places on the Indigenous landscape that fostered sustained partnerships based on reciprocity and mutual benefit. This dynamic balance was an ideal state of relations that was sometimes difficult to achieve and maintain. However, in spite of the violent confrontations that sometimes occurred there and the less desirable consequences of the trade on Indigenous lifestyles, the fort was perceived as a place where

ethical relationality was seasonally enacted and renewed. The fort began as a place where cultural differences could be held in organic tension because the spirit and intent of interactions was made clear to both parties from the outset. This was the original pedagogy of the fort on the Prairies.

Unfortunately, however, “[a]s Fort Edmonton moved into a position to gain from the development of agricultural settlement, where individual self-reliance and private property became the dominant economic strategy, its people abandoned their connections to the commons and their earlier economic strategies” (O’Riordan, 2003, p. 14). This was the era when fort pedagogy shifted and the fort gradually morphed into a powerful mythic symbol of development and civilization that would come to determine, in very violent ways, the significance given to Aboriginal presence in Canada. The specific character of this shift can be perhaps best examined through the example of the garden vegetables, grains, and hay crops tended outside the palisaded walls of Fort Edmonton by its occupants during the fur trade era (O’Riordan, 2003, *passim*). In an effort to secure adequate food sources for themselves and their livestock, the people living at the Fort typically planted and harvested potatoes, turnips, carrots, cabbage, wheat, barley, and hay. In doing so, they naturally had to claim a piece of land adjacent to the Fort, and often delineated this claim with wooden fences.

Now, while the Fort was regarded by local Indigenous peoples as a neutral trading place occupied on a partnership basis by traders given special status in their territories, the surrounding lands and resources were understood as part of a collective economic system in which open access to common property resources

was key. Competition between groups and the designation of control over territories did exist in this system, but the general ethic guiding it was that all were provided access to the food and resources necessary for them to live and prosper, as long they did so with due respect given to the needs of others, the animals, and the land. This communitarian economic spirit is what allowed the people of the Fort unrestricted access to the wide variety of regional resources—wood, meat, fish, and grazing lands—that they required to support themselves and do the business of the trade. This unrestricted resource use was balanced with access to trade at the Fort for the local Indigenous people. In light of this reciprocal spirit in the context of the commons, it should not be surprising that Indigenous groups visiting Fort Edmonton frequently helped themselves to the vegetables, grains, and hay that the Fort occupants tried to secure as their exclusive private property. Potatoes were apparently a particular favorite of the *Siksika* Blackfoot (Silversides, 2005, p. 57). It is interesting to note that the people accessing these resources usually took the time to deconstruct the fences surrounding the gardens and reuse them for firewood or poles—showing evidence that they viewed the attempted claims to private property as arbitrary and inappropriate in their traditional territories.

By the late 1860s, as more and more newcomers arrived on the Prairies and critical resources began to dwindle, the Hudson's Bay Company shifted its economic focus away from the fur trade and the communitarian economic system. The dire consequences of this shift were realized after *papamihaw asiniy*—the sacred 'flying rock'—was removed from its place by a Methodist missionary in

1866. The people of the area considered the removal of *papamihaw asiniy* a very bad sign foretelling of terrible things to come. Elders prophesied that war, disease, and famine would result (Goyette and Roemmich, 2004, p. 90). These prophesies quickly came true. The buffalo became much harder to find. Warfare and killing increased as the hungry and starving people competed for the scarce buffalo still to be found in the area. A terrible smallpox epidemic killed thousands in 1870 (pp. 113-117). Amidst all of this trouble, and while officials at Fort Edmonton began employing armed guards to protect their fences and garden produce from the people coming to trade (Silversides, 2005, p. 57), Cree leaders in the Edmonton region learned that the Hudson's Bay Company in London had sold their traditional territories—Rupert's Land—to the Dominion of Canada without consulting them.

In 1871, a delegation of Cree leaders led by Sweetgrass travelled to Fort Edmonton to register their objections to this sale with the chief factor and remind Company officials of their historic partnership with the Indigenous people of the area. These leaders asked the Company officials to take pity on their starving and suffering people, reported that their country was ruined and could no longer support their needs, and requested the negotiation of a formal Treaty partnership (Goyette and Roemmich, 2004, pp. 120-121). By the time that Treaty 6 was completed in 1876, and an adhesion by the Papaschase Cree negotiated at Fort Edmonton in 1877, the Fort was already becoming quite closed to Indigenous interests and needs despite the very recent history of co-dependent partnerships at the place. The people were soon languishing on reserves and making annual

pilgrimages to the gates of the Fort to receive their Treaty payments. Fort Edmonton as a ceremonial *pehonan* had been re-*placed* by an administrative centre for the region that facilitated the spread of liberal capitalist interests at the expense of the local Indigenous peoples. Fort Edmonton became a mythic symbol *and* organizing principle for the development of the new Canadian nation and nationality.

One troubling outcome of these major shifts was the idea that Indians were out of place in Edmonton and no longer belonged there. Evidence of this sentiment can be seen in the story of the Papaschase Cree and the expropriation of their Treaty 6 reserve lands in the 1880s (Donald, 2004). Their Chief Papastayo selected the location of their Reserve approximately four miles south of the North Saskatchewan River, directly across the river from Fort Edmonton. Soon after making this decision, trouble started. A large and vocal group of settlers in the Edmonton area did not want the Papaschase Indian Band Reserve No. 136 to be anywhere near the growing settlement of Edmonton. They argued that the Reserve would impede the growth and development of the town and deny the settlers access to valuable resources and fertile land. The newspaper of the time, the *Edmonton Bulletin*, advocated that the Papaschase Band “be sent back to the country they originally came from” (Maurice, 2001, p. 4). Somehow, in a few decades, the Indigenous people living in the Edmonton area had become outsiders to their own *pehonan*. In the end, the settlers got their wish. The members of the Papaschase Band were forced to wait while their Treaty rights hung in limbo and

were left destitute and hungry for several years after the negotiation of Treaty 6 and the eradication of the buffalo.

Eventually, the desperate members either took Métis scrip, thus forfeiting their Treaty status, or simply moved to other reserves where relatives lived. On November 19, 1888, three adult males who were living on the Enoch Reserve surrendered the rights of the Papaschase Band to Reserve No. 136. The removal of Indians from the place called Edmonton, as seen in the example of the Papaschase Cree, is just one example of similar processes at other significant gathering places on the Prairies during this era. The “spatial and ideological diaspora” of Indigenous people, and their subsequent re-creation as outsiders in Canada, was absolutely necessary to realize the teleological dream of the nation and nationality (McLeod, 1998a). From the early 1880s, the approximate time when the Papaschase were displaced, to about 1910, the civilization and development of the *pehonan* called Rossdale Flats proceeded at a very rapid rate. The construction of new buildings, railways, and roadways right over top of historic burial grounds is clearly indicative of the very violent and exclusionary implications of this new form of sovereignty. The significance of this message was not lost on an Aboriginal woman who appeared on the Rossdale Flats during railway construction in 1908. She watched the construction crew dig up the remains of her baby (Kalman et al. 2004, p. 107; Coutu, 2004, p. 221). The crew must have stopped their work at her request and then watched as she fell to her knees and collected her baby’s bones in her apron. She later placed these remains in a black shoebox and took them back to her reserve to be reburied. This

unnamed woman understood, perhaps better than anyone else, that Indians no longer belonged in Edmonton.

On August 10, 2007, a cool and rainy summer day, I returned to the Rossdale Flats with my family to again participate in a ceremony there. The purpose of this gathering was to ceremonially open the commemorative monument and park named Traditional Burial Ground and Fort Edmonton Cemetery that had been constructed at the site. The gravesites of the remains that we had reburied two summers previous were marked with metal plaques and included within the overall circular design of the monument. The large circle of the monument is marked by large cement plinths positioned to create openings to the four cardinal directions. Also marking the perimeter of the circle are several rust-coloured steel posts that are intended to symbolize tipi poles. In the middle of the circle, encompassed within a Métis infinity symbol, is a steel sculpture that blends the Christian cross with an incomplete circle as its crossbar in recognition of the mixed traditions that come together at the site. The figure-eight shape of the Métis infinity symbol marks the sidewalk path that visitors can follow to tour the Memory Gardens and read the placards listing the names of all the people who were recorded buried at the site since Fort Edmonton was first established so many years ago.

When the ceremony started, I climbed on top of a western plinth so that I could get a better view of the speakers who were huddled together beneath the central sculpture. My son climbed up and stood beside me. I wrapped my arm around his shoulders and pulled him close so that we could both be sheltered

beneath our little umbrella. Standing there with my son, looking over the assembled people and listening to the prayers and speeches, I silently wondered if this ceremonial gathering might be seasonally renewed. It seemed unlikely given current divides separating Aboriginal and Canadian. Meanwhile, below us a sweetgrass smudge set on the corner of the monument struggled to stay alight in the rain. I pulled my son closer and whispered a little prayer. Maybe he will remember.

Conclusion

In 1969, The City of Edmonton began plans for the reconstruction of historic Fort Edmonton at a site a few miles upriver from the Provincial Legislative Grounds, the location of Fort Edmonton at the height of the fur trade era. When it opened in 1974, Fort Edmonton Park was comprised of a reconstructed Fort Edmonton that was built according to specifications detailed in 1846 (Goyette and Roemmich, 2004, p. 35). Since then, Fort Edmonton Park has expanded significantly, taking an era-based approach to demonstrate how Edmonton has grown from fort to city by reconstructing local landmarks according to chronology and development: 1885 Street, 1905 Street, and 1920 Street. Fort Edmonton Park has taken on a significant and influential educational role in Edmonton area today. School programs offered for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 focus mostly on fur trade life, pioneer experiences, and interactions with costumed actors. Fort Edmonton Park has been such a success that visitors often confuse contemporary recreations with historic realities. For example, University of Alberta students have reported that most visitors to the

recreated Fort Edmonton mistakenly assumed that the Fort they toured was the original Fort, preserved in its original condition, and still situated in its original location (p. 35).

In light of this confusion, an important related question arises: In what ways does the experience of visiting Fort Edmonton Park perpetuate and support other mistaken assumptions about the history of the place now called Edmonton? Peers (1996), in her study of forts recreated as historic sites, noted that the messages such places send regarding Aboriginal-Canadian relations can recapitulate the socio-spatial dichotomy symbolized by the fort walls:

Given the patterned diminution of the representation of Native people at these sites, and the messages this pattern projects about the relative power and importance of Europeans over Native people in the past, one could easily conclude that these sites merely reflect and reinforce social structure, including the domination of Native peoples by peoples of European descent. (p. 190)

Educators and curricularists should wonder about the lessons such public educational sites are teaching, and how these lessons influence the ways in which people speak to each other about culture, identity, and difference. Fort Edmonton qualifies as a public educational site that insists on a socio-spatial structure of insiders and outsiders with impermeable walls despite some fairly clear historical evidence of human relationality that troubles these assumptions.

While the concept of permeable fort walls may not be much of a revelation to most people, what needs extensive critique are the commonsense assumptions

that repeatedly reinscribe cultural divides and perpetuate colonial frontier logics in contemporary contexts. It is this logic that causes both insiders and outsiders to imagine that they inhabit separate realities. As seen best in the example of Fort Edmonton, the fort walls themselves became a medium of economic and cultural exchange through which people slowly came to know each other. This exchange value, wherein outsiders brought trade goods to the fort and received desired manufactured goods from insiders in return, gradually shifted to unbalanced exploitation and the assertion of power on the part of the colonizers. This power enabled the colonizers to set the terms of future exchanges and determine the relative cultural and intellectual value of outsider knowledge. One significant outcome of this process has been that the fort walls have, in metaphorical terms, slowly expanded outward from their original limits as colonial territory was claimed for newcomer settlement and resource exploitation. The outsiders were pushed to the margins as the logic of the fort expanded and continued on. Over time, and heavily influenced by powerful versions of history and anthropology, fort walls that were simultaneously permeable and impermeable gradually morphed into solidly impermeable civilizational divides, and this troubling interpretation of human relationality has left a deep legacy on settler societies.

This legacy can be discerned in the field of education when Indigenous and Eurowestern scholars theorize as though the oppositional Others are irrelevant to their separate deliberations. On the one hand, Eurowestern curricular and pedagogical frames are predicated on the exclusion of Indigenousness and thus contemporary assertions of Indigenousness are considered outside comprehension.

On the other hand, and ironically mirroring Eurowestern curricular and pedagogical frames, some Indigenous scholarship in the field of education has also been predicated largely on a theory of cultural exceptionalism and exclusivity. How this troubling situation came to be so is the focus of the next two chapters.

Chapter Four:
The Curricular Problem of Indigenouness: A Genealogy of Inside/Outside

An interesting albeit limited debate took place in the Edmonton Journal in December 2006. It began in the form of an article in the Ideas section of the newspaper in which the writer critiques Prime Minister Stephen Harper's evocation of the 'war veterans died for our freedoms' argument to justify current Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan. The writer takes issue with Harper's suggestion that previous military actions justify ongoing military commitments by countering that war has not and does not define Canadians as a people. He surveys and portrays Canadian history and resultant priorities as evolving out of competing French, British, and American claims, with some First Nations involvement and influence in these dealings, and proudly proclaims that Canada "was the first modern state to be born without revolution or civil war" (Watts, 2006). The suggestion here is that Canada has a four hundred year tradition of peace and negotiation that has uniquely influenced the evolution of the nation. The writer concludes that Stephen Harper's politically motivated proposition reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of military conflicts in Canadian history.

The initial responses to this critique came in the form of 'Letters to the Editor' five days later. Three such responses were published and all three focused on the correction and clarification of historical details that the writer used to substantiate his claim. For example, one letter pointed out that the writer had credited the wrong Prime Minister with a certain quote and went on to argue that a study of the specific character of Canada's past Prime Ministers might reveal

some interesting insights in relation to the topic. Another came to the defense of Prime Minister Harper's position and emphasized the important role played by Canada's military in the First and Second World Wars. It was more than three weeks after the original article first appeared that the newspaper published a letter that questioned the writer's thesis by countering that Canada is a nation with a very long, and often conveniently forgotten, history of violence against Aboriginal peoples. The letter writer argues that this notion that Canada is the only modern state born without revolution or civil war is only defensible if we rely on myopically selective versions of EuroCanadian history to support it (Mohr, 2007). Of course, these historical versions must conform to the national storyline that Canadians are most comfortable hearing and telling about themselves. While Canada may not have had civil wars or revolutions in the conventional sense, the writer argues, there is no denying that violence against Aboriginal peoples and their ways has been perpetuated in multiple forms over several centuries. The historical realities pointed out in the letter put Canadian self-congratulation regarding historical non-violence in ironic perspective.

The newspaper did not publish any subsequent responses to this challenge. Perhaps readers did not respond in writing and privately decided that nothing more needed to be added. Although reflective silence has an important pedagogical place, such silences in public forums and contexts are troubling to me because they can suggest avoidance rather than reflective contemplation. The micro event witnessed in the editorial pages of the Edmonton Journal is a small-scale example of the particular ways that many Canadians respond to assertions of

Aboriginal presence in the larger public sphere. Avoiding engagement with contentious issues has been a common response of Canadians who feel uncomfortably or unjustifiably implicated in historical wrongs committed against Aboriginal peoples. This avoidance response often manifests itself as defensiveness, political correctness, or guilt whenever individuals are called to respond in public forums. Some yearn for simpler times when the national narrative was seamless and supposedly more representative of the experiences of the vast majority of citizens (Granatstein, 1998; Bliss, 1991-1992). There is comfort and familiarity with such narratives. After all, the argument goes, one should be able to have a discussion about Canadian history without getting bogged down in memory claims from victimized groups fixated on 'white' amnesia.

The discomfort felt when such national narratives are interrupted is symptomatic of colonial frontier thinking and the perception that assertions of Indigenosity in the context of contemporary Canada effectively change the subject and detract from more reasonable efforts focused on national cohesion and unity. Some observers argue that the desire to claim an identity today requires a certain spiritual and sacral reification of the past and memory; memories of historical trauma only serve the selfish needs of the 'victimized' or 'disenfranchised' few who wish, through their identity claims, to have everyone else feel guilty about the injustices experienced by their ancestors. Framed in this way, this "[s]acralization of memory...acts as an obstacle to democracy because focusing such group memories on narrow ethnicity results in groups competing

for the recognition of suffering, and thus undermining the democratic spirit of cooperation” (Misztal, 2004, p. 79). Extrapolating on this logic, we can summarily conclude that democratic cooperation is undermined when ‘ethnic’ groups tell stories that do not conform to accepted versions of truth that dominant groups tell themselves. The message here is that dominant groups only want to hear stories that they recognize as relevant and true. This version of democratic cooperation is remarkably parochial and inequitable. The range of possible responses to stories of historical trauma is limited by this logic. If reluctant listeners do not feel guilt, they may instead become defensive and express this by rebuking the colonized for dwelling on the past and blaming others for their problems. The desire is to isolate memory as a private practice, a separate cultural preoccupation, and thereby limit its ability to engender human transaction. This logic helps to reinforce the notion of separate realities and impermeable walls.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in detail the contested terrain that separates Aboriginal and Canadian in historical, social, political, and economic terms and better understand the ways in which these problematic separations find expression in curricular and pedagogical conversations and imaginaries. It will begin with an exploration of the tensions associated with asserting Indigenusness as a subject position—with a particularly pointed response to various ‘post’ critiques regarding the (im)possibility of identity claims. In formulating such a response, I will clarify my own role as an interpreter—an inherited position that I take seriously. The next section will consider the ways in which practicing and preservice teachers engage with

identity politics and resist, in various ways, the *imposition* of Aboriginal perspectives into the Alberta Social Studies curriculum. I will conclude by making the point that both Aboriginal and Canadian policy makers, educators, researchers, and scholars contribute to the maintenance of the perceived cultural divides in the work that they do. What is needed, I will argue, is a theory that allows for Indigenism as a critical interpretive position and theoretical place from which to address the field of education, maintain commitments to teach the foundational tenets of wisdom traditions, all the while remaining mindful of the broader context of human relationality and experience.

Identity Politics and the Problem of Indigenism

Over the past several decades, it has become fashionable for academics and theorists to use the prefix ‘post’ to designate advances in thinking and corrections to earlier misinformed theories of culture, identity, language, and knowledge. When using terms like postmodern, postcolonial, or poststructural, for example, the common perception is that critical progress has been made in thinking. These *new* theories, as ‘post,’ imply a temporal quality to these advances, as though the project of human enlightenment will inevitably move forward with time as the error of past ways is revealed and critiqued. Latour (1993) provides significant insight into the legacies of Eurowestern intellectual traditions and what it is that these ‘posts’ are struggling to overcome. Beginning with reference to European societies, he states:

Somewhere in our societies, and in ours alone, an unheard-of transcendence has manifested itself: Nature as it is, ahuman, sometimes

inhuman, always extrahuman. Since this event occurred – whether one situates it in Greek mathematics, Italian physics, German chemistry, American nuclear engineering or Belgian thermodynamics – there has been a total asymmetry between the cultures that took Nature into account and those that took into account only their own culture or the distorted versions that they might have of matter. Those who invent sciences and discover physical determinisms never deal exclusively with human beings, except by accident. (p. 99)

Latour terms this modern partition of Nature and Society the Internal Great Divide and argues that this way of thinking about the world led to an imposition of an External Great Divide separating modern from premodern societies. In this model, what distinguishes premodern from modern is an inability to separate Nature from Society and, as a consequence, premodern peoples frequently get bogged down in inarticulate, nonscientific, and irrational preoccupations (p. 99). This model helps explain the self-righteous ways in which modern societies have historically interacted with those deemed premodern.

Such a self-assured view of the world, which places modern man at the centre of human progress and development, makes a powerful statement about identity. If the world could come to be known through the employment of proper mental habits, then the true self could also come to be known through proper development. In modernist thought, there is a belief in an essential and multifaceted self that can become fully represented and achieved through discipline, rigour, and hard work (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 166).

Thus, the prescribed task of the modern man is to reach his full potential. This concept of potential, informed by teleology, exists separate from the circumstances of one's life and operates on the assumption that individuals spend their lives working to achieve a sense of self "isolated from other selves and insulated from the physical world" (p. 167). Emphasis is placed on individuality, independence, and the ideal of the self-made man—values that remain constant across contexts and situations. True identity, in this example, is only realized when one reaches full self-potential. Constructing the world in this way enabled Euromodern man to confidently proclaim himself the endpoint of human evolution that all other peoples should aspire to achieve. Such an identity achievement obviously required adoption of the habits of the modern man.

Although it took a few centuries, these conflated beliefs about modernity and identity were eventually questioned and critiqued. Coming in the form of postmodernism, this critique raised significant questions regarding the assumed universality of grand narratives and the ways in which modernity reduces all human experience to a monologic interpretation that privileges scientific and technological explanations of the world (Lyotard, 2002). What postmodernism critiques, then, is the assumption that the modernist developmental trajectory can be imposed on all societies in the world and used to determine their relative worth. "Postmodernists...argue that modernism's hope for a unified and fully knowable universe has collapsed. Instead we live in a world of partial knowledge, local narratives, situated truths, and shifting selves" (Davis, 2004, p. 109). This skepticism grew out of the violent and disorienting experience of living through

two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. After 1945, in response to the weaknesses and contradictions evidenced through the experience of two global wars, colonized peoples around the world began intensified movements for independence from their European colonizers. The flipside of modernity's promise was the necessarily violent competitions between European nations for imperial power and control, as well as the revolutionary struggles raised by the colonized. Critical theorists and philosophers, led most notably by Algerian academics whose scholarly work was deeply shaped by the Algerian struggle for independence from France, began a broad critique of the universalistic assumptions of modernity by noting its associations with power and control (Fischer quoted in Smith, 1997a, p. 2). Postmodern thinkers, while questioning the possibility of universal human goals, also condemned modernist thought for inspiring and shaping industrialization, capitalism, and colonialism, and justifying the exploitation and violence these movements wrought.

Postmodern thought has had a profound effect on conceptions of identity. Postmodernism, in rejecting the modernist assumption that the self exists in some essential form, recognizes that individual human experience is diverse and thus different for each person. From birth to death, each person has a contingent sense of self that will be subsequently altered as they age, experience the world differently, and affiliate themselves with various people, contexts, and ideas. To postmodernists, then, identity is conflicted, fluid, and constantly shifting:

One's sense of self, it is suggested, unfolds continuously through the recursive and reiterative processes of representing and interpreting

one's identity in relation to (and in distinction from) other forms – persons, objects, events, and so on...A sense of identity arises in the weave of what is remembered, what is represented from the present, and what is imagined for the future. The self, from this perspective, is not isolated and fixed. Rather, self is the product of communal relations and is thus always produced. The self is fluid and contextual.

(Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000, pp. 169-170)

It is important to note that postmodern perspectives on the self do not necessarily negate the possibility of an identity expression or articulation; rather, what is rejected is the possibility that identity can be fixed and defined with any surety. Postmodernists are only interested in questions of identity that involve sustained attempts to interrogate and articulate, in a recursive manner, the relationships between subjects and the discursive practices that shape and problematize them (Hall, 1996, p. 2). This idea of recursion emphasizes that identity and identification undergo an ongoing process of erasure and emergence with each attempted enunciation of a subject position. Viewing identity as recursive and contingent stems from the conviction that identities are constructed *within*, not separate from, the specific historical and institutional contexts that inform them. The belief is that identities “emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity” (p. 4). Identity is thus subject to the ‘play’ of difference—diverse, contradictory, and often tensioned, influences. In postmodern terms, then, concerns over identity are

framed as problems of representation. Representations of self are always already infused with traces of past representations and ideological influences, and therefore must be made temporarily and in a spirit that maintains openness to other possibilities (Bauman, 1996, p. 18).

However, while 'post' theorists dispute the possibility of a coherent and unified conception of identity, many groups recognize a responsibility to live in the world (rather than in theory) and position themselves in ways that speak to their personal and family histories. Rather than accepting as unquestioned the relativistic assumption that we all have *interesting* adventitious identity stories to share, some members of so-called minority groups have countered that there is much more at stake with identity when the social context is rife with oppression, systemic violence, market logic, and institutionalized injustice. In such conflicted and conflictual situations, identity becomes a means for making a political statement and the grounds from which one can stand in opposition to commonsense societal norms. This identity politics involves consciousness of one's personal and inherited history—identity—and sustained efforts to assert and reiterate this consciousness via public discourse as a way to strategically remind listeners of difference (Bromley, 1989, p. 210). Such identity articulations often presuppose an essentialized subject position from which to speak. Such strategic essentialism enables members of national, ethnic, or minority groups, despite significant personal and experiential differences, to simplify their identities temporarily and present themselves as a collective to achieve certain common goals (McLeod, 2000, pp. 194-195).

In contrast to this collective impetus from marginalized groups, the institutions and conventions of modern liberal democracies are founded on an ethic of individualism shaped by Enlightenment philosophies. Modern liberal constitutionalism is based on the presupposition that society is comprised of equal individuals who recognize the value in coming together to form a uniform political body. In this model, individual cultural differences are irrelevant and subservient to the larger constitutional values that unite the people in a homogeneous political whole (Tully, 1995, p. 63). The shared sovereignty of the people is believed to be vested in the liberal democratic values that comprise the constitution—the constitution *guides* the nation—and adherence to constitutional standards is deemed necessary to uphold the common good. What the ‘common good’ connotes, of course, are authoritative European standards of freedom, democracy, justice, constitutionality, equality, and institutionality.

The self-appointed ‘right’ to designate these standards as universally good was proclaimed during the Enlightenment era (and since upheld) when European political philosophers began to define their own standards in contrast to the reported characteristics of premodern societies encountered through imperial activities. Relentless taxonomical categorization of non-European societies as different positioned European societies as the final arbiters of the common good *and* the desired evolutionary endpoint of human development. Possessing the power and authority to decide the relative worth of Others, European societies developed a political philosophy that insisted on the necessary incorporation and assimilation of Otherness as an example of benign democratic progress.

According to liberal democratic intellectual traditions, any constitutional accommodations to cultural difference, for example, are highly problematic because they admit to differential and preferential regard for groups that should be treated just like everyone else (p. 67-69). At issue here is contention over the validity of sovereignty claims, the assumption that liberal democratic political theory is inherently good for all citizens, and the normative role of equality (Turner, 2006, pp. 60-63).

Many minority groups in liberal democratic societies have resisted this normative logic of equality by insisting on group-differentiated citizenship rights that recognize their unique cultural, linguistic, and historic positions in relation to the larger society (Kymlicka, 1996). These groups contend that democratic equality should not necessarily mean that everyone is treated the same; rather, it suggests respectful recognition of difference as a critical starting point for real democratic dialogue. In contemporary identity politics, this demand for recognition is often directly connected to problems created as a result of historic misrecognition. The connections between socio-political recognition and identity are intimate:

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *misrecognition* of others, and so a person or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.

Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of

oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (Taylor, 1997, p. 75)

Movements to right these wrongs are indicative of an overall desire on the part of the misrecognized to gain more control over public understandings of their individual and collective identities—how these are presented, articulated, celebrated, and esteemed. In Canada, what this has meant, in part, is that Aboriginal peoples have upheld precolonial, decolonial, and non-assimilatory versions of who they think they are, individually and collectively, and respectfully insisted that the significance of these identities be considered in culturally-appropriate and -relevant terms.

This sort of essentialized identity statement, however strategic it may seem, is dismissed as an impossible fantasy by most ‘post’ theories. Hermetic identity claims are seen as a trap in that, while all people naturally desire to name themselves, the consequence of doing so is contextual boundedness and a necessary and ironic distancing from the self undergoing scrutiny and attempted recovery (Derrida and Ewald, 1995, p. 274). Thus, in this critique, the act of self-identification actually results in misidentification, a closing off of other possibilities, and a troubling and inorganic form of self-enclosure. Related critiques of identity politics note that most identity claims today are rooted in inherited modernist views informed by colonial logics that construct human societies as independent, isolated, closed, and homogeneous cultures with specific cultural quirks that label them different (Geertz, 1986).

Fanon (1966), in his famous study of the psychological ramifications of colonialism, anticipates that the colonized would mirror back those very same culturalist images that the colonizers imposed on them. Bhabha (1994) notes a phenomenon that Fanon termed “cultural mummification” that describes the constraining and dominating effects of stereotypes that eventually “leads to a mummification of individual thinking” (pp. 77-78). In this strangely paradoxical situation, cultural groups militate for the recognition of identity / difference claims based on an ethic of human diversity while simultaneously closing down any possibility of subject being outside of collectively circumscribed authenticity. Being recognized as a ‘real’ one of us, in the current context of identity politics, requires a person to ‘live’ the cultural characteristics deemed most evidentiary of true membership. Thus, to ‘post’ theorists, the problem is not recognition or misrecognition of cultural groups *per se*, but rather the trap of essentialism:

Cultural identities, especially in the context of globalization and transnational migration, are formed and re-formed through the movement, interaction, translation and negotiation among people and peoples who (potentially) belong to a plurality of communities. “Otherness,” in this context, becomes a set of *similarities and differences* rather than a pure site of opacity and alterity...Architectonic and categorical identities *and* well-bounded antagonisms are increasingly harder to sustain. The frontier between the *ego* and the *alter* cannot be drawn outside of the contextual political struggle itself. (Maclure, 2003, pp. 10-11, emphasis in original)

What this critique, and others like it, contend is that parochialized views of self and community fail to address adequately, and with necessary forethought, the larger and more critical questions raised by current transcultural global trends.

In light of these critiques, how is it possible to claim Indigenousness?⁶⁴ It is perhaps best to begin with an understanding of who is Indigenous and how such an identity claim can be viewed as occurring on two separate planes. Indigenous peoples can be considered members of communities who have lived in particular locations in the world for a very long time and have a collective storied memory of the meaning of their existence in that place (Dei, 2000, p. 114; McLeod, 1999-2000, p. 39). This long-term habitation has supported and perpetuated deeply rooted spiritual and metaphysical relationships with the land (and other entities) that thoroughly inform and infuse the specific cultural practices and linguistic conventions of the people. Indigenous communities are considered unique, in relation to other distinct communities, because these venerable connections to land and place have been maintained and continue to find expression in communities today. In this sense, then, Indigenous peoples, as descendants of the original inhabitants, are seen as the holders and practitioners of a *sui generis* sovereignty in their traditional lands.

The inherited traditions, although certainly altered and adjusted in response to changing times, connect the people to epistemological and ontological insights that foster the maintenance of a unique form of citizenship. Politically,

⁶⁴ While the discussion that follows is intended to have a global Indigenous focus, I admit that my experience with that focus is limited to Canadian perspectives. Any discussions of Indigenous identity will begin with my understandings of Canadian First Nations communities and experiences and attempt to bridge, sometimes awkwardly, to more global concerns.

and on a global scale, Indigenous peoples are seen as united in a common struggle to defend their cultures, languages, and lands from further damage and erosion brought under the guise of economic progress and development. Thus, Indigenousness, as a subject position, is less of a constrained and essentialized burden, and more of a personalized responsibility to honour inherited wisdom traditions. To properly grasp this important difference, it needs to be remembered that Indigenous societies (the ones that I am familiar with) do not conceptualize individuality in ways congruent with European liberal democratic assumptions. For many Indigenous peoples, an individual's sense of self grows out of how he or she fits into the community. The community itself stands at the centre of a much larger whole, and the role of the individual is always to give back to the community. In general, "Indigenous societies are *synecdochic* (part-to-whole) rather than the more Western conception that is *metonymic* (part-to-part)" (Weaver, 2000, p. 227). Little Bear (2000) illuminates this distinction by emphasizing the value placed on holism in Indigenous wisdom traditions:

The value of wholeness speaks to the totality of creation, the group as opposed to the individual, the forest as opposed to the trees. It focuses on the value of the constant flux rather than on individual patterns...If a person is whole and balanced, then he or she is in a position to fulfill his or her responsibilities to the whole. (p. 79)

Ideally, then, an Indigenous person would see his or her identity as intimately connected to inherited wisdom traditions and the vitality of the community as a whole.

Unfortunately, the political economy of being Indigenous, both historically and currently, does not always allow individuals to operate in the realm of the ideal. Indigenousness is also often evoked to inspire opposition to colonial and neo-colonial logics. From the perspectives of many Indigenous scholars, what needs to be opposed are current 'post' theories which discount the beliefs of their communities, unilaterally proclaiming the end of subjectivity just at the time that Indigenous communities are beginning to recover from colonial legacies and assert their ways. The ironic flip-flop wherein Indigenousness is declared a romantic fantasy in the wake of an intense, centuries-long studying and theorizing of Indigenous *difference* is not lost on Indigenous scholars. Quite naturally, there is suspicion that someone else is, once again, exercising a self-proclaimed intellectual authority to determine Indigenous identity and delimit its expression in the world. The shifting 'post' academic field fails to acknowledge the viability of a pointed, critical, and Indigenous reply rooted in subjective "communitist" experience (Weaver, 1998, p. 22). Such replies insist that Indigenous wisdom traditions offer a viable way out of the trap created by neo-liberal market logics and vivify the possibility that we can live differently in the world today (Alfred, 2005; Battiste and Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999; Stewart-Harawira, 2005a; Grande, 2000).

These thrusts suggest two general expressional planes of Indigenousness. The first plane is an oppositional stance in which Indigenous identity is asserted to counter colonial and neo-colonial logics. This counter-identity enables resistance to existing power structures by privileging and idealizing Indigenous ways of

knowing as inherently insightful and virtuous. However, on this plane of Indigenous identity, it is not considered necessary to provide or demonstrate depth understanding of the particular aspects of Indigenous cultures that make them valuable. Focus is instead on Indigenousness as *different* from mainstream ways, and since the West, as a result of a long record of historical injustices, has lost the moral authority to arbitrate on these matters, the assumption is that it properly falls to Indigenous peoples to set the terms for future interactions. Thus, this plane of Indigenous identity is generated to repair the damage done by colonial government policies of assimilation and legislative acts that defined Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems in paternalistically dismissive terms. Indigenous peoples reduce their identities to simplified versions of Indigenousness that enable them to stand in stark and unambiguous contradistinction to the received definitions of who they might be as a people. On this plane, the onus of Indigenous identity is on the individual responsibility to speak and act as living proof that assimilatory acts of the past were unsuccessful.

The second plane of Indigenousness is more directly and profoundly affiliated with wisdom traditions. The focus here is on maintaining continuity with cultural and ceremonial traditions in an effort to constantly renew connections with ancestors and their ways. This adherence to traditions is motivated by the firm conviction that educating community members about their inheritances—philosophical, intellectual, spiritual, lingual—is a vital commitment that will foster balance in the community and enable the people, individually and collectively, to more deeply understand and articulate their authentic selves.

Subjective authenticity, in this context, does not postulate identity purity, but rather calls on the individual to live with organic consciousness of the values and teachings of wisdom traditions. Authentic Indigenousness today is recognized in individuals who, as much as possible, live their lives according to these traditions.

Importantly, this plane of Indigenousness is considered precolonial, in existence prior to settler arrival, and therefore not understood as a direct *response* to colonialism. Rather than getting bogged down in colonial victimhood, a received position which submits to a shallow and colonized interpretation of Indigenous subjectivity, this second plane of Indigenous identity is guided by the firm conviction that the precontact lifeways of Indigenous peoples were viably attuned to the natural rhythms and particularities of their traditional lands. More directly, the argument is that Indigenous peoples were quite happy, healthy, and prosperous (thank you very much) prior to colonization. Thus, the desire, in terms of identity, is to continue to regularly enact traditional cultural practices as a way to honour the Creator and the unique relationships that the people have to their territory. Valuing these things provides sustenance and meaningful ontology. Continuing on with these ways is the fundamental way that the people imagine themselves continuing on in the world as a community.

This continuity is what provides individuals with the ability to enact Indigenousness in the world today with the desired spirit and ethical intent. These wisdom traditions provide a philosophical place from which Indigenous peoples can address the contemporary world. Thus, in this second plane, in contrast to the first, Indigenous identity is much more than a hardened façade created, always

and inevitably, in opposition to colonialism. Instead, it is a fluid consciousness that calls on the individual to constantly effectuate relationships with inherited wisdom traditions in ways that lets them live in the communities today. The individual spirit receives sustenance from participation in this reciprocal process. And the people go on.⁶⁵

The fact that Indigenous peoples ‘go on’ today in various parts of the world, however, does not mean that their experiences are predictable and coherently structured by the two expressional identity planes theorized here. The suggestion that the expression of Indigenous identity is limited to two separate planes is admittedly reductive and thus problematic. Although identity coherence may be a hope in some communities, it is not so simple to name Indigenous experience today. Ideally, the fluid interaction between the first and second planes of Indigenous identity would foster healthy, dynamic, and influential forms of Indigenousness in the world today. However, such a model discounts the possibility of other expressions of Indigenous identity at work that manifest themselves in various contexts.

Take the concept of Aboriginality in Canada as an example. The Canadian concept of Aboriginal, as a nationalized interpretation of Indigenousness, has legal and constitutional purposes and is used to denote, as a distinct minority group, the modern-day descendents of the original inhabitants of the place now called Canada. What unite these diverse peoples as ‘Aboriginal’ are two things

⁶⁵ This sentence is inspired by the National Film Board of Canada documentary titled *Kainayssini Imanistaisiwa: The People Go On* (2003). This film documents the efforts of *Kainai* Elders to repatriate cultural artifacts and medicine pipe bundles from American and European museum archives.

that reiterate the two identity planes: they are the inheritors of Indigenous wisdom traditions *and* victims of oppression and disenfranchisement stemming from colonial policies. However, many Indigenous groups reject the label ‘Aboriginal’ as a colonial term itself, see it as only convenient for the needs of governments, and dismiss it as too generic and dismissive of the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of various Indigenous communities (Alfred, 2005). Despite these critiques, the categorical definition of Aboriginal still applies in Canada and encompasses, for the most part, First Nations peoples, Status Indians (with and without specific Treaty rights), Non-Status Indians, Métis, and Bill C-31 Indians without a home—and people defined as such live in various urban or rural (reserve or settlement) settings with huge disparities in terms of access to economic, political, and social resources.⁶⁶

This undeniable diversity of Indigenous experience in Canada makes it seem blatantly contradictory to claim an authentic Indigenous identity. What would give someone the right to impose a collective identity and responsibility on individuals with Indigenous bloodlines who do not wish to be so bestowed? Such contradictions are reflective of the complexity of being Indigenous in Canada today. The emphasis on legal and political definitions of Indianness coupled with the intense social and cultural ramifications of the Imaginary Indian has created a situation in which many Indigenous people, still reeling from the devastating effects of colonization, yearn for an authentic understanding of who they are and what it might mean. This complex and ambiguous situation is a natural reaction to

⁶⁶ This definition does not include Inuit peoples, themselves Indigenous to their traditional territories in northern Canada, because their individual and collective experiences with colonial governments are markedly different from those termed Aboriginal.

tremendous change in a relatively short period of time. Ontologically speaking, what these identity conflicts indicate is that the people desire some foundational philosophies to provide them with guidance and direction in confusing times. In many Indigenous communities, these foundational ontologies and epistemologies, though certainly not understood and expressed as they were in precolonial times, have nonetheless survived much tumultuous change. These then inform identity statements and are the basis for revitalization movements in many Indigenous communities today.

However, rather than striving towards some form of unattainable authenticity, I think that Indigenous peoples should instead concern themselves with the regular organic enactment of inherited wisdom traditions in their daily lives. Focus should be on living and working according to these teachings and demonstrating their vital relevance to teaching and learning today. I contend that these practices provide guidance on how to engage and teach the dominant society about balance, reciprocity, ethics, connectivity, and living well with the land and other beings. Such a focus does not require denial of the diverse, complex, and contradictory influences that shape Indigenous subjectivity today. It does however call on Indigenous peoples to frame their own understandings of wisdom traditions in ways that honour and sustain their practice in Indigenous communities *and* demonstrate their relevance to Canadian public policy. After all, as *Kainai* Elder Andy Blackwater advises, our tipis are all held down by the same pegs now.

Here we can draw on the wisdom of an *Anishnabi* scholar, Dale Turner, to better understand how such a challenge to identity might be worked out. In his recent book, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (2006), Turner contends that agreements between Indigenous societies and liberal democratic governments are fundamentally flawed as partnerships of peace because liberal democratic societies are unable to accept Indigenous societies and their traditions on their own terms. He shows that liberalism, a political philosophy developed at the height of the colonial project, is falsely universal and assimilatory in character. A good example of this false universalism of liberalism is Enlightenment philosopher John Locke's definition of property rights as it relates to Indigenous sovereignty over their traditional lands. Locke defined property rights according to standards of European agriculture based on clearing the land, planting crops, raising domesticated animals, and building permanent residences on those lands. Land used for hunting and gathering was considered vacant, unused and, therefore, not owned by anyone (Tully, 1995, p. 74). Locke used this philosophical disqualification of Indigenous sovereignty to justify European takeover of colonized lands and the imposition of presumably universal standards of modern constitutionalism. It is this unilateral usurpation of sovereignty that is at the heart of ongoing land claim disputes in Canada today.

Turner sees the perpetuation of such universalized colonial logics as a major point of contention. However, Turner's philosophical vision for working through this problem is quite pragmatic. He sees a role for word warriors—Indigenous intellectuals well-versed in European intellectual traditions who can

act as mediators between the Indigenous philosophers from their own communities and their non-Indigenous colleagues. Their specific role is to engage and contest European intellectual traditions and advocate for their people at the institutional level. Turner contends that word warriors, as the new Pipe Carriers, must address the existing asymmetrical relationship between Indigenous philosophies and the political and legal traditions of the Canadian state. “The asymmetry arises because indigenous peoples must use the normative language of the dominant culture to ultimately defend world views that are embedded in completely different normative frameworks” (Turner, 2006, p. 81).

Turner uses the example of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) to substantiate this point. He notes that Elders were consulted during the early stages of the RCAP process to provide testimony on cultural traditions and current struggles, but the final word regarding the implications of these testimonials for existing political and legal structures was reserved for government experts. The Elders were permitted to tell their stories, but their role as recognized authorities was usurped when policy decisions needed to be made. Turner’s point is that if Indigenous peoples vacate the public domain and retreat to their communities, they run the risk of continuing to let others interpret meanings and set the terms of their existence. He envisions word warriors as individuals who work to end this asymmetry by asserting Indigenous philosophies and world views within dominant legal, political, and intellectual communities. Working together with Indigenous cultural leaders and Indigenous scholars well-versed in European intellectual traditions, they would foster a strategic movement

dedicated to the recognition of Indigenous ways as legitimate and necessary to the creation of a just relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians and the creation of a renewed Canada.

Turning Outside In: The Critical Position of the Indigenous Interpreter

The things we give ourselves to, we become part of and they can own us.

(Lightning, 1992, p. 244)

The assertion of Indigenousness could be misunderstood as an insistence that “Indigenous ways of knowing/knowledges sit in pristine fashion outside the effects of other bodies of knowledge” (Dei, 2000, p. 129). By extension, this generalization implies that Indigenous peoples, as possessors of such knowledges, inhabit a reality separate and distinct from *normal* human experience. The interpretation of Indigenousness as a separate premodern brand of human existence descends from a long history of colonial categorization and the racialization of knowledges. In sum, these projects, primarily based in anthropology, conflate race category with cultural affinity *ergo* cultural identity to knowledge, thereby attributing scientific value based on the perceived contributions different racial groups have made to human development and progress. According to Spivak (quoted in McConaghy, 2000, p. 23), this process of “cultural bio-determinism” posits that a people’s cultural production determines, literally, the boundaries of what they can or cannot do and know. Indigenous peoples were deemed most culturally primitive and therefore only valuable in better understanding the nascent human origins from which modern

Europeans had ascended. Thus, for a long time Indigenoussness has been connoted as a premodern evolutionary stage in human development.

The thoroughness with which Europeans studied ‘inferior’ peoples during the colonial era can be explained as a preoccupation with theorizing difference—rigourously confirming the superiority of civilized peoples in obvious contrast to the wildness of the Indigenous Other. This encyclopedic knowledge of strange difference grew into an expression of power that gave the knowers the authority to appropriate and fragment the world according to interpretive principles derived from the thesis of European ascendancy (Barthes, 1980, p. 27). The intellectual legacy of this endless theorizing of identity founded on difference is dichotomous thinking, a rift separating ‘us’ and ‘them,’ which has been one of the main epistemological supports of many academic disciplines still thriving today.⁶⁷

The dutiful dedication of much academic thought to the theorization of difference has resulted in a preoccupation with structuring knowledge according to polar opposites. As a mode of distinction-making, dichotomization has aided the compilation of systems of taxonomic classification, but has also, in the process, supported a dyadic mindset that sees “irreconcilable differences” and “superficially opposed claims to truth” as natural and commonsensical oppositionalities in the world (Davis, 2004, pp. 194-195):

⁶⁷ A lecture given by Dr. Kiera Ladner, Canada Research Chair of Indigenous Governance, in March 2007 is an example of the persistence of this problem. While repeatedly complaining in her talk about the reluctance of her fellow political scientists to admit that the study of Indigenous Governance had a ‘place’ in the discipline, she also repeatedly argued that academic decolonization required ‘thinking outside the box.’ By describing an inside/outside spatial quality to such knowledge, Dr. Ladner replicated the very binaries she set out to critique, thereby implicating herself in the conceptual exclusion of Indigenous knowledge.

Dichotomization, because it is rooted in the assumption that it is a process of labeling parts of the universe as they really are—that is, as if the observations were independent of the observer—has tended to be cast as an ethically neutral, objective process. Moreover, the terms of a dichotomy can sometimes seem totalizing, as if they span the full range of interpretive possibility. (p. 10)

As Lightning (1992) warns, giving oneself so thoroughly to such a project will eventually result in the project consuming or owning the self. Dichotomization has been so successful as an epistemological mode that many of us are unable to organize our thoughts and imaginings according to any other paradigm. This is one way that we can understand how identity claims get reduced to expressions of who we are versus who we do not wish to be (Calliou, 1998).

The prevailing influence of dichotomization also helps us better understand colonial frontier logics that make it possible to suppose that Indigenous peoples and their ways exist outside of History and Civilization. Or, diametrically, that Indigenous peoples and their ways merit special consideration as a morally pure form of human civilization, unsullied by violence, avarice, and greed, and naturally attuned to the needs of Mother Earth. The point is that polarized opposites can create a very constrained view of the world. When subjectivity plays itself out as a choice between one or the other, what is discounted is complex “simultaneity,” or the possibility that a being (entity) or phenomenon can embody both extremes, and points in-between, all at the same time (Davis and Sumara, 2006, p. 153). The complex ways in which this

simultaneity finds expression in the world belies the supposition of 'either/or.' Instead of fortifying oneself in a polarized position, the concept of simultaneity encourages us to imagine a synergy (>from Mod.L. *synergia*, from Gk. *synergia*, joint work, assistance, help, from *syn-* together + *ergon* work) of the extremes.

In the context of Indigenous identity politics, however, there is much at stake in choosing a side, especially since "in-between-ness" is usually considered ambiguously placeless and, therefore, dangerous and undesirable (McMaster, 1995, p. 75). Surveillance and border patrol has inevitably regressed into a circumstance in which Indigenous peoples and their communities are "fragmented into those who can authentically perform Indigeneity and those who are silenced and/or rendered outside the space of Indigeneity because they cannot, or will not, perform" (Paradies, 2006, p. 361). These splits provide evidence of the long-lasting effects of dichotomous thinking and remain a key theoretical problem confronting educational projects involving Indigenous perspectives.

To be clear, though, dichotomies themselves are not necessarily a problem. The particular problem with dichotomization, as I have been outlining here, is that it has fostered the development of a rational, classificatory, and scientific view that has come to dominate the world. However, dichotomous thinking is not entirely malevolent and dispiriting. It is clear that major scientific and technological advances have been achieved by following these principles and related assumptions. It would be very difficult to live without the material products of these advances and the accrued benefits to the quality of our lives

today. Nor is dichotomous thinking a uniquely European propensity.⁶⁸ Indigenous wisdom traditions also recognize dichotomies as the contradictory nature of existence and teach this through the so-called Trickster stories. Trickster stories teach, in part, that life has an unpredictable edge to it that belies surety and that proceeding with living, despite this unpredictability, will naturally result in mistakes being made. Building on the teachings of these stories, the old people speak of dualities like, say, good and evil, in terms of fluxic movement between the two extremes and acting to create a (temporary) balance.

What this means is that nothing is inherently good or bad, right or wrong. The world is viewed as full of dynamically complex dichotomies that manifest themselves in various forms contemporaneously. The important lesson derived from this realization is that one side of the binary does not operate in isolation and exclusion from the other. Both entities exist simultaneously and in relation to each other. The power relations between the two entities are seen as unpredictable and dependent on the circumstances of the context. The appropriate human response to this unpredictability “lies in participation within the flux by means of acts of renewal” (Peat, 1997, p. 567). A good example of this is the Blackfoot spiritual entity *Ksiistsikoom* (Thunder). After an unresolved battle with a rival spirit-power, *Ksiistsikoom* agreed to a compromise that divided the year into two parts. The summer season became *Ksiistsikoom*'s time (Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2001, pp. 16-17). The power of *Ksiistsikoom* is viewed as both helpful and damaging. *Ksiistsikoom* has the power to wreak havoc weather-wise and also do

⁶⁸ There is some evidence to suggest that dichotomous thinking is a biological predisposition created by the hardwiring of the human brain. See Davis, 2004, p. 6.

much damage in the world through the medium of lightning. However, lightning is also the deliverer of helpful and powerful dreams. So, to be ‘touched’ by *Ksiistsikoom* can be both deadly *and* empowering (Narcisse Blood, personal communication). This transformative and fluxic power of *Ksiistsikoom* is recognized by the Blackfoot through the practice of maintaining Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundles and opening them each spring when *Ksiistsikoom* is first heard. In so doing, the Blackfoot renew their relationships with *Ksiistsikoom* and ameliorate themselves to its transformative powers. The goal here is to balance the powers of *Ksiistsikoom* in the interests of harmony and prosperity for the coming year.

This brief exploration of dichotomous thinking has been undertaken to emphasize two related points. First, contesting the discursive power of anthropological notions of culture and race as it pertains to curricular and pedagogical thinking does not discount Indigenoussness and necessitate the erasure of Indigenous subjectivity (McConaghy, 2000, p. ix). As we have seen, modernist logics have contributed to the structuring and conceptualization of dichotomous thought as always atomizing, oppositional, and irreconcilable, as evidenced by the perceived civilizational divide separating Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Yet, as with civilizational divides, we know that these oppositional categories are founded on arbitrary cultural assumptions rather than universal truths. The definitional categories of Indigenous and European, for example, only exist because of the colonial experience and the preoccupation with documenting difference. Europeans did not define themselves as such until they encountered

Others unlike themselves and vice versa. Thus, in the context of transculturalism today, the concept of Indigenousness only makes sense in contradistinction to the non-Indigenous.⁶⁹ In this sense, and in accord with Blackfoot views of dichotomies, these definitional categories are complementary rather than oppositional. They depend on each other to exist.

Second, there is a clear need to demonstrate that there are viable forms of Indigenous thought that can help us better understand the significance of human relationality today, beyond racial and cultural categorization. I suggest that Indigenous wisdom traditions inform the creation of an Indigenous interpretive frame to deconstruct and decolonize commonsense understandings of dichotomous thinking and the inside/outside divide. Inspired by the spirit and intent of Blackfoot perspectives on dichotomous thinking, what is required in the current educational context is an understanding that the assertion of Indigenous perspectives does not necessitate a negation or discounting of other perspectives, as though Indigenousness can only be properly considered in isolation from other commitments. Nor will a simplistic compare and contrast approach address current needs. Instead, educators need to understand that all human knowledge systems have distinct, yet related, approaches to answering similar questions. If properly contextualized, insights gained from such an interpretive frame can create a more balanced, interreferential, and decolonized repositioning of Indigenous perspectives in relation to teaching, academic work, and public policy deliberations. In these efforts, we must remember Trickster teachings about

⁶⁹ Indigenous ways, like those of the Blackfoot peoples, obviously existed thousands of years prior to the arrival of newcomers to their lands. My point is that the categorical concept of 'Indigenous' only exists as a result of contact and colonization.

surety, contingency, making mistakes, and the pedagogical significance of ambiguous contradiction.

As we have seen, Nakata (2002) has termed this sort of interpretive repositioning as the “Cultural Interface.” In locating concepts of Indigenous knowledge, Nakata emphasizes that the whole area of Indigenous knowledge is contentious, mostly because it has been claimed by different people for different purposes over many years (pp. 281-283). He rightly points out that in current research trends what is most critical is recognition that the extraction of Indigenous knowledge from its cultural context and the “*ex situ*” storage and application of those prized nuggets of information can undermine the integrity of the knowledge system itself (p. 283). In theorizing a “Cultural Interface” position, and further complicating this problem of decontextualization, Nakata emphasizes the complex and conflictual blending of Indigenous and Eurowestern ways experienced by most Indigenous people today that has become so thoroughly interwoven that “distinguishing traditional from non-traditional in the day to day is difficult to sustain even if one was in a state of permanent reflection” (p. 285).

What is critical about this concept of Cultural Interface is that the integrity of the Indigenous position is not erased by the recognition of the influence of Eurowestern ways. Following Indigenized understandings of dichotomous thinking, Indigenous and Eurowestern knowledge systems exist simultaneously—in context and in relation to each other. The quality and character of those interactions are unpredictable. The critical task is to act at the interface of these knowledge systems to comprehensively address the damaging and dispiriting

prevalence of commonsense market and colonial frontier logics, and the ways in which these logics misshape the terms of Indigenous participation in public spheres. For Nakata (2002), this notion of Cultural Interface is critical to the future of Indigenesness:

It is about maintaining the continuity of one [knowledge system] when having to harness another and working the interaction in ways that serve Indigenous interests... This notion of the Cultural Interface as a place of constant tension and negotiation of different interests and systems of knowledge means that both must be reflected upon and interrogated. It is not simply about opposing the knowledges that compete and conflict with traditional ones. It is also about seeing what conditions the convergence of all these and of examining and interrogating all knowledge and practices associated with issues so that we take a responsible but self-interested course in relation to our future practice... so that our own corpus of knowledge, derived within our own historical trajectory and sets of interests, keeps expanding and responding to that which impacts our daily life and practice. (p. 286)

While emphasizing the “Cultural Interface” as a conceptual place, and theorizing the intersection of knowledge systems, Nakata also argues that the daily lives of Indigenous peoples are already circumscribed by the discursive space of the “Cultural Interface” (p. 285). Thus, framing this intersection in terms favourable to Indigenous communities is legitimate because Indigenous knowledge systems and languages have suffered the most epistemic violence and are most in peril

today. However, rather than forwarding Indigenism as a strictly cultural imperative, Nakata wishes to bring a more pragmatic critical awareness—“conscientization”—to this process (Freire, 1976). To decolonize, the people need to become critically aware of the logics that deceive them and structure their realities. Nakata implies that Indigenous leaders and academics must kindle this critical awareness through interpretation of the significance of these intersections following an Indigenous interpretive frame. These leaders, akin to Turner’s (2006) “word warriors,” will actuate critical engagement at the Cultural Interface.

I have some personal familiarity with a similar sort of critical interpretive position. My grandfather many five generations back is Jimmy Jock Bird, a man of mixed allegiances who worked in various capacities in the fur trade and lived for almost a century (Jackson, 2003, *passim*). More formally named James Bird Jr. by his parents, Jimmy Jock was born in 1798 near the Sturgeon River, not far from the present-day location of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. His father was an Englishman from Middlesex who joined the Hudson’s Bay Company as an apprentice and clerk. James Bird would retire from the Hudson’s Bay Company as Chief Factor of Edmonton House. Jimmy Jock’s mother was a Cree woman named *Oomenahowish* in historical documents whose family lived in the area around Cumberland House in present-day Saskatchewan. As the son of a Hudson’s Bay Company employee, Jimmy Jock was raised at the various Company outposts located on the upper reaches of the North Saskatchewan River, including Edmonton House and Rocky Mountain House. Although afforded certain privileges as the son of the Chief Factor, such as a short stint of formal

schooling at York Factory, Jimmy Jock was an independent character who preferred setting his own course working for the Hudson's Bay Company as an interpreter, trader, and outpost organizer. Jimmy Jock's prime task was to encourage the Blackfoot to make the long trip to trade their furs at the Hudson's Bay Company posts far to the north of their territories.

Cut loose by the Company and declared a freeman in 1821, Jimmy Jock began working as an independent trader while living and travelling with the Small Robes Band of the *Piikani*. It was during this time with these people that he met his wife Sally. A few years after marrying into the *Piikani*, Jimmy Jock broke off affiliations with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1831, switched to the American Fur Company, and began encouraging the Blackfoot to trade at their posts established along the Missouri River. For the rest of his long life Jimmy Jock continued to move throughout the west following the best interests of his family, from his childhood homes (along the North Saskatchewan River) to his father's retirement community (Red River Settlement) to the camps of the *Piikani*. He gained a reputation as a fiercely independent man who refused to be restricted by arbitrary rules and boundaries. As someone who had the experience and know-how to operate comfortably in various contexts and in multiple languages, Jimmy Jock was often sought out by trade officials and missionaries to work as an interpreter. His critical role as an interpreter became more official in 1855 when he interpreted the Lame Bull Treaty between the United States and the Blackfoot for the *Piikani* and Cree. Twenty-two years later, Jimmy Jock also interpreted

negotiations concerning Treaty 7 between the Canadian government and the Blackfoot people.

When he finally died in Montana on 1892—ninety-four years old, blind, toothless, and crippled—Jimmy Jock, a Cree half-breed, had become something of an icon in the West best known for eschewing authority and choosing to live most of his life among his *Piikani* relatives. His mixed allegiances provided a unique kind of preparatory schooling in linguistic and cultural literacy that enabled him to (un)comfortably reside in various settings, regularly shifting between the Hudson’s Bay Company outposts of his childhood and Blackfoot camps farther south while also temporarily inhabiting places in-between these two poles. Reflecting on the significance of this life story, it is tempting to fetishize Jimmy Jock as a hybrid character, marginal man, border crosser, and cultural broker in the “third space” who occupied liminal spaces between dichotomous lifeworlds and was able to walk in those two worlds (McMaster, 1995; Bhabha, 1990). It is tempting to characterize Jimmy Jock in these ways to make the point that cultural mediation, as intervention in-between opposed dichotomies, requires leadership from individuals who embody border-crossing subject positions that transcend frontier logics and traverse cultural divides (Giroux, 1991).

However, such fanciful theorizing disrespects the reality of Jimmy Jock’s subject position and the contradictory tensions he strove to balance amidst the powerful capitalist and imperialist thrusts of the fur trade. In light of these exploitive economic impetuses, the critical space of the interpreter cannot be theorized as simply an epistemological issue, but must be considered with respect

to the pressures and upheavals experienced as a result of changing economic realities on the Prairies during this era. Jimmy Jock's critical role as an interpreter was guided by a responsibility to provide for his family *and* help his extended family and friends better understand the tremendous changes being brought to their territories by the newcomers. Thus, interpreting Jimmy Jock's life story in terms of hybrid subjectivity overlooks the daily realities of his subject position and the ethical factors motivating his decision to act as mediator.

Like the Indigenous actors at Nakata's (2002) Cultural Interface, Jimmy Jock, as interpreter, was immersed in the constant dynamic tension that punctuated the relationships linking the lifeways of his Indigenous relations to the priorities of the newcomers. As an interpreter, he was positioned right in the middle of things and found it necessary to speak from the centre of the action of the times. "This should not be confused with, say, an orientation to compromise, or a simple doctrine of the mean" (Smith, 1999a, p. 45). Instead, his critical role as interpreter was a calling in the sense that the complex and confusing context of the time required some form of negotiation. His unique positionality enabled Jimmy Jock to help the Blackfoot and Cree adjust to the coming tumultuous change as advantageously as possible given the circumstances.

I have come to see Jimmy Jock's position as an interpreter as a critical role that has been passed to me like an inheritance.⁷⁰ Although the context and circumstances of our lives are vastly different, I see some notable parallels. I was born and raised in Edmonton, the son of a Cree father and EuroCanadian mother.

⁷⁰ This is a visionary statement rather than a self-anointed authority to interpret. It has grown from talks with Elders who have helped me 'see' a role for myself in this work.

I moved to Blackfoot territory as a young man and was subsequently reeducated by the *Kainai* people. Through this reeducation process, I gained some knowledge of the Blackfoot language, cultural and spiritual practices, and wisdom traditions as they pertain to their relationships to their traditional lands. As an educator and researcher, I have spent much time contemplating the relevance of Blackfoot ways to dominant curriculum discourses, concepts of citizenship, and Canadian public policy.

Since returning back 'home' to Edmonton from Blackfoot country, I have worked to position myself as an interpreter of Indigenous ways for educators and curricularists who lack familiarity with and understanding of such topics. This interpretive work has become increasingly critical in Alberta since educational policy makers decided several years ago to initiate a major focus on Aboriginal perspectives in their curriculum documents across subjects and grades. There is now an increased demand for people who can speak to educators about the significance of Aboriginal perspectives to their teaching in familiar, relevant, helpful, and engaging ways. At base, and at the risk of anthropological exoticism, this can involve speaking *about* Indians and their ways to people who have never personally known one. The more enriching engagements I have had with educators are characterized by a collective desire to see connections between Aboriginal perspectives and their own assumptions and prejudices. Inspired by Jimmy Jock, I act as interpreter with the hope that I can help make things better for my Cree, Blackfoot, and Métis relations through the process of educating

educators about the significance of Indigenous wisdom traditions to their teaching practices.

However, the work of interpretation, when done properly, is not a one-sided exchange. It cannot be considered a project exclusive to Indigenous peoples, but instead necessarily implicates everyone in Canadian society. A balanced project of interpretation does not allow for isolation and disqualification. While we well know that regular exchanges between Aboriginal and Canadian are constantly occurring at many levels and in diverse contexts, what requires rethinking are the terms and conditions according to which these exchanges take place. We require an ethical space (Ermine, 2004). Here again the balanced, yet self-interested, concept of Nakata's (2002) Cultural Interface seems especially prescient and visionary.

How can the creation of an ethical space be fostered in educational settings? One of the most important ways is through ethical interpretive work that forwards human connectivity as a critical starting point for working through the tension-filled terrain of cultural politics today. The theory of ethical interpretive work that I am cultivating is informed by Cree and Blackfoot wisdom traditions. Following these insights, I see ethics as a shared public project that necessitates respectful engagement and more critical understandings of culture. Understanding culture more critically requires recognition that cultures are not insular things, but rather that cultures embody process-oriented theories of the world that are repeatedly (re)adjusted through interactions with other beings. While the significance of contextually-specific cultural practices and beliefs cannot be

discounted, it must be remembered that culture is a frame through which we understand ourselves as different *and* in relation to others, the Creator, and the Earth. The challenge is to balance these relationships in sustainable ways. In this conceptualization, then, culture is not an oppositional problem of Inside versus Outside that must be overcome through assimilation and incorporation. Instead, and at its heart, cultural practice is an organic theory of renewal and relationality. We can understand ethical interpretive work and ethical space in the same ways.

However, when surveying the current intellectual contexts of the human sciences and education, it becomes clear that these complex ethical challenges are severely undermined by the prevalence of fragmentation and colonial frontier logics. The curriculum field provides a good example of this problem. Dominant curriculum discourses have been and continue to be most thoroughly informed by European intellectual traditions. These intellectual traditions derive mostly from modernity and the resulting focus on scientific and rational conceptions of the world that fostered particular understandings of the most worthwhile forms of knowledge and how these should inform human endeavours (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 73).

Such conceptualization of knowledge found expression in the form of categorization, accumulation, classification, and the assertion of universal human insights derived from European-based interpretive frames. Eventually, as technological advances became more closely tied to economic growth, market logics became the litmus test by which all socio-economic value was assessed. By the late nineteenth century, formal public education in Europe and North America

was structured and institutionalized to facilitate the desired market-based economic growth, as well as the propagation of certain related conceptions of citizenship (Tomkins, 1986; Apple, 2004). Schools created for these purposes were founded on codified representations of knowledge called curricula. Officially standardized Programs of Study were created for each subject area to ensure that students received the right information in the correct sequence. The role of the educator in this “banking model” of education was to bestow upon students the knowledge deemed most valuable—to place this knowledge in their heads—as a way to maintain control over the processes of learning and what would be learned (Freire, 1970). In this way, and in accordance with market logics, education became associated with social Darwinism and curriculum as an expression of cultural capital and something of a gatekeeper to employability (Apple, 2004).

These intellectual and educational thrusts were applied with fervency to the ‘problem’ of Indian presence in Canada. Residential schools were founded on the belief that assimilation to EuroCanadian ways was the only real option available to Aboriginal peoples during post-Treaty times. Curriculum, in this context, was a training manual for assimilation delivered by church-based educators, supervisors, and their Indian Affairs colleagues. In the wake of devastating social damage wrought by these policies, and as Aboriginal communities began to revitalize and assert their own notions of sovereignty, residential schools were gradually closed as Aboriginal leaders began assuming control over school systems operating in their communities. A significant aspect

of this takeover was a determined desire for separate and distinct education systems that honoured the suppressed Indigenous cultural traditions and original languages of the people. This movement was both a rejection of the imposed EuroCanadian education system, as well as a hopeful envisioning of a new, imaginative, and somehow 'cultural' Indigenous educational initiative.

As a result of this shift, educators and curricularists began to speak and write about the need for culturally-relevant and culturally-appropriate curricula and teaching styles. These notions of curriculum inform most Aboriginal education projects designed to improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal students. The common feeling is that the 'right' kind of knowledge will set the students free from the oppressiveness of mainstream education. My experience working with the Alberta Learning Ad Hoc Committee, charged with developing a Program of Studies for Aboriginal Studies in Alberta, is a telling example of this sort of orientation to curriculum. While most of the educators on this Committee showed a genuine concern for the general viability of the courses being developed, there was also a prevalent desire to deliver a curriculum document that would serve the specific needs of Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Although Aboriginal Studies was intended as a course open to every student in Alberta, it quickly became clear that the hope was that this 'new' curriculum would help repair the damage done to Aboriginal students by the mainstream curriculum with its emphasis on European notions of history, language, and

culture. Unfortunately, and contrary to its intended purposes, Aboriginal Studies became a course for Aboriginal students.⁷¹

The problematic assumption that informs this curriculum initiative is that the presentation of Aboriginal culture-based knowledge in place of dispiriting Eurocentric knowledge would make school much more enriching and inspiring for Aboriginal students. In this example, curriculum is conceptualized as a kind of panacean document designed and developed to be the definitive word on the issue. The goal was to get it right so that nothing else would need to be added. It is ironic to note that the tone and intent given to these Aboriginal Studies initiatives were founded on a particular curricular and epistemological understanding of culture as a thing, a pre-packaged assortment of cultural attributes that can imported into the classroom.

Interestingly, it seems that the Eurocentric version of curriculum development and the attempts to 'bring' Aboriginal perspectives into curricula have both been shaped by rather parochial and instrumental conceptions of curriculum. These curricular conceptions are symptomatic of commonsense ideas about knowledge, culture, and civilizational divides. If knowledge and culture are perceived as exclusively owned by certain groups, then it follows that each group will focus on their own inherited entitlements, discount or disqualify the participation of outsiders, and promote their ways as naturally and inherently

⁷¹ Aboriginal Studies was intended as course for all students in Alberta. As a course dedicated to Aboriginal issues and perspectives it would obviously attract many Aboriginal students, but it was also intended to allow other students opportunities to engage with these concerns as well. Since Aboriginal Studies has been made available as a course in Alberta, it has been offered mainly by schools located on First Nations reserves and Métis settlements and at public schools with high Aboriginal student populations. The huge majority of students taking these courses in Alberta are Aboriginal.

superior. These assumptions have shaped the curriculum conceptions noted above.

What is most needed in each of these models is a theory that acknowledges human relationality. Such acknowledgement would honour the interreferential nature of our experiences and help reorient ourselves—as educators, students, adults, and children—to more complex and braided understandings of knowledge and its production. This suggested curricular and pedagogical reorientation towards relationality becomes ethical when difference is acknowledged and critically engaged, without the need to assimilate it.

A critical interpreter is positioned right in the midst of this dynamic of human relationality. The role of the interpreter is to problematize perceived cultural divides by demonstrating that living together in a society, as Aboriginal peoples and Canadians do, necessitates the dynamic interaction of diverse peoples. ‘Living together,’ as a concept, has important hermeneutic, curricular, and pedagogic resonance here. It conjures images of commonality of experience and understanding. However, despite the fact that Aboriginal and Canadian have lived together for many generations now, we know that the presumed commonality of experience and understanding is elusive precisely because different historical, philosophical, interpretive standpoints exist and persist. It is a difficult relationship that requires repeated and careful contextual interpretation.

When we find ourselves in a situation that requires interpretation, the possibility of proceeding in a meaningful way requires critical engagement with effective-historical consciousness (Gadamer, 1975, p. 267). “The illumination of this situation—effective-historical reflection—can never be completely achieved,

but this is not due to a lack in the reflection, but lies in the essence of the historical being that is ours” (p. 269). What seems necessary to express given a certain context will obviously be shaped by the particular interpretive frame of the interpreter that is shaped, in turn, by personal and collective cultural memory and knowledge of one’s own historicity:

Taken positively, as pure theory, “effective historical consciousness” denotes the way that self-understanding (personal and collective) always takes place within a horizon of past, present, and future, a horizon through which I understand myself “now” through recognizing myself as having a past, and being oriented toward a future which itself will somehow contain the “now.” What is presupposed is an understanding of historical process as open and dynamic, always changing. (Smith, 1999a, p. 49)

In the current Canadian educational context, there is a crisis of effective historical consciousness that has curricular and pedagogical implications. The crisis is created by a poverty of historical understanding on the part of educators who fail to understand the world outside of Eurowestern structures and philosophies. These same educators are now finding themselves in the uniquely ambiguous situation of trying to teach *about* cultures and histories that are perceived as outside their lived experiences. Yet, as teachers, they must say something to their students.

This situation requires renewed attentiveness to critical interpretive pedagogies. What is needed in the current educational context is a realization on the part of teachers that their traditional role as bestowers of knowledge is no longer tenable. They must become leaders in the classroom in the interpretation of

cultures and foster the development of these hermeneutic sensibilities with their students (Smith, 1999b, p. 5). I suggest that a pedagogic form of listening and interpreting that is inspired by the Blackfoot concept *aokakio 'ssin* can provide direction on this imperative. Although accurate translation to English is impossible, *aokakio 'ssit* is a general directive to be wisely aware. This concept evokes an ethical responsibility to listen carefully and practice deep attentiveness to the earth and the other entities that live among us (Narcisse Blood, personal communication). We are obliged to observe and perceive in multi-sensory ways all that is around us—the ground, animals, trees and plants, rocks, the sun, moon and stars, and so on. *Aokakio 'ssit* is a pedagogic call to *pay attention* to what is going on around us, interpret these insights in relational ways, and attempt to bring the understandings gained from the interpretive process to expression through language and ceremony—to share them with others. Blackfoot ethics teaches that you honour that which you have learned by passing it on to others in ways that do not foreclose future inquiries, but instead encourages them. The ethical ideal is to advise others on these matters as a way to facilitate subjective interpretive processes without overtly interfering in them. It is this critical Indigenous interpretive frame that I use to understand the complex cultural challenges salient in the curriculum field and teacher education today.

Positioning the Teacher: Resistance, Ambiguity, and Biographical Crisis in Response to Aboriginal Curriculum Perspectives

The purpose of this section is to consider and interpret the responses of practicing and preservice teachers to curricular initiatives that emphasize Aboriginal perspectives. I focus specifically on the new K-12 Social Studies

Programs of Study introduced by Alberta Education that were implemented beginning in 2005.⁷² As a former Social Studies teacher and consultant who worked on some of these documents, I feel a familiarity and an affinity with these initiatives. In general, I find the Programs of Study refreshing, thoughtful, provocative, and facilitative of meaningful engagement with Aboriginal perspectives. Although there are several possible reasons for this success, the most prominent reason is that the curriculum developers consulted extensively with Aboriginal Elders, community leaders, educators, and resource people. The result is that the new Programs of Study take Aboriginal perspectives seriously and frame them as interconnected with the main themes of the different courses.

I am interested in the ways in which teachers respond and interpret these curricular initiatives. I am particularly interested in how preservice and practicing teachers—usually quite unfamiliar with Aboriginal issues—are positioned in relation to Aboriginal perspectives in the Social Studies curricula. I argue that this positioning is heavily influenced by the pedagogy of the fort and colonial frontier logics, both of which teach that Aboriginal perspectives have *no place* in serious considerations of teaching and learning. The teacherly response to these initiatives, then, is normally and naturally one of resistance and ambiguity. I begin consideration of these problematic responses with a focus on the inherited colonial terrain and received theories of Indigenusness that typically inform teacherly considerations of curriculum and pedagogy today.

⁷² The implementation phase will be complete in September 2009 when the new Grade 12 Social Studies Programs of Study come into effect in classrooms across the province. For more on this, see the Alberta Education website at: <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/socialstudies/programs.aspx>

a. Colonial legacies, public education, and the exclusion of Indigeness

It may seem strange to interrupt conventional conversations regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher education with concepts and notions derived from Indigenous wisdom traditions. After all, as we have seen, the foundations of the modern educational project are predominantly derived from European intellectual traditions that have, in turn, been profoundly shaped by the experience of coming-to-know the world through colonial endeavours. Formal education, in this sense, has been structured around Eurowestern interpretations of knowledge and knowing. Until quite recently, Eurowestern culture was presumed preeminently central to proper education and this presumption justified the exclusion of insights from ‘outside’ this epistemological stronghold. Relying heavily upon falsely universalized and market-determined notions of civilization and human progress, formal education became an institutionalized process wherein the young were given access to knowledge largely derived from the colonial impetus, a transcendent belief in scientific thought, and the classifying, categorizing, and differentiating that went with these projects (Willinsky, 1998). In this model, Indigenous peoples were only of interest as examples of earlier stages in the evolution of the human species—an uncivilized state that Europeans and their descendents had ascended out of many centuries before (Campbell and Marshall, 2003, pp. 2373-2374).

This explains, in part, how it is that those outside of Europe are often understood in cultural terms, as though the peculiar cultural aspects of a particular

group demonstrate the static nature of their existence. The Indigenous were staid *objects* to be plotted on the timeline of civilization. For example, I remember studying ‘Native Peoples of Canada,’ as the topic was named in grade seven Social Studies in Alberta back in 1978, and being guided through a textbook survey investigation of the traditional lifeways of Indian peoples across Canada according to geographic zone, cultural practices, social organization, food sources, clothing, and shelter (Leechman, 1956) . It seemed that being a living and breathing Indian in 1978 was an anachronistic impossibility. The overwhelming implication of this message was that the only way out of this trap was through the benevolent assimilation tendered by the school.

Understanding this historical problem and its deep associations with colonial frontier logics and the inside/outside civilizational divide provides critical insight into the reasons that the phrase ‘Indigenous Education’ seems oxymoronic to some. Right from its beginnings, public education was framed in terms of civilizational progress based on an unbridled devotion to scientific methods of inquiry. Progressivism, as this educo-philosophical position is termed, originally expressed devotion to teleology and human evolution as explanations for the rapid population growth, industrial development, technological advancement, and exponential improvement in material well-being experienced in Western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century (Egan, 2002). The Progressivist conviction was that scientific thought, viewed as the evolutionary pinnacle of human knowledge systems, had spurred these changes. For Progressivists, the educational problem became one of educating children in ways that attended to

their nature while remaining mindful of their various modes of learning and stages of development (p.5). The evolutionary development of the human race was perceived as recapitulated in the development of the person from infancy to old age. Understanding these developments in scientific ways was perceived as the key to effective educational instruction and the proper sequential construction of curricula. “Scientific knowledge thus, in its constituents, mirrors the development of the human mind, and therefore is the supreme arena in which the training of the human mind should take place” (Banks, 1980, p. 126). Such emphasis on scientific principles as the guiding purposes for education would obviously exclude Indigenous perspectives from serious consideration. Rather, Indigenousness, in anthropological terms, was interpreted as scientific evidence and confirmation of Eurowestern civilization and ascendancy (Egan, 2002, p. 28).

Herbert Spencer, a leading Progressivist in Victorian England, asked an enduring question that has had a profound influence on formal education and curriculum structures: What knowledge is of most worth? Spencer’s answer to this question came in the form of a paper published in 1855. Spencer begins this essay with a critique of the state of education in 1855 and decries the predominance of classical education, with its emphasis on Latin and Greek and related theological and philosophical studies, as overdetermined by tradition and routine. For Spencer, this educational focus was useless and thus unacceptable because “[n]ot only were the classical languages obsolete, they also took up time, money, and energy that could be better directed to the study of science, technology, and engineering” (Guttek, 1997, p. 288). Thus, in answering his own

question, Spencer asserts that scientific knowledge is of most worth. He supports this statement by pointing out that educational policy and curriculum should be guided by the ultimate usefulness such endeavours have to human social and economic needs. An education focused on the teaching of science as a subject discipline and of general scientific thinking throughout the curriculum, Spencer contends, would properly prepare young people for complete living (Deering, 2001, p. 147).

This idea of useful curriculum “appealed to politicians and the administrators of the great institutions of modern states because it made the schools very largely into agencies of socialization” (Egan, 2002, p. 117). It also appealed to the general idea that scientific, and therefore universal, insights into human development could be employed in educational contexts to foster the properly staged development of the child. Curriculum became a tool of social engineering in that the proper construction and delivery of curriculum was assumed to be the best way, in educational terms, to promote desired social progress (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 74). This explains, in part, how commonsense educational talk came to classify curriculum as a developmental and scientific exercise undertaken to get the topics of study accurately sequenced, organized, and delivered. This insight also helps us understand how constructivist assumptions about teaching and learning became so popular and, in turn, fostered the belief that the teacher is the holder of knowledge in the classroom and the director of the *natural* intellectual progress of the students as they move from simple to complex, concrete to abstract, vagueness to

exactness, empirical to rational (Davis and Sumara, 2003, pp. 126-128). It is interesting to note that Spencer considered the study of historical knowledge worthwhile only in sociological terms “as a means of directing future action” (Banks, 1980, p. 130). We might trace the conceptualization of the subject discipline of Social Studies back to Spencer.

Once the depth and breadth of Spencer’s influence on curriculum thinking is realized, it should not be surprising that Indigenous knowledge systems have largely been excluded from consideration in formal educational settings. Indigenous knowledge has not been considered useful scientific knowledge worthy of curricular consideration. Actually, the notion of Indigenousness is antithetical to Spencer’s notion of scientific thinking. Following human evolutionary theory, Indigenousness, as I experienced in grade seven Social Studies, has been reduced to a cultural and sociological portrayal of ‘how people live before they become civilized.’ Indigenousness was considered a condition to be overcome through education. This is why many still view Indigenous Education as a strange aberration that works at cross purposes—mixing insider notions of education with outsider cultural beliefs and practices.⁷³

b. Encountering Aboriginal curriculum perspectives

Settler societies like Canada are slowly beginning to come to terms with this intellectual legacy. In the Canadian context, awareness of Aboriginal perspectives has become a rising public policy priority. Across Canada, curriculum initiatives have been introduced that acknowledge Aboriginal

⁷³ For some examples of this thinking that are indirectly linked with education and curriculum see Widdowson (2005) and Widdowson and Howard (2006).

perspectives and knowledge systems and integrate them into Programs of Study across subject areas and grade levels. Alberta Education, the branch of government responsible for education in my home province, has been a curricular leader in these initiatives. These policy shifts are guided by the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (Alberta Learning, 2002) that specifically identifies the need to increase the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and knowledge systems by all Albertans as a major educational goal.

Following these directives, program leaders from Alberta Education have had extensive consultations with Aboriginal leaders, educators, and community members regarding curriculum reorientation to these new policies. Social Studies is the first major subject discipline in Alberta in which new Programs of Study are being gradually implemented by teachers in the classroom. While most curriculum change creates anxiety for teachers, especially when there is high expectation that teaching practice will be significantly altered, the new Social Studies program in Alberta has caused a particularly high level of stress for Social Studies educators. Most noted among the changes to this curriculum is a shift to an emphasis on issues-focused and inquiry-based approaches, as well as the explicit statement that an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives and experiences is an integral part of Canadian citizenship and identity (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). As these policies have been translated into Programs of Study from Kindergarten to Grade 12, educators across Alberta have been confronted with two realities. First, the new Social Studies curriculum demands

that teachers embrace the issues-focused and inquiry-based approach which means, for many, a significant shift in their pedagogical practices. Second, the writers of the new Social Studies curriculum documents did an admirable job of linking Aboriginal perspectives with larger topical issues like globalization, nationalism, democracy, ideologies, Albertan history, and Canadian history. What this means is that Aboriginal perspectives cannot be treated as separate special interest topics of inclusion somehow supplemental to more rigorous issues. Teachers are expected to engage their students in exploration of Aboriginal perspectives on a wide variety of topics as a regular part of their classroom inquiry process, in association with other considerations (like, say, immigration, globalization, or environmentalism) and this practice obviously requires significant background knowledge on the part of the teacher.

Many teachers in Alberta find themselves woefully unprepared to engage with Aboriginal perspectives in these ways. Very few of these teachers have taken a single university or college course connected to Aboriginal perspectives and fewer still have ever actually met an Aboriginal person in their personal lives. Although many teachers are themselves highly educated, there is a huge informational gap when it comes to Aboriginal knowledge systems and perspectives on, for example, history, politics, economics, and citizenship.

Given that Alberta's teaching population is overwhelmingly EuroCanadian, and given also that this demographic reality is unlikely to change any time soon, we can expect that the success of these critical curricular initiatives will ultimately depend on educators who have little or no experience with

Aboriginal perspectives. This seems a rather daunting challenge that places the teacher in the awkward and unconventional position of the learner rather than the expert who possesses all necessary knowledge. Yet, the complex tasks of rethinking the role of the teacher in the classroom, reconsidering what counts as knowledge, and challenging some of the commonsense and normalizing discourses of teacher education is precisely what is at stake in this curriculum shift. If this curriculum is to be successfully implemented, I believe that it will be as a result of teachers' ability to resist the normalizing assumptions that everything that occurs in the classroom depends on the teacher as expert and reframe their task as an opportunity to learn *from* Aboriginal perspectives rather than as a government-imposed requirement to learn *about* Aboriginal peoples:

Whereas learning about an event or experience focuses upon the acquisition of qualities, attributes, and facts, so that it presupposes a distance (or, one might even say, a detachment) between the learner and what is to be learned, learning from an event or experience is of a different order, that of insight. (Britzman, 1998, p. 117).

The implication here is that regarding Aboriginal perspectives, in a teacherly manner, as yet another set of facts to be added to one's burgeoning teaching repertoire replicates the very same colonial frontier logics that the new curriculum has been designed to contest.

The desire to externalize knowledge of Aboriginal peoples is coextensive with the need to regard Aboriginal reality as separate and distinct from EuroCanadian reality. A separate culturalist interpretation of Aboriginal reality

permits a rendition of “lovely knowledge”—‘studying their traditional culture in culturally-appropriate ways will improve their self-esteem’— to stand in place of the need to interrogate the difficult knowledge of colonial logics that condition and propagate commonsense myths about history, identity, and human relationality (Britzman, 2003b). Here we also see the deep influence of anthropology, exhibition pedagogy, and representational epistemology (Biesta and Osberg, 2007, pp. 16-17) in relation to Indigenesness, in that knowing *about* Indians through lectures, textbooks, history books, and films still has more intellectual authority than sustained social, political, and ethical engagement (Deloria, 1998, p. 189). To see oneself implicated in discussions of difficult knowledge regarding the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is to experience a certain biographical crisis (Britzman, 1991, p. 8). “New knowledge is first confronted as a criticism toward and loss of the learner's present knowledge if the knowledge offered is felt as discontinuous with the self, if it seems to threaten the ways the world has been perceived” (Britzman, 1998, p. 128)

In such engagements, teacher resistance to such knowledge is natural and to be expected (Carson, 2005, p. 6). When we consider that so much of teacher education is predicated on the need for the individual who wants to be a teacher to conform to a predetermined identity-role that suits institutional needs, demonstrate normalized competence in these contexts, and unconsciously conflate teacher thinking with teacher identity, we begin to understand the intense socio-cultural dynamics that are invested in the creation of a teacher. As Smits (1997) points out, this predetermined role of the teacher plays out as a storyline that

parallels, and often displaces, a person's own history, and the difficult task of the teacher becomes one of conciliating the teacher story with the personal story in ways that maintain fidelity to some meaningful moral orientation (p. 284). This moral orientation is most often informed by commonsense notions of citizenship and the characteristics of a 'good' person and how these are, in turn, conditioned through the process of education in various contexts.

Remembering again that the successful implementation of Aboriginal perspectives in the Social Studies curriculum will depend on mostly EuroCanadian teachers, it is useful to consider the shared educational histories of this group.⁷⁴ The large majority of these teachers would have attended public schools in Canada from kindergarten to Grade 12. As students, they would have spent much time becoming familiar with official versions of knowledge across subject areas. In Social Studies, for example, they would have studied Canadian, European, and so-called 'World' history from a decidedly Eurowestern perspective. In science, they would have learned about the categorization and classification of the world according to Eurowestern scientific methods of inquiry and accepted as fact the belief that all useful scientific knowledge was configured in the minds of Eurowestern thinkers. Much of this thinking would have been confirmed outside of school—around the dinner table with their families and through mainstream media sources. When they moved on to university or college,

⁷⁴ These observations are informed by my work as a facilitator and researcher associated with the Diversity Institute in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. In using the label 'EuroCanadian teacher,' I do not mean to deny the possibility of diversity within this demographic group. Instead, I generalize by making the point that such teachers often have shared cultural experiences in society and education that make it easier for them to successfully adjust to the institutional demands of formal education. They have had similar experiences as students. Such demands, passed as commonsense, often have an unproblematic familiarity with these teachers.

most of these assumptions would have been confirmed in a more specialized and rigorous manner. When they began teacher education, their experiences with knowledge and subject areas as students would have a deep effect on the conceptualization of their roles as teachers.

Throughout their educational experiences and in their private lives, the issue of what knowledge is of most worth would have been answered most convincingly in favour of Eurowestern perspectives. It would be strange if they did not replicate and reinforce this orientation to knowledge once they became teachers. These influential forces interact to create a powerful conception of identity that is often seen as cultureless—that is, shaped by commonsense naturalized ways of doing things rather than by specific historical and cultural assumptions and prejudices that can be genealogically traced. Such conceptions of identity are resistant to reflexive autocritique done in the interest of understanding personal and professional motivations and priorities more intimately. This explains, in part, why the possibility of new curricular knowledge, like Indigenous knowledge, is resisted by many teachers. Most do not see their personal or professional selves—which are often difficult to distinguish—implicated in such knowledges. Instead, the knowledge, as new, is perceived by many educators as foreign and thus outside accepted educational practice, usually only included at the behest of government officials pandering to special interest groups, and therefore a malignant threat to the professional integrity of the teacher to deliver meaningful lessons and properly prepare their students for continued study of more worthwhile forms of knowledge.

c. Summary of responses from practicing teachers

I have gained significant insights grappling with these issues among public school teachers in my role as a Social Studies curriculum consultant with Alberta Education. Over a two year period, I was a member of a working group of practicing teachers that created first drafts of the new high school Social Studies Programs of Study in Alberta. Although I was a participant and contributor to the overall process, my more specific role was as an expert in Aboriginal perspectives as they relate to Social Studies issues and topics, a challenging role to be negotiated by one person when Aboriginal perspectives are so diverse and complex. We did manage to complete an acceptable first draft, and these draft Programs of Study were soon reviewed by practicing high school Social Studies in the context of professional development in-service sessions offered around the province.

In my role as consultant, I was invited to participate in some of these sessions by Alberta Education administrators. At these sessions, I found that most teachers were angry and frustrated with the new curriculum because it seemed so drastically different from previous and current curricula, and would thus cause an inordinate disruption in their teaching practices and preparation time. Although this critique was leveled at the curriculum in general, it seemed that most teachers voiced a disproportionate concern for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives. Predictably, even though I was never an Alberta Education employee, I was put in the awkward position of answering these critiques and defending government policies and the new curriculum as these relate to Aboriginal perspectives. At

these sessions, I heard three general resistance-inspired statements that I paraphrase and interpret below.

The first concerns the professional efficacy of the teacher:

I can't teach this stuff. I don't know anything about Aboriginal issues, their history, their culture. I'm not properly prepared to teach any of it.

Practicing teachers have expressed genuine anxiety over the content shift implied by the phrase 'Aboriginal perspectives,' as well as the pedagogical demands implied by the phrases 'issues-focused' and inquiry-based.' The general anxiety relates to the feeling that teachers, individually and collectively, have not been properly prepared to successfully implement the new curriculum initiatives in their classrooms. Whether they blame the teacher education programs that they graduated from (which, for some, may have been over thirty years ago) or the lack of useful professional development opportunities offered in their districts, teachers typically feel that the new curriculum places unfair professional demands on them. Linked to this sentiment is the related critique that the new Social Studies curriculum reflects some fanciful theorizing based on idealistic public policy influences that have little relationship to the daily practical classroom realities lived by teachers in the presence of their students. This view also subtly articulates a suspicion that an unfortunate agenda of political correctness has caused Alberta Education officials to include Aboriginal perspectives in the new curriculum, despite the fact that such perspectives are perceived as irrelevant to the daily lives of the students. There is the sense that teachers and students are being 'force fed' a curriculum that very few people, including teachers, support. Finally, there is also a real fear that teachers do not have adequate background

knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives to enable them to teach the topics in engaging and informed ways. There is a teacherly conviction that Aboriginal perspectives are the product of distinct cultural understandings that someone from *outside* those cultures cannot and should not attempt to teach to young people. While most Social Studies teachers would profess to a depth of knowledge in Canadian, European, and World histories and perspectives, they consider Aboriginal perspectives as separate and distinct from these understandings, and therefore *outside* their field of expertise as teachers.

I suggest that this professional anxiety is also deeply rooted in the cultural myths of teaching that insist that the teacher is an expert and that everything that happens in the classroom depends on the teacher (Britzman, 2003a, pp. 224-230). From the point of view of the teachers that I have heard, the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the new curriculum displaces them from their traditional role as informational experts and this realization generates a sense of pedagogical unpredictability. Feelings of confusion and ambiguousness will naturally cause discordant reactions to the new curriculum and subsequent resistances among those teachers who are accustomed to a more controlled and teacher-dependent classroom.

The second statement is concerned with the assumed identities and motivating interests of the students being taught:

This curriculum doesn't have relevance where I teach. I don't have any Aboriginal students in my classes.

The troubling argument expressed here is that a curriculum that features Aboriginal perspectives is most properly suited for Aboriginal students. This

contention requires some unpacking. Many teachers in Alberta are aware of the low high school graduation rates of Aboriginal students and have heard the argument that Aboriginal students would do better in school if they were given the opportunity to study the history and cultural practices of their own people in culturally-appropriate ways. Cultural difference, in this conception, accounts for Aboriginal incapacity to complete formal schooling. If Aboriginal students could participate in schooling (so the argument goes) in culturally-relevant ways, they would probably be more positively motivated to complete high school. The ubiquity of this curricular logic accounts for the concern in the statement regarding relevance. Many teachers can easily understand the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives when teaching Aboriginal students, but fail to comprehend the necessity of those perspectives for all students in Alberta. On a related point, this statement also provides evidence of colonial frontier logics. The sentiment expressed in the statement is congruent with the belief that outsider cultural knowledge is only relevant to outsiders. Yet, in strange contradiction, insider cultural knowledge presented in the form of traditional school subject disciplines like Social Studies, Math, Science, and English Language Arts, is deemed relevant to all cultural groups and, in fact, necessary for accredited educational success.

Social Studies teachers who express this view are victims of colonial frontier logics that frame Eurowestern cultural knowledges as normal, natural, necessary, objective, values-free, and commonsensical, while Indigenous cultural knowledges are delimited in expressly subjective and cultural terms that make

them relevant only to those who live according to those knowledges. Or maybe these teachers feel culturally and racially disqualified from commenting or discussing Aboriginal perspectives in their classrooms. Either way, the received assumption here is that Indigenous knowledges have nothing to contribute to Eurowestern perspectives. This view is akin to Žižek's observation that "[t]oday's racism is precisely this racism of cultural difference. It no longer says: 'I am more than you.' It says: 'I want my culture, you can have yours'" (Reul and Deichmann, 2001). What this logic seeks to deny is the possibility of human relationality and, in educational settings, curricular and pedagogical interreferentiality. Teachers who fail to see the relevance of Aboriginal perspectives to contemporary Social Studies in public school settings have been deeply influenced by colonial discursive practices that work to depoliticize knowledge and render mute any critiques of the false universality of Eurowestern knowledge systems. While such teachers may want to be left alone in their classrooms to teach in ways that are most comfortable to them, the priorities of Canadian public policy, the demands of Aboriginal peoples and their allies, and the looming spectre of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives will significantly unsettle the possibility for such comfort.

Linked to this discomfort regarding Aboriginal cultural matters is perplexity over the necessary distinction of Aboriginal peoples from other 'ethnic' groups in Canada. This perplexity can be seen in this third statement:

Why do we need this Aboriginal perspectives stuff? We already have multiculturalism.

Canadian-Canadians, or Canadians of European ancestry whose ancestors have lived in Canada for many generations, are perhaps the demographic group most dedicated to the preservation of traditional Canadian institutions and values (Mackey, 2002, p. 156). This dedication has a peculiar character to it, however, in that *Canadian-Canadians* typically view themselves as cultureless, severely normal, and somehow disadvantaged by the perceived onslaught of diverse ethnic groups that have been immigrating to Canada. To *Canadian-Canadians*, the threat is that the Canadian way of life, as they recognize and value it, will be replaced by multicultural priorities. So, for example, 'true' Canadian history that tells the story of the birth of the nation will be replaced by a mish-mash of revisionist culturalist histories. A resultant impact of this replacement will be that Canadian notions of citizenship, legal institutions and conventions, and political practices will also be forced to adjust to and accommodate the diverse cultural practices of new Canadians. The fear is that all that they have come to value as Canadian will succumb to a multiculturalist agenda and the country will be rendered unrecognizable to them.

The rhetoric of multiculturalism, as some have termed it,⁷⁵ has been asserted into this cultural conflict zone as a way to retain a measure of control over changing cultural contexts in Canada. Since it was first discussed as official federal government policy by the Trudeau government in 1971 until today, multiculturalism has gradually gained currency in the Canadian public domain as a logic of cultural difference. The policy supports the maintenance of cultural practices of so-called hyphenated Canadians under the guise of tolerance,

⁷⁵ See, for example, Sears and Hughes (1996) and Cummins (1997).

understanding, and the celebration of difference—and often reduces such differences to the public display of diverse tastes in food, fashion, and dance.

Difference is allowed—in defined and carefully limited ways—as long as the *project* of Canadian nation-building comes *first*. In this structure of difference and Canadianness, those defined as ‘real’ and ‘true’ Canadians are the ones who define the appropriate *limits* of difference.

(Mackey, 2002, p. 148, italics in original).

That multiculturalism, as a policy, would be mentioned by teachers in the way expressed above demonstrates the success and pervasiveness of multicultural rhetoric applied to school settings today. In my interactions with preservice teachers, I have also noted their familiarity with and support for the official principles of multiculturalism as these apply to Canadian national identity and values. The significance of the paraphrased quote shared above is that teachers have established a certain comfort level with multiculturalism that they wish to maintain. The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the new curriculum is perceived as a disruption of the balanced multicultural status quo as it relates to teaching, and this is unsettling for some.

Revealed in this voiced resistance to Aboriginal perspectives, however, is a huge lack of understanding of the unique historical, cultural, linguistic, legal, and constitutional stature of Aboriginal peoples as descendents of the first peoples of this land. Since it is only recently that Aboriginal perspectives have become a public policy issue in Canada, it is to be expected that uninformed commentators would attempt to reconcile Indigenosity with multicultural policy. It has been

so successfully disseminated as a guiding organizing principle of Canadian society—a policied embodiment of Canadian ‘fair play’—that important differences between groups considered *cultural* have been erased. However, Aboriginal peoples cannot be lumped in with ethnic groups that have immigrated to Canada (Stevenson, 1998). The suggestion by teachers that multicultural perspectives in curricula can somehow account for the need to include Aboriginal perspectives, or that multicultural rhetoric can simply be expanded to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives, is tantamount to a massive collective forgetting of the historical roots of Canada and a denial of the “historically constituted present state of affairs [and] historically derived debts and obligations that are part of any identity of the present” (Smith, 1999b, p. 10). Educators must be willing to examine and unpack these denials and better understand the deeply held commonsense and myth-construed cultural assumptions that inform them.

d. Responses from preservice teachers

In critiquing the curricular views of practicing teachers regarding Aboriginal perspectives, it is useful to also consider the burgeoning and increasing complex personal and professional views of preservice teachers in the context of the university. Practicing teachers, hardened by many years of teaching experience, are perceived as much more resistant to curricular change, while beginning teachers are perceived as more open to and supportive of such changes. As a graduate student and research assistant at the University of Alberta, I have had the unique opportunity to test this assumed openness as an invited presenter to preservice teachers studying and preparing to teach Secondary Social Studies

during their Advanced Professional Term (APT). Course instructors would typically request, in nonspecific terms, a two-hour session for their students on Aboriginal perspectives in Social Studies as seen in the new curriculum. After doing several of these invited presentations, I became critically aware of the problematic position I was placed in when I ‘parachuted’ into the classroom unaware of the context or previous discussions, delivered the necessary information on Aboriginal perspectives, and left without eliciting much response from the students. In my presentations, I used texts and images to contest and interrupt the official history of Canada with the experiences, memories, and stories of Aboriginal peoples—some of which included the memories of my own extended family. Mixed in with this were digressions into extended explanations of contemporary issues of Aboriginal identity, stereotypes, proper identity terms, and some philosophic thoughts regarding Aboriginal perspectives and the need to reframe our understandings of curriculum. I thought it was an interesting and provocative presentation.

However, the students rarely engaged with these issues in ways that would indicate that they felt the same. Silence was the most common response, although some students would ask informational-type questions to clarify or correct their previous understandings. Obviously, there are many ways to interpret these responses (one of which might be that I am not a very effective presenter!), but during my time with the students I discerned a strange externalization of Aboriginal perspectives—as though the information I shared with them needed to be kept at a cautious distance. In light of the current context of identity politics,

this should not be surprising. Still, deep consideration of the ways in which preservice teachers reacted to the presentation of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives led to a related preoccupation with the terms according to which I spoke to them. How could I speak in ways that would foster deep listening and engagement?

In the effort to gain more insight on this question, I decided to ask students from two separate Social Studies APT classes at the University of Alberta to voluntarily and anonymously respond to my presentation in the form of a written questionnaire that was distributed immediately following each presentation. The specific question posed to the students is:

Has this presentation influenced your beliefs about curriculum and teaching? If so, how? If not, why?

A total of 32 completed questionnaires were returned to me. Most respondents expressed appreciation for the presentation and many suggested that the presentation had more accurately reinforced or confirmed much of their previous thinking about Canadian history and Aboriginal perspectives. These findings are consistent with general observations that I have made during previous and subsequent interactions with preservice teachers. For the most part, these students recognize that formal education systems have marginalized Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge systems in the past and they express a related desire to critique accepted teaching practices and discuss new ideas and approaches. While these responses are interesting and useful in some ways, I find most of them uncritical in the sense that the respondents simply repeat or confirm their agreement with statements they heard from me during the presentation.

I believe that most students choose to respond in these uncritical ways because it is perceived as safer and easier to simply tell the researcher what they want to know. I am much more interested in critical statements from respondents and interpreting the significance of those statements to the larger project of better understanding the deep influence that colonial frontier logics has had and continues to have in teacher education and the field of curriculum studies. Below, I share selected excerpts of critical written responses from students that will be interpreted with these issues in mind. I present the statements in groupings based on their subtle commonalities:

I think I require more training on how to present a lesson in an aboriginal context before I attempt one and claim that it is authentically aboriginal. Perhaps more examples on how to do this would have helped.

I am interested in Aboriginal history, but with my limited knowledge at this point in the subject am not confident in how I will present the Aboriginal views properly.

It seems like a very logical approach, but I think it would be very difficult to engrain a way of thinking into one's process of instruction that they do not know inside and out. This may be a reason why this dichotomy between curriculum and aboriginal education exists. You would have to be an internal element of a particular society in order to perpetuate their corresponding views. Such views would, at that point, flow freely and uncandidly to illustrate indigenous perspectives in the many facets of the instructional and educational processes.

These three statements demonstrate a reliance on the notion of cultural disqualification as a form of resistance to new teacher knowledge that was also noted in the interpretation of paraphrased statements of practicing teachers. That this point should be prominent in the reactions of both preservice and practicing teachers to Aboriginal perspectives in Social Studies curriculum should not be all that surprising. The current context of identity politics has fostered a

conceptualization of cultural difference as an imposing rift that works to restrict membership, and its related authority to speak and re-present, to those deemed most culturally authentic. More often than not, authenticity in Indigenous contexts is defined according to cultural habits and affinities rooted in static colonial logics and anthropo-logics rather than in some organic conception of community.

However problematic cultural authenticity may be, the preservice teachers who authored the statements express a self-conscious awareness of Aboriginal identity politics (in relation to themselves as outside that culture), and a cautiousness in discussing such issues. At some point in their education, privately and publicly, they have come to believe that discussing Aboriginal issues can be extremely contentious, emotionally unsettling, and fraught with danger of being accused of cultural insensitivity, close mindedness, or even racism. To me, though, such accusations are too simplistic and convenient as explanations for resistances. I focus instead on the awkward feelings of displacement that preservice teachers experience as a result of the new curriculum initiatives and the lack of conceptual tools and language to help them better understand the significance of these shifts to their personal and professional identities. When confronted with these tensions, these preservice teachers retreat behind a *comforting shelter of real or passive ignorance that effectively disqualifies them from participation*. The curricular and pedagogical logic implied here is that teachers are only allowed to teach about their own cultures—a logic that the field of education has never upheld but implicitly always practiced. In accepting this ignorance and disqualification, these teacher candidates dismiss the opportunity to

interrogate the constructs that shape group identifications and better understand how their responses are conditioned by commonsense answers to the problematic question of cultural difference.

The unfortunate result of this disengagement is that the boundaries of inside/outside are maintained and reinforced. In so doing, however, the integrity of the individual identity is also stabilized, a phenomenon that has also been noted in another recent study: “Ensuring, therefore, that there is the continued separation of the ideological sets enables the candidates to provide justifications for their ideas, while simultaneously limiting the degree of dissonance that they experience” (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell, 2005, p. 156). Kanu (2005), in her study of Manitoba teachers’ perceptions of the inclusion of Aboriginal culture in curriculum, also suggests that teacher disengagement from the curriculum based on lack of knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives may be understood as an active resistance to difficult and dissonant knowledge. Resistance to this knowledge, and the feelings of estrangement, discomfort, guilt, and defensiveness it foments, is performed through the “ideal of ignorance,” disqualification, and the denial of self-implication (p. 58). These “contradictory positions are a manifestation of a whiteness striving to maintain its distance and legitimacy against an unstable social network” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 265).

It seems worthwhile, in light of these considerations of teacher resistances, to consider the ways in which common notions of knowledge, knowing, teaching, and learning also become problematic when new curricular knowledge is confronted by the teacher. In the three responses, there is a palpable concern with

the new knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives as a perceived threat to the respondent's abilities to be competent teachers. I suggest that this concern reveals a certain mindset regarding a teacher's relationship to knowledge that has deep roots in Eurowestern culture and formal structures of education. As noted earlier in the analysis of the statements from practicing teachers, there is a commonsense perception that the teacher must be an expert in control of the knowledge that will be presented and represented to the students. This perception is built on the notion that the world is ultimately knowable. Knowledge, in this sense, is considered measurable, quantifiable, calculable, and an accurate representation of a pre-existing reality independent from the school context (Biesta and Osberg, 2007, p. 16). True knowledge is considered accurate and dependable according to how well it represents an independent reality.

This understanding of knowledge is connected to the modernist assumption that pre-existing epistemological truths are out there in the world to be uncovered if the proper mental habits are employed. The accumulation of knowledge parallels human progress and forges a linear teleological path. Colonial renditions of Indigenusness have been represented in the Eurowestern academy as knowable, in a reductive culturalist sense, when appropriately positioned on this human evolutionary path. But, recent decolonized assertions of Indigenusness that contest and belie colonial logics are increasingly considered outside Eurowestern knowability and thus incomprehensible to outsiders. For a teacher to attempt to teach something that is perceived as unknowable is a fundamental contradiction of basic pedagogical tenets that are foundational to

institutionalized understandings of teaching, education, and knowledge (Jones, 2001, p. 283). Linked to this contradiction, and the ambiguousness it causes for those trying to teach, is the psychoanalytic possibility that the comprehension of Indigenoussness has the potential to so thoroughly disrupt and destabilize fundamental Eurowestern economic, historical, and socio-cultural assumptions that the regular citizen cannot tolerate *knowing* such things subjectively.

Ignorance [or professing not to know] is thus no longer simply *opposed* to knowledge; it is itself a radical condition, an integral part of the very *structure* of knowledge... Ignorance, in other words, is not a passive state of absence—a simple lack of information: it is an active dynamic of *negation*, an active refusal of information. Ignorance... is nothing more than a *desire to ignore*. (Felman, 1982, pp. 29-30)

The admission of ignorance of Aboriginal perspectives evidenced in the above statements from the preservice teachers is indicative of a biographical crisis on their part precipitated by their inability to comprehend Indigenoussness and ameliorate the implications of this to their growing challenge of becoming a teacher. The curricular mixing of insider and outsider knowledges subverts more established forms of knowledge and challenges the notion that everything can be known, and thus controlled, by the teacher. From the perspectives of these student teachers, the imposition of Aboriginal perspectives in the school context amounts to changing the subject and context because formal schooling has never before considered Indigenoussness in these ways. “Ignorance... ‘grows’ only in someone when knowledge and context no longer fit each other” (Vitebsky, 1993 cited in

Jones, 2001, p. 286). Ignorance, in this example, is a form of resistance and a strategy of self-preservation on the part of the preservice teachers. The realization of personal and professional implication with regards to Indigenous knowledges has the potential to so thoroughly destabilize commonsense assumptions of knowledge, teaching, and learning and ruin their purposes for university study that it must be resisted and externalized. The problem is forestalled until knowledge and expertise can arise. This teacherly preoccupation with guaranteed meaning is a significant impediment to their necessary engagement with Aboriginal curriculum perspectives. If educators could come to see that they, as Canadian citizens, have a personal and family history that already intimately implicates them in Aboriginal issues, and that the perceived divides are simultaneously permeable and impermeable, then the realization and interpretation of these inherited relationships could begin to breakdown these resistances. Implicative knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives will emerge through their sustained engagement with those topics. In this educational context, Aboriginal perspectives are reframed as an opportunity to learn rather than a threat to existing knowledge.

Active ignorance of Aboriginal perspectives and resistance to its implications is linked to the belief that the imposition of Aboriginal curriculum initiatives in school settings is a moral threat to the character of schools and schooling. Note the following statements from three preservice teachers:

Curriculum is scary! Unfortunately this presentation has not eased any fears regarding my impending "doom/awaking'" and the mini-revolution that is about to occur in Alberta.

I know it is important for my students to understand the history and how the cultures are different, but I still feel like I would be cheating my students if I focused on aboriginal studies and ignored everything else. My students come from many backgrounds and I don't think it would be fair to teach one perspective if we can't teach them all.

There was no real thing or idea that I could connect with it seemed. Also, some ideas were not explained well enough. You spoke of not just changing our facts but teaching differently, but how does the different way work? Also, kinda hard to connect when I get the sense of: your people do things badly compared to my people.

A commonality discerned in these three statements is the perception that the integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the new Social Studies curriculum is considered a disorienting disruption of the regular business of school. These three respondents view this disruption as a significant threat to the philosophical and moral integrity of the education system, and thus themselves as future teachers. These perceived threats of Aboriginality in educational contexts are linked to larger societal concerns regarding Canadian public policy and the future of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

In general, there is a pervasive belief that Aboriginal peoples are a thorn in the side of Canadian society. Although many Canadians will readily admit that Aboriginal peoples and communities have been victims of historical injustices, this admission is tempered with the conviction that civilization has brought more good than bad to them. Historical injustices are thus justified on these grounds. For many Canadians, the cult of victimization surrounding Aboriginal peoples today is a trap that can only produce anger, frustration, dysfunction, animosity, dependence, and victimhood for those caught in it. The suggested solution to this problem is that Aboriginal peoples get over their past, shed their communal role

as special status victims, and live in Canadian society with the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as individual Canadians. That this solution has never really been seriously considered as a viable option to Canada's Aboriginal 'problem' seriously irks many Canadians.⁷⁶ Coupled with the irksome reactions to these public debates is resentment over the ways in which Aboriginal peoples are literally and figuratively perceived as obstacles to social harmony in Canada. Such resentment stems from the belief that Aboriginal peoples in Canada frequently hijack economic resources and political attention to selfishly get what they want from governments or judicial systems. Morality, in the sense of accepted standards of goodness and badness in public contexts, informs and fuels this resentment. Aboriginal perspectives are perceived as a moral threat to Canadian society when they are experienced as an unwelcome imposition foisted upon Canadians to placate someone's demand for recognition of historical wrongdoing. Many Canadians believe that their right, as citizens, to follow their own moral guidelines is in danger of being co-opted by a constrained morality that typifies the Aboriginal agenda. What is considered at stake in these debates, then, is the right of the large majority of Canadian citizens to maintain their own standards of moral correctness. The socio-spatial configuration of insiders and outsiders reappears in yet another context.

The contentiousness of statements of moral correctness in Canadian public contexts can be seen in the speech given by Assembly of First Nations Grand

⁷⁶ The Trudeau government did introduce the infamous 'White Paper' in 1969 that suggested the removal of special status for Aboriginal peoples, but this suggestion instigated a widespread political uprising in Aboriginal communities that is still being felt today. The reaction against the 'White Paper' was so vociferous that it was soon removed from the political agenda as a workable option.

Chief Phil Fontaine to the Canadian Club of Ottawa in May 2007. Fontaine, in his efforts to raise awareness of the devastating effects of poverty, crime, and unemployment in Aboriginal communities across Canada, warned the audience that they could see an increase in peaceful protests and blockades if significant efforts were not immediately undertaken to improve the shameful living conditions of Aboriginal peoples. In his warning, Fontaine emphasized that the anger and frustration levels of Aboriginal peoples were palpable, and he feared that these feelings could reach a breaking point and threaten public safety and well-being.⁷⁷ In this case, Aboriginality is framed as a very real threat to the existing social order *if things do not improve*.

How might this message be heard by Canadians? The image of the recalcitrant and threatening Indian man has certainly played a prominent role in popular media for many generations. The natives are expected to be restless and pose a moral threat to the lifestyle of the insiders—this is the mythical story, based on fort logics, which Canadians have been told for many generations. More recently, however, the spectre of Aboriginal unrest has been expressed as an impending crisis to Canadian social order. Aboriginal policy has been informed by this idea of crisis as moral threat. Rather than driven to respond to the low economic quality of life crisis lived daily by many Aboriginal people, this spectre of impending crisis has influenced Canadian public policy makers as a looming disruption of the social good. So, while Aboriginal leaders describe the living conditions of their people as unacceptable and *immoral*, average Canadians insist

⁷⁷ Media coverage of Fontaine's speech can be found at:
<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/05/15/fontaine.html?ref=rss>

that conformity to accepted moral standards is precisely what will help Aboriginal peoples climb out of the debilitating political and socio-cultural morass that misshapes their lives.

As with most conflictual issues of social concern, these contentious debates eventually find controversial expression in educational contexts, sometimes in dysfunctional ways. The “moral panic that stages education” has been a significant force in the attempted reconciliation of Indigenosity to Canadian curricular standards (Britzman, 1998, p. 58). Consciousness of the impending crisis of Aboriginal dissatisfaction has influenced curriculum thought by encouraging “crisis policy-making” (Tomkins, 1981, p. 163). This insight suggests that curriculum initiatives involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada, such as the one under consideration here, are not necessarily motivated by some ideal of social good, but rather by a need to address, through policy, an impending social crisis. In this conception, curriculum is a policy tool that can be used to anticipate possible disruptions to the social order and stabilize the status quo. Gradual change is desirable as long as it conforms to the moral model supported by the curriculum.

When the moral character of debates surrounding Aboriginal policy and curriculum initiatives are considered in their fullness, it becomes easier to understand how Aboriginal curriculum perspectives can be perceived as “scary,” fearful, an “impending doom/awaking” and “mini-revolution” by some preservice teachers. I suggest that the perceived scariness of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives is directly linked to the widespread incomprehensibility of

Aboriginal presence and participation in Canada today. While many educators would readily support the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives to Aboriginal students, they have a much more difficult time accepting a policy decision requiring them to teach Aboriginal perspectives to all students.

Two things make this notion 'scary.' First, there is the historical, cultural, and moral baggage associated with Aboriginal peoples that constructs them and their ways as outside Eurowestern knowledge systems, unknowable to insiders, and thus incommensurate with any formal public education endeavours. The second is the realization that acceptance of Aboriginal perspectives in education will necessarily call into question many of the commonsense assumptions associated with knowledge and schooling. For example, the acknowledgement of Aboriginal perspectives as they relate to official versions of Canadian history will necessitate critical reflection on the many civilizational myths that have shaped the story of the nation. To call into question such institutions is to also question one's own identity as socially constituted and regulated by them.

The point is that sociality is governed by relations of power, and relations of power govern the self. A central dilemma, then, of the slippery and shifting meanings of equity and difference concerns how individual and collective perspectives on these terms become implicated in larger discourses of social regulation. (Britzman, Santiago-Válles, Jiménez-Muñoz and Lamash, 1993, p. 190)

Such subjective disruptions are indeed potentially quite scary. One way to resist such scariness is to invoke transcendent values both as a way to withdraw from

and resist personal implication and instead take a moral stand. In the second quote above, the respondent asserts resistance to Aboriginal curriculum perspectives through a declaration of allegiance to universalized values of Canadian multicultural equality and fairness. Adherence to such transcendent values can be understood as one way to attempt to stabilize meaning when faced with an ambiguous teacherly dilemma such as this (Britzman, 1994, p. 67). The desire is to rise above the ambiguity and locate one's position through the logic of accepted and moralized social standards. However, in taking such a stance, the respondent reveals a grave misunderstanding of the Aboriginal perspectives curriculum initiatives in Social Studies in Alberta. The teacher is not required to teach Aboriginal studies or ignore "everything else," but is expected to help students understand how the various perspectives on issues (one of which is Aboriginal perspectives) are connected. Problematic, too, are the respondent's concerns over the fairness of teaching "one perspective if we can't teach them all." This statement expresses equality as a moral compass to aid in the deflection of the various claims made by cultural groups for special recognition and attention.

The multicultural rhetoric of equality has particular currency as a public policy logic: "The *Canadian*-Canadian model of nationhood, which has 'citizenship', civil and legal rights, political rights and duties, and socioeconomic rights as ideals, is a Western liberal model that places the notion of equality at its centre" (Mackey, 2002, p. 157, italics in original). However, what needs to be unpacked and interpreted with the respondent's statement and its implications for teacher education are the ways in which 'regular' or 'normal' curriculum is

conceived as perspectives-free while curriculum initiatives that emphasize particular perspectives are dismissed as overly biased. Previous curricula were not regarded as perspectives-based because they were presented as culturally neutral and based on supposedly universal social, economic, and democratic values. Ironically, while the equality argument has powerful pull associated with multicultural rhetoric, it is precisely in the ways such idealized democratic qualities are constructed as “*not cultural* (in that it is not presented as the project of one cultural or ethnic group)” that requires sustained critique in teacher education (p. 162, italics in original).

e. On what terms can we speak and listen?

Several questions arise, however, regarding the pedagogic intent of such critiques, the desired manner by which they will be heard, and the practice of “listening as a mode of thought.” (Simon, 2004, p. 191). While reflexive critique has a place in teacher education, there has been a natural avoidance of more contentious issues raised by cultural identity politics, especially those associated with the position of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. As previously noted, there are so many complex emotions of guilt, defensiveness, frustration, and political correctness associated with Aboriginal issues that many people suffer an awkward kind of social paralysis when the topics are raised in public contexts. Evidence of this tension can be readily observed in the context of teacher education whenever Aboriginal speakers are invited to address preservice teachers. As one of these invited speakers, I have often felt pressure to prove something to the audience about Aboriginal perspectives—to directly challenge their prejudices, unsettle

them, and change their minds. The students, on the other hand, exhibit body language cues that reveal their shared fear that an Aboriginal presenter will focus anger and accusation over historical and ongoing injustices directly at them. Such fear causes social paralysis.

Mindful of these expectations, and the difficult responses that accompany them, I have developed a non-confrontational presentation ethic as a way to engage the audience in the topics in relational and interreferential ways. I have observed this practice while in the presence of *Kainai* Elders and noted their avoidance of direct and explicit confrontation, accusation, and advice-giving when speaking and teaching in public contexts. Instead, they speak personally and autobiographically through story and place the onus on the listener to listen carefully to the message and derive personal significance from it. The pedagogic intent is to help the listener consider their own personal and autobiographical stories in relation to the topics raised through story in a recursive manner and then test these insights against recognized values and norms—all the while hoping to inspire physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual movement within the listener. Such movement then provides a meaningful basis for the continuation of life and living with renewed consciousness.

Inspired by the ethical response-ability of this pedagogical approach, I have tried to speak according to these terms during presentations to preservice teachers. This teaching ethic can cause dismay for some because I purposely avoid providing lists or recipes for successful teaching of Aboriginal perspectives. Instead, I begin such presentations with the personal and autobiographical. This is

then followed by a fairly extensive critique of official versions of History and the ways in which Aboriginal perspectives have been excluded, reduced, isolated, and marginalized. Although I rarely make explicit connections linking the personal and autobiographical with these critiques, attentive listeners will easily make these connections themselves. I then proceed to weave a series of related stories that demonstrate the historic problem of the position of the Aboriginal in Canada with a specific intent to demonstrate to the listener the ways in which the past recurs simultaneously in the present and influences our perspectives on the future. Curriculum, as a specific topic of discussion, is usually only raised in concluding comments when I explore Aboriginal curriculum perspectives and point out some key concepts (associated with the stories) that inform those perspectives. I prefer to take a curricular stance throughout the presentation in the stories I tell, the images I use to accompany them, and the relationships that develop from them. The presentations conclude with an open question session during which students usually ask informational-type questions about Aboriginal peoples concerning appropriate terms to use and the cultural characteristics of Aboriginal communities. It is rare for thoughtful discussions to take place.

One of the side effects of using an indirect and inexplicit presentation style is that some preservice teachers, unfamiliar with this pedagogic stance, will struggle to make sense of what they have heard. Although it is possible that I, as presenter, accentuate this struggle by speaking in a seemingly inarticulate, confusing, and random manner, I suggest that the sentiments expressed by the third respondent also reveal discomfort and unfamiliarity with pedagogic listening

as a provocative instigator of inquiry. The respondent expresses difficulty in connecting with my indirect presentation style, laments the poor explanation of ideas, and calls for clear examples to demonstrate how the presented curricular ideas would actually “work.” These are valid critiques that I have noted and continue to ponder. As an educator and presenter, I realize that the pedagogical decisions that I follow cannot and will not have the same desired effect on every listener. The preferred pedagogic style will not work for everyone.

However, I am also concerned with how this respondent *listened* and *heard* the presentation. The respondent reduces the intent of my presentation to a single simple message: “your people do things badly compared to my people.” By telling personal and autobiographical stories of historical trauma related to “spatial and ideological diaspora” (McLeod, 1998a), it is possible that I have violated an unspoken moral code of civility by implicitly accusing someone (EuroCanadians in this case) of wrongdoing and evoking a certain “politics of bad feeling” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 78). Roger Simon (2004) argues that it is also possible that failure to listen to stories of historical trauma is symptomatic of an encounter with difficult knowledge—“knowledge that places a disruptive claim on its non-Aboriginal listener and requires a degree of self-reflexivity in order to be responsive and responsible to that claim” (p. 194). As we have seen, practicing and preservice teachers both show significant resistance to self-reflexivity and self-implication. To subvert such resistances, Simon (2000; 2004) forwards a theory of public memory as a form of historical consciousness that can generate a pedagogical context based on the idea of listening (to stories of historical trauma)

as a mode of thought. The curricular and pedagogical power of this concept of public memory is eloquently enlivened with these words:

...public memory has the potential to expand that ensemble of people who count for us, whom we encounter not merely as strangers (deserving compassion, but in the end having little or nothing to do with us), but as ‘counsellors,’ people who in telling their stories change our own. In regard to the practice of fostering such a public memory, our responsibility would be not only to support the inclusion of forgotten or unknown histories that pertain to our contemporary problems and relationships, but to help constitute public memory as a pedagogical space by making evident and supporting the critical exploration of the questions, uncertainties, ambiguities, and failures that arise in the process of trying to be responsive to the testament that speaks to these forgotten or unknown histories.

(Simon, 2004, p. 198)

What is suggested in this statement is that people who listen to stories of historical trauma have a responsibility to listen and respond in public ways that instantiate a transactive exchange with/in their particular context.

In an effort to foster such engagements and avoid social paralysis, Simon and Eppert (1997) call for a “double attentiveness” to the deep connections evoked in story and the ethical responsibilities they confer upon each of us (pp. 178-179). The first form of attentiveness involves fair judgment of the historical accuracy and significance of the historical accounts heard and a related necessity to problematize the methods and standards followed to determine such accuracy.

The second form of attentiveness involves positioning the listener as an apprentice to testimony and attending to the “particular ways any testimony attempts to translate what is singular [personal and autobiographical], a person’s experience in or of the past, into an idiom through which witnesses can be addressed” (p. 179). Thus, listening as a mode of thought, double attentiveness, and the curricular and pedagogical significance of stories of historical trauma are related concepts that all point to the need for openness to reflexive self-implication in teacher education as it relates to Aboriginal perspectives. Although there is significant resistance to these subjective shifts—conditioned by colonial frontier logics—the need to externalize and isolate Aboriginal perspectives can only be problematized and unpacked if teachers come to see themselves implicated in the issues raised. Reflexive self-implication will call into question many of the prevailing normative assumptions and categorizations that inform teacher education and enable the perpetuation of colonial frontier logics that devitalize teacherly encounters with Indigenoussness.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the location of Indigenoussness across a broad, varied, yet connected intellectual terrain of cultural identity politics, public policy, democratic liberalism, and the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education. Throughout this exploration, I have tried to be clear about the particular hermeneutic sensibilities that I have used to interpret these contexts. By locating Indigenoussness within these common public contexts, interpreting the significance of this, and revealing the resistances and anxieties such localities

produce, I contest colonial frontier logics and demonstrate that, in light of these tensions, any viable plans for proceeding must involve public acknowledgment of Indigenous presence and participation. Such acknowledgement will necessarily involve a process of deep questioning of the many colonial-inspired stereotypes and prejudices that support frontier logics and thus begin processes of reparation with Indigenous peoples.

An important part of these processes will be the maintenance of a critical Indigenous interpretive position as a means of addressing diverse audiences on issues of common concern. What this means is that this acknowledgement and ‘coming together’ that is imagined here will not be a simple process of compromise and reconciliation as a means to ‘move on.’ Rather, a critical Indigenous interpretive position demands affiliation with wisdom traditions, a responsibility to make those salient in public contexts, and pedagogical dedication to teach these ways when the appropriate opportunities arise to do so. This challenge will be revisited in the next chapter as part of a general exploration of the construction of Indigenosity in Canada as *Indian*, the socio-cultural and economic exclusion of Indians as outsiders in their own lands, the reinforcement of this exclusion through the residential school experience, and the ways in which Indigenous scholars have replied to this exclusion in curricular and pedagogical terms.

Chapter Five:
Replies from the Outside: Indigenous Curricular and Pedagogical Responses to Colonial Frontier Logics

Probably the most blatant and insidious example of colonial frontier logics being earnestly applied in the Canadian context can be seen in the conceptualization of the Indigenous child as outsider in need of coercive Christianizing and civilizing through the formal schooling process. Although there are many interstices and intersections where one could begin an exploration of Indigenous curricular responses to colonial frontier logics, the residential school experience has wrought such extensive ongoing intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal communities that any respectful study of Aboriginal education in Canada must begin with an acknowledgement of its effects.⁷⁸ This first experience with formal Eurowestern-style education has so deeply marked Aboriginal peoples and communities that most contemporary Aboriginal education initiatives in Canada are predicated on an expressed desire to recover, in one way or another, from its aftermath.

The story that follows was told to me by Duane Mistaken Chief, a *Kainai* educator and Blackfoot language specialist at Red Crow College on the *Kainai* Reserve. It is about an Elder who shared her residential school memories at a community meeting:

⁷⁸ Stories of residential school experiences are not always well-received in public places. My experience at the University of Alberta has been that many people, including University administrators, believe that such stories dwell too much on victimhood and accusation and do little to improve the situation for Aboriginal peoples. Though this critique may be partly valid, one also has to wonder how people are listening to such stories and what they are learning about themselves from their responses to them.

[S]he said that she was raised by her grandparents. And while she was with them, the old lady made a doll for her, and she told her, “Okay, this is your child. That is for you to take care of. You take care of it just as if it were a real child. That’s your baby. You get up, whatever you have to do for the baby, you make sure. You have to clean it up, make sure it’s safe. So you make sure it’s safe, and you even go to the extent that when you go for a blessing, you get your face painted and that, you take your doll with you so that doll can have its face painted as well. So you just treat it like a real baby.”

Along with that, she was taught other skills, like how to sew, how to take care of berries, so she was always hanging around picking berries. And at that time she was given a Buffalo Stone. And the old man told her “Okay, here is the stone.” Inísskimm, they call them ‘Buffalo Stones.’ And he said, “You hang on to this. That will remind you of your being Indian, so you will never forget. So just hang on to that.” There are other purposes for the Inísskimm, but at that point that is what they told her. “You will never forget you are Indian as long as you hold on to this stone.” And even that stone was all painted. So everything was well taken care of. There was a lot of discipline involved. There was a lot of little life blessings.

And then finally, I don’t know if it was the Indian agents, but a representative of the boarding school said to the old people, “You know, the time has come for your daughter to go to school.” It was actually the

granddaughter, but they referred to her as their daughter. "She needs to go to school; she is of age now. We need to take her back to the school." But then the old people said - - well, they discussed it, and they said, "Well, this child is too young. At least give us one more year with her, and then we will let her go." So they agreed to that. They made the arrangement, and they continued with all the teachings. She still had her doll; she still had the stone.

And then the following year came, and then they came back for her. They sadly let her go. She had her little suitcase. You know, when they packed it, they made sure they put the rock in there and the doll. And again, there is your reminder. "You make sure you take care of these. Take good care of your baby. Your rock will also remind you that you are an Indian."

They got here [the residential school], and then the nuns opened up all her belongings, they opened up the suitcase. They got rid of all the stuff they didn't want her to have any contact with. At that point that lady, as she was telling the story, she got to that point and she said, "My baby." And then she just broke down and she started crying as if it was happening again. She just broke down and started crying and said, "My baby." That was the very first thing they threw away. She said, "To this day I have never seen my baby again." To her that wasn't a doll. It was a baby. And then she said, "And my Buffalo Stone, they threw it away too." After all

these years, I don't know how many years, over 50 years, and to this day she's still affected in that way. (Donald, 2003, pp. 89-91)

In this story, the doll and Buffalo Stone are symbolic of the intimate ties the young girl had to her grandparents, her extended family, the language and cultural traditions of her people, and a particular ethical and spiritual place in the world. The stark curricular and pedagogical contrast between her home and residential school—what and how she was learning in each context—can be used to emphasize a perceived civilizational divide separating Eurowestern and Indigenous⁷⁹ knowledge and educational systems. The palpable pain relived by the woman through the telling of her story can be justified and explained away as a necessary part of the civilizing process. This assessment of Indigenous ways, based on falsely universal criteria, detracts from the very real social and epistemic violence committed against Aboriginal peoples in the name of Eurowestern moral righteousness.

It is important to remember that Canadian legislators endorsed federal residential school policies that removed Aboriginal children from their homes, housed them in harsh environments, unraveled their connections to their cultural values, identities, families, languages, and spirituality, and disrupted the functioning of family and cultural institutions (Milloy, 1999; Miller, 1996). We know that many Aboriginal people and communities are still struggling to come

⁷⁹ I use 'Indigenous' in this section when referring to more global understandings of Indigeness shared by Indigenous peoples around the world. When I switch back to 'Aboriginal,' I am again referring to specific Aboriginal cultures and ways in Canada that I am familiar with. Although there are numerous connections between the two, clarifying distinctions is important.

to terms with this trauma. Many generations have been affected. We know these things intellectually, bodily, generationally, and mnemonically. However, we still need to listen carefully to these stories. We need to listen, again and again, to such memories to see ourselves implicated in them whoever we are and wherever we are in Canada. Like a poignant tap on the shoulder, the stories remind us of our responsibilities and commitments to each other. Importantly, they also remind that the socio-economic success of Canada as a nation is founded on a history of Aboriginal displacement and disenfranchisement.

Some Canadians have apparently felt this tap and responded to its implications. In May 2007, the Minister of Indian Affairs of the Government of Canada announced in Parliament that his department had completed negotiations with representatives of churches, the Assembly of First Nations, other Aboriginal organizations, and legal representatives for over 80 000 former students on the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. After many years of meetings, negotiations, and delays, the Canadian government finally admitted its culpability regarding the turmoil created in Aboriginal families and communities by the legislated removal of Aboriginal children from their families and their placement in church-run residential schools. These schools, most active in Western Canada over an eighty year period beginning around 1900, were founded and premised on a commitment to 'civilizing education' that often involved sustained physical, mental, and sexual abuses perpetrated by teachers and administrators against students. Although some former students consider their residential school education ultimately beneficial in helping them gain the skills and knowledge

necessary to be successful as adults, most tell disturbing stories of lonely suffering stemming from their long-term separation from family and abuses endured or witnessed. Many continue to struggle to come to terms with this trauma. All of the struggles currently facing Aboriginal peoples and their communities—unemployment, low high school graduation rates, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, crime—can be considered symptomatic legacies of the residential school experience and its insidious intergenerational resiliency. Until real healing occurs, Aboriginal peoples will continue to suffer with these legacies and their devastating effects.

To their credit, Canadian government officials, in finalizing the Indian Residential School Agreement,⁸⁰ have identified this need for healing as not solely an Aboriginal concern. While a significant aspect of the Agreement does include monetary compensation for former students based on the number of years they were in attendance, a more engaging provision of the Agreement involves the creation and organization of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This initiative, surely inspired by the South African post-apartheid public inquiry of the same name, will focus on the residential school experience in the Canadian context.

The Canadian TRC will have two general purposes. The first is to provide a public forum for former students, as well as family and community members, to tell their stories in safe and culturally-appropriate ways. One major assumption informing this forum is that the public telling of these stories will foster healing

⁸⁰ All specific information on the Agreement is derived from the website: http://www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca/english/pdf/IRS_SA_Highlights.pdf

on the part of the tellers, their families, and their communities. When victims of historical trauma have opportunities to tell stories that have been repressed or internalized, the implication is that the very act of public storytelling can enable the teller to avoid being 'owned' by the stories any longer. Voicing the trauma is a healing act that can begin a process of personal and collective renewal. This is indeed an important yet risky proposition that raises the possibility that some Aboriginal people will share their stories of the residential school experience for the very first time. The second purpose of this Canadian TRC is to raise awareness among the general Canadian citizenry of the residential experience and its effects. Although the Agreement does not explicitly name processes for public education, we can assume that media coverage of the TRC and stories told by former residential school students will spark various forms of public debate in classrooms, meeting halls, living rooms, and coffee shops in communities across Canada. Canadians will finally have the opportunity to listen to first-hand accounts of residential school experience and judge for themselves the legacies of these historical injustices, the consequences of these governmental policies for Aboriginal peoples and communities today, and the responsibilities that Canadians have to begin their own healing in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples.

This challenging call for heightened Canadian public engagement, education, and awareness regarding residential school experiences raises some complex curricular and pedagogical tensions. What is most prominent curricularly is the insistence that all Canadians, as citizens of this land, need to listen to the stories and witness them being told. We can expect that resistance regarding the

presumed worth of hearing and witnessing such ‘stories’ will be widespread and significant. Such resistance points to a pedagogic problem regarding the terms according to which such stories can be heard and witnessed by Canadians as an ethical call and responsibility. Relying again on Simon (2004) who theorizes “listening as a mode of thought,” I suggest that Canadians will only be willing to listen to the stories of residential school experiences if they can accept that such stories enact a claim on Canadian public memory, and thus implicate us all (pp. 191-192). If the stories stemming from the TRC are to be heard, and thus provide the context for public engagement over issues involving Canadians and Aboriginal peoples, the residential school experience (and all the struggles resulting from it) must be viewed as a shared legacy rather than a separate cultural problem that Aboriginal peoples need to ‘get over.’ While no one living today is personally responsible for the residential school policies of the past, we all must live with the consequences of these decisions today.

Fostering the development of this shift in social and historical consciousness will require significant reeducation efforts that must be led by Aboriginal community leaders, Elders, public figures, academics, educators, and their allies working in various contexts. The guiding vision of this reeducation project will not be to forward Aboriginal perspectives in place of all else, but rather to help Canadians realize that their formal education and socialization has, both subtly and overtly, presented them with a theory of the Indigenous that has shaped and conditioned their ability to respond to Aboriginal presence and participation encountered in their daily lives. To facilitate this reeducation

process, Indigenous teachers and scholars, on behalf of the families and communities that they come from, have a responsibility to promote their values, perspectives, and priorities *as matters of common public concern and consideration*. This requires respectful engagement beginning with building relationships with those outside of one's own identifiable group. This is how decolonization on a societal level will occur. To clarify this point, I lean heavily again on Martin Nakata, an Australian Indigenous scholar who has "attempted to theorise the Indigenous position as an interface position, rather than an oppositional position" (McConaghy, 2000, pp. ix-x). He writes:

Our position is one of intersection in the first instance, however we are geographically, historically, socially, or economically located. Our position—historic, cultural, social and economic—has been discursively circumscribed for us and governmentally enacted upon us... Unless we begin to understand our position in terms of the (often shifting) discursive regimes that produce that position we will continue to have difficulty articulating the complexity of our position. Until we do we are bound to reify the very categories of race and culture that have historically constituted our position as inferior, as secondary, as marginal, as different, as other. (x)

Taking up Nakata's challenge, then, as well as the commonly heard Aboriginal spiritual invocation '*All My Relations*,' I wish to assert relationality and interreferentiality as ethical curricular and pedagogic positions from which to interpret the conflictual cultural terrain and publicly address the tensions that arise

there. Resisting the temptation to frame Indigenousness in isolated and exclusionary ways is the first step toward decolonization.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which various Indigenous scholars have replied in their work to the historical exclusion and mistreatment of their peoples and the diverse approaches they have used in taking up this challenge to teach and reeducate. Although this review also includes considerations of scholarly work done by Indigenous academics from the United States, Australia, and *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, the specific focus is on Aboriginal scholars working in the Canadian context. In focusing on the Canadian context, I take the opportunity to properly historicize and contextualize the position of Aboriginal scholarship in the field of education. Doing so requires awareness of the ways in which Indians have been legislatively and culturally defined in Canada, as well as an understanding of the ramifications these definitions held for post-Treaty Indians and their exclusion and isolation on reserves. The long-lasting significance of these definitions can be seen in the deep influence they had on the conceptualization of residential schools and the creation of a ‘civilizing curriculum.’

Following an examination of residential school curricular and pedagogical assumptions, I provide a survey of replies that Aboriginal scholars have crafted in response to the residential school experience and colonial frontier logics. These are organized into four sections. The first section reviews studies that explore and express Aboriginal ontologies. The second section focuses on inquiries into Aboriginal epistemologies and ways of knowing. The third section considers

inquiries into the ways that Aboriginal cultures and languages can be used to decolonize educational practices and institutions through culture-based approaches. The fourth and final section examines more recent studies that employ critical Indigenous and decolonial approaches in the field of the education. After noting the importance of these studies to the curriculum field and the ways that they have informed my work, I argue that a more interreferential inquiry, particularly one that engages with EuroCanadian perspectives, is necessary to renew partnerships, acknowledge ethical space, and 'place' notions of citizenship. This is the necessary next step.

Defining and Relocating *Indian*

From the beginning of its creation as a concept describing the people of the so-called New World, the idea of *Indian* has been, at best, enigmatic. An overdone historical account tells us that Christopher Columbus believed that the Aboriginal people of North America that he met over five hundred years ago were inhabitants of islands southeast of the southernmost tip of India. Believing that he was in India, *las Indias*, he naturally referred to these people as *los Indios*, or Indians (Moffat and Sebastián, 1998, pp. 15-16). Columbus cannot really be blamed for making such a mistake; his efforts and perspectives on exploration and conquest were clearly products of European society at that time. What is astonishing is that this misnomer, and the connotations attached to it, has resisted irrelevancy to this day. It is worth noting that Columbus believed he had discovered not just a New World, but an Edenic New World as described in the Bible, and the quest to discover this paradise on earth had preoccupied European

consciousness throughout the Middle Ages (pp. 15-56). “The Native Americans first found by him, therefore, were inevitably assumed to partake of those same Indian-Edenic characteristics that had been discussed throughout the Middle Ages in Europe” (p. 53). Thus, right from the very beginning of the use of the term *Indian*, Indians were conceptualized as people with specific characteristics and inclinations.

Since the time of Columbus, this condition of being “overdetermined from without” has persisted to bedevil Aboriginal people in diverse and damaging ways (Fanon, 1967, p. 116). This means that the processes of colonialism, through various social, cultural, legal, and political forces, have suppressed the identification of the character of the colonized in favour of the colonizer’s version of events and people, and consequently the colonized have been defined in European terms. This orientation towards the colonized derives from the European belief that knowledge diffuses out from the cultural center of Europe and that any person with roots in the periphery was thus rendered a “savage” and marginalized as such (Battiste, 1998, p. 22). “The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, 1986, p. 154). To define *Indian* in their own terms was advantageous for the colonizers because it enabled them to co-opt the identity and collectivity of the people they called Indians by denying them the chance to be considered real people with real tribal names living in particular

places, and instead translated that reality into a European rendition of the noble savage called, generically, *Indian*.

The name “Indian” is a convenient one, to be sure, but it is an invented term that does not come from any Native language, and it does not describe or contain any aspect of traditional Native experience or literature. *Indian*, the noun, is a simulation of racialism, an undesirable separation of race in the political and cultural interests of discovery and colonial settlement of new nations; the noun does not reveal the experiences of diverse Native communities. The name is unbidden, and the Native heirs must bear an unnatural burden to be so christened in their own land. (Vizenor, 1999, p. 47)

In the place we call Canada, where the history and memories of colonialism are frequently re-enacted, a huge, bureaucratic governmental institution called Indian Affairs was created to administer all things related to Indians. To help with this effort, and to limit their clientele, the government decided to define *Indian* as such:

3. The term “Indian” means

First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;

Secondly. Any child of such a person;

Thirdly. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such a person:

(Smith, 1975, p. 87)

Contained within that definition of *Indian* is Status Indian, who is legally recognized as a registered Indian with a Treaty number and specific Band or Tribal affiliation; and Non-Status Indian, who is a person of Indian ancestry, who usually claims Indian cultural identity, but is not recognized as an Indian by the government. In practical terms, this means that people in Canada who are defined as *Indian* receive Treaty benefits and special constitutional status whereas other people called *Indian* receive no such benefits or recognition because they lack a legal affiliation with a specific Treaty. Thus, a notable effect stemming from this definition of *Indian* in Canada has been to divide and disentitle individuals, families, and communities, and force conformity to interpretations of Indianness limited to the social, cultural, political, and legal interpretations of *Indian* endorsed by EuroCanadians.

With these influences in mind, it is accurate to depict *Indian* as an abstract cultural concept rife with ambiguities. One aspect of *Indian* connotes the historical and ongoing relationship that First Nations have with both the British monarch and the Canadian government. This relationship recognizes the significance of family, clan, and tribe to Aboriginal people through Treaties, and implies an equitable partnership in which Aboriginal people and EuroCanadians will share land and resources, as well as the benefits that come from them. The other aspect of *Indian* was imposed by the Canadian political system and personified in the form of the various *Indian* Acts. The Canadian government passed the Indian Acts of 1876 and 1884 with the intention of assimilating; enfranchising and, eventually, facilitating the disappearance of the reserves and

Treaty Indians (Milloy, 1999, p. 21). Through these Acts, Aboriginal governments were displaced, and a series of draconian rules and regulations imposed on the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people (Richardson, 1993, pp. 95-106). This colonial regime has gone through different phases and seen various consequences. Aboriginal people have been treated as obstacles to economic development and expansion; they have been treated as uncivilized children in need of Christianity and a proper education; they have been treated as anachronistic residue leftover from a dusky past who would eventually die off; they have been treated as tax burdens who want their *Indian* rights, but will give nothing in return (Tully, 2000, pp. 41-42).

The emphasis on legal and political definitions of *Indian* has, in part, been fuelled by the idea of the Imaginary *Indian* as a social and cultural icon frozen in time (Francis, 1992). Imaginary *Indian* has certain characteristics and propensities that have been projected on to all Indians in the form of these well-known stereotypes: a closeness to nature, skill in producing artwork, a primitive and ancient inclination to singing and drumming, spirituality, a dislike for work and discipline, a child-like inability to resist temptation, long braided hair, a natural ability to hunt, sneakiness, and a general inability to adapt to the pressures of a contemporary lifestyle. These few examples of stereotypes are listed here to make the point that Imaginary *Indian*, as a cultural icon, has had a profound impact on the possible roles that Aboriginal people could assume in Canadian society:

Any Indian was by definition a traditional Indian, a relic of the past. The only image of the Indian presented to non-Natives was therefore an

historical one. The image could not be modernized. Indians were defined in relation to the past and in contradistinction to White society. To the degree that they changed, they were perceived to become less Indian... The Imaginary Indian, therefore, could never become modern.

(Francis, 1992, p. 59)

Indians have not been considered capable of generating anything beyond an anthropological form of culture that emphasizes trinkets, food, and spirituality—exotically *different*, but still inferior and incapable when compared to European forms of knowledge and culture. The present-day quandaries caused by these stereotypes and the colonial inscription of Aboriginal identity are poignantly expressed by my friend *Aamsskááphokitópii*, a young man from the *Kainai* Nation:

What the hell makes an Indian today—if we don't smoke pipes, or if we don't have long braids? What the hell's supposed to be an Indian today? I wasn't raised in a boarding school so I can't go get government compensation. Never lived in a teepee. I don't even own a teepee.

(Donald, 2003, p. 114)

In his statement, *Aamsskááphokitópii* is clearly expressing frustration over the limitations of essentialist definitions and (mis)conceptions of Aboriginal identity, as well as the ambiguity of confronting the Imaginary *Indian* on a daily basis. As Restoule (2000) observes:

“...Aboriginal identity” can be constrictive and colonizing.... *Identity* implies fixedness; that the “things” that make one Indian remain the same

and should be the same as those things associated with Indianness by the Europeans at the time of historical “first” contact. Identity places power in the observer who observes Aboriginal people from the outside and defines them, giving them an identity. (p. 103)

Thus, the concept of *Indian* identity has a pluralizing effect as the characteristics of individuals are often oppressed by, and subsumed under, stereotypical notions of the collective. This “mark of the plural” sentences individuals to an anonymous existence in which a blanket identity creates the illusion that such characterizations apply to all members of that group (Memmi, 1967, p. 85). This places the burden of social interaction squarely on the shoulders of any individual who tries to break free from these stereotypes in that *Imaginary Indian* becomes a triple person, someone who is responsible for self, race, and ancestors all at the same time (Fanon, 1967, p. 112).

A culture or cultural group subjected to the forces of colonialism becomes mired in the images, structures, and desires of the dominant group, deformed by the unequal power relations, and the escape from these influences often seems hopeless. Having the power to define *Indian* in legalistic and socially binding ways (informed by colonial frontier logics) facilitated the process through which Canadian government officials asserted political and economic power over the country at the expense of Aboriginal peoples. Legislating *Indian* identity by means of the *Indian Acts* clarified exactly who the subjects of the Treaties were. But this legislative process also provided an extensive list of those *Indians* who qualified for special settlement on designated reserves. These two complementary

processes came to fruition in western Canada coeval with the eradication of the once massive buffalo herds from the Prairies. The devastation caused by this tremendous loss, coupled with raging smallpox epidemics and increasing warfare over scant resources, brought the Aboriginal peoples of the time to their knees. For Treaty makers on both sides, this seemed the perfect time to construct a special refuge for Aboriginal peoples to protect them from further hardships or abuses, and provide aid in their gradual adjustment to the ways of the newcomers. Unfortunately, what happened instead is that colonial frontier logics were turned inside out so that Aboriginal peoples became the insiders forcibly isolated within their own communities.⁸¹ The reserve became a fortress dedicated to special treatment within the Canadian system that actually enforced isolation and exclusion.

The advent of the reserve system, first conceptualized with the negotiation of Treaties in eastern Canada, limited the ability of Aboriginal peoples to disrupt the takeover of their lands by immigrant farmers (Buckley, 1992, pp. 32-34). Strangely, and in curious parallel to the survival of the enigmatic label *Indian*, the reserve system has been maintained to the present day despite its obvious faults. These two examples bespeak the prevalence and resiliency of colonial frontier logics. The contemporary dilemma of the reserve is that it has become a homeland—a special place shared by relatives and friends—and location where distinct cultural spiritual, and linguistic practices can be maintained, and paradoxically, a government-created and –administered pocket of isolation often

⁸¹ For many years, Aboriginal peoples living on reserves in Canada had to obtain written permission from an Indian Agent to leave the boundaries of the reserve. Special permission was also required to visit a reserve. For more on this see Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council (1996).

wracked by social and economic despair. Whether viewed as good or bad, or both, it seems clear that the “isolation of the reserve is the very essence of its being.” (p. 11). This problem of Aboriginal isolation and exclusion, enacted through the *Indian Acts* and manifested through the reserve system, has become the primary conceptual means according to which Canadians understand and construct Indigenosity today. The reserve has also become the primary conceptual means by which First Nations people identify themselves and signify where they are from. Despite this conceptual reorientation of the frontier, and the socio-spatial shifting of insiders and outsiders, the civilizational divides were hardened in Western Canada in the years following Aboriginal settlement on reserves. Hope for a solution to this ‘Indian problem’ would soon find expression in residential school curricula.

The Civilizing Impetus and Residential School Curricula

The provisions of Treaties, including those for education, did offer some hope for the future. Interestingly, though, it seems that this hopeful vision originated from many Aboriginal leaders of the times who understood that changing social, economic, and political circumstances in their traditional lands required significant adjustments for their communities if they were to survive and prosper. These leaders consistently insisted at Treaty negotiations that the Crown provide for the education of their children so that they could compete with EuroCanadians on an equal basis in earning a living and looking after their families. They wanted their children to have opportunities to lead good lives just as any EuroCanadian child would (Grant, 1996, p. 63). These leaders recognized

the benefits that Canadian society offered their people, and believed that the sharing of their land with the Canadian government and newcomers would, in return, provide them with access to education, expertise, training, and economic opportunities that would help make their people prosperous in the future (Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, 1996, p. 210).

Thus, education and the successful adaptation to a new way of life were viewed by Aboriginal leaders of the time as keys to future prosperity for their peoples within Canada. This educational vision was directly tied to the need for training and technology that would enable Aboriginal people to make the economic shift to an emphasis on agricultural production and animal husbandry. To provide the training and instruction to meet these demands, the Crown agreed to provide schools and teachers to those communities that requested them (Milloy, 1999, p. 54). It was the Plains Cree chief Sweet Grass who suggested that these educational initiatives be supervised by missionaries (p. 54). Sweet Grass, in apparent response to the mediatory and translatory functions performed by trusted missionaries during the Treaty process, hoped that missionaries could continue to serve as advocates for Aboriginal peoples throughout the educational process mandated by the Treaties.

Thus, in contrast to the common perception that Aboriginal peoples in Canada were bewildered victims of the proverbial wheel of change right from the beginning, it is clear that Aboriginal leaders anticipated the need for specific forms of education—they explicitly asked for them—and willingly brought their children to schools to receive the necessary training and instruction. They trusted

that the Treaty officials and missionaries would ensure that their people would be treated fairly and respectfully. There is ample evidence to show that the first attempts at agricultural training and instruction in the West were eagerly welcomed by Aboriginal peoples who demonstrated that they were ready and willing to learn the skills of farming and ranching soon after settling down to reserve life (Dempsey, 1980; Buckley, 1992; Christensen, 2000; Wilson, 1921).

The goals of the Aboriginal leaders were not entirely different from those of Canadian government officials. Soon after Aboriginal settlement on reserves occurred in western Canada in the early 1880s, Canadian government officials began planning formal education processes on the reserves as negotiated through the Treaties. They, too, believed that the purpose of the treaties and treaty rights was to “civilize” the Indians by replacing traditional cultural practices and beliefs with “the modes of thought and action” characteristic of Canadian citizens of that era (Kozak, 1971, p. 48). The difference was that the government considered total assimilation of the Indians to be the main goal of this process. Total assimilation, and the elimination of *Indian*, required particular forms of education drastically different from those specifically requested by the Aboriginal leaders of the times. This difference points to a fundamental misunderstanding of the spirit and intent of various provisions of the Treaties and the discordant ways in which the stakeholders interpreted their significance.

The formation of this government policy was shaped by two main factors. First, the eradication of the buffalo herds just a few years after the Treaties were negotiated created a severe resource crisis in Aboriginal communities that

government officials had not anticipated. In response, government officials believed that they needed to expedite the educative and civilizing process by placing students in industrial schools established in places far away from the reserve and distracting community influences (Miller, 1996, p. 100). The formation of this policy was further informed by a second factor: the prevailing racist ideology of the times. Aboriginal incapacity, as this ideology might be called, held “that Aboriginal peoples had to be controlled and have decisions made for them because they were incapable of making what non-Natives considered sound choices on their own” (p. 101). These are the factors that influenced Canadian government policy makers to impose unilateral decisions on the formation of the education of Aboriginal peoples in post-Treaty times.

For guidance in the establishment of an education system for Indian children that would best meet these goals, the Canadian government commissioned Nicolas Flood Davin to write a report on the feasibility of establishing boarding schools for Treaty Indians. In 1879, Davin, after studying some industrial schools for American Indians, approved of the creation of such schools for Canadian Indians with the proviso that they be administered and supervised by missionaries who, he believed, would employ the proper benevolent discipline needed without looking for personal gain (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986, p. 6). Thus, by the late nineteenth century, the Canadian government had the philosophical and pedagogical foundations for an oppressive and imperious education system that would assimilate Indian children by first

removing them from their families and communities, and then gradually replacing Aboriginal habits and beliefs with European and Christian values and practices.

Implementing these policies proved to be challenging, however, and the first few decades of Indian education policy occurred in fits and starts. On reserves, day schools were established by the various Christian denominations that were present in the communities and could staff schools. Student attendance was sporadic at these schools and the instructors could only hope for very basic instructional achievements in speaking, reading, writing, and arithmetic for their students. By 1892, these struggles prompted federal government officials to make school attendance compulsory and enforced by truant officers (Grant, 1996, p. 65). Meanwhile, older students of an elite status were sent off their reserves to Industrial and Boarding Schools to receive detailed instruction in specific trades and skills. The students received very little literacy instruction; emphasis was instead placed on the acquisition of more practical and employable skills. Boys learned carpentry, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, butchery, wheelwrighting, cabinet-making, tailoring, shoemaking, and printing while girls honed the skills of sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidering, spinning, housekeeping, and dairy work (pp. 66-67).

After approximately two decades of administering this education system, Canadian government officials became concerned that the system was costing them too much money and that the desired assimilation processes were not occurring on a scale that they had expected they would. The statistic most telling of this failure was the high number of graduates who retrograded or simply

returned to their home communities and ‘uncivilized’ ways (Grant, 1996, p. 73). In response, Indian Affairs officials embarked on a new policy in 1909 that would focus on educating Indian children for reserve life. This school system became an even more dominant characteristic of Aboriginal communities when the Canadian government made school attendance compulsory for all children between the ages of six and sixteen and eliminated the day, boarding, and industrial schools in favour of one residential school system for all students (Chalmers, 1972, p. 163).

At its height, the residential school was an all-encompassing experiment in the resocialization of Indian children. The curriculum was not limited to the classroom, but designed to intrude on all aspects of the child’s life. To residential school administrators and teachers, who were usually also missionaries, the civilizing impetus necessitated a total remaking of the Indian child, even if this process required violence and coercion:

A child was to be brought to civilization through discipline and, if necessary, by punishment and would become, therefore, a civilized parent, able naturally to “exercise proper authority” over the next generation of civilized children.

In this vision of residential school education, discipline was curriculum and punishment was pedagogy. Both were agents of civilization; they were indispensable to the “circle of civilized conditions” where the struggle to move children across the cultural divide would play itself out in each school situation, child by child, teacher by teacher.

(Milloy, 1999, p.p. 43-44)

Thus, the curricular and pedagogical priorities of residential schools were predicated on an assumed need for discipline on the part of the students, enforced on threat of punishment, as a necessary prerequisite and partner to a civilizing education.

In striving to carry out this civilizing mission, however, the instructors were first confronted with a significant language problem. Students who arrived at the residential schools came from a home environment where the family spoke the language of their communities and lived, as much as possible, according to their own distinct cultural values and ethics. Students were often expected to learn the English language and adjust to the demands made on them to adopt Christian and civilizing habits, while also learning the very basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Former students report that that these demands were too high, that they learned very little in their first few years, and that their 'learning' involved parroting back what the teacher said as best they could (Grant, 1996, p. 168). Most times, because they had not learned English, they did not know what they were saying. After a few years in the schools, though, most students gained a working knowledge of English. Their continued progress and improvement was hindered by the small amount of instructional time dedicated to academics. Much emphasis was placed on prayer and religious instruction. Former students in Roman Catholic residential schools remember praying up to ten times a day and spending hours upon hours memorizing the catechism (Grant, 1996, p. 173).

Although the residential school instructors obviously considered religious instruction very important, the large majority of student time was spent labouring

at various jobs associated with the running of the schools. From its beginnings right to the 1950s, the distinguishing feature of the residential school program was the so-called 'half-day' system in which students were supposed to spend half the day on academic studies and the other half on the practicalities of vocational training (Miller, 1996, p. 157). The classroom instruction they did receive was based largely on an Ontario model that emphasized English, geography, reading, arithmetic, history, vocal music, calisthenics, reading and writing, and, of course, religious instruction as students progressed from Standard I to VI (Kozak, 1971, pp. 174-180). The practical education aspect employed the students with regular chores and duties: the girls sewed, cooked, and cleaned, while the boys worked outdoors doing farming and agricultural chores (p. 100). Unfortunately, the reality of this system was that students were mostly used as free labour to perform menial tasks.

Early on, it became evident to Aboriginal parents that their children were not receiving the education promised through the Treaties and were instead being used as slaves to the system. In 1896, one father refused to send his son back to school, protesting to the Indian agent that his son had attended for five years yet could not perform basic communication skills in English because he had spent most of his time tending cattle (Kozak, 1971, p. 166). Yet, despite these failures, and the protestations of Aboriginal leaders and parents that the Treaty promises for an education that would enable their children to prosper were not being respected, this system persisted for many years. The effect is that many Aboriginal students left school functionally illiterate and without critical

vocational skills necessary for gainful employment. For many decades, a “buckskin ceiling” loomed over the heads of the students and led to an isolated existence on reserves for many generations (p. 157).

So, one central and damaging consequence of this “buckskin ceiling” is that graduates of the residential school system were not successfully integrated into Canadian society as the government and missionaries had hoped they would be. The civilizing curriculum had failed. Although Canadian government officials and the school instructors themselves take much of the blame for this failure, it is important to acknowledge that this unsuccessful integration was also influenced by systemic racism against Aboriginal peoples as well. They were simply not accepted outside their own communities. This obvious lack of success with the residential schools prompted the Canadian government to make amendments to the sections pertaining to education in the Indian Act. In 1951, the new Act gave the Minister of Indian Affairs the power to negotiate tuition agreements with provincial school jurisdictions whereby Indian children would attend provincial schools surrounding reserves (Daniels, 1973, p. 106). On most reserves, attendance at residential schools was discouraged. Instead, the Canadian government began to emphasize attendance at day schools.⁸²

At provincial schools, Aboriginal students were finally given the opportunity to study the same academic subjects and topics as their Canadian counterparts. However, this government policy of integration was not met with complete support by Aboriginal parents who worried that their children would

⁸² One statistical example of the success of this decentralizing movement on the part of the Canadian government occurred with the people of the Blood Reserve, where one-half of all school age children were attending provincial schools by 1964 (Ninastako Cultural Centre, 1984).

face the harsh realities of prejudice and discrimination in the off-reserve schools (Chalmers, 1972, pp. 294-295). A related and perhaps more overriding concern was their inability to have any kind of influence over the education of their own children (pp. 318-319). These concerns, and the fears associated with them, were heightened with the government release of The White Paper in 1969. The central goal of The White Paper was to achieve social, economic, and political equality, and to make Indian people equal partners in society with other Canadians; the basic message was that Indian people should no longer be treated differently from other Canadians, whether legally, constitutionally, or otherwise (p. 197). With respect to education, the authors of The White Paper recommended that “all services to Indian people come through the same channels and from the same government agencies as serve all other Canadians” (Daniels, 1973, p. 197). Most Indian parents and political leaders did not interpret The White Paper in this way. Many saw it as a veiled attempt by the Canadian government to back out of its Treaty obligations, and several leaders began to advocate for Indian control of Indian education (pp. 198-199).

The White Paper sparked a political and cultural revolution in Aboriginal communities that is still being felt today. The event marks a time when Aboriginal peoples realized that their communities had survived despite many years of turmoil and extensive government-supported efforts to eliminate them as a people. Inspired by *The Red Paper*,⁸³ a critical detailed reply to the White Paper that asserted the unique status and rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, Aboriginal

⁸³ *The Red Paper* was the popularized title of the response that was more formally titled *Citizens Plus*. The document was created by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta in 1970. See Indian Chiefs of Alberta (1970) for more.

communities across Canada began to revitalize spiritual, cultural, and linguistic traditions as a means to repair the damage done by residential schools and the civilizing curriculum. This resurgence paralleled academic successes of Aboriginal students and gradually led to Aboriginal participation in deliberations concerning the education of Aboriginal students. Subsequent to this social revolution, curricular work put forward by Aboriginal researchers and writers has been inspired by a research agenda focused on an explicit desire to reclaim, restore, and revitalize Indigenous ontologies, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing as necessary to the education of Aboriginal students with a healthy sense of their Indigenesness. Carrying on this legacy, contemporary writers and researchers strive to articulate Indigenous ways to help people recover from the impositions and encumbrances of “cognitive imperialism” (Battiste, 1998, p. 20) and the Eurocentric monologue most insidious during the residential school era.

The challenge for Indigenous peoples is one of restoring their spirit and bringing back into existence, health, and dignity the world of the fragmented and dying...Indigenous scholars have begun to reclaim their own perspectives, their own designs, their own strategies, and their own visions. Reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous heritage and knowledge is a vital part of any process of decolonization, as is reclaiming land, language, and nationhood. (Battiste and Henderson, 2000, p. 13)

Symbolically, then, Aboriginal people working in the field of education endeavour to restore the doll and buffalo stone to their rightful owners. There are several approaches to this.

Ontological Approaches

Ontology is a branch of philosophy focused on metaphysics concerned with the nature and meaning of human 'being' in the world. As a philosophical disposition, an ontological approach involves consideration of the essence of knowing about the world in a spiritual sense, and necessarily includes metacognitive meditation on the significance of one's own culture and identity in the larger world. From an Indigenous perspective, culture and identity are living and deeply spiritual manifestations of complex relationships with the land, cosmos, ancestors, language, ceremonies, and memories that the people have renewed for centuries. "A central principle of indigenous peoples' relational ontologies and cosmologies is the inseparable nature of the relationship between the world of matter and the world of spirit" (Stewart-Harawira, 2005a, p. 37). We can think of the world of matter as the day-to-day routines, roles, and responsibilities that are generally associated with living a good life. The world of spirit grows from relationships with the Creator and the ways in which respect and thanks are ceremonially and ritualistically given to the Creator, the land, all living things, and the ancestors for helping us to live good lives.

From an Indigenous perspective, the daily ontological task confronting us all involves contemplation of the ways in which the spiritual world and the material world are connected and regularly acknowledging those connections. Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions advise balance between these two aspects of the world. Elders, wise ones who best remember these traditions and understand their importance, offer guidance and education on how to live

according to these values. Thus, Indigenous peoples often consider expressions of their identity and culture as subjective attempts to respectfully remember their ancestors and the spiritual world in their daily lives. This ontological theory contains a complex system of relationships through which we are taught the meaning and purpose of life. This understanding of human existence is premised on the spiritual. “In essence, the identity of the people and the theory of human development is based on a framework of moral and ethical relationships” (Bastien, 2004, p. 84).

As Weber-Pillwax (2003) points out, however, the essence of being and identity formation are not isolated and individualized processes (*passim*). They instead depend on collective consciousness. Indigenous wisdom traditions articulate values, morals, ethics, and ways of living and knowing that embody a theory of the purpose and essence of human existence. Those ontological foundations are salient in Indigenous communities today. However, this ontology only finds expression as identity when people embrace those ways. Respect and consciousness of this theory of human existence is implied here, as well as attentiveness to the intergenerational, environmental, and collective contexts that have informed this worldview. While many Indigenous people believe that they were born with a biological and cultural identity rooted in the specific ontological wisdom of their community, the correlative requirement is that this gift of identity must be consciously respected and acted upon to become vivified (F.> *vivifier* from Late L. > *vivificare* from L. > *vivus*, living from L. > *vivere*, live)

In this view, then, identity is not a thing—a fixed, essentialized, and constrictive way of being; rather, identity arises through a process of *identifying* with specific worldviews situated in a particular time and place that support fluid subjectivities and the ability to respond and adjust to change (Restoule, 2000, p. 103). This distinction is important because many Canadians mistakenly assume that asserting Aboriginal identity necessitates a return to the old ways, life in tipis, hunting buffalo, and eschewal of all modern conveniences. Talk of Aboriginal culture and identity is often dismissed as misty-eyed nostalgia. However, contemporary understandings of Indigenous ontology do not require rejection of the present. Guidance on how to live in the world today comes from consciousness of collective wisdom traditions. Identifying with this ontology comes through participation in ceremonies, rituals, and observance of the various ethical obligations and responsibilities that we have to each other. According to Alfred (2005), *being Indigenous*

is living heritage, being part of tradition—shared stories, beliefs, ways of thinking, ways of moving about in the world, lived experiences—that generates identities which, while ever-changing and diverse, are deeply rooted in the common ground of our heritages as original peoples. (p. 139).

In the Blackfoot context, for example, identifying with the language, prayer, and sweetgrass, participating in ceremonies and rituals, and attending to the ethical relationships in the community, are all viewed as grounding cultural responsibilities that guide the people down specific paths (Narcisse Blood,

personal communication). When Indigenous knowledge is understood in its holism, we come to know that “principles of traditional knowledge...remain fixed and provide the framework within which new experiences and situations are understood and given meaning” (Stewart-Harawira, 2005b, p. 155). Adherence to these teachings enables a person to actively participate in the contemporary world, embrace all the necessary technological accoutrements, and still live according to the ontological priorities of the people.

Thus, Indigenous ontology offers a critical opportunity to live differently in the world today. Consciousness of traditional teachings can help us interrogate and contest Eurocentric philosophical traditions that shape the commonsense moral syntax that dominates current social, political, and economic discussions (Stewart-Harawira, 2005a, p.33). Sharing such ontological knowledge with young people in schools is an urgent pedagogical move because the current societal emphasis on consumerism offers only the possibility for a dispirited and myopic identity based on material possessions and unquenchable purchasing desire. This individualistic desire to possess distracts us from the violence, military and otherwise, committed to preserve present global economic structures, and thereby supports the perpetuation of the system. An education that teaches young people to identify with specific wisdom teachings that emphasize ethical relationships with others can reframe understandings of what it means to be human.

It is in this sense that an interest in identity is also an interest in action, namely that any form of action, pedagogical or otherwise, implies a theory of identity. As a teacher, the question of “what is to be done” with respect

to Others (a particular child, or group) depends on who I think the Other is, and who I think I am in relation to them. (Smith, 1997b, p. 265)

As we have seen, the whole structure and concept of residential schools was founded on a specific theory of identity. Through this educational process, it was assumed that Indians would be incorporated into the general citizenry and the Indian problem would be resolved. Indigenous cultures and communities have proved to be more resilient than that though. Despite the assimilation tactics of the residential schools and the Indian Act, Indigenous languages, worldviews, and cultural practices have survived, and been revitalized and strengthened in recent years. Honouring the survival of these ways of knowing has been a particular focus for Indigenous academics since the end of the residential school era. They wish to engage with the traditional ontologies of their communities and position these at the forefront of any policy discussions concerning Indigenous education. These scholars argue that bureaucratic policies of educational assimilation have weakened their communities. To strengthen the people and foster holistic balance in their communities, then, an educational process that follows traditional ways of knowing is required. This process would support the desires of the people to reclaim their identities and cultural practices, and the reestablishment and maintenance of balance between the material and spiritual worlds.

a. Makokis: Traditional Cree Educational Processes

Makokis (2001) conducted a study that explored Cree traditional educational processes as balancing influences in the context of the Saddle Lake

First Nation. Engaging in conversations with seven Cree-speaking Elders, she used a grounded theory approach to identify the core values and beliefs of the Cree people and then consider how these beliefs can help decolonize the minds of the people and reshape Cree self-governance systems (p. 9). In the study, Makokis explicitly acknowledges the devastating effects that practices of “institutionalized colonization,” including residential schools, have had on Aboriginal communities, and argues that these “are the struggles that need to be overcome by community leaders as they journey back to the cultural roots” (p. 41). With this point, the author forwards the assertion that community leaders are the ones that must lead the people in the work to revitalize traditional ways. They must live and model these ontologies. A significant aspect of this leadership involves deep personal understanding of identity—reflecting on who you are and the reasons that you were given life on the earth (p. 168). The Elders in the study repeatedly mention the intimate connections linking the Cree people and the gifts provided to them by the Creator. These gifts are the culture, language, spiritual practices, ceremonies, rituals, relationships with all living things and the cosmos, as well as the ethics and values this specific ontological views teaches about the meaning and purpose of human existence. “According to the Cree world view, it is in each individual to seek out and understand the truth of his/her existence” (p. 89). To live of life with balance, integrity, and respect, a person must stay true to these teachings.

If people from a community truly believe that the Creator has put them on earth for a specific purpose, and that they must live their lives according to these teachings, then they will also have specific views on the type of educational

process that is best suited to meet the needs of their community. All societies have a theory of the ideal citizen and specific processes to prepare young people to become the kind of person they have in mind. Makokis argues that imbalance in First Nation communities today stems directly from colonization and the miseducation of the people. In simple terms, the people have been taught ideas and values foreign to who they are and ignorant of the worldview specific to their society. For Makokis, balance can only be reestablished if people return to the traditional teachings. The Elders in her study speak of traditional Cree beliefs and values and the intimate links with the Creator (pp. 91-93), natural laws of kindness, honesty, humility, sharing, and strength (pp. 93-100), and teachings from the turtle regarding strength, perseverance, and following a straight path (pp. 100-103). These values and ethics are embodied in the many ceremonies and cultural practices of prayer and renewal unique to the Cree people (pp. 103-112). People are educated on these things through participation—committing to the process—but also through thinking, feeling, and speaking the Cree language and listening to Elders tell stories and legends using their own context-specific pedagogical approaches and sensibilities (pp. 113-120). Here it is important to note that the efficacy of this context-specific education is dependent on the use of the Cree language. “The language encodes the identity of the Cree people” (p. 117).

These teachings can be considered as the curriculum that would enable the people of Saddle Lake First Nation to renew and deepen their connections to the ontological foundations of their community. While acknowledging that her people

also need to attend and graduate from formal educational institutions, Makokis argues that First Nations communities must adapt current educational systems so that they reflect the core traditional values and beliefs of the people (p. 224). She, along with the Elders, envisions a process that would educate young people in and about Western ways, but offer ontological supports and encouragement to employ and evaluate school-based knowledge according to traditional Cree values and ethics. In this curriculum model, First Nations students would be given the skills to balance the demands of mainstream society with their respect for and adherence to traditional teachings. Expanding on the implications of this point, Makokis writes that the identity of

First Nations people is threatened and, in order to survive, the resurgence of First Nations languages and ceremonies must be a priority in all communities. By following the Natural Laws given to us by the Creator, we can begin to restore the concept of our identity and humanity, then our responsibilities to our families and communities, and, eventually, to the global community. (p. 193)

This explanation emphasizes the belief that First Nations people must undergo an inner ontological reflection on the meaning and purpose of their lives before they can interact with others in efficacious and balanced ways. Restoring identity requires a firm foundation of traditional teachings. Renewing the affiliations that people have to their traditional lands, languages, and ontological priorities will encourage the emergence of leaders that live with integrity and respect for the wisdom traditions of the people. They will live according to those values. For

Makokis, these are the kinds of leaders that will restore and revitalize First Nations communities.

b. Weber-Pillwax: Indigenous Ontology

Weber-Pillwax (2003) carried out a similar inquiry into Indigenous identity consciousness and formation; however her focus is on influencing the ways in which educators, curriculum planners, and administrators relate to Cree and Métis students in the context of Northern Alberta. She argues “that any discourse relating to the education of Indigenous children must centre on Indigenous descriptions of Indigenous experiences, descriptions that are ontological and epistemological in nature, and presented in relationship with Indigenous identity formation and consciousness development” (abstract). For Weber-Pillwax, contemporary schools view Indigenous children as a ‘problem’ that needs to be fixed, and educators and administrators attempt to solve these problems, and fix the children, by focusing bureaucratic attention on inadequate funding, second language learning, cultural differences, behaviour, counselling, poor achievement, poor attendance, and low graduation rates (p. 21). These preoccupations distract from the reality that “school-based educators are rarely prepared to ground their standard school-based programs and curricula within the social reality or lifeworld of those children whom they perceive to be situated at the margins of the school society” (p. 21). In other words, schools today are unable to honour, respect, and nurture the ontological foundations of the Indigenous identities lived by the Indigenous students that attend them. They instead commit institutional violence to these young people daily.

This doctoral study is motivated by a desire to reduce incidences of such violence and encourage teachers and administrators to instead endeavour to better understand and respect the identities of Indigenous children in schools today. To this end, Weber-Pillwax's study is focused on providing an exploratory inquiry into the different ontological and epistemological threads that constitute Cree and Métis culture and identity. The author uses several interpretative metaphors that she theorizes as expressions of lifeworlds, or models of consciousness, that reflect consciousness and underpin identity (p. 156). These interpretations are based on the assumption that identity consciousness of a people is profoundly influenced by the physical geography—the land and landscape—of their home territory. Weber-Pillwax asserts that the identity consciousness model of the Cree and Métis of Northern Alberta is a trail through the bush with markers that show possible paths to follow and significant points on the journey of life (p. 174). She notes that the trails have a balancing role in the communities—fulfilling daily practical needs of moving around while simultaneously comprising highly significant connections to the spiritual realm and the presence of ancestors. Travellers visit spiritual markers along the trails, called *manitohkanak* in Cree, to pray and make offerings to the Creator as thanks for providing for the people (p. 175). Thus, consciousness of these trails and awareness of the experience of travelling them shapes the identities of the Cree and Métis people of Northern Alberta.

A trapper or any other person who knows the bush knows because and through a deep and lengthy intimate relationship. The trails on the land are as familiar as the lines on a lover's face. The trails are a part of individual

identity, and over time they become the shape of the individual's consciousness... The consciousness of the trails and woodlands peoples is the journeying towards the experiences of seeing and connecting, and these are the guiding forces of our movements. (p. 180)

According to Weber-Pillwax, this form of consciousness is not an isolated intellectual exercise wherein one *thinks* about life and its meaning. Instead, she argues that the experience of *being-in-relationship* to your lifeworld comes to inhabit your self, fostering linkages across time and space, and naturally encompasses the ways in which you think about the world (pp. 110-111). For the author, mainstream educational approaches effectively insist on the separation of being and thinking ('Check your identity at the door...') and deny the possibility of holistic Indigenous identity and being in schools.

Weber-Pillwax argues further that holistic Indigenous being is intergenerational and bound together by ceremonies. "Oral and written forms of text and scholarship, Indigenous narratives, and elder's teaching abound with this concept of intergenerationality as a supporting structure of Indigenous identity formation theory" (p. 153). What this identity structure reinforces and fosters is an ongoing, organic, and fluid relationship between individuals and their ancestors. For Weber-Pillwax, this relationship depends on orality consciousness, or awareness of living with the power of spoken words, singing, drumming, and other sounds (p. 141). This orality consciousness is honed through participation in ceremonies. One such ceremony, the *wihkohtowin*, involves intense oral expression, drumming, and dancing (pp. 129-131). Weber-Pillwax uses this

ceremony to demonstrate that active participation in such ceremonies immerses the individual in the context of orality consciousness that is imbued with living history and communion with the aspirations of the collective. In this exchange, individual identity becomes enlivened and more complex. In her concluding remarks, Weber-Pillwax argues that all considerations of Cree and Métis identity formation must be viewed as synchronic approaches to making meaning out of our lives. In this view, a synchronic approach entails the ability to take one event or text, interpret its significance, and use it as reference point along the trail from which new insight can be gained. “Synchronicity is the defining characteristic of our lives, and to know consciously and to live that knowledge in the expressions of our individual lives is to have a strong identity” (p. 195).

c. Young: Ontology of Language and Place

Young (2005) is equally interested in the issue of strong Indigenous identities and the impacts of formal schooling. Her study, however, involves an explicit focus on the role that language plays in identity formation. The critical view of language that informs this study is captured by this quote from Cajete (2001) that is referenced by Young (2005):

Indigenous people are a people of place, and the nature of place is embedded in their language. The physical, cognitive, and emotional orientation of a people is a kind of “map” they carry in their heads and transfer from generation to generation. This map is multi-dimensional and reflects the spiritual as well as the mythic geography of the people.

(p. 165)

These reminders of the importance of place, language, and intergenerationality to Indigenous identity formation are specific points of focus in this inquiry because Young, as a residential school survivor, has very personal and intimate memories of her own struggles to reconcile her schooling with her responsibilities to her family and community. In one shared memory, the author poignantly tells the story of returning to her *Anishnabe* community in Northern Manitoba after being away at school for ten months, speaking English at the dinner table, and being corrected by her father with the words, “ ‘*Intanishnabemowin niin awind oma biiting.*’ (We speak Saulteaux in this house.)” (p. 18). Young admits that several decades later, she is still trying to make sense of this memory, recover from her residential school experiences, and uncover the multiple layers of her identity that have been continually updated and refigured to the present day. She views the writing of her book as a way of freeing herself from her residential school experiences and reclaiming her voice and vision as an *Anishnabe* woman (p. 34).

For Young, a significant part of the freeing process involves conversing with young *Anishnabe* people on their personal and family histories, and their reflections on language and identity. Using a narrative approach to relate their words and ideas, Young profiles *Niin*, a young woman of Cree and *Anishnabe* parentage who grew up in the city and does not speak an Indigenous language, and *Aanung*, a young man with an *Anishnabe* mother and Canadian father, a fluent listener but non-speaker of the *Anishnabe* language, who was raised in small towns with few Aboriginal people. Both *Niin* and *Aanung* were students at a post-secondary institution when they met Young. She writes separate chapters for

each research participant in which she narrates their life stories and reflections using the information derived from her conversations with each. Interestingly, the author also includes special chapters used to reflect on these narratives and how the stories of her own struggles with language and identity relate to those shared by *Niin* and *Aanung*.

Young (2005) sees herself and her research participants as walking the same difficult path and carrying the same stories of struggling to maintain connections to the Indigenous languages spoken by their parents while living in an urban environment away from their home communities (pp. 144-148). She recognizes the ways in which their struggles and journeys are intertwined:

Neither *Aanung* or *Niin* grew up in their parents' First Nations community but they visited every summer and both expressed their connections to the land, the sacredness of the land where they find comfort and serenity. It was clear to me that it was the land, their families and relatives that kept them going back. I learned about my own sense of sacred, my own spirituality and the spirits of the animals at home as well. That is where I go when I want to renew my energy, both physically and spiritually, when I want to remind myself of who I am and where I come from and what I know. (p. 158)

Young's work points to the need to recognize and remember that Indigenous ontologies are rooted in specific contexts and ways of knowing—languages—that inhabit and inspire those places. In light of the dramatic effects that language fluency can have on identity, many, including the author, argue that educational

processes most relevant to Indigenous people are those which support reconnections with language as an articulation of the individual in living relationship with the lifeworld of the ancestors. This knowledge will enable young people to face future challenges and remain mindful of an Indigenous interpretative framework that will help them walk in a good way.

Epistemological Approaches

Closely unified with ontological approaches associated with Indigenous wisdom traditions and teachings are the epistemological habits and assumptions that constitute a community's theory on the content and method of knowing. Epistemology is an articulation of cultural and societal knowledges as forms of truth and how a society constructs and validates these truths. Less concerned with the specifics of identity consciousness and the experience of human existence, epistemological approaches focus instead on knowing and thinking about the world and how knowledge systems are different and related. Thus, epistemological approaches require writers and researchers to bring expression to thought processes of individuals and collectives living in a specific cultural context. In this approach, pragmatic explanations on how we organize and make sense of the lifeworld are forwarded.

It should be noted that epistemology, as a philosophical discipline, has been greatly influenced by the Enlightenment and the emphasis on rationalism and the scientific method that has grown out of it. With this approach, knowledge of all truths has been conceptualized as either empirical or analytical, and a great deal of weight has been placed on the role of induction in the project of arriving at

general truths or natural laws. Objectivity is viewed as a necessary mindset for success in this endeavour. Knowledge came to be viewed as an endpoint sufficient in and of itself (Davis, 2004, p. 31). This epistemological turn discounts the spiritual and metaphysical realms as too subjective and irrational to garner serious scholarly consideration.

In the Eurowestern tradition, it was precisely this disconnection of ontology from epistemology that enabled the epistemological turn and thus the reification of enlightened reason, scientific logic, and rationality. The specific problem stemming from this disconnect is that the shift resulted in an incorporation of ontology within an epistemological nexus. The relationships between being and knowing were confused—the distinctions became less clear—as ways of being were increasingly defined based on Eurowestern ways of knowing. This was translated into a declaration that Eurowestern ways of knowing were the only way to be. This declaration was a major principle guiding Eurowestern impetuses during the colonial era that has maintained its influential power in the world to the present. Thus, one of the most significant challenges facing Indigenous educators in the effort to decolonize has been to renew the productive tension between ontology and epistemology in educational contexts through the assertion of alternative ways of being and knowing.

Ermine (1995) takes on this challenge with a brilliant essay that notes the ways in which Aboriginal epistemology offers a critical opportunity to rethink Eurocentric philosophical assumptions and conventions. This project is especially important today as Indigenous communities begin to recover from the assimilative

thrusts of colonialism and institutionalized education. In framing his understandings of Aboriginal epistemology, Ermine begins by arguing that the fundamental difference between Western and Aboriginal worldviews has to do with the “uncharted course of exploration and discovery for purposeful knowledge” that each society has embarked on (p. 101). “One [the West] was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other [Aboriginal societies] was on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical” (p. 101). As has been noted, the historical clash of these approaches has been to the detriment of Aboriginal peoples and societies.

Ermine (1995) warns that the Western world’s preoccupations with acquiring, cataloguing, and objectifying knowledge are attempts to understand the universe external to the self which can lead to a “fragmentary self-world view” that emphasizes atomistic thinking and denies the capacity for subjective holism (pp. 102-103). This holistic state is “grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit...Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie no further than the self” (p. 108). The purpose is to unite the internal with the external, the ontological with the epistemological, to connect all existence, and think and speak about the universe as an enmeshed whole. Ermine argues that because Indigenous languages and cultures offer specific and unique insights on this accumulated knowledge, “it is critical that we examine the inherent concepts in our lexicons to develop understandings of the self in relation to existence” (p. 104). He offers the Cree word *mamatowisowin*, a concept describing the human capacity to be creative and

synthesize all the insights and understandings that constitute our being, as an example of this approach (pp. 104-105). For Ermine, the cultural concept *mamatowisowin*, as a central characteristic of Aboriginal epistemology, has the potential to inspire attentiveness to holism in Aboriginal education and a renewed curricular and pedagogical “responsibility to uphold a world-view based on recognizing and affirming wholeness and to disseminate the benefits to all humanity” (p. 110).

Aboriginal epistemology encourages and inspires ethical relationships with all other forms of existence in the universe. Such intellectual propensities provoke thoughts regarding the role of people in these intertwined relationships, and the ways in which they can act to restore and maintain balance in the world. As Ermine notes, this approach requires an inward turn to subjective experience and introspection as a way to place oneself in the stream of consciousness and come to know in ethical ways. In Aboriginal contexts, Elders are viewed as wise ones who have come to know in these ways. Many believe that Aboriginal epistemology is best understood through consideration of texts from Elders.

This is the approach taken by both Akan (1999) and Lightning (1992) in their studies. Akan asks the question: What do Native students and educators need to know about Native education? She focuses her research on the advice offered by one respected Elder from her home reserve in southern Saskatchewan. The Elder’s answer to her question was given in *Saulteaux*, and Akan translated the original oral text into written English while trying to preserve intended rhythms and meanings of the original *Saulteaux* text. This translation process, completed

in consultation with the Elder, resulted in a poetic transcription where the English translation was placed beside the original Saulteaux words (pp. 19-28). Akan offers an interpretation of this text by breaking it into sections based on themes or main points, and by making comments on the literal and inferred meanings of the words (pp. 28-33). This study concludes that Aboriginal education is an act of walking (experiencing), as well as, a willingness to talk or engage in “careful thought about oneself in a world with other human beings” (p. 37). The Elder was himself an example of someone who walks and talks in this way. Aboriginal epistemology is organically manifested in the ways in which he lives his life and interacts with others. By “walking” in the culture and sharing those ideas with others, he offers a model of someone who “walks and talks” for his community. This is the model that Akan believes will help create a clearer understanding of Aboriginal education for all involved.

Lightning (1992) begins his inquiry with a similar concern for the future direction of Aboriginal education. As an educator at Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema, he wonders what the Cree culture teaches about the mind and the attainment of knowledge and information and how these insights might influence teaching practices (p. 219). He posed this problem to an Elder. In an unusual move, the Elder wrote out his response in Cree syllabics. The difficult task for Lightning was to then translate the text, informed by Cree language experts and subsequent conversations with the Elder, into English. The Elder’s text offers specific advice on how to live a good life. His concern is with the development of a compassionate mind and the daily habits that would foster this.

He advises special care for the brain/mind and the heart/blood because these two energy forms, connected, enable a person to think compassionately (pp. 224-225). The Elder advises against the use of harmful substances (alcohol and drugs) and participation in detrimental activities (adultery) that will do damage to the mind and heart. He emphasizes instead a strong spiritual life that 'feeds' the mind and heart equally and distributes positive energy to the emotional, physical, and mental aspects of a person.

Now this that we are saying concerning the mind which is life [aliveness] and the spoken word which is life-giving, and the both having divine life giving power; [they] can be used in sharing the knowledge of these truths to others and moving [inspiring] them to change their lives because of it.
(p. 226)

For Lightning, the implications of this text are that educators who work with young people should understand the dynamics of the compassionate mind, model its uses, and foster its development (p. 233). With the creation of this text, the Elder brought attention to an epistemological concern regarding the transfer of knowledge to future generations. Noting this, Lightning argues that educational leaders and parents need to take seriously the advice of the Elder, embrace the project of developing the compassionate mind, and support an educational philosophy that focuses on balance, harmony, compassion, and well-being of the heart and mind (p. 253).

Culture-Based Approaches

In simple terms, culture refers to the accepted societal rules and assumptions that guide the ways that people conduct and express themselves in specific contexts. Although culture is often written and spoken about as though it is a static and identifiable thing possessed and practiced by Others, culture is really a dynamic social process of making sense of past influences in light of current circumstances and future priorities. Cultural teachings emphasize values, ethics, and specific roles and responsibilities that provide meaning to people's lives. In this way, culture can be seen as the practical and creative expression of epistemological and ontological understandings. Epistemological and ontological assumptions manifest themselves as a specific cultural lens through which people view, interpret, and participate in the world. Thus, culture is the physical and sensory manifestation—a day-to-day playing out—of thoughts and deliberations originating in the philosophical and metaphysical realms which are themselves tied to enactments in the material realm. Although culture is often defined with reference to clothing, dance, music, spirituality, food, ceremonies, and rituals, and how people are recognized as culturally different, the more subtle epistemological and ontological aspects of culture that influence our worldview are actually more significant. Writers and researchers working with culture-based approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in Indigenous education have struggled to present culture as something more complex than food, festivals, tipis, and legends.

Despite these struggles, culture-based approaches are still seen by many as the key to changing the educational experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Successful participation in formal schooling has required conformity to Eurocentric cultural values and assumptions. Ironically, the commonsense logic and universalistic pervasiveness of Eurocentrism in schools renders such cultural values invisible to all except those who were raised in a different cultural context. Formal school culture, then, does not recognize and cannot comprehend traditional Indigenous cultural practices and values. Underlying this tension is the belief that Indigenous languages and cultures simply do not belong in classrooms.⁸⁴ This reality explains the call for culture-based curriculum among Aboriginal educators. Marie Battiste, an influential *Mi'kmaq* scholar teaching at the University of Saskatchewan, has been especially pointed in her critique of conventional Eurocentric approaches to curriculum. She condemns educational jurisdictions across Canada for failing to develop a transformed curriculum that embraces a more informed and diverse understanding of what it means to be human (Battiste, 1998, p. 19). She calls for a decolonized approach to curriculum that honours and acknowledges Indigenous knowledges and languages:

The reconstruction of knowledge builds from within the spirit of the lands and in Indigenous languages. Indigenous languages offer not just a communication tool for unlocking knowledge; they offer a process of orientation that removes us from rigid noun-centered reality and offers an unfolding paradigmatic process for restoration and healing. (p. 24)

⁸⁴ This tension is made more complex by Indigenous traditionalists who steadfastly believe that it is disrespectful and inappropriate to discuss traditional ways in institutional contexts. Their view is that the culture lives in the community—outside the classroom—and according to traditional cultural protocols and practices.

Echoing the views of other Indigenous scholars, Battiste (2000b) argues that this restoration and revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures, while certainly deeply meaningful to Aboriginal students and communities, offers opportunities for Canadians to better understand the significance of living on this land (p. 201).

Culture-based curriculum, then, involves teaching and learning how to live in the world according to knowledge derived from Indigenous wisdom traditions. The curricular importance of connecting contemporary classrooms in Indigenous communities with the cultural and linguistic practices of the Indigenous students was confirmed in a study done by Begaye (2007). The author surveyed and interviewed Native American practicing teachers (who were committed to teaching in Native communities) on the importance of culture and language to their teaching. All respondents felt that language and culture should be an essential part of a school curriculum to appropriately aid in the “identity development and academic success” of the students, assist in the overall effort to preserve and maintain language and cultural practices, and ensure that students are properly prepared to assume a ‘cultured’ role in their communities (pp. 42-43). Throughout, the respondents noted the critical connections between language and culture, as well as the need to assert culture-based curricular approaches to resist the Eurowestern schooling model and better serve the needs of Indigenous communities and students. Such a demand requires a fairly clear vision of the role culture and language can play in curricular considerations.

There are two general implementation models that apply to culture-based approaches to curriculum: exploration of specific cultural practices and development of culturally appropriate curriculum models. These two approaches are sometimes hard to distinguish because they often overlap. However, both generally involve the integration of specific cultural practices and teachings with standard classroom curricular orientations. The intent here is to show that Indigenous cultural teaching approaches offer opportunities for teachers and students to experience unique curricular and pedagogical engagements in the contemporary classroom. When teachers and students collaboratively explore forms of knowledge and ways of knowing not normally considered in classroom contexts, there is great potential for expanding understandings of human creativity, erudition, and learning.

I gained intimate knowledge of these approaches as a teacher and facilitator of the Elder Mentor Program at Kainai High School. One of the primary goals of the Elder Mentor Program was to recreate the traditional pedagogical relationship between the young and old in the community. The planning group wanted to promote and nurture positive relationships between students and Elders. We assumed that the Elders would become role models, sources of inspiration, and trustworthy guides for the students, and help the students be successful in the future. Of course, the Elder Mentor Program and the assumptions we made about its usefulness required significant rethinking of the usual educational experience offered at Kainai High School. Inviting the elders into the classroom as teachers, not guests, is an experimental departure into the

ambiguity of Blackfoot pedagogical approaches. Normally, community culture and school culture are regarded as separate and distinct. During the era of residential schools, Indigenous children were purposely removed and isolated from their communities as part of the overall plan to assimilate them. Any prolonged exposure to the community, the culture, the language, and the traditions was thought to hinder the successful education of the children. The Elder Mentor Program has been designed to try and bring these two entities, Kainai High School and the Kainai community, together.

In bringing these two distinct cultural contexts together, however, we struggled to identify cultural practices and processes that worked best. Initially, culturally and historically relevant topics were chosen, and the Elders were asked to speak on them during the weekly meetings. This allowed for little interaction between the students and Elders. Next, the participants in the Elder Mentor Program tried activities like berry picking, drum making, cooking, beading, and sewing. The idea was to imitate a typical traditional setting in which Elders told stories to children while they went about their daily chores together. This approach had some success, but it was difficult to organize the projects and all the supplies they required. Later, the Program became field trip based. The Elders came to the school twice a week. The first meeting of the week involved a discussion focused on the place the group would visit on the field trip. Then, the whole group travelled to the site chosen, and the students and Elders had opportunities to interact during the whole trip.

The most successful of these field trips was when the group travelled to the site of Heavy Runner's Camp, southeast of Shelby, Montana. In January 1870, one hundred and sixty-five *Aamsskáápipikani* (South Peigan) were killed when their camp was encircled and fired upon by U.S. Army troops under Major Eugene M. Baker (Ege, 1970). Only a few children survived. After the slaughter, the bodies and tipis were piled up and set on fire. The Elders had some stories to tell about the memories the Blackfoot people have of this horrible act. But, to the students, the ceremony of remembrance was the most powerful part of this whole trip. After this ceremony, one member of our group received a Blackfoot name from an Elder. The group then slowly waded across the river and began walking the very land on which Heavy Runner's Camp sat on that day. It was beautiful sunny day in early fall, there were berries hanging from the trees, and many birds flittering busily about. We visited with that place for most of the afternoon. It became clear to me that the students become conscious of the significance of that place to them and their families. The blood and bones of their ancestors are in the soil. On that day, the people reclaimed that site for themselves by adding another layer of memory to the landscape. The camp was repatriated from the margins of history books to the hearts and minds of the students.

The educational impacts of curricular and pedagogical experiments like the Elder Mentor Program are difficult to measure. However, one significant outcome has been the ways in which the Elders, teachers, and students have interacted in refreshing ways. Such interaction has also been an outcome of a unique curriculum project undertaken by staff and students at Ermineskin Junior

Senior High at Hobbema, Alberta. This project involves a partnership with Glenbow Museum in Calgary. The museum staff identifies cultural artifacts housed at Glenbow that were obtained from the Cree communities in the Hobbema area. Once the artifacts are transferred to the school, the students begin the process of gathering background information on the artifacts from the Elders. The students, as archivists for their community, listen carefully to the Elders, compile and organize the information, connect the stories to the artifacts, and repatriate the artifacts to the cultured memories of the people. Like the Elder Mentor Program, this curriculum project evolved out of general desire to integrate cultural information with mandated classroom objectives and practices. There was no specific initial curriculum plan. The resultant process grew organically out of the collaborative intentions of the Elders, teachers, and students.

There are also some culture-based approaches to curriculum that are focused on the achievement and articulation of a model or framework. Carol Cornelius (1999), an Oneida/Mahican woman, articulates a creative culture-based framework for developing curricula that promotes respect for diverse cultures that is inspired by the intimate relationships that the *Haudenosaunee* peoples have with corn. Her book begins with an examination of commonly held stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and their cultures in the American context. The author argues that these stereotypes have been shaped by colonial logics associated with the presumed settlement and civilization of empty and underutilized lands. Cornelius makes the compelling argument that curricula have been founded on these racist assumptions and powerful notions of nation and nationality that

actually work to exclude the possibility for respectful classroom considerations of human cultural diversity (pp. 27-31). She presents the example of *Haudenosaunee* cultural teachings as a framework that can inspire teachers to develop culturally-respectful curricula. Of particular focus in articulating this framework are the “Thanksgiving Address [which] defines and expresses the world view of the Haudenosaunee” (p. 69) and “corn [a]s integral to the Haudenosaunee way of life” (p. 91).

By focusing on these cultural centres of *Haudenosaunee* world view, Cornelius (1999) hopes to show that utilizing specific cultural elements as curricular thematic foci fosters an interconnected and holistic view of cultural contexts (p. 91). The author goes on to show the cultural significance of corn to other Indigenous peoples in the Americas, as well as its prominent role in colonial exchanges, colonial military strategy, and the development and settlement of the United States—including a fascinating section on its contemporary cultivation as a major mass-produced cash crop with multiple uses. For Cornelius, the example of corn provides a curricular means for promoting the interconnected and co-dependent nature of human cultural experience, and thus valuing and respecting human cultural diversity as a shared human interest. This framework also provides a conceptual means to resist persistent stereotypes by emphasizing that “[a]ll cultures change, none is static, and curriculum materials can present the dynamic nature of change by showing how the culture incorporates or adapts items from the modern world but maintains the continuity and integrity of its world view” (p. 163).

The continuity and integrity of a viable world view is also at the heart of a curricular framework for Aboriginal literacy developed by George (2003). She created this framework in response to reductive definitions of literacy—reading and writing—that tend to place too much emphasis on cognitive outcomes and not enough on other realms of knowing. The author draws on Indigenous wisdom traditions to create a more holistic approach to understanding literacy. Here George makes use of the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and related insights associated with balance of the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional qualities of human existence (p. 31). In working to understand how Medicine Wheel teachings can better inform our understanding of Aboriginal perspectives on literacy and the multiple and complex ways people can express or demonstrate literacy, the author augments her framework with oral teachings from *Anishnawbe* and Iroquois Elders regarding the cultural and spiritual significance of rainbows. For George, the seven colours of a rainbow symbolize qualities of the Medicine Wheel and the various dimensions of Aboriginal understandings of literacy. Red represents confidence and Indigenous languages; orange is balance and orality skills; yellow symbolizes the moon and harvests, as well as literacy creativity expressed through art, music, or sign language; green symbolizes growth and literacy in the languages of European newcomers; blue is truth with reference to skills required to communicate using technology; indigo is the colour of the night sky and represents dream time and the skills needed to interpret the spiritual world of dreams, visions, and other insights; violet is believed to be a healing colour that symbolizes forms of literacy required to facilitate holistic health (pp. 34-38).

George argues that this “Rainbow / Holistic” curriculum framework for Aboriginal literacy offers an explicitly Aboriginal culture-based perspective on the issue of multiple intelligences pp. (33-34). By positing complex literacy forms associated with the colours of the rainbow, she creates a curriculum model that will help educators recognize and value the multiple ways understanding can be expressed, beyond just reading and writing.

Other culture-based curricularists argue that these model or framework approaches are too prescriptive and mechanistic, and ignore the important collaborative role that community members can play in developing culturally relevant educational approaches. Lipka (1989) notes this problem in his work in curriculum development with Yup’ik Eskimo communities in southwest Alaska. The author critiques the school-centric approach to curriculum development in which curriculum developers insert themselves into the role of interpretive experts who are empowered with the vision to translate culture into classroom curriculum. For Lipka, this approach amounts to a recreated dominant-subordinate relationship between school and community (p. 224). The school exploits its relationship with the community to its own school-centric ends. In this model, culture is not treated as a living thing practiced by knowledgeable people. Lipka’s conclusion is that culture-based curriculum projects must establish a curriculum agenda that partners with the community, follows the priorities and initiatives of community leaders, and encourages the community to use the school as a resource (p. 225).

Ball (2004), in her article in which she reflects on her work with First Nations students through First Nations Partnerships Programs co-created by First Nations communities and the University of Victoria, affirms Lipka's emphasis on collaboration with community leaders. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council, comprised of leaders of nine affiliated Cree and Dene communities, requested a partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. They wanted to collaborate in the development of a university-accredited Early Childhood Care and Development program that would be offered to prepare community members to promote the well-being of young children and their families in their communities in culturally-appropriate ways (p. 459). They also wanted the program to be delivered in their communities with a central focus on the involvement of Elders in the creation of a training program grounded in Cree and Dene cultures. In meeting these challenges, Ball reports that the partnership employed a Generative Curriculum Model approach that "focuses on uncovering new, community-relevant knowledge sources, considering knowledge that resides in communities, and creating fresh understandings from reflection and dialogue" (p. 460). Following this model, curriculum is generated when University instructors present accepted Eurowestern textbook theories on early childhood development and the students and Elders then assess and critique the theories according to their relevance and appropriateness from Cree and Dene perspectives. Often following pedagogical and curricular guidance from Elders, Ball asserts that the Generative Curriculum Model allows the program participants to make connections between the "emergent Indigenous curriculum

and the university-based scripted curriculum” (p. 471). Ball reports a high student success rate with the program, as well as a high level of community and Elder satisfaction with the character of the course. The knowledge generated through the sessions appears to localize the experience and deepen its meaning and relevance to the participants. The author credits the community members themselves for these successes and points to the need for openness to the organic and generative potential of similar First Nations community-based curriculum projects.

Archibald (1997), in her compelling study of Sto:lo and Coast Salish First Nations stories and storytellers, also provides an excellent model of community-based and-informed curriculum development. Her inquiry focuses on the First Nations tradition of storytelling as a powerful pedagogical model and the ways in which the transactive process of telling and listening could enhance contemporary educational experiences. In her study, Archibald chronicles the struggles with the various stages of the curriculum development project—the tensions between oral and written text, lesson plans and pedagogical intuition, question sheets and talking circles (p. 92- 142). After many years, a significant revelation for Archibald, as culture-based curriculum researcher, came when she made the positional shift from critical ethnographer (objectively noting and describing cultural practices) to story researcher with Elders (p. 112). This shift marked a return to the power of stories and storytelling as educational tools.

Archibald (1997) began to attend to the stories in culturally appropriate ways by listening to the Elders explain the teaching ideas enacted by a storyteller

and how the story itself can also teach if told in the appropriate manner (pp. 200-208). In the end, unable to articulate a definitive curriculum model, Archibald argues for a fluid model that is negotiated with the community. She contends that a story-based curriculum teaches much about values and cultural contexts, and this is perhaps the most meaningful contribution that First Nations researchers can make to contemporary curriculum debates.

The principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy helped me get at the “core” of making meaning with and through stories. These principles may be a beginning theory of Sto:lo and Coast Salish storywork. I suggest that these principles must be understood and practiced if Sto:lo and perhaps other First Nations stories are to be meaningfully used in an educational context. (p. 212)

The implication here is that culture-based models of teaching and learning cannot be cheap imitations of actual cultural practices. To turn an oral story into a storybook with questions and activities serves the needs of the school and the curriculum-as-planned, but effectively separates the story from the teller, the teller from the listener. The whole package—the story, storyteller, listener, values, contexts, spirit, and intent—must be respected for the desired pedagogical exchange to take place. This challenge of balancing influences and commitments, and the particular ambiguity associated with doing this in formal educational contexts, continues to face culture-based researchers and developers today. The (re)search for answers is ongoing.

Towards a Critical Indigenous Standpoint

In searching for viable curricular and pedagogical approaches, my concern is that Indigenous writers and researchers (and their allies) have focused too much on the needs and concerns of their communities at the exclusion of Canadians. I understand why this has occurred. Indigenous communities are struggling to recover from the isolating and detrimental effects of colonialism. Poverty is high, graduation rates are low, and researchers naturally want to help their people recover. Education is seen as the modern day buffalo in that it can provide the people with strength, health, and a high quality of life while also providing for their families, but only if educational institutions begin to address their deficiencies in meeting the needs of Indigenous students. Indigenous researchers often voice the responsibilities that they have to serve their communities by researching topics that are important to them and facilitating societal and institutional change.

Most research that has been done by Indigenous people in the field of education has taken ontological, epistemological, or culture-based approaches or various combinations of these three influences, because these approaches encompass the priorities of their communities. In Indigenous education circles around the world, curriculum has come to be used as a restorative tool that can help heal formerly colonized peoples with specific notions of culture (McConaghy, 2000, p. 261). I value these projects and the lessons that they have taught me regarding the foundational aspects of cultures and traditions. However, I wonder how well this research invites or encourages consideration by scholars

and researchers who do not identify themselves as Indigenous. I wonder how well an academic genre can sustain itself when it remains isolated and focused on *ex situ* identifications of culture. I wonder about the inherent contradictions that arise when wisdom traditions that value ecological relationality are used to exclude others and actually deny relationality in pursuit of cultural authenticity.

Some Indigenous scholars quickly dismiss the call for broader research goals and implications because they do not want their research agendas to be co-opted by the needs of others. They remain focused on the needs of the people in their communities, and I respect that. However, it is important to note that this oppositional tension is maintained because many Aboriginal people still believe that their ways of knowing the world are, for all intents and purposes, radically different from Eurowestern views (Turner, 2006, p. 7). Ironically, it is this concept of strange difference that undergirds colonial frontier logics and maintains the civilizational divides separating insiders and outsiders. It is only recently that Aboriginal academics in Canada have distanced themselves from this received and circumscribed oppositional stance—fort pedagogy—and embraced more complexly relational curricular and pedagogical considerations.⁸⁵ What is key to this work is the assertion that Aboriginal cultures and knowledge systems need not be held in exceptional isolation from other ways of knowing or doing. Different ways of understanding and acting in the world are not necessarily mutually exclusive and in agonistic competition with each other; rather, holding them in respectful tension can provide us with deeper and more holistic

⁸⁵ See McLeod (1998a, 1999-2000, 2000, 2002), McMaster (1995), Borrows (2000), Ermine (2004), and Calliou (1998) for examples of this.

understandings of what we think we are supposed to be doing with our time in this world. We can acknowledge and respect cultural difference without seeing it as a problem.

To restate some earlier related points, colonial frontier logics, dichotomous thinking, and culturalism have been perpetuated to the present day and taught us to divide the world in damaging ways. I call for a postcultural approach:

Postculturalism [does not] regard cultural difference as completely irrelevant to an understanding of social formations. Rather, it seeks to problematize issues of culture and identity and to position cultural considerations within a wider framework for knowing Indigenous education, beyond the two-race binary. (McConaghy, 2000, p. 9)

Postculturalism attempts to counter the pervasiveness of colonial discourse, which conditions our responses and perpetuates stereotypical notions of cultural identity, with subversive notions of culture that make visible the connections linking people rather than the rifts that divide them. Postcultural curricular and pedagogical approaches reject the notion that authentic forms of culture can be preserved and imported into the classroom for exploration. Postcultural curricularists instead view culture as an active process of renewal that is generated organically when participants engage together in shared deliberations with an overt consciousness of the significance of the past, present, and future influences in shaping their perspectives.

For Indigenous scholars, the call for postcultural curriculum and pedagogy is a challenge to reposition Indigenousness in the field in explicitly decolonial ways. This repositioning is informed by a desire to better understand how colonial frontier logics have constructed and circumscribed Indigenousness as an anachronistic cultural condition outside Eurowestern comprehension. To do so requires resistance to reductive, simplistic, and anthropological renditions of Indigenous culture through the purposeful enactment of Indigenous wisdom traditions in curricular and pedagogical contexts. This move to enactment is key because it allows us to consider the significance of Indigenous ways of knowing in relation to the knowledge systems and philosophies from which they are produced. Enactment not only represents Indigenous knowledge, but also strives to perform it in appropriate and relevant ways. What this means to educational settings is that the content of our teaching and learning should not be separated from the context in which it occurs and the processes we go through to teach and learn. I learned this educational imperative from *Kainai* Elders. As Nakata (2007) argues, taking an explicitly Indigenous standpoint provides opportunities to understand more deeply the ways in which Indigenousness has been positioned in the academic field while also fostering more critical considerations of the possible ways in which Indigenous knowledge systems can enrich teaching and learning *in relation* to other knowledge systems (pp. 214-216). The recent emergence of Indigenous scholars in the field of education who are committed to research informed by a problematization of received conceptions of culture offers hope that the field is indeed moving toward a postcultural stance.

Verna St. Denis, a Cree/Métis scholar working at the University of Saskatchewan, confronts the problem of culturalism in provocative ways. St. Denis (2004) argues that the focus on cultural revitalization in Aboriginal education in the wake of the residential school experience has led to the predominance of a vexing form of cultural fundamentalism in the field. “Adherence to cultural revitalization encourages the valorization of cultural authenticity and cultural purity among Aboriginal people and has helped to produce the notion and the structure of a cultural hierarchy. ‘Authentic’ cultural Aboriginal identity has become high currency” (p. 37). The author argues that cultural fundamentalism has created a particular problem for many Aboriginal teachers and students who come to feel culturally inadequate as ‘Indians’ because they cannot perform their culture or language in authoritatively authentic ways. Building on the significance of this analysis, St. Denis contends that the project of cultural revitalization frames Aboriginal peoples as responsible for *losing* their culture and languages; “they are produced as reckless caretakers of their culture” (p. 43). Importantly, she forwards the view that this emphasis on cultural revitalization in Aboriginal education distracts from and minimizes the historic and ongoing systemic racism and discrimination that has also so deeply affected Aboriginal peoples:

The popular notion that one has lost one’s culture, as opposed to having one’s culture stolen, places the responsibility for making appropriate cultural adjustments on those who for so long were the target of systemic and individual cultural change...Describing Aboriginal youth

as lost is a benign way to describe the effects of the discrimination, exclusion and sustained violence and aggression they face on a daily basis. (p. 43)

The realization that the cultural revitalization movement has positioned Aboriginal peoples as responsible for the effects of their own colonization, strangely disregarding the power relations at play, has prompted St. Denis to focus her scholarly work on anti-racist curricula. She collaborated with Carol Shick in researching anti-racist curriculum as it pertains to Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and together the two authors articulate the need for critical race analysis in teacher education programs as a way “to counter commonplace tropes or mythologies that are part of a Canadian narrative” (Shick and St. Denis, 2005, p. 296). They argue pointedly that not enough attention is given in Canadian curriculum practices to theorizing race and how and why it matters. Such theorization is most critical in teacher education programs for helping future teachers interrogate the institutionalization, naturalization, and invisibility of white privilege, especially in school contexts, and their own participation in the perpetuation of this problem (pp. 297-298).

Shick and St. Denis (2005) contend that anti-racist curricular work is especially urgent in Canada today because Aboriginal peoples continue to suffer daily from the effects of racist attitudes and practices while Canadians continue to receive international admiration for their openness, tolerance, and deep respect for universal human rights. “The perception that Canada is not implicated in racist practices is well rehearsed and embedded in many curricular activities that are

used to illustrate that Canadians can be moved by the plight of others” (p. 305). Shick and St. Denis report on the confrontation of these curricular problems in a compulsory anti-racist course in their teacher education program. In the course, they ask their students to speak and write autobiographically on their own social positionings and analyze these according to anti-racist pedagogical and curricular insights. They encourage their students to reconsider themselves and their social positions in new and more critical ways that resist received narratives of nation and nationality. “Students are encouraged to comment on what their socially positioned gender, sexuality, ability, class, and race afford them or cost them, and how these identifications depend on normative social practices and histories” (p. 311). The authors conclude that critical anti-racist curricula in teacher education can aid significantly in challenging culturalist interpretations of Indigeness that fortify civilizational divides of strange difference and prolong the isolation and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples and their perspectives.

Ojibwe scholar Mary Hermes (2000) also focuses on the problem of culturalist interpretations of Aboriginal curriculum with a particular concern regarding the conceptual place given culture-based curriculum. The author confesses that she once believed that culture-based curriculum held tremendous potential to revitalize Aboriginal communities and facilitate the development of relevant educational experiences for disenfranchised youth. Critical inquiries as a teacher and researcher have led Hermes to temper this belief with some necessary cautions. She notes that common notions of culture-based curriculum appear to be

‘stuck’ on problematic notions of culture—what it is and what it is for—that are promoted by both Aboriginal communities and external authorities:

Much curriculum development has been plagued by superficial notions of ‘culture’ (i.e., culture as material culture) and state or federally driven standards which at best include content about Native peoples and at worst act to reinforce stereotypes of a static culture. (p. 388)

For Hermes, this tension is a result of a dichotomy that differentiates between cultural tribal-based knowledge and Eurowestern academic knowledge. She notes that teachers, parents, and students associated with one Ojibwe tribal school perceive a competition between learning Ojibwe culture and rigorous subject discipline-based academic study in preparation for college or university (p. 390). That these two endeavours would be viewed as mutually exclusive is evidence of colonial thinking that creates a serious curricular dilemma:

The idea that these courses of study embody agendas (one White and one Native American), which are in direct competition with each other rests on the assumption that ‘cultures’ have fixed boundaries and are competing for the membership of the youth...An underlying implication is that the ‘academic’ curriculum is not from a particular culture, but rather it is universal...The implication for Ojibwe culture classes is that they offer nothing in terms of intellectual development, knowledge or rigor. (p. 391)

The author argues that Aboriginal culture-based curriculum approaches can be powerful if practitioners reject narrow and fixed notions of pre-packaged culture

and instead embrace broader cultural projects informed by Indigenous wisdom traditions.

For Hermes, culture-based curriculum can be broadened if classroom experiences are predicated on group inquiry processes that are guided by moral and ethical principles of relationality that are widely evident in the community. For her, the emphasis should be on cultural understandings of group processes in motion rather than on culture as content:

Setting up a structure where students can learn the skill of a discipline, and yet draw on their own experiences and background to fill in the specific content, invites students to bring their home culture into the classroom...it is in the relationships between teacher/students/curriculum/identity within the class that encourages and invites students to continually re-create who they are in that class, not the specific content. (p. 395)

Interestingly, in theorizing culture as an organic and relational process of active renewal, Hermes reconceptualizes culture-based curriculum in decolonial ways and suggests a curricular and pedagogical place for the consideration of Indigenous wisdom traditions alongside, and in tension with, Eurowestern intellectual traditions. For Hermes, a culture-based curriculum would provide the foundational means for addressing the intersection of these knowledge traditions and interpreting the significance of this for Aboriginal communities.

The curricular approaches of Shick, St. Denis, and Hermes point the way towards a critical Indigenous standpoint that theorizes the intersection of Indigenous and Eurowestern perspectives. However, if critical Indigenous

scholarship in a postcultural era has anything specific to offer, it must be a vision for an Indigenous standpoint as a specific means of address. I often worry that Indigenous scholars get bogged down in critique and fail to provide academic leadership regarding viable curricular and pedagogical alternatives. Anti-racist curricula, for example, is based on an explicit assumption that it can solve the problem of racism and thus cure people of the affliction just by talking subjectively about the harm it does to others. In this regard, anti-racist curricula can be helpful in identifying and interrogating, genealogically, normalized racist beliefs and practices of a society, but often stalls on the question of how to proceed once racism has been acknowledged.⁸⁶

Like Hermes, I believe that the future of critical Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy lies in the assertion of localized Indigenous knowledge systems as viable expressions of culture that require a respectful place with/in public spheres. Place-based notions of Aboriginal citizenship, when seen in intersection with more official versions of Canadian citizenship, can complexify curricular and pedagogical considerations, move past the problem of culturalism, and trouble the common perception of separate realities. Critical Indigenous standpoints informed by place-based notions of citizenship, such as Indigenous Métissage, articulate both an *indigenous* agenda—focused on attentiveness to the historicity of the local context (and relationships festering and growing there) while remaining mindful of contemporary macrolevel tensions—and *Indigenous* interpretative priorities, shaped by wisdom traditions, that provide an ethical vision on how to proceed.

⁸⁶ I am not denying the existence of racism. Rather, I am critiquing anti-racist curricula as a solution to the problem of racism. This critique is informed by personal experience, as well as Ellsworth (1989) and Thompson (2003).

Place-based curriculum and pedagogy implicate all that live in particular places and necessarily reject colonial frontier logics that insist on impermeable cultural divides inhabited by insiders and outsiders.

These theories are motivated by a desire to renew the partnerships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians as a strategy for decolonization. Canadians need a new story of the history of their nation that acknowledges ongoing Aboriginal presence and respects the cultural significance of particular people and places in Canada. Indigenous scholars are best positioned to lead this movement and help set the terms on which this will occur. However, it is important to note that the promotion of critical Indigenous curricula and pedagogy does not require a denial or abandonment of ontological, epistemological, and culture-based practices. Rather, this approach places these at the forefront as the terms of engagement with others. It takes responsibility for the ethical space between Aboriginal and Canadian and the terms according to which interactions will occur (Ermine, 2004). It is used to build alliances and affiliations instead of walls. For me, as researcher, the context of my research matters very much. However, I would regard my work as a failure if only Aboriginal people read it. Thus, I have a responsibility to write and research in ways that engage and inform people from diverse backgrounds, and invite their responses. This approach will facilitate vital decolonial movements in the field and contest colonial frontier logics by resisting the falsely universal standards used to evaluate the relative worth of Indigenous cultures and traditions.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the quality and character of Aboriginal curricular and pedagogical approaches crafted in response to experiences associated with legislated discrimination and institutionalized schooling in the Canadian context. Its particular importance to this study is in demonstrating that many of these replies have been framed as the exclusive cultural concern of Indigenous scholars and their communities, and therefore outside the general purview and concern of the field of education. While vital contributions have been made to the field by Indigenous scholars dedicated to ontological, epistemological, and culture-based approaches, there has been scant research dedicated to theorizing the curricular and pedagogical significance of the intersections of Indigenous and Eurowestern ways. I have emphasized throughout that what is most critical in the field today is the assertion of an Indigenous interpretive standpoint, informed by wisdom traditions, to better understand these intersections and reread and reframe them in public and relational ways. In the next chapter, I focus this work on the spirit and intent of ethical relationality as a curricular and pedagogical commitment.

Chapter Six:
Enacting Indigenouness in Educational Contexts: Ethical Relationality as a Curricular and Pedagogical Commitment

Indigenous peoples in North America tell innumerable and interconnected stories of a Trickster-Teacher-Brother being who is involved in the creation and discovery of the world and all those that inhabit it. Tricksters are simultaneously spirit and human and possess unique transformative powers that give them the ability to appear in diverse forms such as Coyote, Spider, Raven, Whiskey Jack, Crow, and Old Man. They also often appear in differing human-like forms—male, female, and sometimes a balance of both— depending on where they are and what they are doing. The telling of Trickster stories was an important part of the teaching ‘curriculum’ in traditional times and these stories were told to the young with specific pedagogical intent. These traditions continue in many communities today.

Over the years, I have heard Cree stories about the Trickster *Wisahkecâhk* and Blackfoot stories about the Old Man *Naapi*. While the stories and cultures are different in important ways, I have noticed some notable similarities. Most prominent is that *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* appear to be the same being who takes on different significance to the Cree and Blackfoot as (s)he travels through the traditional territories of each group. Thus, these stories have a certain continuity specific to the particular place in the world being described. Since both figures participate, in haphazard and accidental ways, in the creation of the world, the stories of their particular actions and reactions can be traced in the landscape and lifefoms specific to each group and territory. The stories tell of creation and the

ways and means by which *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* discover the uses, purposes, and characters of the different lifeforms—people, plants, animals, trees, rocks and so on—that they encounter as they travel around. These stories teach the young about the nature of the world as their ancestors knew it, but also provide pedagogical guidance and insight on how to behave with good manners in the world.

The stories of *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* enable this instruction by providing us with vivid examples of how not to behave, and we are expected to learn from their mistakes. In the stories, both *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* often forget their relations and act in disrespectful, selfish, deceitful, and thoughtless ways. Both beings typically want to find shortcuts, take the easy road, avoid work, and trick others into doing things for their own benefit. They are both often hungry, thirsty, tired, in need of shelter, in want of a sexual companion, jealous of what others have, and unwilling to put in the time and effort to meet these needs and wants for and by themselves. They are revealed as spirit beings subject to very human emotions and desires. As students of the stories, we are trained to see ourselves and our own foolishness in their mistakes. We all have *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* within us. One powerful insight that I have learned from these stories is that both *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* constantly endeavour to secure the surety and comfort of a good life at the expense of others. In attempting to do so, they both selfishly covet—make love to -- something that is impossible to possess. In their endless

attempts to attain the unattainable, do the impossible, craft surety out of ambiguity *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* make love to death. And they repeatedly fail.⁸⁷

This idea of making love to death can be interpreted in many different ways, most notably with reference to the ongoing human love affair with technology and development juxtaposed with the environmental damage done in the name of such progress. As we continue to ‘make love’ to our cars we slowly kill ourselves. However, in the context of this inquiry, I wish to interpret it in curricular and pedagogical terms specific to the persistence of colonial frontier logics and the pedagogy of the fort. The denial of human relationality through the violent imposition of civilizational divides is an act of making love to death. It is unsustainable as an organizing principle because attempts to seal frontiers with impermeable walls will eventually lead to atrophy and death. Any living and life-giving system has an ecological imperative of connectivity and relationality that must be acknowledged and balanced with the daily dynamic flux of human interests and desires. Even though walls and boundaries are necessary to indicate and assert cultural difference, these walls can never be fully closed to others. Like the skin that protects any living thing, they must be simultaneously open and closed. Attempts to isolate, exclude, or build impermeable walls separating peoples, cultures, and knowledge systems, and deny connectivity, will ultimately end in failure. When we attempt to do so, whoever and wherever we are, we emulate the bad manners of *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi* seen in their single-minded

⁸⁷ This interpretation is inspired by a website reference to Dr. Jace Weaver, a Professor at the University of Georgia. I am unable to properly reference it because the website is no longer available. In an email contact with Dr. Weaver, he indicated that he had no knowledge of said website. Therefore, responsibility for this interpretation is entirely mine. For more on the significance of Trickster see Weaver (2001).

focus on their own simple and selfish desires. Among other things, this failure teaches us that curricular and pedagogical approaches that selfishly promote one people, culture, or knowledge system as eminently superior, finally and completely, will also fail.

Yet, we know that for many years now curriculum and pedagogy have been regarded as mechanistic tools that aid in the educational attainment of such single-minded and exclusionary notions of truth. The belief has been that the right information from the proper knowledge system, sequenced in the correct order, presented in the correct way, would produce the desired effect in the student. The significance of the educative process comes pre-determined. Such a truncated curricular and pedagogical approach, applied throughout the grades with the proper instruction, would eventually produce the right kind of citizen. This approach longs for surety, a conclusion, and the language it uses suggests a troubling kind of foreclosure reminiscent of the pedagogy of the fort. As David Jardine (1992) has written:

It longs for the last word; it longs for a world in which the Word no longer lives, a world in which the droning silence of objective presentability finally holds sway over human life. The difficult nature of human life will be solved. We will finally have the curriculum “right” once and for all. We will have turned children inside-out and searched out every nook and cranny. Nothing more will need to be said. (p. 118)

Like *Wisahkecâhk* and *Naapi*, adherents to these curricular and pedagogical approaches make love to death.

As I have tried to show throughout this work, colonial frontier logics that stem from the pedagogy of the fort have had a dramatic influence in educational contexts. This influence can be seen in curricular and pedagogical approaches that teach that the cultural and knowledge system differences separating Aboriginal and Canadian are stark, vast, and must be overcome. The stories told to children in schools about Indigenous peoples have been based on a Eurowestern theory of primitivism that unilaterally places Indigenousness outside comprehension and acknowledgment. Even though times have changed and public policy priorities have shifted, and Indigenous ways are gaining some prominence in Canada, these exclusionary colonial practices are still replicated and perpetuated. Evidence of this problem was considered in the previous two chapters.

So, in light of the divisiveness taught through colonial frontier logics, which curricular and pedagogical commitments offer the most hopeful possibilities for decolonization and renewed partnerships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian? My response to this challenge grows from my interactions with *Kainai* Elders who have repeatedly reminded me that teaching is a responsibility and an act of kindness viewed as movement toward connectivity and relationality. Through the reciprocal process of teaching and learning, we move closer together. This movement towards holistic interreferentiality and recognition of difference has resonances with ecological understandings of the earth that are antithetical to the teleologies currently shaping the habits and priorities of *Homo Oeconomicus*. Universalized market logics that seemingly justify intensified resource exploitation and voracious consumerism are indeed deeply connected to the

violence—epistemic, institutional, and otherwise—that has been committed in accordance with fort pedagogy. It is the denial of connectivity that allows such violence and exploitation to continue. I am convinced that we require a new or renewed ethical framework that clarifies the terms by which we can speak to each other about these pressing issues of shared concern. The curricular and pedagogical enactment of ethical relationality has become a matter of survival.

In the section that follows, I clarify the particular philosophical and theoretical commitments that comprise ethical relationality. Following that, I conclude with two sections that describe specific and situated curricular and pedagogical instances in which ethical relationality is enacted.

Ethical Relationality

Ethical relationality is centred on an ecological understanding of the world. The term ecology (>from German *Ökologie*, from Gk. *oikos* house, dwelling place, habitation + *-logia*, study of.) refers to a branch of biology concerned with the study of the relations of organisms to one another and their physical surroundings (Barber, 2001). In current lexicon, the prefix *eco* generally refers to actions or activisms taken in the interest of environmental protection and stewardship. However, as Davis (2004) points out, the term environment (>from O.Fr. *en*, to place inside + *viron*, circle) describes the separation and enclosure of particular natural settings from each other and the organisms that inhabit them, not the relationships and interconnections they have (p. 103). This tendency to conflate ecology with environmentalism likely stems with the extensive anthropocentric training we have received in schools to separate and differentiate

ourselves as humans from the natural systems that we depend upon for our survival and prosperity. As we have seen, the pedagogy of the fort is a particularly virulent human form of this separation and differentiation that presents cultural divides as natural and necessary. Ecology is a term that has been reclaimed and reframed by complexity theorists in the field of education who are interested in alternatives to linear, reductive and fragmentary ways of thinking that descend from scientific, modernist, and colonial logics. Here is how Davis describes the significance of ecological thinking to this work:

The word *ecology* is derived from the Greek *oikos*, “household”, and usage of the term has evolved to encompass the webs of relationships in which we find ourselves and out of which our identities are established. Ecology is about interrelationships and interconnections. It involves an attunement to co-dependencies, mutual affect, and co-determinations. In brief, ecology is concerned with the fundamental intertwining of all things.

(p. 103)

The general affinity that this ecological orientation has with notions of relationality and connectivity prominent in Indigenous wisdom traditions is obvious.

Indigenous peoples have long recognized these interdependencies in the world and their knowledge systems focus on the balanced and participatory role of people within the dynamic flux of natural systems. However, it is not necessary to claim that Indigenous peoples today hold exclusive copyright on this view of the world. It is possible that other peoples with different wisdom traditions can

also value ecological conceptions of the world in their own ways. A relational and interconnected view of world is perhaps a generalized human propensity that was expressed in diverse ways prior to the application of the homogenizing processes of modernity and colonialism. That said, it is heartening that the foundational philosophies of Indigenous knowledge systems are finally receiving some recognition as viable and insightful in their own right *and* in complementary intersection with other ways of knowledge.

Although I know very little about complexity theory, I find it simultaneously fascinating and promising that the proponents of two seemingly disparate and unrelated ways of knowing—scientific and Indigenous—would appear to be acknowledging each other and moving closer together. This does not mean that these knowledge systems are the same or are gradually becoming the same. Any move towards sameness is in violation of the ecological principle of biodiversity and usually leads to ecosystem sterility and death. While it is true that humans and human systems are not limited by the same principles as plants, animals, and elements in natural ecosystems, we cannot deny that we are similarly co-dependent on those things that are life-giving and life-sustaining. Thus, human cultural diversity is an ecological principle that is similarly life-giving and life-sustaining when it is understood as evidence of interconnectedness and relationality.

Importantly, however, relationality is not the equivalent of universality or relativism. Relationality, as an ethical stance, requires us to attend to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation to others. It

means that there is something at stake in saying so beyond postmodernism, new age spiritualism, or 'playing nice.' So, for example, when the *Kainai* people explain their place in the world, they talk about how the Creator has gifted them with their land, language, culture, ceremonies, resources, stories, and knowledge systems and how their individual and collective responsibility is to honour these gifts by using them in their daily lives. The *Kainai* believe that all people have been similarly gifted by the Creator and that those gifts are specific to particular places in the world. A temporary and dynamic balance is achieved when these place-based gifts are honoured and used by the people who were gifted them. This does not mean that peoples and cultures should be closed to each other and that sharing between them should be discouraged. On the contrary, the *Kainai* people are generally quite open and generous to visitors and often welcome them to their community and spiritual events. There is also recognition that there is value in visiting other places and learning from the people that live there. However, there is a clear understanding that the *Kainai* people have a deep relationship to their particular place in the world and they avoid making claims to authority or sovereignty beyond that. They would never consider going to another land and telling the people there how to do things. Those that do so act with bad manners and forget their relations.

This philosophy teaches me that relationality is not just a simple recognition of shared humanity that looks to celebrate our sameness rather than difference. Rather, it is an ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences position us

in relation to each other, and how our futures as people in the world are tied together. It is also an ethical imperative to see that, despite our varied place-based cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together with others and must constantly think and act with reference to these relationships. Any knowledge we gain about the world interweaves us more deeply with these relationships and gives us life.

Balance and reciprocity are key principles here. Balance, in this context, is understood as an action or movement that is taken with respect to the relationships that give life. A temporary balance can be achieved when that which gives life is given life in return. One way to achieve balance in this way is to make respectful use of all the gifts that we have been given by the Creator and then give back—return the gifts—in some way. This specific form of relationality is based on the ethical imperative to acknowledge that all that we have been given and all that we are involves taking from all our ecological relations—the air, the water, the sky, the sun, the earth, the animals, the language, the culture, the people, the past. Since we are enmeshed in these ethical relationships, we are complicit in the taking and must also participate in the giving. By acting in reciprocal ways, we simultaneously take life and give life. Thus, balance and reciprocity in the world are constantly renewed or neglected based on the actions we take with respect to our relations. Things get out of balance when we forget our relations and act with disregard for them. This is why the Blackfoot term for reciprocity or making amends—*aatsimihka'ssin*—refers to the ethical imperative to act in a sacred way (Akayokaki, 2008). An ethical and sacred balance is temporarily achieved when

we give and take with respectful acknowledgement of the relationships that we depend upon for our survival.

The philosophical ideals of ethical relationality can be difficult to discuss in the context of teaching and learning today without seeming rather frivolous and impractical. In working through these difficulties, I focus on enacting them in specific curricular and pedagogical contexts as a way to show their relevance and importance. This commitment has been particularly provocative because the large majority of students that I teach and learn with in the Faculty of Education know very little about Indigenous peoples, their histories, their cultures, and their philosophies. They have been taught for pedagogy from a very young age and most of these students do not believe that Indigenous issues have anything to do with them and their lives. Before I begin teaching and learning relationships with such students, I spend much time contemplating the ways in which the presence of an Indigenous instructor in their university classroom will be unsettling to them. I am mindful of the ways in which Indigenous knowledge systems have been and are currently positioned within the institution and how my position vis-à-vis the students has the potential to be severely circumscribed by colonial frontier logics.

So, for example, I could enter these relationships with bad manners and speak with an accusatory intent based on the assumption that the students are all racists who need to be told the truth about Aboriginal peoples in Canada. I could talk to the students in exclusionary terms of 'we' and 'you' that cast Aboriginal peoples as innocent victims of colonial rapacity perpetrated by white people just

like them. However, having seen the effects of such talks, I find them unethical because they commit the same ecological violations as colonial frontier logics. They deny relationality. The students usually respond to such exclusionary talk with guilt or defensiveness, and neither of these responses fosters any significant movement towards renewed partnerships between Aboriginal and Canadian.

So, mindful of these dynamics, I try to teach and learn with students with the specific intent of demonstrating ethical relationality to them. I consider them all relatives who, like me, have families, histories, and stories that are an important part of who they think they are. When possible, I engage the students in an initial reciprocal talking circle process in which we each tell and hear personal stories that explain who and where we are each from. This process is important because it establishes a respectful classroom context that emphasizes that ‘we’ are working and thinking together on issues of shared concern. When Indigenous issues are examined or discussed, I deliberately frame them as issues of common concern that cannot be limited or reduced to Aboriginal communities or the problem of how to teach an Aboriginal student. Guided by the textual and interpretive sensibilities of Indigenous Métissage, I facilitate activities and discussions that encourage the students to see themselves, their families, and their stories in ecological relation to Aboriginal peoples and thus implicated in the discussions. In my attempts to honour and enact ethical relationality, I insist that the legacies and consequences of colonialism in Canada, like the traumas associated with residential schools, are not simply Aboriginal problems. Rather, they implicate us because we all live here together in this place. I ask the students

to think in these ecological ways about teaching and learning with the specific curricular and pedagogical intent of fostering the production of new knowledge and understandings on their part. This emphasis on ‘newness’ should not be understood as a demand for innovation; rather, what is new is produced through relationships and dialogues that find expression as a classroom ethic.

Teaching and learning that focuses on the production of new knowledge and understanding, rather than strictly imparting authoritative knowledge, is life-giving and life-sustaining and enacts a reciprocal spirit that ‘gives back’ through the very act of ethical consideration. This spirit seems to take on a storied character to it that, individually and collectively, weaves its ways into the classroom relationships. We see ourselves in the stories we tell because the stories describe the state of our relationships with each other. These stories describe ethical relationality. I frequently tell stories and draw attention to them when I teach because I want the students to attend to the storied nature of experience and the ways in which stories bring us together. If, as I contend, curriculum is comprised of stories that teachers tell students about their places in the world and pedagogy is the quality and character of the relationships fostered and supported through the process of telling these stories, then the storied nature of educational experience needs to have a more prominent and explicit role in teacher education. Stories that traverse received colonial divides are a key part of any move towards decolonization in education.

These perspectives are founded on the belief that stories have a transformative effect when the interchange between teller and listener evokes a

sense of community and continuity. Story creates this possibility by providing listeners a culturally-specific cognitive map that they can use to interpret many layers of individual and collective lived experience and memory. Linear progressions of time are suspended in this interchange. In this concept of story and what it does in the world, past, present and future amalgamate and overlap. Distinguishing between them is not considered important. What is emphasized for those living in the present is that the past and future are nearby, close to us, and, ideally, we will remain mindful of the significance of the past and future when we make decisions and tell our stories. In these ways, stories construct an ethical and epistemological framework—an expression of citizenship—that describes who the people think they are in relation to their ancestors, to each other, and to the land they call home. They also enact a theory of ethical relationality that can guide curricular and pedagogical approaches.

The Residential School Experience as Curricular and Pedagogical Imperative

One of my roles in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta is to support the articulation and development of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives in subject area teaching methods courses that students take in preparation for their teaching practicums. The main challenge that I face in this new position is to balance the need to assert Indigenoussness *on its own terms* with the need to demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous issues and knowledge systems intersect with Eurowestern approaches. This is a particularly ambiguous and complex task because the recent curricular initiatives requiring the explicit

inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives are new to most people and demand some new thinking on the part of both teachers and students.

One particular point of contention amidst this demand for newness is the issue of practicality. Calls for practicality in teacher education are most often geared toward solving the perceived problem of ambiguity. Since we have been trained to view ambiguousness as basically an informational problem, a practical approach, in the context of teacher education, usually means getting the information 'right' and organizing it in the most efficient and logical ways. With regards to Aboriginal curriculum perspectives, then, a commonly expressed assumption is that detailed information about Indians will produce more informed and better prepared teachers who, provided the right information, will then be able to accurately 'cover' Aboriginal perspectives. Practicality on the part of the instructor is assessed based on his ability and willingness to impart this information to the students *and* demonstrate its applicability to regular classroom contexts in lesson or unit plan format. Ambiguity is thus reduced in this scenario because the instructor has told the student teachers what they need to know (curriculum) and shown them how to teach it to their own students (pedagogy). The problem is solved.

As a former classroom teacher, I can well understand this emphasis on practical approaches in teacher education. Preparing to be a teacher is a highly anxious experience rife with feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and inadequacy. We worry that we won't be able to teach with the necessary authority and control. Information and plans provide this authority and control, and thus reduce the

possibility of chaos, because they enable the teacher to tell the students what and how to think. In this scenario, practical approaches are perceived as much more useful and worthwhile than philosophies or theories because they are more directly connected to the daily working context of the classroom. However, despite my awareness of the difficult task of learning to teach, I find it problematic that informational practicality is assumed to solve ambiguity.

There are two general reasons for this. First, I think that ambiguity is a basic human condition that results from our encounters with complex issues that cannot be solved, once and for all, with more information. Any meaningful deliberation on complex issues will naturally contend with confusion, uncertainty, tension, and turbulence. When education is used to advance knowledge as a form of power and exclusion, then these forms of ambiguity are suppressed and evaded. What is most critical in classroom contexts today is shared student and teacher engagement with messy, contentious, and ambiguous issues with the curricular and pedagogical intent of producing new knowledge and understanding. Second, my work with the Diversity Institute⁸⁸ in the Faculty of Education since September 2004 has made it clear to me that informational sessions for the sake of information are rarely worthwhile pedagogically. More information actually shuts down dialogue because receivers naturally conclude that nothing else needs to be added and revert to a passive stance. In the past few years, Diversity Institute workshop sessions have moved away from straight informational sessions and

⁸⁸ The Diversity Institute is a research initiative that provides a series of workshop sessions on social and cultural diversity for students preparing for their final round of teaching. Workshops session have focused on the significance of a variety of diversity issues relevant to education including Aboriginal perspectives, language, race, and culture, faith and spirituality, and sexuality and gender.

adopted a more explicitly pedagogical approach that focuses on the complex identity tensions generated when one is learning to teach and the ways in which student teacher identities are troubled and implicated in encounters with cultural and social difference. Perhaps one of the more important lessons taken from these sessions by student participants is that human diversity is a complex issue that cannot be resolved via instrumentalist approaches.

These curricular and pedagogical commitments were enacted during sessions in January 2008 with students in their Advanced Professional Terms (APT) who were preparing to teach secondary students social studies. To avoid general information sessions about Indians, the three course instructors and I worked together to conceptualize a sustained inquiry process focused on residential schools in Canada as an historic and current concern. Specifically, we were interested in asking the student teachers to consider how stories told by residential school survivors as part of the planned Truth and Reconciliation Commission could and would be understood and discussed by teachers and students across Canada. Together, we crafted two throughline questions⁸⁹ that would provide specific points of focus for the inquiry process:

- How does your historical understanding depend on the marginalization of others?
- On what terms can we speak of historical injustices? To which purposes?

I began the inquiry process with a three hour introductory session that focused on the various ways in which Indigenous identity has been imagined and deformed by colonial processes that continue to the present day. One of my main points was that the residential schools were predicated on a specific theory of

⁸⁹ The concept of the throughline question is borrowed from den Heyer (2005).

Indigenous identity. The inquiry process was furthered along a few weeks later by a provocative documentary film called *Muffins for Granny* (McLaren, 2007) that weaves the stories of six residential school survivors in agonizingly intimate detail. My comments prior to showing the film were focused on reminding the students of the throughline questions and providing some contextual background information on the film and filmmaker. Then, I drew a circle on the board, divided it into four sections labelled as spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical, made some brief comments about the teachings of the medicine wheel, and asked the students to attend to these as they viewed the film. When the film ended, it was clear that many of the students had been visibly 'moved' in some way by the film and these emotions influenced the discussion that followed. Here is a listing of questions that I had in mind as I facilitated discussion following the film:

- What sort of claim does this film make on you?
- What kind of a story does this film tell?
- What questions does this film answer?
- What further questions does it raise?
- How does the filmmaker create a teaching process out of the film?
- How do people typically resist hearing stories like these?
- How should we listen to stories of historical trauma?

A few weeks after viewing the film, the students participated in a culminating three hour symposium during which they shared their thinking with regard to these four questions:

- Where does your historical understanding come from?
- To what extent does your historical understanding depend on the marginalization of others?
- What principles (should) guide your understanding of what is important to teach and understand in social studies?
- On what terms can we speak to each other of residential schools? To which purposes?

These questions are obviously affiliated with the throughline questions, but are more pointed towards drawing relationships between educational philosophies and theories and the curricular and pedagogical demands of being in the classroom everyday and having something meaningful to say. Overall, I would say that this inquiry process was highly successful because the students were given time and opportunity to think together and generate new knowledge and understanding. Most exited the session feeling a responsibility as educators to address Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching because they saw themselves implicated in the issues raised.

There were certain curricular and pedagogical commitments that were foremost in my mind as I worked through this inquiry process with the students. Most prominent was the need to let the stories told by the residential school survivors make a claim on them and trouble who they think they are in relation to others. Such stories are like gifts from the tellers that inhabit us and become part of our own story. They transcend information. Once we have listened, we have an ethical responsibility to the teller to act with the story in mind. These stories provide us with a kind of ethical code that guides our interactions with others. This is the storied enactment of reciprocity. In order to honour the storytellers for the gift of their story, I wanted the students to sit with the stories as people rather than as educators. Evoking the Blackfoot pedagogical concept *aokakio'ssit*, I wanted them to *pay attention* to what they had heard, thought, and felt. Also evoking the teachings of the medicine wheel, I facilitated discussion after watching the film with the specific intent of helping them avoid the over-

intellectualization of what they had heard and seen. Instead, I wanted them to also attend to the other claims—emotional, spiritual, and physical— that the stories made on them. My assumption was that this sort of insight would offer more movement for them as teachers than any kind of lesson plan or teacher strategy focused discussion.

It is on this point that the enactment of ethical relationality as a curricular and pedagogical commitment can be seen. The curricular imperative of the residential school experience could be approached as an informational problem with an instrumentalized ‘let’s-learn-about-it-so-it-never-happens-again’ purpose. I could have also framed the medicine wheel as a teaching method. However, as I have shown throughout this work, ignorance of the residential school experience (and Indigenous experience in general) is not a curriculum content problem that can be solved with straight informational seminars about Indians. Nor is it solely a teaching methods problem that can be overcome with Aboriginal culturalist approaches. Such approaches are designed after the pedagogy of the fort and reinforce the idea of separate realities. The ignorance taught through colonial frontier logics can only be overcome when those confronted with new information about others are positioned in a curricular and pedagogical context that encourages them to see themselves implicated and complicit in that ignorance. The inquiry proceeds from that provocation.

Following the teachings of *Kainai* Elders, I believe that this educative intent must be guided by an ethic of non-interference that requires us to resist the desire to prescribe meaning and tell people what to think and do. This teaching

ethic is rooted in the conviction that insightful learning can only occur when we are moved—intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually—to see ourselves in the lives of others and participate in the dynamic flux that is the world. There is no need to objectify the medicine wheel as ‘thing’ because we learn about it through the process of enacting its teachings. And we keep going from there. This conception of the reciprocal process of teaching and learning as an identity-and place-based provocation provides a more meaningful basis for insightful engagement than any sort of instrumentalist conversation. Despite calls from the students for more practical suggestions and examples, I consider it more pedagogically important that they carry the stories and the inquiry process experience with them as they begin to teach. My hope is that the *practical* enactment of ethical relationality that they experienced through the inquiry process will eventually find expression in their own curricular and pedagogical commitments.

Ac ko mok ki’s Map and the Vitality of Place

For various reasons, place and positionality have become key aspects of my research agenda and Indigenous Métissage. The most significant reason for this is a fascination with the connectivity between place and identity, and how Indigenous people choose to map their territory as a way to express who they think they are. Indigenous place-stories and mapping conventions are expressions of sovereignty that are deeply influenced by wisdom traditions and provide specific examples of how to recognize the land as relative and citizen. I am interested in bringing these insights to bear in educational contexts because they

present a cartographic sensibility that has the same practical purpose as conventional Eurowestern approaches, but is markedly different in the way it is expressed and remembered. I think there is much to be learned about citizenship and the land from holding these two mapping approaches in tension.

This interest has resonance with the pedagogy of the fort because mapping was perhaps the first and most significant act of colonialism in North America. Mapping is a sovereign act that declares a certain relationship to the land. To engage in the act of mapping is to simultaneously declare sovereignty over the territory be mapped, to say this is *our* land, this is where we live, we know these places, and we have stories about them. When the land now called Canada was mapped according to European cartographic conventions, it was assumed that the mapmakers had the authority to draw borders and name places for themselves. Such maps became expressions of truth that necessarily excluded Indigenous claims to sovereignty. It is not a coincidence that mapping is also one of the first skills that children learn in school. Labeling and colouring a blank map of Canada (think *terra nullius*) is an intimate schooling experience that inaugurates the young into the colonial project. This version of mapping teaches that the science of making a map is natural and universal and done according to conventions and assumptions established in Europe. The jurisdictional borders that students draw on their blank maps of Canada are regarded as final rather than arbitrary. I view maps as cultural artifacts that are deeply connected to specific philosophical assumptions and prejudices. Considering how Indigenous people continue to map their traditional territories with place-stories today, in relation to other forms of

mapping, has the potential to offer new insight into notions of ethical and interreferential citizenship.

The map that inspired this interest was drawn by a *Siksika* Blackfoot man named *Ac ko mok ki* at the request of a Hudson's Bay Company surveyor and explorer named Peter Fidler. The story of its creation, translation, and re-creation, and the ways in which that process brought Indigenous and Eurowestern knowledge systems together in organic tension, has served as a guiding metaphor for the curricular and pedagogical shifts that I imagine in this work (Warhus, 1997, pp 1-3, 153-157; Binnema, 2001). Peter Fidler was stationed at the Hudson's Bay Company trading outpost called Chesterfield House during 1800 and 1801. Chesterfield House was established at the confluence of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers, very close to the present-day border separating the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. At the time that Fidler was there, Chesterfield House was the southwestern-most entrepôt of the Hudson's Bay Company, and thus positioned at the very edge of European knowledge of the vast landscape of western North America. The topographic and demographic characteristics of the lands to the south and west of Chesterfield House was largely unknown to Europeans at this time and there was much interest in learning more about the resources and peoples that lived there.

Like all European explorers of the day, back in 1800 Peter Fidler needed help from local people in finding his way around. At Chesterfield House, Fidler encountered Blackfoot, Cree, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Kootenay, Snake, and Nez Perce Indians that came to the fort to trade. Throughout the winter of 1800

and 1801, Fidler collected information from these informants. He would have noted that Indigenous knowledge of this territory was deep and detailed. For millennia, people had travelled the Prairies, hunting the buffalo and meeting with neighbouring peoples to exchange goods, share stories, participate in ceremonies, and discuss their knowledge of the land. Over many generations, this accumulated knowledge would thoroughly permeate the lifestyles and knowledge systems of the diverse peoples who lived in this area. Their knowledges and networks, remembered through stories, provided them with culturally-specific ways to map the land and convey their deep connections to it. With the help of translators, Fidler would have heard this knowledge as it was shared by numerous Indigenous visitors to Chesterfield House.

In February 1801, Ac ko mok ki visited the post and met with Fidler. Ac ko mok ki apparently told Fidler that he and his band of followers had just returned from a long trip to the south and west, and the explorer immediately requested that he draw him a map showing where they had been and the route that they travelled. Ac ko mok ki proceeded to draw a map that followed Blackfoot cartographic conventions and sensibilities. In constructing his map, Ac ko mok ki would have likely related all the information verbally as he drew, for that was how the information was organized and stored in the oral record and cultured memories of the Blackfoot. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Ac ko mok ki's map is that it is oriented with west as the top rather than north. The reason for this is that the most significant orientational reference points for the Blackfoot people are specific peaks in the Rocky Mountains that can be seen from the

Prairies. Ac ko mok ki represented this mountain range with two long parallel lines down the length of his map from north to south. He drew in and named the features of the range most notable to the Blackfoot people and provided the estimated travelling times between each one. Another prominent aspect of the map is the network of waterways that flow into the Missouri River and resemble a typical leaf venation pattern that connects to a central stem. This main waterway of the territory is represented by an east-west line drawn through the middle of the map. Ac ko mok ki included the main tributaries to the Missouri, the rivers and creeks that one would encounter as they travelled the territory, in a range that spread from the Milk River in present day southern Alberta to the Bighorn River in the region now called central Wyoming. The Blackfoot man also provided topographic information on the west side of the Rocky Mountains by sketching in the Columbia and Snake rivers, as well as the Pacific coastline. There are extensive notes written in the margins of the map by Fidler that provide details on the various symbols and names that were used in drawing the map. These refer to the physical and social landscape of the territory mapped. The quality of the land and available resources are indicated, as well as suitable places to camp. Ac ko mok ki also gave Fidler more specific information on the various groups living in the territory by placing circles at the locations of the most recent campsites of enemies and allies, providing their Blackfoot names, and approximate population sizes.

In all, Ac ko mok ki sketched out a detailed map of more than two hundred square miles of territory. The map provides such unique insight into

Blackfoot worldviews that it is considered one of the great documents of the colonial era. Unfortunately, the deeper meaning of the map was soon lost. Fidler made a copy of Ac ko mok ki's map, reduced to one-quarter of its original size, and sent it back to London via Hudson's Bay. The map was translated from the Blackfoot and a new map was created that followed European cartographic conventions. Aaron Arrowsmith created this new map while working at the London headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company. In the process of translating the map, he forgot to consider what it might mean to the Blackfoot, and instead used Ac ko mok ki's map to create a more complete European version of the northwestern part of North America. When it was completed, this new map travelled back to North America and eventually made its way into the hands of Thomas Jefferson, the American President at that time. In 1804, President Jefferson commissioned the famous explorers Lewis and Clark to travel along the Missouri River into the territory route first delineated by Ac ko mok ki three years earlier. Ironically, the map drawn by Ac ko mok ki enabled the Americans to claim and exercise sovereignty over the territory depicted. Despite the invaluable guidance provided them by the map, it is interesting to note that Lewis and Clark often found it confusing and questioned its accuracy. The problem, it seems, is that both Fidler and Arrowsmith assumed that Ac ko mok ki's line of mountains was located on the Continental Divide. They mistakenly assumed that Blackfoot cartographic sensibilities and understandings of the land could be simply assimilated to suit Eurowestern views and needs. So, for example, they did not know that Ac ko mok ki's map only noted prominent mountains best seen from

the Prairies, and that the Continental Divide was, in some cases, up to fifty kilometres farther west. They also assumed that Blackfoot understandings of map scale and the overall purposes of the map were equivalent to theirs. They did not know that Ac ko mok ki's map was drawn to serve the needs of someone travelling overland and that the noted peaks *and* waterways were both critical orientational guides in that context. This is why they are emphasized so prominently on the map. A poor understanding of Blackfoot mapping conventions and assumptions accounts for Lewis and Clark getting lost. They needed a deeper understanding of the Blackfoot knowledge system in order to accurately interpret and use Ac ko mok ki's map. When taken out of the context in which it was created, the map probably seemed rather simple, confused, and out of proper scale to those Hudson's Bay Company officials who examined it back in 1802. What was missing from this cultural encounter was understanding and appreciation for what the map meant to the Blackfoot.

So, what is the value of this map and story today? What can they teach us? The map demonstrates that the Blackfoot people, like all Indigenous groups in Canada, possess a sophisticated understanding of their lands and a specific form of literacy for demonstrating and sharing this. The story shows that different cultural groups can have similar goals—mapping the land for example—but apply very different processes and understandings to achieve those goals. Different cultural traditions follow different processes for representing and performing knowledge because they are informed by different philosophical assumptions and prejudices. This irreducible difference is evident in the story. However, this

notion of irreducible difference does not mean that different cultural groups are unrelated, and thus inhabit separate realities. Rather, it simply means that human beings have different ways of understanding the world and their places in it. However, as the story of Ac ko mok ki's map reminds us, the teleological trajectory of the colonial project teaches conformity to a pedagogy that requires all peoples and knowledges to be assimilated to conform to universalized Eurowestern standards. Yet, despite the power of this colonial impetus, we cannot deny that Ac ko mok ki's map, as an archived artifact from the "underside of modernity" (Dussel, 1996), is also *foundational* to Eurowestern cartographic conceptions of the land he delineated back in 1801. When Ac ko mok ki and Fidler sat face-to-face in dialogue with a common purpose, the tension created when their different knowledge traditions came together generated new knowledge and understanding. This new knowledge was represented and performed in the creation of the map. A full understanding of the significance of Arrowsmith's map can only be achieved with reference to Fidler's relationship to Ac ko mok ki, the map that he shared, and the entwined interpretive tensions connecting Indigenous lands, Chesterfield House, London, and Washington D.C.

Building on this provocative historical example, I believe that ethical relationships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian will be renewed when Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems are revealed to be complicit in, rather than outside, commonsense understandings of truth and knowledge. Recognizing Indigenous presence and participation without the need to assimilate difference is critical to this ethical shift. As I have shown throughout this work,

Indigenous Métissage is a provocative and productive approach to this issue because it requires an *indigenized* interpretive understanding of colonial encounters through attentiveness to artifacts that come from particular places. Guided by Dussel's (1993) transmodern spirit and ethical relationality, Indigenous Métissage is dedicated to the renewal of partnerships connecting Aboriginal and Canadian by reviving those historic instances of negotiation and "Cultural Interface" (Nakata, 2002), such as those that occurred at forts, that have been dismissed by colonial frontier logics and relegated to the outside.

Conclusion

Paying attention to these historic examples will foster more critical and effective historical consciousness that will, in turn, shape the terms by which people will participate in public policy dialogues about present relationships and future possibilities. This movement is necessary not to assert ethical relationality as a new master narrative, but to allow for intersections of knowledge systems to be held in organic tension in the localities and contexts where these intersections occur. Organic tension, in this example, refers to a situation in which the significance of the intersection of differing knowledge systems is co-realized by participants as part of the inquiry process. In educational contexts, the turbulence created by this cultural interaction will produce new knowledge and understanding that will vitalize our curricular and pedagogical commitments. Such turbulence is always specific to a particular place—classroom, school, university, community, *pehonan*, fort—and co-dependent on the energies, intents, and movements of the players. I believe that the ethical processes through which

Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other in organic tension have the potential to be simultaneously and synergistically life-giving and life-sustaining for us all.

Epilogue:

I did not make a conscious decision to become an academic researcher and writer. When I began graduate studies at the University of Lethbridge in September 1998, I was mostly interested in taking time off from teaching to both refresh myself and do some sustained thinking on the unique educational contexts present in the *Kainai* community. Back then, I did not imagine that I would one day write a dissertation. I was simply searching for a place to belong where I could make a meaningful difference. In this search, I typically deferred to others based on their expertise, experience, and wisdom. As an Indigenous ‘misfit,’ without a home community and bereft of linguistic and cultural traditions, I viewed this deferral as necessary because I had nothing insightful to say. I viewed my participation in Aboriginal education as almost entirely dependent on the willingness of mentors and friends to share their knowledge with me.

This disengaged disposition was disrupted when I began regular visits to the home of *Kainai* Elders Bernard and Rita Tall Man. At the time, I thought I was visiting them to record conversations that would inform my Masters thesis. I asked them questions about *Kainai* traditions and philosophies in the hope that I would better understand what it was that they wanted young people in their community—my students—to know. However, as the visits continued, Bernard and Rita began to turn the attention of the research inquiry away from my questions and towards me. Subtly, indirectly, gently, and persistently they asked: Who are you? Where are you from? Who are you from? What are you supposed to be doing with your life? This shift in focus was a pedagogical act of kindness

that continues to resonate within me today. The poignancy of this shift was punctuated by a statement made by Bernard after he had listened to a detailed account of my family history, when he stated matter-of-factly: “Now we know that you are one of us.” This declaration helped me realize that I wasn’t just studying Indians. I was studying myself.

This acceptance fuelled a sense of responsibility to do *something* to help Indigenous communities recover from the devastating effects of colonial power. I began doctoral studies at the University of Alberta with this in mind. Early on in these studies, I wrote of the need to explore the ways in which the histories and memories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada are integral to mainstream perceptions of Canadian history and memories. I suggested that a provocative method for doing this is to identify and interpret the ways in which Aboriginal people have critiqued or responded to situations that they viewed as unjust, unfair, or in need of rethinking. I framed these responses as replies expressed in the form of subtle cultural tricks that are often misunderstood or misinterpreted. I thought that I would study such replies crafted by Aboriginal peoples as a way to reveal the complexities of Aboriginal-Canadian relations today.

I now realize that this work is a rather lengthy reply to the questions posed by Bernard and Rita Tall Man almost a decade ago. Rather than studying the replies of others, I have instead crafted my own reply. In doing so, I have deconstructed the colonial processes of Indigenous displacement and located, again, a place for personal family stories and experiences. This Indigenous

reassertion and relocation is also the inspiration for the curricular and pedagogical considerations offered in this work.

One of the main challenges of this work has been the need to balance personal and family affiliations with the challenging and insightful work of prominent Indigenous scholars today. While I feel the strong need to participate and carry on this scholarly tradition, I also often feel ironically inadequate in this regard, as though my work is not Indigenous enough. I find that the influential work of these scholars speaks to me as an individual researcher, but that I can only awkwardly and tangentially identify with their emphases on communitarian traditions. I have only been a guest participant in communitarian traditions practiced by communities to which I cannot claim membership. I wish that this inquiry were more deeply rooted in specific Indigenous wisdom traditions. I wish that this work engaged more fully with specific Indigenous views of the significance of *forts-as-places*. I wish that I had been able to work under the guidance of local Cree Elders to reconstruct the cultural landscape of the Edmonton area in more detail. However, I also feel strongly that this work tells a story that needs to be told. Perhaps my 'wish list' will be seen in future work.

However, I am increasingly aware that the stories I wish to tell are often marginalized in public and institutional settings for various complex reasons. The implications of this awareness are that the work to reassert and reconceptualize a place for Indigenous peoples in educational contexts cannot be considered in isolation from larger societal influences and thrusts. So, for example, the predominant curricular and pedagogical message that the Canadian nation and

nationality, true to its settler roots, supports a multicultural society that continues to welcome and accommodate diverse groups of people from around the world cannot be disassociated from commonsense historical, social, and political understandings of Indigenousness. The two stances depend on each other because the very idea of settler requires an appropriation and incorporation of Indigenousness. Yet, in seeming contradiction, there is a clear need *to* disassociate Indigenous from liberal multiculturalism because ‘diversity talk’ conceals and misrecognizes ‘Indigenous.’ Due to the institutionalized perpetuation of the various colonial logics identified in this work, Indigenous peoples are largely miscomprehended as just another minority group who supply culture and ‘colour’ to the Canadian mosaic.

Thus, the key challenge facing Indigenous peoples today is the assertion of difference in response to the homogenizing power of coloniality, liberal multiculturalism, diversity talk, and globalization. A major tension associated with meeting this challenge, however, is to find a way to assert difference while also simultaneously recognizing that Indigenous peoples cannot operate in isolation from the people who have come to live on their lands. Canadians and Aboriginal peoples must face these challenges together and continually create locally developed ways to address them that bring tangible benefits.

The most promising example of this sort of dynamically balanced partnership can be seen in the field of archaeology in Alberta. Over the past few years, I have been privy to various research initiatives begun by archaeologists and consultants, working under the auspices of the Government of Alberta, who

have sought guidance and assistance from Indigenous Elders and leaders in their work. Put simply, the archaeologists have realized that their scientific approaches to various sites of archaeological interest provide interesting, but limited understandings. They have admitted that they do not have the cultural knowledge necessary to connect the various sites and artifacts in insightful ways. In some cases, Aboriginal people have been employed to guide and supervise more in-depth explorations that combine existing archaeological knowledge with emerging Indigenous insights. Multiple benefits have arisen from this fluid site-based amalgamation of knowledge systems. Perhaps the most important is a heightened consciousness of these sites for Indigenous communities and an active repatriation of them by the people. After several dark decades, they are remembering and visiting the sites again and the land is reciprocating. These collaborative engagements have, in some cases, also led to the protection of certain sites through government action.

This research fits well with my interest in the curricular and pedagogical significance of Indigenous place and story. I view this work on the pedagogy of the fort as foundational to future research inquiries into the cultural topography of the Treaty 6 area of Western Canada as it was understood by my Cree ancestors. I imagine a research process guided by Cree Elders that locates, maps, and tells the stories of significant sites in the area of central Alberta. I also imagine that this research process will both serve the needs of Indigenous communities and educate Canadians about the significance of land beyond its resource exploitative potential. Living and working in Alberta, where the oil sands reign supreme, I

view (re)connection with land and place as a critical and urgent public education project.

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APPENDIX I
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTIES OF EDUCATION, EXTENSION AND AUGUSTANA
RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
(EEA REB)

I. Application for Ethics Review of Proposed Research

(revised July 10, 2006)

Principal Investigator - Dwayne Donald

Department/Faculty- Secondary Education

Complete mailing address - [REDACTED]

E-mail - ddonald@ualberta.ca

Co-applicant(s) - none

Project title - *The Pedagogy of the Fort:*

Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous Métissage

Project Deadlines

Starting Date (year/month/date) 2006/09/20

Ending Date (year/month/date) 2008/06/30

Overview of Research Project

The colonial past and the social and spatial dichotomies that separate Aboriginal people and Canadians continue to haunt contemporary Canadian society. This inquiry is focused on the educational and curricular legacies stemming from the conceptual topography created by forts, frontiers, and

boundaries that serve to separate and delineate Aboriginal from Canadian. I want to show how Aboriginal perspectives can expand and enhance the field of curriculum studies and theorize the possibilities for an “ethical space” for Aboriginal and Canadian relations (Ermine, 2005).

I plan to visit with [REDACTED], a respected [REDACTED] Elder who works as a cultural consultant and teacher’s aide at [REDACTED] School. He knows much of the oral history of the Cree people in the Edmonton area. I was introduced to [REDACTED] at a meeting with colleagues and friends. Since that first meeting, we have met regularly to discuss our shared interests regarding Cree history and culture. To begin the more formal research process, I will ask him to speak to one question: **What stories do the Cree people tell of the place now called Edmonton?** With his permission, I will tape record our conversations.

There are significant issues involving respect that a researcher must be mindful of when inviting an Aboriginal Elder to share oral history in a research process. First, it is inappropriate to interview an Elder through the use of scripted or pointed questions. Formal interviews tend to focus priority on questions that elicit the best answers and a question-answer exchange as a means to support a particular thesis (Weber, 1986, p. 65). Alternatively, conversational inquiries are hermeneutic endeavours in that those participating in a conversation hope to reveal something held in common (Carson, 1986, p. 78). Thus, when working with an Elder, the respectful approach is to outline an issue or problem that you are interested in knowing more about, and then listen patiently while the Elder tells

you what he or she think you need to know (Lightning, 1992; Akan, 1999).

Cruikshank (1990) advises a respectful research model that prioritizes collaboration. Conversations of mutual inquiry grow from there. Second, Elders typically tell their stories to remind people of their relations to each other and to the land. In this context, researchers must take “seriously what people say about their lives rather than treating their words simply as an illustration of some other process” (Cruikshank 1990, p. 1). The stories cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they are told.

As a curriculum researcher, it is important to share these ideas with future teachers. Many express feelings of inadequacy regarding the teaching of Aboriginal issues. I plan to give a 45 minute multimedia presentation on Aboriginal curriculum perspectives to two classes of Social Studies APT students in September 2006. Following the presentation, and after allowing time for questions from the students, I will distribute an open-ended written response questionnaire to the students. The question will be:

Has this presentation influenced your beliefs about curriculum and teaching? If so, how? If not, why not?

I will personally visit the class prior to giving my presentation to explain the background information of my study and distribute the information letter and consent forms. One notable disadvantage to this approach is that the student responses may be biased by my presence and the background information provided. Instead of responding according to their own views, they may feel compelled to write responses based on their impressions of my research goals. I can attempt to mitigate this problem by establishing respectful rapport and

cautioning the students on this point. Both Hinds (2000, p. 44) and Kumar (1999, p. 118) suggest that questionnaire respondents are more likely to provide detailed and insightful answers when the researcher is present and a collaborative rapport is established. In other words, they will be motivated to write quality responses if they feel that the researcher has a deep interest in their views. I will also make it clear to the students that their participation is voluntary and their responses will be anonymous. Anonymity will encourage more people to respond and express themselves freely and openly (Moore, 2000, p. 114).

I will select responses that I find most provocative and engaging. I intend to use these responses in the introduction of my dissertation as points of engagement with my work. This approach is inspired by Willinsky (1998) when he used student email responses to show that students have been taught to divide the world according to race and ethnicity (pp. 6-8), and Mackey (2002) when she interpreted the significance of “bottom line statements” from white Canadians on multiculturalism, national unity, national identity, and their perceived disempowerment (p. 42). Like them, I will solicit statements from an interest group and interpret the significance of selected responses in light of my research focus.

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IV. Procedures for Compliance with the U of A Standards

Please describe clearly and concisely how you intend to comply with the Standards by answering each of the following questions.

1. How will you recruit your participants?

The recruitment of ██████████ followed traditional cultural protocols. Basically, I asked for his help with my doctoral research and recognized the spiritual significance of our work together by making an offering of tobacco to him. His acceptance of the offering was symbolic of his decision to work with me and share what he knows.

The APT Social Studies students will be recruited on a voluntary basis. With the permission of their instructors, I will visit their classrooms to explain the purposes of my research, the written response format, and their role as respondents. I will distribute the information and consent forms, review them with the students, and then ask them to sign the form if they wish to participate in the study. I will ensure that the students understand that the signing of the form does not bind them to participate. They can choose not to participate at any time prior to submitting a response.

Following this initial meeting, I will return to give the planned presentation. Following the presentation, I will distribute the single question written response sheets and ask the students to provide a response to the question. I will again emphasize that their participation is voluntary and anonymous. Students who do not wish to participate may hand in a blank response sheet.

2. How will you explain the purpose and nature of your research to prospective participants?
In order to begin informal meetings with ██████████, I needed to tell him what I thought I needed to know. I spoke at length about the history of my Papaschase Cree ancestors and explained that I wanted to know more about their lives in and around Fort Edmonton. I told him that I wanted to contest the official history of Fort Edmonton, a history that maintains Aboriginal people as outsiders, by demonstrating the permeability of the fort walls. I made it clear that I hoped he could tell me stories of the Cree history of Edmonton that would show that the history of the place called Edmonton is more interrelated and interreferential than we have been led to believe. I explained that one of my main goals is to influence how teachers teach Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom.

For the APT Social Studies students, I will explain the following points: I believe that the national narrative of Canada, the stories that we have been told in school, has taught us to view Aboriginal peoples as outside the official story of the nation. The fort, as a mythic symbol, reinforces this story and the spatial and social dichotomies that separate Aboriginal and Canadian.

Symptomatic of this civilizational frontier is the isolatedness of Aboriginal perspectives in the field of education. Since there are still few Aboriginal educators in schools, I believe that a major focus of Aboriginal scholars in education needs to be on helping future teachers recognize Aboriginal presence and participation in contemporary Canadian society. However, rather than regarding Aboriginal perspectives as a separate and exclusive discipline, I want to show that Aboriginal perspectives can expand and enhance mainstream understandings of curriculum.

In making such claims, though, I am mindful of the need to avoid replicating the inorganic discourse of Indigenous accusation and white guilt. My research needs to also consider the views of mainstream Canadian teachers. To this end, I plan to raise some of these issues as curricular considerations in the form of a presentation. I would like to know what you think of the ideas of have presented, as citizens and as future teachers.

3. (a) What steps will you take to obtain the free and informed consent of the participants? e.g. How will you provide opportunities for potential participants to exercise their right to not participate?

██████████, as an Elder, is in control of the research process that we will share. I cannot proceed without his consent. He would not have accepted the tobacco offering if he was not willing to work with me. In agreeing to work with me, however, it is understood that the research process will proceed on terms that he deems most appropriate. Should I begin to behave disrespectfully or inappropriately, he will correct me. If problems continue, he will not meet with me anymore. It will have become clear that I am not ready to listen. Our relationship of elder-apprentice is bound by Cree cultural protocols of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. If these are not appropriately observed, the Elder will not participate in the research process with me.

The Social Studies APT students will be free to make their own decision regarding participation in the research. After hearing about my research plans, it will be their decision to sign the consent form. I will leave the room and ask them to hand in their form by placing it in an envelope. Those who elect not to participate may hand it in blank. My absence will perhaps make some more comfortable in making a decision.

Following the presentation, I will again emphasize to the students that their decision to complete a written response sheet is voluntary and anonymous. They are not bound to participate if they signed a consent form. They can choose to not participate at anytime prior to submitting a response. After submitting their response, however, withdrawal is impossible because I will be unable to identify their writing.

If some students who choose not to participate worry about being singled out and stigmatized, they can accept a written response sheet and simply write on it: "I choose not to participate in this research" or leave it blank.

- (b) Are there limited and/or temporary exceptions to the general requirements for full disclosure of information? If yes, (i) please describe the exception(s) (ii) justify the need for the exception(s), and (iii) explain the provisions for debriefing participants.

No.

- (c) Are there any circumstances which could compromise the voluntary consent of participants (e.g., incentives, captive populations, second relationship)? If yes, how will these circumstances be dealt with?

It is possible that ██████████ may feel obligated to work with me as part of his role as a community Elder. However, as an apprentice, I must trust that the Elder will make decisions based on what he thinks is best for all.

It is possible that some Social Studies APT students will feel undo pressure to participate in the research because their classmates are participating. They may also assume that their instructors support my research and that their participation is expected by them. I can mitigate these influences by addressing these issues directly

during the introductory session. I will make it clear that their participation is entirely voluntary and their decision should not be based on peer pressure or the perceived desires of their instructor. They should only participate if they are personally interested in doing so.

4. How will you provide opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out without penalty, harm or loss of promised benefit?

My relationship with [REDACTED] is such that there is no risk of penalty, harm, or loss of promised benefit. My work with him will be done on his terms and according to Cree cultural protocols. If he decides to opt out, he will do so with the belief that I am not prepared to listen to what he has to say.

For the Social Studies APT students, I will attempt to mitigate any harm or penalty for opting out by making the decision to opt out confidential. I will give all students the opportunity to examine the consent forms and written response sheets so that none can be singled out as nonparticipants. Students will place their forms in envelopes before handing them in.

5. (a) How will you address privacy, anonymity and confidentiality issues?

[REDACTED] has specifically asked that his name not be used in association with any writing stemming from this research project. He has stated that he is not interested in gaining any credit or accolades for the information shares with me. At this point, I am planning on referring to him as a 'Cree Elder' in the study, but any personal references to him, who he is, and where he lives and works will be submitted to him for final approval.

The Social Studies APT students will only write their names on the consent forms. Therefore, I will only receive the names of those students who consent to participate in the study. The students who complete the written response sheets will not provide their names.

- (b) If you plan to record sounds or images in your project, how will you address anonymity and confidentiality of participants and non-participants?

With the permission of [REDACTED], I do plan on tape recording our conversations. Our conversations will take place in a private environment, so the only voices on the tapes will be his and mine. Anonymity and confidentiality for [REDACTED] will be addressed as previously mentioned.

5. Will there be any risk, threat or harm to the participants or to others? If yes, (a) please elaborate and (b) how will you minimize the risk, threat or harm?

None that have not been previously mentioned.

6. How will you provide for security of the data during the study and for a minimum of 5 years thereafter?

I will be the sole possessor of any tape recorded conversations with [REDACTED]. Any use of these recordings outside the purview of this specific study will be with his guidance, discretion, and consent. All recordings and transcripts will be securely stored.

The consent forms and written responses will also be in my sole possession and securely stored.

8. If you involve research assistants, transcribers, interpreters and/or other personnel to carry out specific research tasks in your research, how will you ensure that they comply with the Standards?

Not applicable.

9. Please describe any other procedures relevant to complying with the Standards.

None.

Student Research Proposal Information Letter
The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage
Doctoral Research Project – Dwayne Donald

Introduction

I am a graduate student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. I am currently conducting a research study that is focused on the ways in which Indigenous perspectives can expand and enhance the field of curriculum studies. I believe that the national narrative of Canada, the stories that we have been told in school, has taught us to view Aboriginal peoples as outside the official story of the nation. The fort, as a mythic symbol, reinforces this story and the spatial and social divides that continue to separate Aboriginal and Canadian. Symptomatic of this split is the isolatedness of Aboriginal perspectives in the field of education. This has become a serious public policy issue in Canada, especially as school jurisdictions begin to implement new curricula that emphasize Aboriginal perspectives. Since there are still few Aboriginal educators in schools, I believe that a major focus of Aboriginal scholars in education needs to be on helping future teachers recognize Aboriginal presence and participation in contemporary Canadian society. To this end, I plan to raise some of these issues as curricular considerations in the form of a presentation for your class. I would like to know what you think of the ideas I have presented, as citizens and as future teachers. Your ideas will help me complete the writing of my dissertation and earn a PhD.

Research Method

I will provide your class with a presentation titled: “Maps, Place-Stories, and Aboriginal Citizenship: Curricular Considerations in the Present Tense.” Following the presentation, each willing participant will be asked to write a response to a single question. I will collect these responses, consider each of them in terms of their significance, and then choose those most interesting and relevant to my research focus. I will then interpret the significance of each of these statements as they relate to the main points of my research. Your statements are important to me because I want to know how my research ideas are perceived by future teachers.

Possible Uses

As stated previously, your response could become part of my dissertation and help me earn a PhD. It is possible that this study could eventually be published in book form and sold. It is likely that some of this information will be used in academic articles, presentations, and teaching. Ethical standards established by the University of Alberta will guide each use.

Participation and Rights

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. This project does not involve your course instructor and you will not be penalized if you choose not to participate. If you do choose to participate and do provide a written response, your response will be anonymous, private, and confidential. This anonymity makes it impossible to withdraw your written response from this research because it will not be possible to identify your response once it is submitted. Your name and any information that could identify you will not appear in research reports. Security and safekeeping of your responses will be maintained for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

Informed Consent

If you have any concerns, complaints, or questions about this research project or its consequences, please contact me: Dwayne Donald

ddonald@ualberta.ca
492-2902

If you would rather speak to someone else about this research project, you can contact my supervisor:

Dr. David G. Smith
davidg.smith@ualberta.ca
492-0499

You can also contact the Chair of the Department of Secondary Education:

Dr. Elaine Simmt
elaine.simmt@ualberta.ca
492-9402

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty Jo Werthmann at 780.492.2261.

Student Consent Form: Written Response
The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage
Doctoral Research Project – Dwayne Donald

I, _____, hereby consent to
participate in
(print name)

“The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage” research project being undertaken by Dwayne Donald. My
participation will involve completing a written response to an in-class
presentation provided by Dwayne Donald.

I understand that:

- my participation is voluntary.
- all written responses will be anonymous and confidential.
- it will be impossible to withdraw my response once it has been submitted.
- my written words could be used in subsequent publications and presentations.
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research.

(Signature)

(Date)

Student Written Response Sheet

The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous Métissage
Doctoral Research Project – Dwayne Donald

Please write a response to this question:

**Has this presentation influenced your beliefs about curriculum and teaching?
If so, how? If not, why not?**


Research Proposal Information Letter
The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage
Doctoral Research Project – Dwayne Donald

Introduction

I am a graduate student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. I am currently conducting a research study that is focused on curriculum and Indigenous perspectives. I believe that the stories that Canadian students have been told in school have taught them to view Aboriginal peoples as outside the official story of the nation. The fort is a symbol of this split. Forts reinforce the idea that Indians are outsiders. The main message is that Aboriginal people and Canadians do not interact. The trouble with current representations of forts as museums and historic sites is that they present versions of the Canadian West that effectively cover over the many layers of historical interactions with Aboriginal people that brought the place into being. I want to contest this version of history by learning and sharing stories that the Cree people tell of the place now called Edmonton. As school jurisdictions begin to implement new curricula that emphasize Aboriginal perspectives, I believe that studies like this are necessary to help educators recognize Aboriginal presence and participation in contemporary Canadian society.

Research Method

I propose that we meet regularly beginning September 2006 until June 2007 to have conversations regarding your thoughts on one specific question: **What stories do the Cree people tell of the place now called Edmonton?** With your permission and guidance, I will audiotape our conversations and transcribe them into written texts. Using these tapes and transcripts, I will identify the stories of Edmonton that I find most useful to my research focus. I want to mix Cree historical understanding and stories with relevant 'official' histories of Edmonton to show that both versions describe a shared reality and offer a more holistic and balanced understanding of the place.

Uses

The information that you share with me in our conversations will become part of my dissertation and help me earn a PhD. It is possible that this study could eventually be published in book form and sold. It is likely that some of this information will be used in academic articles, presentations, and teaching. Ethical standards established by the University of Alberta will guide each use.

Participation and Rights

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You will not be penalized if you choose not to participate. If you do choose to participate and engage in conversations with me, your participation will be anonymous, private, and confidential as per your request. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time and will not be required to provide a reason for choosing to do so. Security and safekeeping of the audiotapes and transcripts will be maintained for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

Informed Consent

If you have any concerns, complaints, or questions about this research project or its consequences, please contact me: Dwayne Donald

ddonald@ualberta.ca
989.0022 (H) 492-2902 (W)

If you would rather speak to someone else about this research project, you can contact my supervisor:

Dr. David G. Smith
davidg.smith@ualberta.ca
492-0499

You can also contact the Chair of the Department of Secondary Education:

Dr. Elaine Simmt
elaine.simmt@ualberta.ca
492-9402

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty Jo Werthmann at 780.492.2261.

Elder Consent Form: Audiotaped Conversations
The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage
Doctoral Research Project – Dwayne Donald

I, _____, hereby consent to
participate in
(print name)

“The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Frontier Thinking, and Indigenous
Métissage” research project being undertaken by Dwayne Donald. My
participation will involve engaging in conversations with Dwayne Donald.

I understand that:

- my participation is voluntary.
- I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- my voice will be audiotaped.
- all recorded conversations and transcripts will be anonymous and confidential.
- my words could be used in subsequent publications and presentations in consultation with me.
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research.

(Signature)

(Date)