

Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love:
An examination of the impact of Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices
in Teacher Education and on Teacher's Classroom Practices

by
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Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory qualitative study whereby 21 randomly selected participants made meaning of their experiences while engaged in Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP). The particular seven practices used were the Smudge, Oral Knowledge Transmission, Teaching and Sharing Circles, Storytelling, an Oracle and Sweat Lodge. I incorporated the STITP into Summer Institutes on Aboriginal education (1994-2007) as an integrated approach for providing the link between the practise of our ancestors and the andragogical theory of adult learning. I conducted 3 Sharing Circles and 13 interviews (of the 21 participants) resulting in the voices and stories that revealed how the participants made meaning of their experiences as the focus of this research. They described their relationships and their responses to the educational transactions that took place for them while in the learning circle of the institute. They described what they learned, what was important to them, and how they are using STITP today. The participants' stories build upon an earlier study where Elder/Knowledge Keepers, as participants and witnesses to the STITP, were interviewed for their perspectives and experiences. The Elder/Knowledge Keepers' voices emerged with four learning themes that provided a link between Indigenous pedagogies and adult learning theory and supported the importance of these in pedagogies in teacher education. The student participants also discussed the importance of these four major themes. The viability for the use of STITP in teacher education have proven positive and important for shifting paradigms, changes in perceptions, and learning growth as reflected in the participants' narratives. Serious consideration to the use of Indigenous practices like STITP in future teacher education, preparation for certification and postgraduate study is suggested. This

study resulted in a development of a concept of ‘seven footprints’ connecting the Indigenous learning lodges to the academic classroom a model for teacher education that further emerged as an ‘eighth footprint’ reflecting an a Prophecy of the ‘Eight Fires’ as outlined in this thesis. Since this model referred to as *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* is in its early stages of exploration and development, further research is feasible and necessary.

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I would like to use this opportunity to recognize the significant place ceremony has in my life, supported by Creator, Manitou, and the Ancestral Spirits, in guiding my life's journey through dreams, which have and continue to inform my learning process. I give thanks for the relationships we have with the Spirit World and the ways in which our worldviews animate the world in which we live. Ours is not a simple understanding of the connectedness to all living things, especially when all things are considered living.

Firstly, I am deeply grateful for all those who made it possible for me to write this thesis. I would like to express a special thanks and I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Ernie and Mary Guilbault. My parents never gave up on me, and they inspired my truth to be realized.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the family I was given, who have supported, encouraged, and helped me to understand the boundaries, protocols, and privilege of life itself. For my Father, the late Ernie Guilbault (ebun), and my Mother, Mary Guilbault (nee Bowers), who modeled the ability to be sovereign people and who knew how to be okay in their own skin, I give thanks. *Ebun* is an Ojibwe word used to denote a respectful way of identifying a person as having passed on into the Spirit World or as having died. (I will use the word ebun to identify those Knowledge Keepers and Elders who have passed on.) Their love and conviction about the Creator's laws demonstrated that all individuals have a path upon which they make their footprints. Our ancestors left footprints with the understanding that one's children and grandchildren will need these footprints to guide them throughout their lives. The ultimate goal is to travel on the given path as a person of peace. To my siblings who cared for my children during the time of my earlier studies, I thank you for keeping my children safe. To my partner and life mate, I especially give thanks to the power of her prayer and belief in my gifts. The encouragement to continue came from her in the darker moments of my growth and

healing. The commitment to the work in my thesis was not only mine. It was also inspired from my mother who knew the importance to my Father for me to write about the truths found in the body of this work.

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Fourthly, I would like to acknowledge the gentle land upon which we were given to live and give thanks for all of its beauty and glory. My travel to lands across the ocean is what developed the clarity for me in how I have come to cherish the piece of Mother Earth, which we in Manitoba, Canada, call our birthplace, as a safe and gentle place. I have also come to recognize that it is this land that informs the ways we think and speak. I value and assert the ways in which we express our culturally Indigenous ways of knowing in the following languages: Cree, Ojibwe, Dakota, Dene, OjiCree, and Mitchif. I ask that our children and grandchildren be granted the same luxury of knowing the land for its richness, beauty, and life-giving nurturance. It is for these innocent ones that I do this work. I would like to give special thanks for two people who have stepped beyond the boundaries of academe to see the importance in me as person and more importantly as a potential to be encouraged. As Elders/Knowledge Keepers in my life, I thank you, Dr. Jon Young and Dr. Laara Fitznor, for seeing the researcher and writer in me. I am so grateful for your continuous encouragement during the tough times and your dedicated supports to my thesis development and writing. I also acknowledge my other committee members, Dr. Dennis Bracken and Dr. Joannie Halas, who have provided encouragement, offered ideas, and continued to review my work allowing me to move through the various stages of my PhD. program. To Dr. Marie Battiste I thank you for the significant comments and questions posed by you as my External Examiner.

Ekosani! Niiogahbewiik (Woman Who Sits at the Centre of the Four Directions)

Prologue

My learning journey and the experiences with Elders and Knowledge Keepers throughout my life has incited my enthusiasm for this research as a study (Creswell, 2007) into the reflections of students as they participated in various Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education. Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers refer to those individuals who carry, store, and transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. The Elders and Knowledge Keepers in my life were very clear in guiding me to realize that the knowledge and experiences I acquired while walking with them as an apprentice could be purposeful in contemporary learning engagements (Murray & Rice, 1999). They encouraged me to use the traditional knowledge and practice they shared with me to build capacity in others and to become better informed about Indigenous Peoples and our ways of life and living (Masayesva, 1999).

To this end, I have explained the ways in which I was able to fulfill part of the commitment I made as a Knowledge Keeper to pass on appropriate information to other educators who may have an opportunity to influence positive outcomes for the children and youth with whom they work. The commitment I made to my Elders, Mentors, Teachers, and Creator to live a good life described the ways in which appropriate information/knowledge will be passed on. That knowledge will also help all those who listen to move in the direction of living a good life that is appropriate. In 1993, I was approached to become what they called the *Road Scholar* for a Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education by the then Director of the Winnipeg Education Centre and two Indigenous community leaders and educators who have long histories in the field of education. They were particularly interested in the provision of an opportunity for the

learners who came to this learning engagement to participate in authentic, culturally relevant experiences that could help them find their place in Aboriginal education. This institute was offered for two previous years through the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC), which at that time was a component in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. After a lengthy discussion, I agreed to take on the task. The individuals who had approached me presented a traditional protocol of a tobacco offering, as is the custom in local Indigenous practices when asking for transmission of Aboriginal knowledge and traditions. After presenting the tobacco, I was asked to coordinate and facilitate this Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education for the 1994 summer session. I worked with WEC for the first year of the institute.

In preparing for the vision or sightedness of the work to come, I had to seek the wisdom of my immediate Elders and Knowledge Keepers. They offered support and encouragement to answer the tobacco protocol to do the work required to facilitate an authentic Indigenous teaching and learning opportunity. When I sat down to create the calendar and schedule the course outline, it took only 45 minutes to plan what could be in this three-week event. When I reflected on this time, I recalled that I felt the request to coordinate and facilitate this institute had opened a doorway to arrange an educational experience that could be a unique model that was very special. Changes in attitude and perception, paradigm shifting, liberating opportunities, and life-altering experiences were all possible in fact. At this time, my personal reflection was that because a combination of traditional Indigenous teaching practices were used by the helpers who facilitated the institute processes, this integration would contribute to an educational atmosphere whereby transformation could occur for the participants. In fact, I observed many of these

changes noted in the journal assignments of the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education (Summer Institute) learners, and that information inspired me to try to capture these reflections in this thesis work.

After many years of working with teachers in the field and as an educator in school and university settings, I observed that many Canadians are unaware that they exist within a void of knowledge related to Aboriginal people, their histories, lifestyles, languages, traditions and practices. For the most part, many educators have never been engaged to examine this void. Educators responsible to integrate Aboriginal education have indicated that the preparation for the implementation of Aboriginal education was minimal if not absent.

In preparation for the direction of this study I conducted a literature review to gain a sense of previous work related to the education of First Nations, Metis and Inuit children and Aboriginal education in general. The review provided historical accounts of leaders in First Nations and Metis education who attempted to provide direction to legislation, policy development and the control of education by Aboriginal people. Teacher education was an important component of the documents reviewed and assisted me to develop/analyze perceptions, understandings, and meanings of the learners from the Summer Institutes from the years 1994 to 2007.

Therefore, as I offered culturally relevant educational experiences to fill the void previously mentioned, I approached my research study to find answers from participants' as they experienced the Summer Institutes. The focus of my data collection in this thesis was through three Sharing Circles, and 13 individual interviews which provided me with rich data to complete this thesis. More will be said about these later in this thesis. I

gathered the bulk of my data for this study from the participants' reflections as they related their experiences and interactions during the Sharing Circles and individual interviews. The participants, in my mind, might be able to speak directly to the acquisition of Indigenous knowledge, which could have possibly helped fill their void. To this end, participants of the 12 previous Summer Institutes were invited to engage in the Sharing Circles and individual interviews in this study, and 21 of these students responded to the call. I integrated the research from a previous study I did on Elders' knowledge shared at the Summer Institutes that underscored the need for culturally relevant teaching as part of these institutes. This previous study with 3 Elders / Knowledge Keepers provided me with 4 significant key concepts related to the learning processes of Summer Institutes (Laramee, 2008a).

This void of knowledge I referred to in this study fills a huge space in Canadian society—so much so, that many who live in this territory have not been exposed to the knowledge from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives. These include stories, worldviews, foundational beliefs and practices, lifestyles both historical and contemporary, and atrocities impinged upon Indigenous peoples of this land and in their relationship with the Canadian government. There is little known or recognized in Canadian schools about Indigenous teaching and learning practices and pedagogies that Aboriginal people followed for daily living prior to contact with Europeans (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies [CAAS], 2002; Laramee, 2008a; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). As educators move into the implementation of Aboriginal education this lack of knowledge about each other's mutual place as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians in treaty

relationships and partnerships inhibits alliances. These alliances perhaps can be promoted through teacher education experiences as has happened during the Summer Institutes. This not knowing has existed and continues to exist throughout the Canadian experience and as we move forward with anticipation for healthier postcolonial life (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2004; Cajete, 1994; Harper, 2008) the exploration of such relationships and partnership must be facilitated.

In his apology, Prime Minister Stephen Harper described the moving forward in relationship and referred to a postcolonial life (p. 2). Many schools and Aboriginal educators are struggling, firstly, to understand their place as modern Keepers of Indigenous Knowledge and, secondly, to understand what kinds of information they need to impart to Canadian children about these relationships (Cajete, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995). There were many types of relationships I thought of when I listened to Harper's national apology for the first time. These relationships involve every Canadian from *new comers*, to all those people inter-generationally born and raised in Canada, to the governments and systems that operate in this land that affect the First Peoples. I give thanks to the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and the hard work of their staff. An educational kit has been developed to assist educators in this process (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, 2012) and all of those educators who struggle through the *not knowing* how to help people gather constructive and accurate knowledge about the Aboriginal Peoples of this land.

In his apology to Aboriginal people in Canada, Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2008) identified education as the way to move into respectful partnerships needed to develop meaningful relations amongst Canadians. As Canadians, we cannot move

constructively forward into these renewed treaty relations without a vehicle such as education to fill the void. This requires respectful, mindful, truthful, and ethical ways of imparting the knowledge required to shift paradigms and reconstruct the ways in which we see each other (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2004; Castellano, 2000; Graveline, 1998). As Aboriginal/Indigenous Peoples who welcomed others to this land, we now come together with those others and our global neighbours from many other lands around the world to figure out ways that sustainability in this land and on this planet is possible (Henderson, 2008; Johnson, 2007; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Venne, 1998). Subsequently, we begin to collectively understand it is time, as stated by Elder Ernest Tootoosis, “to do the next 500 years more peacefully and respectfully than we had done the first 500 years” (personal communication, July 20, 1980). This is a similar sentiment that the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (2013, para. 1) hopes will occur.

It is my hope that the reflection and stories in this study will reveal ways to integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices when educating teachers. The goal of the Summer Institutes was to support and strengthen participants’ capacity during their time in the institute to use the experiences and knowledge acquired so that they may contribute to achieving this postcolonial goal as stated by Elder/Knowledge Keeper Tootoosis.

This qualitative research relied on an exploratory approach by conducting three traditional Sharing Circles and 13 individual interviews, by relying on participants’ stories about and reflections on the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) as they shared in either in the Sharing Circle or individual interview. These Sharing Circles and interviews engaged the participants from the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education (1994-2007) in discussions related to the methods implemented in

the STITP. The STITP is described in more detail in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The transmission of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews through traditional Indigenous teaching practices, I have come to learn through the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and many scholars of the contemporary world, are considered valid pedagogy for mainstream teacher training (Ackley Christensen, 1991; Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2002; Hodgson-Smith, 2000).

Various scholars over the last few decades have indicated that the use of traditional Indigenous teaching practices are viable in contemporary education systems, classrooms, and courses from early years to post-secondary education (Alberta Education, 2005; Antone, 2001; Battiste, 1998, 2002, 2004; Western Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education [WNCBP], 2000). Dei (2000) and Hampton (1995) spoke to the notion that there is a reciprocal emotional exchange that transpires between the Elder/Knowledge Keeper and the apprentice (learner), thus influencing the depth and breadth of their learning relationship (Dei, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Hodgson-Smith, 2000). In a dialogue with her grandmother, Hodgson-Smith (2000) revealed that deep emotion formed the main purposes and basis for sharing the knowledge carried by the Elders/Knowledge Keepers. She introduced the idea that through her grandmother's response, the emotion of love was identified as the key to this knowledge doorway. The depth of relationship and emotion between a grandmother and her granddaughter motivates the transmission of the knowledge from one generation to the next. It has been my experience, and I can attest that with the Elders/Knowledge Keepers in my life, that same emotion has been the basis for what they were able to share with me. One other

emotion that is also extremely important is that of trust. These Elders/Knowledge Keepers need to trust and tend to when they love you.

Dei (2000) argued that the relationship between the teacher and the learner in classrooms in our schools can evoke powerful responses when mutual respect characterizes the transactional bond and that bond is deepened by the specific learning activities. In order for such opportunities to present themselves, the learner must feel free enough to respond to the facilitator of the knowledge, as would a granddaughter to her grandmother. According to Martin Brokenleg (as cited in Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990), teaching requires an unconditional atmosphere of acceptance to develop a sense of belonging.

The need to belong is a condition necessary in the life of every human being, and yet, not every educator knows how to foster belonging. In many situations, educators themselves require an examination of their own sense of belongingness (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 1998; Kirkness, 1999; Neisin, 2009). It has been made clear by scholars and educators in the field that traditional Indigenous teaching practices are critical in shifting paradigms, changing attitudes, and influencing perceptions about Aboriginal peoples and their place in Canadian society (Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995). The Elders taught us that these traditional Indigenous teaching practices are instrumental in shaping change in the way people do their work in schools and/or live life (Battiste, 2000; Fitznor, 2002; Settee, 2007). Furthermore, Cajete (2000), Ermine (1995), and Hampton (1995), in their respective works, examined the reciprocal transactions that occurred in the learning circle when learners engaged in traditional Indigenous teaching practices. They indicated a shift in their

role/function back and forth between the learner in them and teacher in them during their learning transaction/process (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Hampton (1995) explored the notion of *mamatowisowin* in his article “*Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education*”, Joseph Couture (1991a) in his work, “*Explorations of Native Knowing: Emergent Issues*,” and Willie Ermine (1995) in his article, “*Aboriginal Epistemology*,” all recognized that each learner participates in the energy of knowledge transmission both as individuals and as a member of the collective. The repetition of stories, teachings, processes, actions, interactions, and transactions move the learning energies in a cyclic motion referred to as spiral learning, just as each of the STITP of the Summer Institute was unfolded in the learning circle (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995).

While they were immersed in this unique model of learning as they engaged in the STITP, the student participants shared that they, as students, experienced recurring feelings and emotion. They described them as a spiral of learning and felt the transactional process while they shared their stories, experiences, and interactions. Many of them told me during the institute that they were unaware of how to speak about these feelings and transactions, but they knew and felt something cyclical was happening. As their facilitator for learning, I observed this movement of learning energy during their discussion of the four categories explained by the Elders/Knowledge Keepers, which has resulted in my explanation provided through the Elder/Knowledge Keepers’ voice in Chapter 3. This learning process was further explored during the Sharing Circles and the individual interviews as participants made meaning of the knowledges and understandings they remembered during their experiences in the Summer Institutes.

The particular traditional teaching and learning practices used in the institutes were similar or the same as some of those used historically in local Cree, Ojibwe, and Dakota First Nations daily life practices, lodges, and ceremonies and by Elders and Knowledge Keepers when passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. While a wide variety of traditional Indigenous teaching practices were implemented during the Summer Institutes, the particular seven practices of Smudge, Oral Knowledge Transmission, Teaching Circles, Sharing Circles, Storytelling, Oracle Development, and Sweat Lodge were identified by me as I observed the STITP contribution in the types of shifts in paradigms and attitudes. These practices are considered important and sacred in Aboriginal culture and, as such, will be capitalized throughout this thesis (see glossary in Appendix A for a full list). According to the participants, these changes have been foundational to supporting these practices being able to make a difference in how they implemented Aboriginal education upon their return to the school and classroom. In Chapter 2, these STITP have been described in more detail offering explanations of why I have chosen to write about them. Since this thesis is an introduction to the model, in Chapter 6, I will outline the facets of the model I am suggesting for consideration by other practitioners and researchers.

In the rigor of Euro-Centric research there is a contemplation made when considering the influence of the researcher on participants' responses and is one of the important considerations to be made in any research. In this case I am not only the researcher but I also had the roles of the creator, coordinator/facilitator, teacher and writer of the work in the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal education. While it is clear that a conductor of research has an influence on participants responses I might think

about those who did not respond and consider their reasons why they did or didn't. I might also consider whether or not the people who did respond answered the questions in a particular way so as not to hurt my feelings if there was something negative they needed to say but didn't. In this very serious consideration I must choose to believe in the understanding that those who didn't come forward and had an option to say what they needed to say did not, probably, for many different reasons and these will always be unknown. The understanding I will go forward with is that the participants who did respond had something to say and came forward to reveal those thoughts, feelings and insights. It is my opinion that the level of trust gathered during the institute was strong enough that their sharing either as a member in the circle or as an individual interviewer drove their responses from a place of truth within them. This place of truth is what made the spiral of teaching and learning possible in the first place because each person was encouraged to speak during the institute and after from this place of truth. They worked hard to find this place and I believe that this seeking venture was a success at least for the 21 participants who came forward. I must remember that the rigor of the tobacco offering influenced everything from my conduct, integrity and ethic in the roles I played guided both myself and the participants as we journeyed through this research. There is a principle in *mino pimatisiwin* which forbids an individual powering over anyone or anything and as I have made pledges and vows in various Indigenous lodges of our Manitoba community, Sundance, Midewewin, Women's Fasting Lodge and the Sweat Lodge I am bound to the ethic of non-interference. Yes I may have influenced the participants and will make the choice to believe it is because of the relationship of trust and the mutual understanding of protocols of our Indigenous context within this study

that the richness of the participants' responses came as they did because it was their relationship with me both in the institute and our continued working relationship in community. All of this speaks of truth, integrity and an obligation to focus on positive relationship to the self and in order for this to occur each and every person within the study understood this ethic. To emphasize the example of influence there were 13 community members witnessing during my thesis defense and ultimately my responsibility is to them, their families and the educators and who they are in community to speak the truth to the best of my ability. From there I relied on my relationship with Creator and the spirits of our ancestors who also came to watch and listen to help me with my truth in this study. Our research is never absent of prayer and humility and knowing that there was an extended social family who shared their knowledge with me it is my understanding that the conviction to continue in their light requires me to always remember that teaching and learning is an act of love.

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Chapter 1: Many Worlds Come Together

The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships to bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us to raise levels of consciousness and insight into our world. Let us go forward together with open minds and good hearts as we further take part in this ceremony. (Wilson, 2008, p. 11)

Introduction

As Wilson (2008) spoke of research as a ceremony, I have come to learn that the ethics and rigor of research processes are as meticulous as working with Indigenous practices. The order, protocol, and structure involved in both are an assurance that the commitment of the researcher and apprentice are quite similar. In this this section of the chapter, I introduce the two overarching questions I posed for myself to answer in order to explain the research I chose to embark upon.

Firstly, in the Research Design section, I describe the research design I explore and write about. I present some background to the research, the research methodology, describe the participants and how they were chosen, define the language or terminology that frames the discussions found in this thesis work, and include the limitations and significance of the study. The section *Situating Myself in the Circle of Indigenous Pedagogy* is included to help the reader understand my reasons for becoming involved in this searching exercise. This thesis is my response due to a number of fronts: firstly, the Elders/Knowledge Keepers who demonstrated their love for me by entrusting me with the Indigenous knowledge required to use the STITP; secondly, my Father's request to one day call me Doctor Lamee; thirdly, to focus my thesis work on the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education (1994 to 2007); and finally, this work is done as a tribute to the participants who trusted in the processes of the institutes.

In the section on Examining the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education, I focus on describing the learning environment where I chose to introduce and implement the STITP. I include components of the course and explanations of each practice of the STITP. Fourteen Summer Institutes not only informed, but also helped me grow as a person and as an adult education facilitator. It was my hope that I would be able to find out from the data collected: (a) if and what the participants learned from the STITP, (b) which of the STITP they decided to use in their practice if any, and (c) if at all and in what ways they were impacted either personally or professionally by their experience in the Summer Institute they attended.

In the Achieving Mino Pimatisiwin through Spiral Learning section, I offer an explanation of the people, the teachings, and the way of living that have facilitated my arrival to a place where it is not only my privilege and right to do this work, but in fact, it is also my obligation as a Traditional Knowledge Keeper, which is the pedagogy of look, listen, learn, and live as practiced while apprenticing with the Elder/Knowledge Keepers

The Research Questions

The purpose of this explorative study was to examine the perceptions of 21 randomly selected participants, who had attended Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education between 1994 and 2007, as to their involvement in the STITP and their identity as an educator of Canadian children. To what extent did their involvement in these practices develop teacher capacity and cultural competency related to Aboriginal education (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies [CAAS], 2002; Cajete, 1994)? Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent did the STITP have an effect on participants' professional identity and confidence as an educator of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children?
2. To what extent did the STITP have an effect on the way participants teach and feel in their classrooms, schools, and personal life?

Research Design

Background to the research. Indigenous knowledges and practices as they relate to teacher preparation have been an important part of my work as an educator, counsellor, administrator, post-secondary instructor, and facilitator of learning. The catalyst for my use of traditional Indigenous practices and teaching tools has been the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education offered by the Faculty of Education of the University of Manitoba, which ran between the years 1994 to 2007. For each year of the course, I utilized traditional teaching practices, which I learned as an apprentice with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Bundle Carriers, Ceremony, and Medicine people of the Cree, Ojibwe, and Dakota Nations. These positions and ceremonies are considered important and sacred in Aboriginal culture and, as such, will be capitalized throughout this thesis (see glossary in Appendix A for a full list).

There is general agreement among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike that schools are not yet meeting the needs of Aboriginal children—by almost any educational indicator one may choose to use. Furthermore, they are not providing the truest and most authentic education about Aboriginal people for non-Aboriginal students (CAAS, 2002; Jenkins, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Silver & Mallet, 2002). The lack of knowledge about Aboriginal peoples and their realities is not considered

acceptable or ethical, especially in an era where access to any knowledge has been made probable by technological advancements. It is my contention that educators need to develop the capacity to be culturally competent.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have their rightful place in education that informs, inspires, and encourages relationships that are meaningful and without prejudice (Anderson, Horton, & Orwick, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). Scholars have advocated that the way in which such relationships may be built is by the implementation of transformative learning opportunities that foster shifts in old paradigms and exposure to new ways of thinking, believing, living, and learning (Dei, 2000; Mezirow, 2003; Smith, 2003). According to Battiste and Henderson (2000), this “awareness is the missing link between wholeness and fragmentation, between wellness and doubt” (p. 75). Learning relationships cannot be strongly built on fragmentation and doubt, and so the better we become at creating safety and opportunities for risk taking without retribution, the better the awareness can take hold.

Meeting the needs of all children and youth in the context of what some have come to call *Aboriginal Education* requires strategies that are inclusive, meaningful, and respectful to all participants (Dei, 2002; Three Fires Society, 2007; United Nations Assembly, 2007). It was my hope that the work coming from the efforts of this thesis have erred on the sides of wholeness and wellness. My reasoning is that those reading this thesis and who do the work in schools realize that at the centre of their Aboriginal education efforts, they have found a manageable space and place in which to engage learners, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Having said this, there are considerations to be made that are fundamental to the learning engagement (Ermine, 1995; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Hodgson-Smith, 2000).

The global picture of the integration of Indigenous perspectives into school programming presents common issues and concerns across various education systems, age and grade levels of programming, subject areas, schools, and classrooms (RCAP, 1996; Settee, 2007; Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, 2005). The following issues support the work of this research and are found in the article “*Making Sense of Aboriginal Education in Canadian Public Schools*” (Laramee, 2008b) and reflect two thoughts and questions expressed by these leaders. As educators try to change their practices to respond better to the needs of Aboriginal students, there is much uncertainty as how best to respond to and what constitutes Aboriginal education; and part of that discussion involves the questions such as:

- Why is Aboriginal education not just for Aboriginal students and more so why should it include all Canadian students? and,
- To what extent are traditional Indigenous knowledge, training and protocols needed when working to engage Aboriginal education and its content

Research methodology. Research about the use of traditional Indigenous knowledges and practices in the academic classroom is a relatively new area of study; therefore, I will use the term *exploratory* to describe the type of qualitative research I implemented (Hanington & Martin, 2012). My interest was in collecting data from some of those educators who participated in the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education between 1994 and 2007. It was my belief that most of the educators who participated in the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education would still be associated with K-12

schooling in the province, in either provincial or First Nations schools. I recruited participants by way of an advertisement that was distributed to a number of educational publications and organization in November of 2011. These were organizations such as Aboriginal Circle of Educators, Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, Manitoba Teachers Society, and Council for Aboriginal Education in Manitoba.

The language of Aboriginal education. Many worlds form the language of Aboriginal education. In order to find the most accurate meanings and true essence from the Indigenous learning experience, we acknowledge that this experience exists within the traditional knowledges passed on by the Elders and Knowledge Keepers as they pass on their knowledge in the ancestral languages and ancestral knowings, all of which come from the land. Since many stories, teachings, values, and beliefs have been translated from the original languages into English, the meanings found in the Indigenous knowledge has been somewhat altered by this translation. Therefore, the Elders/Knowledge Keepers who participated in this research have unselfishly or altruistically made the effort to share the stories, teachings, values, and beliefs in English, knowing that the accuracy and true meaning are somewhat lost in the translation. The Elders/Knowledge Keepers have shared the importance of the relationship between the learners and Knowledge Keepers, which is critical, and through the feelings emoted during the learning experiences, the learners will find some of the truth of the meanings in the feelings experienced. When the Elders/Knowledge Keepers share in their first languages, it has been my experience that even though I do not understand all of what is being said, I still feel the knowledge. The encouragement of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers to speak from the heart when passing on Indigenous knowledge, whether that be

in the original language or English, has great importance to those of us left with the task of oral knowledge transmission. By speaking from the heart, those listening will be fully engaged in mind, body, spirit, and emotions.

The ultimate dream would be for the knowledge to be passed on in the original languages. However, due to the great numbers of Aboriginal people who do not speak their own language, those who carry these knowledges love us enough to speak to us in English. Having said this, the accounts given in this thesis deal specifically with traditional Indigenous knowledge passed on through the English language. Even within the use of the English language, there is a need to contextualize and explain ways in which certain concepts are understood by Aboriginal people. Even though the language of the STITP of the Summer Institute was English, the meaning of the words spoken may not be understood by non-Aboriginal people given the history, the baggage, the *isms*, or the use and/or context within which an English word may be spoken or written. To this end, I have included the following definition to help with understanding some of the terminology, and I have included a complete glossary in Appendix A.

While the term Indigenous is understood in a global context and pertains to any knowledge that comes from the original people of the land (World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, 2006), the term Indigenous as part of this thesis is understood in the context of the Indigenous knowledge of Canada, which comes from the people of this land or territory. In particular, in the territory of Manitoba, Indigenous knowledge is specific to the Métis, Cree, Ojibwe, Dakota, Dene, Oji-Cree, and Inuit people and is slowly finding its place in education systems and at all levels from kindergarten through to post-secondary. In the provincial education systems of Manitoba,

the work of integrating Indigenous knowledge into mainstream systems has been identified as Aboriginal education (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; WNCP, 2000), while in other systems, we will hear references made specifically to First Nations Education, Métis Education, and Inuit Education (Battiste, 1998, 2002; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Limitations of the study. Until the last few decades, teacher education has been void of learning experiences and opportunities in Aboriginal education or Indigenous studies whereby teachers could be engaged in such strategies as the STITP and Indigenous knowledge inherent in the practice of knowledge (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2004; Cajete, 2000). To date, many educators and scholars have described, emphasized, researched, and written about the need for Aboriginal education experiences and opportunities in pre-service, graduate, and post-graduate levels of teacher education (Battiste, 2002; Hampton, 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). We are presently in a period where the pool of people who can implement traditional Indigenous teaching practices into mainstream educational settings is growing, yet remains severely imbalanced proportionately to the numbers of Aboriginal students in either First Nations or provincial schools.

However, the integrity of such people is of concern to Elders and Knowledge Keepers regarding who is an authentic Knowledge Keeper, who has apprenticed as an Indigenous researcher, and who is authorized to do so (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). There are Elders and Knowledge Keepers, educators, and leaders in education who are hesitant to bring the traditional Indigenous teaching practices to academic, post-secondary classrooms, or any classrooms for that matter, because of the potential risk of

the knowledges and practices not being properly respected and protected (Smith, 2003). The entry points, places, and spaces in most post-secondary institutions still require work to advocate, create, plan for, and introduce Aboriginal education experiences and opportunities (Fitznor, 2012; Smith, 2003).

Across Canada, educators, teachers, principals, and superintendents as well as parents and students are faced with a limitation as they struggle with a variety of complex educational issues that relate to improving school experiences and the educational success of Aboriginal students. While the focus of the study does not specifically address this larger picture I feel that the gift from my work may offer some alternatives for those faced with these issues to work with in the classroom. While these issues may be prevalent for Aboriginal students, we are also in the process of providing non-Aboriginal students (and society) with a richer understanding of Aboriginal peoples and their worldviews, contributions, and place within Canadian society (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Battiste, 2004; Fitznor, 2005; Hampton, 1995; Smith, 2003). These efforts are both complex and highly contextual.

Significance of the study. In my mind then, it becomes important to be able to educate teachers as to what Indigenous practices and knowledge educators bring to their learning environments. In addition, as part of this work, I believe that we can constructively influence how educators implement Aboriginal education. I believe that the findings from this research study can inform institutions responsible for teacher education as to some of the benefits for the use of Indigenous teaching tools and practices in their institutions. This study informs us about the significance in shifting paradigms and transforming the ways in which Aboriginal education can be constructed. This

information can be useful to all schools, both provincial mainstream and First Nations schools, in filling the void in knowledge in both Canadian learners and Aboriginal learners. Educators who take such offerings as part of their teacher training have indicated that they have moved along the continuum from cultural awareness to cultural competence (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008).

It is recognized that there is limited information, tools, and resources for educating those who are attempting to be effective in implementing respectful, culturally appropriate programs, which is critical to changing the levels of Indigenous knowledge for all learners who enter Canadian schools. Those who have participated in this study indicated that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners can benefit from the capacity-building efforts of participants of the programs where Indigenous knowledge and practices hold a significant place in the post-secondary curricula (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Alberta Education, 2005; CAAS, 2002; WNCP, 2000).

One of the observations I made over the years as I facilitated the summer institutes is that there is a void in knowledge about Aboriginal education and Canadians' rightful place in it. Through the voices of the participants in this study, I believe the findings can provide the potential to create awareness about Indigenous knowledge and its practices. This awareness development may be seen as enhancing to the body of knowledge for developing a critical consciousness about Aboriginal people and their histories, thus contributing to filling the void of knowledge. Since Aboriginal/Indigenous education is one of the fastest growing fields of education, the experiences shared from the engagement in the Summer Institutes have the potential to constructively open

doorways and move forward the agenda of Aboriginal education for teacher education, school systems, and schools.

This study offers a particular insight into the understandings of educators who participated in the Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education. Further, the value of the study lies in its ability to lay out the complexities of this struggle for meaning and the ability to contribute to the discourse and practice of Indigenous pedagogy in the academy, particularly as it relates to teacher education. The educational jurisdictions the participants work within have influenced the depth and breadth to which they have been able to practice and integrate the information acquired during the summer institutes. There is a great deal of encouragement throughout the voices within this explorative study for others to take future steps in research to continue the exploration, thus adding to and deepening the discourse as to the use of Indigenous knowledges and practices in all areas of post-secondary education.

Situating Myself in the Learning Circle of Indigenous Pedagogy

As noted by Wilson (2008),

Indigenous researchers are knowledge seekers who work to progress Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing in a modern and constantly evolving context. (Back Cover)

While the United Nations Assembly (2007) has incorporated the following article in their

UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 11:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. (p. 9)

Creating the spiral. The place that I hold as a seeker of knowledge in the circle of this research comes from the right and responsibility to practice what I have been taught by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Ceremony Keepers, and Medicine Keepers. The Elders' voices in how I have come to understand my work and those who provided me the knowledge over time are acknowledged and embedded in the section on Exposure to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers. I have situated myself between those who taught me and the experiences in the summer institutes, and I explain what it has meant for me to apprentice with the Elders/Keepers of Knowledge. I also provide a reciprocal context to my relationship with the learners and our shared involvement in the summer institutes.

Over the span of my life, I have come to understand various parts of my life's journey as chapters in a book. I was raised in the urban centre of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and very early, I somehow was guided to believe that I was not to consider living anywhere else except this province and this urban centre. Again, through my mentors, teachers, guides, and relatives, it was impressed upon me that by remaining a Winnipegger, I would be able to observe, over time, how many worlds would converge around me. As an individual, I have now realized and refer to these as the human, familial, interfaith, ethnic, educational, natural (i.e., earth, plant, animal, water, and sky), and Spirit Worlds.

Within each of the worlds opened to me by others or myself, I have transcended learning opportunities and life-changing experiences and epiphanies. I met individuals whose backgrounds were diverse across ethnicities, religions or faith walks, and languages. The messages they shared related to beliefs in humanity, which were similar to those of Aboriginal people. Each person I speak of reflected common practices,

teachings, and foundational principles, which demonstrated many commonalities. The place of differences, however, was not the main point of contact, but rather these worlds exposed to me met and crossed at the place(s) of similarities. I was able to experience an encouragement into *Mino Pimatisiwin* or the possibility of living a *Good Life* (Hart, 2002; Young, 2003) saturated with the love, knowledge, caring, and compassion of those who carried the wisdom to do so.

As I write this paragraph, I feel that I must recognize my most powerful role model and teacher, my Father. On the day I graduated from my master's program in 1993, my Father put his arm around my shoulder as we walked to the gym for the graduation Pow Wow, and he asked me when he would be able to call me Dr. Laramée. I responded by saying, "Geez Pop, I just finished my master's." I recollect this day with deep reverence, because he has been gone to the Spirit World since 1996, and little did I know that in 2012, I would come to understand the depth of his question. After the first institute I facilitated, I had realized that the possibilities for thesis material were evident in this learning experience and that a seed had been planted for me to consider my doctoral program. Therefore, from the early 1990s, a thesis was brewing. As I have worked through my PhD and struggled to meet this most important obligation, I realized that to provide a positive answer to my Father's question, carrying this notion had become seemingly heavy over the span of this past 20 years. During the last part of the process, my actual PhD program, I have met some challenges, my health being the greatest of them. Nonetheless, I had arrived to a block that I could not seem to get through, and as I have indicated, dreams can become great and powerful tools for seeing and learning. I share a dream I had that made sense of where I was with my work.

I was sitting at the center of a circle. There were many dark and ugly things swimming around the immediate core of where I was sitting, and I could not seem to see or reach my support network. However, off in the distance, I could see my Father. He smiled so warmly at me, and I remembered the day of graduation and his question. As I remembered, I stood up, and all of the darkness, frustration, and painful memories dissipated and went away. Low and behold, I could now see and reach out to the people who have supported me through thick and thin. These people started to move towards me in the dream, and I woke up.

After the dream, a few days later, I started to run into and get phone calls from friends, spiritual guides, and family members, and I began to realize that I no longer felt the anxiety that had been bothering my mind, body, spirit, and emotions. I called my Mother and told her the dream. I explained to her that I felt that this work of my thesis had become such a burden to carry for all of this time. I also told her about my experiences while I was doing the Sharing Circles and individual interviews and how much respect and love the participants shared with each other and with me during that process. This realization had me describing to her the feelings I could not explain because there were so many different things that I was experiencing during this process. Her response was immediate and spoken with such love, and I was immediately overwhelmed when she said right out of the blue,

Why do you think your Dad asked you when he would be able to call you Dr. Laramée? Do you not know that he realized what sacrifices you made to complete the master's and what more it was going to take to do this work? That circle you sat in the middle of in your dream is your name (Niiogaabewiik), and your Father created a circle space in your spirit when he asked you that question so that you would not forget who you are and what your work is. When you stood up in the dream, you were standing in the middle of the circle feeling what it means to teach and learn as an act of love. He loved you enough to ask you the question and you have loved him enough to not forget. (M. Guilbault, personal communication, January, 30, 2013)

When she spoke these words to me, my Mother did not know the title of my thesis work.

Exposure to the Elders, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keepers. In this section, I highlight the individuals who have shown me how important it is to know

who you are, where you come from, where it is that you are headed, and how it is you are going to get there. They have loved me enough to share their knowledge and truth so that I may love them back enough to have listened and learned to live and share what they had shared. People who have influenced my life as Elders, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keepers are presented in the following way:

As a Child

Elijah Bowers – Cree	Priscilla Bowers – Cree	Myra Guilbault – Cree	Ernest Tootoosis – Cree
Albert Lightning – Cree	Alexis Simons – Cree	Rose Jackson – Cree	Amy Clements – Cree
Janet Cochrane – Cree	Dorothy Francis – Cree	Stan McKay Sr. – Cree	Dorothy McKay – Cree
Stan Cuthand – Cree	Beatrice Cuthand – Cree	Adam Cuthand – Cree	David Courchene – Ojibwe
Walter Deiter – Cree	Bernelda Wheeler – Cree	Tommy Porter – Mohawk	Philip Deer – Chickasaw
John Snow – Stony	Jean Goodwill – Cree	Alanis Obomsawin – Mohawk	
Jean Lehache – Mohawk	Aurelia Thickfoot – Cree	Rufus Goodstriker– Blackfoot	

As a Young Woman

Mary Guilbault – Cree	Ernie Guilbault–/Métis	Rose Bear – Métis	Bob Major – Ojibwe
Wally Noel – Dakota	Ed Head – Métis	Jim Elk – Dakota	Joyce Olson – Ojibwe
Art Wambidee – Dakota	Eva McKay – Dakota	Eli Taylor – Dakota	Don Daniels – Ojibwe
Ann Callahan – Cree	Aurelia Thickfoot – Cree	Yvon Dumont - Métis	Winston Wuttanee - Cree
Bobby Woods - Cree	Noel Wuttanee – Cree	Daphne Ojig - Ojibwe	Fern Courchene – Ojibwe
Rose Courchene – Ojibwe	Beatrice Medicine – Cree	Jeanette Corbiere – Ojibwe	Kantineta Horn – Mohawk
Marlene Jackson – Cree	Marie Baker – Blackfoot	Flora Zaharia - Blackfoot	Lucille Lepine - Cree

As a Traditional Woman

Herman Atkinson – Ojibwe	Harry Roberts – Ojibwe	Louise Shebiggat – Ojibwe	Mary Roberts – Ojibwe
Wally Swain – Ojibwe	Julie Swain – Ojibwe	Eddie Benton – Ojibwe	Eleanor Olson – Ojibwe
Peter O’Chees – Cree	Stan Nelson – Ojibwe	Stan McKay SR. Cree	Porky White – Ojibwe
Robin Green – Ojibwe	Molly Thomas – Ojibwe	Walter Bonaise – Cree	Alex Bonaise – Cree
George Courchene – Ojibwe	Mary Hall – Dakota	Solomon Hall – Dakota	Mary Hall – Ojibwe
Mr. Tachin – Dakota	Mrs. Tachin – Dakota	Paul Huntinghawk – Ojibwe	
Randy Huntinghawk–Ojibwe			

As a Grandmother and Bundle Carrier

Charles Nelson – Ojibwe	Kathy Bird – Cree	Mide Migwun – Ojibwe	Lawrence Henry – Ojibwe
Danny Thomas – Ojibwe	Gary Robson – Ojibwe	Florence Paynter – Ojibwe	Debbie Garneau – Ojibwe
Bruce Elijah – Oneida	Ron Swampy – Ojibwe	Carl Stone – Ojibwe	Philip Paynter – Cree
Barb Daniels – Oji - Cree	Vera Martin – Ojibwe	Art Solomon – Ojibwe	Helen Settee - Ojibwe
Jennifer Thomas – Cree	David Blacksmith – Cree	Joe Esquash – Ojibwe	Janice Millar – Cree
Shirley Cook - Cree	Anna Gibbs – Ojibwe	Tommy Stillday – Ojibwe	Margo Thomas–Ojibwe
Stan Williams – Métis	Mary Young – Ojibwe	Laara Fitznor – Cree	Tobasonakwut – Ojibwe
Fred Kelly – Ojibwe	Charlette Daniels – Ojibwe	Ernest Daniels – Ojibwe	Edna Manitowabee-Ojibwe

I cannot cite the exact date when nor the individual who may have imparted a specific piece of knowledge. This type of learning, if perceived as a spiral of repetition, will reveal many of these Elders and Traditional Teachers saying the same thing, repeatedly. Further, these teachings emerged in many different ways through many different stories, teachings, and ceremonies, over and through time and space. They always encouraged the young people to sit down and watch the events taking place, to listen to the things that were being said and not said, to learn the information by being a humble helper, and to live a good life so that all would see you as a peaceful person. Each of these individuals has imparted some knowledge, and the emphasis has always been to “know you know, not to think you know”.

The traditional practice of teaching and learning is based in an oral pedagogy, and I beg the indulgence of those reading this paper for me to impart parts of the knowledge I have learnt in ceremonies, lodges, and my life’s walk, which may be relevant to this study. I honour the people cited in this chapter, who took the time to share part of their life’s journey with me, so that I may acquire the knowledge needed to present the information in this segment. I have chosen to identify them as the references needed to qualify and authenticate this part of the literature review even though it is information I use in this thesis which was passed on through an oral tradition. This list is by no means a complete list, and some people may be absent from it. It is not my intention to exclude any person from whom I have acquired knowledge, and there are probably many others I will remember long after the writing of this thesis, and to these Elders and Teachers I mean no disrespect. As I remembered now, I have included in the list Traditional Knowledge Keepers, Bundle Carriers, and Teachers from whom I was able to listen, learn

from, and/or engage with as an apprentice. These individuals practiced patience with me during my life's research to find who I am, where I come from, where I am to go, and ways to get there.

As a result of these people having shared their knowledge and stories with me, bridges to knowledges have occurred. They created a bridge upon which I was able to walk back into the *old ways* (those practiced prior to contact). I have been able to begin building the bridge between the traditional worlds of the ancestors of this territory and between the Aboriginal people and other peoples. These worlds and the people in them, with their disparate world-views, have collided in the past. One of the teachers, Ernest Tootosis, told a group of us in the 1970s at a youth/Elders workshop “after 1992 the next 500 years of relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans would have to be done differently then had been done in the first 500 years of relationship” (personal communication, July 20, 1980). He asked us to think of the learning required to know about each other so that Aboriginal people would be able to find the ways to tell non-Aboriginal people about who we are and what we believe.

Apprenticing while learning my responsibility. As a learner in the transmission of this type of knowledge, I know that when I received information from the Knowledge Keepers that there was, in fact, an understanding of their commitment of love for me, and I, in turn, chose to learn from them as an act of love (Couture, 1991a; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995). When they spoke, I sat down to listen out of a deep appreciation and respect for the knowledge that they carried. Throughout the cyclical stages of my life as a child, a young woman, a mother, and a grandmother, I have moved through the transitions of my life in accumulating Indigenous knowledge (Battiste & Henderson,

2000; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Now I have a responsibility to impart and share what I know (Graveline, 1998) and have learned what I know as an “act of love” (Bouvier, 1994). It was told to me that Rita Bouvier had asked her mother a question about why her Mother Annie taught her the things that she did. Annie’s response to her daughter was that she taught Rita what she knew because she loved her. This story was further told by Katherine Hodgson-Smith (2002) in *Fulfilling Promises* as part of her article, *Aboriginal Education: Issues in Pedagogy* where Rita is identified as one of four women preparing for a workshop in 1994. As a result Rita wrote an unpublished paper in that year, titled *Teaching Our Children What We Know: An Act of Love* as part of a forum on Indian and Metis Education held in Saskatoon.

Throughout my life, I have been exposed to the traditional teachings and practices of the Indigenous people, and regardless of the tribe or linguistic groups in that exposure, there have been certain common values, beliefs, laws, truths, philosophies, and worldviews held by Indigenous people of North America that were presented to me in stories, songs, lifestyles, and ceremonies. These teachings now have meaning in my own life as duties and responsibilities transferred to me as a Traditional Bundle Carrier and Keeper of Knowledge. The same stories, songs, lifestyle, and ceremonies passed on to me, I must now pass to others, as many of Elders and Knowledge Keepers who trusted me with knowledge of practice and traditions are no longer here. Their voices are heard through me as I do my work in each of the teachings, ceremonies, and pedagogical practices now practiced by me. Each of the teachings, ceremonies, and pedagogical practices has significance on its own, but has a developmental quality when perceived as a collective strategy for life and living (Three Fires Society, 2013).

I have learned from those whom I have perceived to be my teachers. They shared with me parcels of what they know as a demonstration of their love for me and caring ways that they are committed to living. In honour of the people who took the time to share part of their life's journey with me, I recognized them in the list earlier in this section and organized the Elder's, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keepers according to the stages of life whereby I was most impacted by their love and kindness.

Reciprocity. As a Bundle Carrier and Knowledge Keeper, I now must put these two things together in meaningful ways for the people of the present so that they will know the people of our past, ensuring that all of our relatives on Mother Earth have the possibility of a future. The reciprocal nature of oral knowledge transmission and the apprenticeship model of teaching and learning presume that each of us who transcended the acquisition of such knowledge and its practice will reciprocate by doing for others what had been shown and modeled to us. As a result of these people having shared their knowledge and stories with me, they have created a bridge upon which I walked into the old ways so that I may see how to live their knowledge with others today. I have been able to begin building the bridge between the traditional worlds of the ancestors of this territory to those people, both Aboriginal people and peoples of other nations, who are willing to walk across the bridge carefully into the worldviews, philosophies, and perspectives of our ancestors.

We can change attitudes and perceptions with even the most basic information on Indigenous knowledge, given the fact that very few of these truths have been able to permeate the mainstream education systems. The reality is that there is such a void of this knowledge that those of us who are considered Knowledge Keepers understand how far

to travel with others in this kind of learning journey. My hope is to enlighten educators so that when they facilitate learning in their classrooms, they may have a good foundation of the basics in Indigenous knowledge and practice of the original people of this territory. As well, there are policy developments, legislation, treaties, and governmental acts and decrees that were established to change the traditional connections of Aboriginal peoples to their territorial lands, language, and familial structures (Indian Act, 1985; RCAP, 1996; United Nations Assembly, 2007). Still today, this information is not being revealed as common knowledge in schools, neither in First Nations or provincial educational systems (RCAP, 1996).

An important aspect of the leadership role I play in Aboriginal education is the traditional responsibilities (Three Fires Society, 2007) and the Bundle of Knowledge that I carry. These roles assist me in my work in bridging the foundational underpinnings of the ancestral worldviews of our land and territory to the contemporary educational setting. While they are integral to my leadership capability, they are not the only aspects of my leadership role. The Bundles of Knowledge help me decipher how to explore Aboriginal education and its integration within the mainstream classroom. There is much substance in the human values found in sacred laws and teachings (WNCP, 2000).

When approaching my research interest, I took the ethic of respect for Indigenous intellectual property (First Nations Centre, 2007; United Nations Assembly, 2007) seriously in the act of writing about traditional ways that have been passed to me in an oral tradition of the Ceremonies and Longhouse I attended in during my apprenticeship. I am mindful of the United Nations Assembly's (2007) statement provided in Article 15.1, which states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their

cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information” (p. 7). The knowledge of the people of the territory presently known as the Province of Manitoba is what has formed the basis of my facilitation practices in the teaching and learning environments of teacher education. I have been encouraged by them to transmit the Indigenous knowledge and practices of my Cree and Ojibwe ancestors. I came to know from a visit with my Great Aunt Aurelia that both ancestral bloods (the Cree and Ojibwe) flow in my veins. I had known about the Cree and Métis parts of my ancestry, but had not known that my Great-Great-Grandmother was Ojibwe. This knowledge carried considerable enlightenment because I had always wondered why becoming part of Midewewin life was so important to me. I consider myself an individual grounded in the ancestral ways of my Cree/Ojibwe/Métis Aboriginal heritage. However, I also recognize that I have also been influenced by the Indigenous knowledge and practices of peoples from other Indigenous Nations.

The Elders’ knowledge. The context in which various authors have discussed traditional Indigenous teaching practice, the need for its place in education (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2004), and specifically as it relates to the educators who become responsible for its implementation requires some exploration. The ways in which educators are presently trained in post-secondary institutions do not adequately prepare them to develop awareness and some competencies required to implement programming in Aboriginal education (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Anderson et al., 2004; Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2002). Crucial to the work in this type of education is the importance of developing the understanding that the Indigenous knowledge of the people of this territory has an important function in education and represents a large context of

the Canadian historical development of this territory (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010). As stated earlier, the following information is critical to helping educators understand the rationale for the integration of Indigenous knowledge and traditional Indigenous teaching practice as good education for this territory and for this country. While I have written these statements as part of my personal belief system and from accounts shared with me by Elders who are concerned about our ways these notions are supported in a document prepared for the University of Manitoba students called *Understanding and Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: An Introductory Handbook* (2011). The ultimate goal is that all Canadian learners who participate in education would begin to realize and understand that such knowledge:

- has been maintained in its integrity and sustained in its value by a tradition of oral presentation and transmission;
- is significant as a current tradition, and the information is an important function in shaping a modern world;
- is to be protected, transmitted, learned, and utilized in its originality;
- can influence the development of healthy and informed relationships between people of many nations; and
- is needed in mainstream education as a tool for influencing paradigms, perspectives, and attitudes toward positive inclusion of Indigenous perspectives

In the document called *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the United Nations Assembly (2007) has listed many articles that also support these points.

Sadly, many of the individuals who have carried the responsibility for such knowledge and its transmission have now gone on to the Spirit World, and “many of them may have even been overlooked or never learned the teachings” (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977). However, there are still individuals who carry the old Indigenous knowledge, and such knowledge has not been greatly influenced by the modern world. The Knowledge Keepers who remain with us need to be found, and with due respect and proper cultural protocols, we can ask them to impart their knowledge as we engage ourselves in meaningful ways of listening to them. Scholars who have come before me have implored the following notion that in order for this to occur, people have to be taught, informed, and/or shift in their paradigms to see the value and importance in this oral knowledge, history learning and research venture (Antone, 2001; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Fitznor, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Medicine, 1999).

Margaret Kovach (2009), in her work, *Indigenous Methodologies:*

Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts, explained that:

The premise found in Nehiyaw epistemology is about giving back to community, and as researchers, we can do this by sharing our work with others so that it can assist others . . . [and] that a contribution on Indigenous research frameworks would be useful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers seeking to honour Indigenous knowledge systems. (p. 11)

Therefore, I believe that the work of today, for those of us who have had the fortune to learn from such individuals, is to serve as conduits. We serve by bridging the world of Indigenous thought and process to this contemporary world, where such knowledge is struggling to find its rightful place (Battiste, 2004; Battiste & Henderson, 2000, CASS, 2005; Couture, 1991a; Hampton, 1995). I feel that I have been blessed as one of those educators with the responsibility to do so.

Further to what is found in Aboriginal/Indigenous epistemologies, I have learned from such individuals that some of the knowledge transmission is situated in prophecy (Couture, 1991a; Hampton, 1995; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). Certain prophecies have transcended time and space, and some of them cross the boundaries of humanity. Knowledge carried within the prophecies has affected both the collective and individual. Many of the prophecies are told to assist individuals to move through issues to become better people and fulfill the gifts and talents observed in them as they grow up around Elders and visionaries of the communities (Hampton, 1995). There have been situations in my personal life whereby my mentors, guides, teachers, and relatives have encouraged and pushed me to be the person whom they have seen in their dreams and their aspirations of a better future for the children and grandchildren and those unborn children in the seven generations yet to come (see list in Appendix B).

An Elder Ojibwe woman from the Pembina Band (Roseau River Ojibwe Nation), Mary Roberts (ebun), adopted me as her granddaughter. At one point in my relationship with her, she shared with me that she felt that with my understanding of the English language, I would be able to use this language as a tool to bring the knowledge of the traditional teachings together. She said that I would do this in ways to create awareness in non-Aboriginal people so that they could find respectful ways of seeing our people. She also told me that I would be instrumental in changing the ways in which Aboriginal people see themselves in the history of Canada. The responsibilities prophesied by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and others with whom I have apprenticed have manifested in my work with children and youth, but more specifically, in these last few decades with educators and all of those who affect the lives of children and youth. My adopted

Grandmother, Mary (ebun), and her brother Herman (ebun) were two people who not only affected my life through prophecies, Indigenous knowledge, and practices, but also ensured through their ways of strictness and kindness that in the hearts, minds, and spirits of many, the teachings would stay alive.

One contentious area of my life was that I did not speak my language. My mother did not teach us the Cree language for fear of us being punished, as had happened to her in the residential schools she attended as child and youth. I am someone who cannot speak my ancestral language, as it was robbed from my experience as part of the residential school intergenerational impact. This loss of language became a source of misery and vulnerability for me. In spite of this situation, Mary Roberts' brother, Herman Atkinson (ebun), a Traditional Teacher, Sundance Keeper, and Healer for many, also had entrusted me with certain knowledge, traditional teachings, and prophecies, and he knew that I would influence the lives of many children and youth by becoming a strong advocate for the ancestral languages.

It was Herman Atkinson who supported me in 1977 in a workshop on his reserve when I told community members that our children and youth were going to need to be educated in both worlds. I shared that our children needed to learn our ways of learning, speaking, and living as well as the ways of mainstream education, which is the ways of learning, speaking, and living from that system. Most of the people left that workshop in anger, and it was then that Herman told the remaining people that they should listen to my words. He said that one day I would be in a position to influence education in many ways that would constructively affect the lives of Aboriginal people in all levels of

education systems both in First Nations and mainstream education. To this end, he shared with me a prophecy that he called the Eighth Fire Prophecy.

He stated that I should keep this prophecy close to everything that I do on behalf of our people (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977), and it has been cited among many different tribes in North America as a vision or way to ensure that there is recognition that Indigenous knowledge will be there for people, which has been endorsed by the statement: “The Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire—an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood” (Benton-Banai, as cited in Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge, 2007, para. 13). In schools and other places of learning, a new kind of teacher seems to be emerging, and they are seeking a way for the continued transmission of such knowledge. The belief in this prophecy, “a new people will emerge...to retrace their steps in history... to find what was left by the trail” (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977) is growing amongst Indigenous people.

Herman was a man whom I believe changed the face of ceremony life in Manitoba, if not in North America. He traveled across Turtle Island to consult, gather knowledge, and participate in ceremony with many Nations. At home, here in Manitoba, he not only woke up my family, he also woke up many other Aboriginal people to reclaim the Ojibwe ceremonial way of life. Now, in my own personal Grandmother life, or my Busy Life, the ways demonstrated by him and his sister Mary are being modelled to my siblings and my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren by me and one of my siblings. My uncle lived the Eighth Fire Prophecy and guided others such as me to do as he modeled. The very things that were once outlawed by the Government of Canada are being advocated by me and others as potential teaching tools for the academic

classroom in contemporary educational settings (Battiste, 2004; Henderson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Venne, 1998).

Others, such as Ernest Tootoosis (ebun) my adopted Grandfather figure, Healer, and Traditional Teacher passed on the knowledge of prophecies. One in particular he had shared with me and my siblings, when he explained that in 1992, the 500-year prophecy would come to an end (see also Johnson, 2007; Solomon & Posluns, 1990; Three Fires Society, 2007). Canada had been in this prophecy since 1492, hence 500 years, and the way in which we moved through the next 500 years in this country needed to be done differently than had the first five centuries of relationship with the people who came to share the land. An interesting note to share here is that RCAP (1996) shared similar points in their report.

This prophecy is a vision or way to understand the historical events that transpired right from the coming of the non-Indigenous visitors to this land, so that eventually, we would have a hand as Indigenous people in saving our planet. We would also have a role to play, in “emerging” as part of the “new people” cited in the Eighth Fire Prophecy (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977). As we become involved in relationships with those who sought refuge in this land, we need to remember our role as the “Red Nation” spoken about in the 500-hundred-year prophecy (E. Tootoosis, personal communication, July 20, 1980). Our responsibilities, our rights, our laws, our uniqueness, and the role we play as keepers of the land (i.e., stewards) in such prophecies are key to the future of all. Still today, we have a role to play in the education of all children and youth who are now learners in this country about the sacredness of Mother Earth and the

need to protect her life (Henderson, 2008; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Johnson, 2007; Venne, 1998).

Ernest Tootoosis taught us the knowledge inside this prophecy required us to understand that, in time and after he was gone to the Spirit World, we would need the knowledge in this prophecy (personal communication, July 20, 1980). It would influence the relationships with those on this land who are non-Aboriginal by ancestry. He indicated that we would live in the time when these people would seek advice of Indigenous peoples and consult with us as to how to save the planet, our Mother the Earth. Forging of new relationships with the oppressors, he told us, would not be easy. However, he suggested our belief in the Eighth Fire Prophecy would help us understand what this new time and the new relationships would require and that “hard work and perseverance” would be indicative of life in this new time and that we would be the “new people that emerge to pick up what was left by the trail” (personal communication, July 20, 1980).

In light of these two prophecies, the relationships between the Indigenous people of Canada and those who signed treaty relations with the First Nations and negotiated rights with the Métis and Inuit were addressed on June 11, 2008, in the *Apology* made by Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada. These relationships or partnerships alluded to by Stephen Harper are, in fact, the exact relationships Ernest Tootoosis indicated would need to be forged and handled in a different manner, if we are to survive the next 500 years on Mother Earth. When Ernest Tootoosis spoke of the 500-year prophecy, he was clear that those of us who would find ourselves in leadership roles at this period would need to remember the teachings in such prophecies to take us through a

time of renewal (personal communication, July 20, 1980). This would be a time when Indigenous people would be respected in the land upon which the Creator had originally placed the Red Nation of the Indigenous people of Turtle Island (i.e., North America). Many people and worlds would converge on Turtle Island, and the people who found sanctuary in the homeland of the Indigenous people of Canada would again seek help from the Indigenous people through the epistemological ways in which we view how all things are related to one another. This interrelationship and interconnectedness codes a way for humanity to continue, but as told in the prophecies (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977), we have found each other beyond race, class, faith, gender, age, and territory to mend and recommit to the laws found in the prophecies (Hartley, Joffe, & Preston, 2010; Johnson, 2007; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Smith, 2005).

Examining the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education

Relationships don't just shape Indigenous reality, they are our reality. Indigenous researchers develop relationships with ideas in order to achieve enlightenment in the ceremony that is Indigenous research. Indigenous Research is the ceremony of maintaining accountability to these relationships. (Wilson, 2008, p. 7)

In this section of the study I have described the relationship between the principles of a model of adult learning, andragogy, which at the heart of its praxis resembles the same principles of traditional Indigenous learning lodges. My purpose for its inclusion as part of this study is discussed as model which encouraged me by virtue of its similarity to consider bringing traditional Indigenous practices to the university first as a student in my Master's program then as a facilitator of learning in the academic classroom. Presented is a brief description of each of the STITP as the core praxis of the Summer Institute. The chapter ends with of the main pieces of belief or philosophy for

learning the concept of Mino Pimatisiwin which is the foundational essence in the quest for learning how to live a good life and finally an introductory explanation related to the spiral and the movement of learning energy.

Andragogy and Indigenous pedagogy.

Andragogy. Malcolm Knowles (1980) and Stephen Brookfield (1986) spoke of finding our humanness in the work we do with adult learners. In my mind, when this happens, they will, in fact, find their humanness in the work they do with the children. With that humanness comes humility and, ultimately, the kind of humanity needed to work with the STITP.

As I described the traditional teaching and learning processes, I felt the need to explain how I came across this mainstream adult model of learning called andragogy (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1980; Knowles & Associates, 1984) and why it intrigued me. As I explored this model during my master's program, I found it to be very similar to the ways in which the Elders/Knowledge Keepers unfold their practice in the lodges and ceremonies. I was encouraged by this philosophy and the practices of this model and have included a brief discussion of the works of Brookfield (1986) and Knowles (1980) in this thesis.

As part of my master's exam, I chose to answer one of the questions, which required me to identify an adult learning theory that resembled or contained in some way elements that were comparable to a learning experience that was familiar to me. In this response, I wrote about Malcolm Knowles' (1980) model of andragogy (see also Brookfield, 1986) and the learning processes found in the Indigenous learning and healing lodges in which I had participated. The grounding principle for both andragogy

and traditional Indigenous teaching practice is that in each model, a circular seating arrangement for the creation of a safe atmosphere and the development of mutual respect between the facilitator/learner and the Knowledge Keeper/apprentice for a positive climate is imperative in each of the respective learning environments.

Upon an examination of the “Andragogical Principles of Learning” in the works of Stephen Brookfield (1986, p. 1), I found similarities to our Elder teachings. Brookfield remarked, “The acts of teaching and learning—and the creation and alteration of our beliefs, values, actions, relationships, and social forms that result from this are ways in which we realize our humanity” (p. 1). Realizing our humanity is, in fact, quite similar to the ways in which Elders have taught us that what we do, think, and act; how they affect our life with others; and why they implore us to become peaceful in our ways and, finally, live our lives as persons of peace. By doing so, we model what effective learning transactions can look, sound, and feel like.

At some point between the first summer institute in 1994 and the last in 2007, I merged both the principles and practice of andragogy with the traditional Indigenous teachings and practise into the work of the summer institutes. This union has created a unique model by using features of andragogy and the STITP philosophy and practice together and implementing them in teacher education. The *Mekiniwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* is a model for teacher education rising out of the work of the Summer Institutes and has been described in the reflections of the participants in this study. This model has not been described or written but will be a result of the contributions made by the participants in this study.

The andragogical model for adult learning so resembles the ways in which Elders/Knowledge Keepers facilitate the Indigenous pedagogy of look, listen, learn, and live in lodges, ceremonies, in the bush, on the prairie, and even in homes as part of daily life and living. I describe the model and how I was encouraged to think about how I could bring the traditional Indigenous teaching practices to the post-secondary classroom to help teachers become more adept at facilitating Aboriginal education. I briefly describe Indigenous pedagogy and how the Summer Institutes merged seamlessly with the concepts in the andragogical adult learning model (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1980). The Summer Institute where all of this took place is best described in that section of this chapter, but first this is a closer look at andragogical practice and philosophy that contributed to the model I have cited.

The following are principles and components of andragogy found in Brookfield's (1986) book *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning: a Comprehensive Analysis of Principles and Effective Practices* and are followed by a connection I have made to Indigenous pedagogy. These principles apply chiefly to teaching/learning transactions or to curriculum development and instructional design activities that support teaching/learning encounters. Let us consider, then, Brookfield's six principles of effective practice in facilitating learning that support traditional teaching practices:

1. Participation in learning is voluntary;
 2. Effective practice is characterized by a mutual respect amongst the participants for each other's self-worth;
 3. Facilitation is collaborative;
 4. Praxis is placed at the heart of effective facilitation;
 5. Facilitation aims to foster in adults a spirit of critical reflection; [and]
 6. The aim of facilitation is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults.
- (pp. 9-10)

Each of these six practices are not only key to the andragogical model of adult learning, but are critical to the ways in which traditional teaching and learning practice transpire. I added a seventh principle in this thesis to those of Brookfield (1986), and it is a principle that comes from the ancestral traditions of facilitating learning while imparting Indigenous knowledge. This principle is what I believe the Elders have said is the gift of reciprocity. The ability to see a teacher in everyone will imbibe an accumulative wealth of knowledge, since each and everything one individual encountered will have something to teach as long as we are willing to learn the lesson.

7. The participants come to value each other as facilitators of knowledge and acquire the confidence to each share their unique gifts in a good way. (Laramee, 2008).

These seven principles integrated as part of the STITP model align very well with the works of Eber Hampton (1995) when he speaks of *mamatowisowin* and the six directions; Willie Ermine (1995) as he explains the importance of the movement inward as one searches for individual identity and purpose within the collective; when Jean Graveline (1998) presents the importance of linking the Traditional worldviews with contemporary learning spaces that challenge the continuity of colonization and facilitate the revitalization of cultural in our lives; and Greg Cajete (1999, 2000) describes seven Indigenous Stages of Developmental Learning and their relationship to ten elemental characteristics which inform the nature of transformation in Indigenous education; and our brother from across the southern water, Graham Smith (2003) who believes that Kaupapu Maori can move the following concepts from Paulo Friere (2007), conscientization, resistance and transformation through the education processes in his country in the development of the notion of sovereignty amongst his people as a function

of education. Among other Indigenous scholars, their works supported the intentions for my research and practice within the model evolving from my work in the Summer Institutes, which I have titled the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*.

These seven components are identical to the praxis of the traditional learning circle. Brookfield (1986) and Knowles and Associates (1984) provided the encouragement for me to integrate the traditional practices of the lodges as part of my work in the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education (Summer Institute). As I facilitated the STITP in the Summer Institute, I began to realize an integrated model for merging andragogy, STITP, and teacher education, which resulted in a unique framework for immersing educators and all who took the course into the layers of Aboriginal education.

The following are the seven components of adult learning from andragogy that inspired me to use traditional teaching tools in the academic classroom. I have come to understand through this praxis that the two ways of working with adults are incredibly similar:

1. Facilitators must establish a physical and psychological climate conducive to learning. This is achieved physically by:
 - circular seating arrangements and psychologically,
 - creating a climate of mutual respect among all participants,
 - emphasizing collaborative modes of learning,
 - establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust,
 - offering to be supportive, and
 - emphasizing that learning can be pleasant. (Brookfield, 1986, pp. 101-111)

All of these actions are found to be critical behaviors practiced by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Bundle Carriers, and Ceremony People who conduct the sacred

lodges. Such a caring, respectful, helping, and accepting climate is said by Knowles to be a climate of humanness” (as cited in Knowles & Associates, 1984, p. 16).

2. Facilitators must involve learners in mutual planning of methods and curricular directions. People will make firm commitments to activities in which they feel they have played a participatory, contributory role.
3. Facilitators must involve participants in diagnosing their own learning needs.
4. Facilitators must encourage learners to formulate their own learning objectives.
5. Facilitators must encourage learners to identify resources and to devise strategies for using such resources to accomplish their objectives.
6. Facilitators must help learners to carry out their learning plans.
7. Facilitators must involve learners in evaluating their learning, principally with qualitative evaluative modes. (Brookfield, 1986, pp. 101-111)

The whole notion of facilitator is an extremely important component of traditional Indigenous teaching practices. For example, the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Traditional Teachers implore the apprentice to understand that they are only the helpers to and keepers of the knowledge, and it is up to the learner to pick up what has been laid out on the path before them. Helper and/or facilitator represent the same activity in both the andragogical model of adult learning and in the traditional Indigenous practice for intergenerational knowledge transmission.

I contend that what happens in the learning lodges of the Indigenous people is connected to the learning principles in the classroom of the academe. I have included this particular model of adult learning theory to present supporting precedence in this model for the assumptions I make for traditional practice to be acknowledged in the realm of adult learning practice for teacher education. Knowles (1980) and Brookfield (1986) provided that segue from the principles and components of andragogical practice to Indigenous pedagogy and its inclusion in teacher education.

Indigenous pedagogy. As I have explained earlier through the quote from Brookfield (1986), humanity is a very significant component of traditional practice. While pedagogy has been defined as “the art, science, or profession of teaching” (“Pedagogy,” 2013, para. 1), a Cree Grandmother, Annie, answered, “We teach what we know as an act of love” (as cited in Hodgson-Smith, 2000, p. 157) in response to her Granddaughter’s conversation with her about why Annie shares her knowledge. “For Annie, pedagogy is an act of love . . . [and is] one that acknowledges the personal, internal nature of knowing” (p. 157). In my mind, the humanity that Brookfield spoke of is transacted when we who apprentice have a similar emotional response to the sharing of Elders and love them enough to stop what we are doing, sit down, and listen to their teachings. Therefore, it has been my experience that when involved in traditional teaching practice, an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper will tend to impart their knowledge (i.e., teach), and those seeking the knowledge sit down (i.e., learn), with both doing so as an act of love, hence the title of my thesis *Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love*.

I have outlined the parameters of Indigenous knowledge referred to in this study and identify the Indigenous knowledge and traditional practices to be examined as a means to provide the necessary rationale and clarity related to their inclusion in post-secondary education. I assert that a link is made between the ways in which Indigenous pedagogy is, in fact, closely paralleled in the adult learning model outlined by Malcolm Knowles and Associates (1984) and Stephen Brookfield (1986). The two ways of creating learning environments have deep levels of understanding for the need for mutual respect to extend itself between the facilitator and the learner.

In this particular segment, I provide an understanding of just what Indigenous knowledge is and how the transmission of knowledge has been an age-old practice, which has kept traditions and practices of ancestral stories, songs, prayers, and ceremonies alive in spite of the extenuating circumstances of colonial imposition and impact. The theory of Indigenous pedagogy or “Indigegogy” as once referred by a scholar, Knowledge Keeper and Elder, Stan Wilson, during a meeting I was attending (personal communication, June 20, 2004) requires us to feel what it is that we do with the learners who present themselves to us. The relational aspect to these learners is primary in how we are able to work with them and requires the facilitator to realize intrinsically the role they play in the learning lives of their students.

I incorporated the STITP into the Summer Institute as an integrated approach for providing the link between the practise of our ancestors and the andragogical theory of adult learning (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1980). During the Summer Institutes, there were various helpers, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Bundle Carriers, who came to assist in the facilitation of the course. I was able to capture their voice as part of a qualitative research methods project during one of the courses in my PhD studies. I secured permission from the three participants in that project to include their information as part of my thesis work. Through their voices, I observed that they provided a link between Indigenous pedagogies and adult learning theory and supported the importance of these pedagogies in teacher education.

The Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education. The Summer Institute has a 15-year history. The six-credit course and its evolution over the span of the 14 years is introduced in this section. I have described how the STITP came to be identified as part

of the learning process that has been included in this study and why it has been important to do so. There have been social workers, police people, architects, nurses, and community members who participated with permission or in audit situations. I have provided a description of the student population and delineated why I have chosen to focus in this study on the post-graduate students who are educators. This delineation was part of the methodology limitations.

The beginning few years the institute were supported by the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC) and the Aboriginal Circle of Educators with an amount of grant money that remained from the previous two years of the institute. After the grant money was depleted, the coordination planning and recruitment processes of the Summer Institute were left to Jon Young of the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, and me. Jon was knowledgeable in the development, design and implementation of other Summer Institutes in Anti-Racism and was a great help in helping me plan and prepare for the implementation of all of the summer institutes I facilitated. He played the part of bureaucratic and academic knowledge keeper and helped ensure that proper procedures were followed so that all the “i’s” were dotted and “t’s” were crossed at the front end of each institute. Jon then supported my work with the institute by ensuring bureaucratic red tape did not inhibit or get in the way of the process of implementing these courses. We would start in January to advertise and build encouragement for registration and even though Summer Institutes usually only ran 4 consecutive years we always managed to get the course up and running. Jon would support and assist where necessary after that only where and when it was necessary to move between the red tape. Once this happened it was up to me to do my part for facilitation, instruction and implementing the Summer

Institutes on Aboriginal Education. Jon as a non-Aboriginal person to this day has remained a true ally to Aboriginal education.

This institute provided a six-credit course offering that occurred each July for 15 to 18 days. The institute ran for 12 years from 1994 to 2007, missing only one year due to lack of enrolment. During this 12-year time period, there were over 200 students who participated in the summer institute, and these participants varied in professions such as education-teaching, including First Nation and provincial school systems from K to 12 and adult education; counselling; administration; social services; social work; policing; architecture; engineering, and similar such organizations. Each year, we had a mixture of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers enrolled in the course. Since this research deals specifically with educators, the mixture of both was important to the circle work because, in their own way, each taught the other through their sharing and the stories they told.

The various Summer Institutes had different course names and were housed in three different places: (a) Children of the Earth High School, (b) R. B. Russell Technical Vocational High School (R. B. Russell School), and (c) Niji Mahkwa Elementary School. Each of these inner city settings contributed differently to the ambiance that was possible in each of the institute's experiences. The institutes, grounded in these locations, were enhanced by the learning environments we were able to create. For example, the Children of the Earth High School's multi-purpose room invoked some of the energy from the creation of this high school as an alternative learning environment, where the Indigenous young people and their perspectives were central to the context, content, curricula, and Indigenous practices throughout its learning environment.

R. B. Russell School offered an experience in its courtyard setting, whereby many of the classes could be held outside. During these institutes, participants were able to experience a learning opportunity in putting up, sitting in, and learning from the tipi that had become a trademark and symbol of commitment to the Aboriginal education initiatives that were part of R. B. Russell Schools' function. For many years, the Aboriginal student population at R. B. Russell School could be between 75 to 85% of the total population.

Finally, the Niji Mahkwa Elementary School offered another learning energy, in that many of the activities of the institutes were affected by the energy left by the children and staff in the Lodge Room and the school itself. The Lodge Room was where the staff hosted the majority of the ceremonies held during the school year, and so, in my mind, combining the lingering learning energy of the children and staff with the learners in the Summer Institutes held at Niji Mahkwa Elementary School contributed to the holistic environment of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional learning.

Utilizing the STITP, the Summer Institute was an intensive all-day (8:30 am to 4:00 pm), three- or four-week journey/experience that provided an immersion into learning from an Aboriginal perspective. Through personal experience and guidance from local Aboriginal traditional teachers and ceremony people, educators, and specialists on Aboriginal education, participants examined developments and issues in the field of teaching and learning. Participants had opportunity to experience traditional ceremonies outside the urban setting as part of the experiential learning aspect of the institute.

The course names of the institutes changed to project a theme for that particular year; however, the course number and appropriate title (i.e., 116: 521 - Recent

Developments in Education, and 63: 538 - Recent Developments in Curriculum)

remained the same to facilitate the proper accreditation as per policy and procedure for course offerings at the 500-level of study. The different names were often in the Cree language denoting the theme for the year. The following general outcomes prevailed throughout the years of the institute:

1. Examine the multiplicity of the Aboriginal community in areas of education, culture, and contemporary lifestyle.
2. Review historical, present-day, and future-looking perspectives from an Aboriginal viewpoint with regard to languages, traditions, education, and lifestyles.
3. Enable participants to become familiar with resources in the Aboriginal community, both human and material.
4. Participate in various ceremonies and activities that are culturally based.
5. Develop an Oracle for presentation on the traditions, languages, education and lifestyles, histories, issues, and knowledges from their involvement, individually and collectively, in the institute.

During the institute, I used many of the traditional Indigenous teaching practices that had been modeled to me in the various lodges, ceremonies, and traditions throughout my life. I had experienced the opportunity to learn and grow in ways that were transformative. I also had the chance to witness the inclusion of people from many cultures in such practices and realized early in my career that these methodologies were going to be part of my work in schools. I did not realize until my master's program that I would incorporate and integrate many of these practices into my work. I realized as I

became familiar with the model called andragogy, as supported by Malcolm Knowles (1980) and Stephen Brookfield (1986) that the adult learning theory they supported was very similar to the ways in which learning was facilitated in the lodges and ceremonies in which I had grown up. I consciously merged the two practices and drafted a framework, which remained fairly consistent over the 14 years of its operation. As a result, I have introduced an integrated model of teacher education, *Mekiniwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin* (Laramee, 2013) through the practice of the Summer Institute.

The Summer Institutes were designed for educators who wanted to explore learning and teaching as a process of life and living from an Aboriginal world view. These Summer Institutes offered an intensive, experiential engagement, which facilitated an immersion into learning from Aboriginal perspectives through guidance from local Traditional Knowledge Keepers, Aboriginal educators, and specialists on Aboriginal education and traditional ceremonies. Some of the learning activities took place outside the urban setting. The socio-historic and philosophical periods of the past, present, and future were included as part of the Summer Institute. Each week had three common themes: (a) traditional Aboriginal teachings grounded in the STITP integrated model, (b) curriculum design centred on Aboriginal perspectives, and (c) issues in Aboriginal education. Students participated in Sharing Circles as part of the whole group, both as a team member and as an individual.

The following explanation supports one of the major teachings from traditional Indigenous practice and beliefs. The teaching is from a Sweat Lodge ceremony that occurred as one of the STITP. The first three stones of the Sweat Lodge, run and cared for by Myra Laramee, included:

- Grandfather/mother of the Past: This stone symbolizes and recognizes that all who enter come with a past that needs to be honoured and recognized.
- Grandfather/mother of the Present: This stone symbolizes and recognizes that all who enter do so with a present.
- Grandfather/mother of the Future: This stone symbolizes and recognizes that all who enter come with a future.

With these three stones framed from Ojibwe/Cree knowledges and teaching pedagogies, we developed a sense of equity because we all entered with these gifts, realizing that not one is more important than another is, and when we approached the lodge, no one was refused entry. We examined the past, present, and future of Aboriginal education, not only in the Sweat Lodge, but also during the work in the Summer Institute as well.

The core of the Summer Institute. The seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices formed the core of the Summer Institute program. As I outlined the various Indigenous traditional tools, there were those included in the STITP (i.e., Smudge, Oral Knowledge Transmission, Teaching Circle, Sharing Circle, Storytelling, Oracle, and Sweat Lodge), as well as others, which were part of the daily and occasional activities of the institute. I chose the STITP firstly for consistency in the research process because I recognized these were used in every institute, and secondly to make the data manageable. In this section, I present both an explanation of the each of the STITP and a description of other learning activities.

The following events took place at various times throughout the Summer Institutes. Some of the events happened daily, and others were particular events that would happen only once during the Summer Institute. Daily activities were smudging,

circle work, teachings, and opening and/or closing circles. Others that were only occasional or one-time events were the star power activity, pipe ceremony, wolf teaching, feast and giveaway, and/or activities of the day that were not ceremonies or teachings.

Elders from whom I have learned have made it clear that when we work with people, the traditional Aboriginal practices we facilitate are demystified and explained as very concrete and practical strategies for life, learning, and living (Fitznor, 1998). The living aspect of this way of teaching and learning is what grounds the practices and keeps them from becoming mystical and magical ways. Everything we do has a practical purpose meant to make our life a betterment of firstly, the collective, and secondly, our individuality. Even though there were other practices used during the Summer Institutes, the following were the STITP, as presented in sequential order: basic ceremony, the Smudge practice, Oral Knowledge Transmission, Teaching Circle, Sharing Circle, Storytelling practice, Oracle collective synergy, and the Sweat Lodge practice, which I consistently used to facilitate pieces of the work in the Summer Institutes. These seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices, plus the others used in the Summer Institute, merged comfortably with the principles and components of the andragogical model of adult learning, so that the more I practiced the integration, the clearer the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*, the teacher education model became. Each of the following practices was foundational to my integrated model, and the research being conducted in this thesis.

The Smudge. During the Summer Institute, the participants were given the rationale for the practice of this most-basic ceremony and were encouraged to become helpers in the process during the sessions. The facilitator helped participants to realize

that all people need to practice this rationale, but may do it in many different ways. It was explained that this basic ceremony is the way the Aboriginal people of this territory choose to smudge or *dust themselves off*. The various ways in which people smudge to cleanse their minds, bodies, and spirits become strategies to help learners focus on their work.

Oral knowledge transmission. Elders and Knowledge Keepers have told us that we have the best tool for learning, and this tool takes the form of our mind, body, and spirit. The relationship we have with the natural order ensures that we retain the information needed to guide us on our life's journey. To this end, they do not allow recording devices of any kind in the lodges or ceremonies. The process required in this type of pedagogy is for the learners to believe in themselves to receive from the experience the necessary information, tools, and skills for living. Trusting in yourself as a learner is what is required. The goal is to encourage the individual to listen with all parts of their being. Participants in the Summer Institute were directed by the instructor not to write during the circle time.

Hence, my purpose when I forbid notes to be taken during the class sessions was to help the participants understand the value of this traditional type of pedagogy and its value in their own personal learning processes. Active listening was only possible when the focus was on the oral rather than the written. Instead, they were asked to keep a daily journal and write a reflection each evening to identify what they learned, what was important to them from that learning, and how they might use it in their life and/or work.

Circles: Teaching and sharing. The circle, which is based on Aboriginal teaching pedagogy, was a useful process to create a safe environment for organized discussion.

Circle protocol/principles allows everyone to be heard, teaches respect for everyone's point of view, and helps build consensus as each member hears the views of others. The participants had an opportunity to be involved in the Sharing Circle process. The circle was utilized in a variety of ways. The circle helped transform vision into practice, and the various applications of the circle methodology were explored. The concept of the circle was a practical Indigenous teaching and learning tool (Hart, 2002; Graveline, 1998).

There were two types of circles used in the Summer Institute: the Teaching Circle and the Sharing Circle. Each had its own process. The Teaching Circle was more of a transmittal experience, whereby Elders/Knowledge Keepers would come and share. The Sharing Circle was more for the internal workings of the participants to share their stories, reflections, and ideas that emerged from all parts of the Summer Institute, their lives, and their work.

The Teaching Circle. During this time, the facilitator used stories, symbols, visuals, humour, and/or artefacts to share information that has been passed from one generation to the other. The main transmission of knowledge during this type of circle is oral. The Teaching Circle may be topical or may respond to questions asked, suggestions made, or needs of the learning group. Participants were given an opportunity for sharing their insights to the information following the knowledge transmission. This part of the Teaching Circle in this territory is facilitated in the traditional cyclical process—always sharing from left to right. During part of the circle, the hierarchical lines of teacher and learner disappeared, and each member of the circle became both as they shared their insights.

The Sharing Circle. The Sharing Circle was facilitated in the traditional cyclical process, with always sharing from left hand or the heart hand around the circle and was usually held each morning, unless time or need did not permit. The goal for this activity was to help the participants get to know each other on a personal level differently than can happen in a linear, row-upon-row seating arrangement. As adult learners, it is rare that one gets to know his/her classmates as a collective. In the traditional Indigenous philosophy, it is imperative that teaching and learning is facilitated as an act of love. During this process, participants learned through their life stories, in family, their work, and their beliefs, to become disseminators of knowledge, which contributed to the overall learning processes in the institute.

Storytelling. Elders/Knowledge Keepers have said in many ways not to talk about what one does not know. To this end, each helper in the Summer Institute used personal, lodge, and ceremony stories to transmit knowledge and explained how they understood and perceived what had been given to them. Participants were given opportunities through journal reflections, Sharing Circles, and the oracle development to work with stories. During the Summer Institute, the goal was to help participants realize how important stories were in the oral transmission of knowledge and how these stories helped make the learning relevant. The stories connected the people to the teachings.

Oracle development. This exercise has seven layers of group work, and the groups are formed by the facilitator rendering a traditional song. During this time, the group was to visualize which of the three or four symbols they most identified with. Through seven sessions, it was necessary to develop a collective story, which included their own personal learning during the institute. Quite quickly, the bonds of a familial

structure formed, and the purpose for this experience became apparent. The group identified themselves from here on as their symbol, and the Butterfly, Unicorn, No Name, or Eagle became a bonding symbol. As a facilitator of Indigenous knowledge, this exercise served to help make the clan structure, kinship models in the traditional organizational structures a real experience for the participants, and they came to have some idea of the roles and responsibilities of such structures.

The participants worked through a process of team development, with guided steps and activities laid out by the facilitator. These steps were created to give each team a similar path, while their creativity would spell out their uniqueness. The outcome was a storytelling venture called the Oracle. The Oracle experience had to demonstrate the participants' collective and individual knowledge acquisition, synthesis, and analysis and of the histories, cultures, and contemporary lifestyles of Aboriginal people. Teaching approaches, educational/curriculum development opportunities, cultural teachings, and Aboriginal perspectives were included as part of this experience.

Each group was given an outline of seven different identified steps and activities, ending up with a final product that would orally tell the collective story of their group. The Oracle assignment had two main outcomes. The first was to get the various groups to work together under this symbol to develop into a deepened small circle within the whole, with some possible glimpse into what it means to be part of a family, clan, or kinship. The second was to search in their collective creativity to orally tell the story of their group's journey in the Summer Institute. Some years of the Summer Institute, the team leaders who were not participants were assigned to groups, and other years the group functioned with a team leader who evolved from within the group. The leader's

main purpose was to help their group process. Various community and educational leaders as well as traditional teachers were asked to come and share their gifts with members of the Summer Institute.

This particular activity was used to help participants guide an experience of working together as a collective. The groups were to use their combined voice to tell one story of their collective experiences and knowledges gained in the Summer Institute. This experience had to include all of the participants' contributions and all had to participate in the storytelling activity created by their team. After each of the Oracles, each group would form a circle, usually on the floor in the centre of their audience. They would listen to a positive comment from each of their college about how their Oracle impacted them as receivers. After this, the Oracle group would tell each other, circle style, what it meant to be part of their group.

The Sweat Lodge/wolf teaching. A journey to a traditional ceremonial place transpired during the institute, and the purpose was to give people the firsthand experience with traditional Indigenous learning and cleansing places. This experience gave the participants actual memories and was included to hopefully break the enigma of such learning places. Students gathered firsthand experiences to talk about with children and youth.

The following other activities were not included in the data collection processes; however, they may have been mentioned in the participants' stories. The various teachings shared came through not only the Knowledge Keepers and Elders who came to sit in the circle, but they also came from participants; some of whom were knowledgeable in Aboriginal ways, and others who rendered teachings from their own nationhood, which

were different from that of Aboriginal experiences. Usually when these teachings were shared, it was because of a similarity found within the two backgrounds. Teachings even came through others who did not realize that they were sharing a teaching, but wanted to share something that was happening for them during the institute, and it came out as a teaching.

A game called Star Power was familiar to one of the Knowledge Keepers, and while he was part of the Summer Institute, we conducted this activity. The game caused participants to focus on the issues of the “haves” and the “have nots”—power, who has it and who does not. Participants learned about the root of where power comes from and the things that people will do to gain power. The game is about who controls one’s destiny, what happens when it is someone else, and what happens when it is you who controls your own destiny. The activity ultimately results in situations or circumstance where choices are made by the self and determinations made by others, followed by discussion and sharing about personal feelings and behaviours that occur during this game and how they relate to real-life situations. This activity occurred during the times when the Elder/Knowledge Keeper Dan Thomas was present during the Summer Institutes.

The Pipe Ceremony is an activity that happens as part of the Sweat Lodge, and we have an opening pipe ceremony where the teachings of protocol, tobacco, water, and fire are given. This ceremony may have happened more than once depending on the group and situations of the people in the institute, both individually and as a group. This ceremony/activity happened for each and every Summer Institute, though possibly at various points of the learning experience.

The Wolf Teaching is a layered ceremony that facilitates a deepened level of sharing through the use of a story told in four segments: (a) life amongst the wolves, (b) the gate keeper, (c) life in the compound and offering to be supportive, and (d) choosing life. These levels may have one or two rounds of sharing depending on the group. The facilitator will use a pipe bundle throughout the process, and the main goal of the ceremony is to have participants move through the ceremony from an extrinsic to an intrinsic form of sharing to recognition of the things that keep one stuck in situations and the need for constant movement of one's energy to remain balanced and whole. This activity occurred during the first seven Summer Institutes and did not evolve during the rest of the Summer Institutes.

Whenever people gather for any length of time, there is a development or bonding that occurs, and when that time comes to a close and the people part ways, there is a need to feast the occasion. A celebration is arranged, whereby participants bring food to contribute to a meal. Often when such an event occurs, and it will be the last time of meeting in this manner, a giveaway will be called. The giveaway in this instance was called so that individuals might bring something to the circle for individuals or the whole group, so that when away from the Summer Institute, these items received would charge a fond memory of the people, time, events, learning, and growth that took place. This activity occurred in each and every Summer Institute.

Each day would be filled with a variety of activities that were practiced daily and other activities that might happen as a special event. The custom and routine of certain activities that would occur daily were there to help participants engage in authentic experiences that were foundational to the good life practices prior to contact and which

are still practiced today by individuals and within families and communities. Other activities occurred one time or occasionally, and these usually were the layered events, such as ceremonies that took up most of the day.

The closing of each day was an opportunity for participants to share their collective experiences and motivate memory for them to go from the circle and write their individual reflection with some sense of summary from the circle about the day's events. There were certain days where this closing was not possible, mostly due to time, but the attempt was made for the closure activity to happen each and every day of the Summer Institute.

Teacher education immersed in Aboriginal education. When teachers are trained in the mainstream to teach both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, they have learned from a model of teaching and learning based in Euro-centric epistemological views and theoretical frameworks (Anderson et al., 2004; Battiste, 2004; Graveline, 1998). They are immersed in this training as the accepted ways of educating all Canadian children. Regardless of their personal beliefs, these models prevail in determining the student teacher's success in the graduation process. Becoming teaching candidates who are qualified to teach with their Bachelor of Education degree and receive certification is dependent upon their acceptance of these recognized frameworks.

A recent mandate in the Manitoba teacher certification requirement now requires teacher candidates to take a three-credit course in Aboriginal education in order to graduate from the faculties of education in Manitoba and certify as a permanent teacher in this province. A three-credit course limits the amount of time engaged in acquiring knowledge about Aboriginal peoples. The course structure, which is approximately

thirteen, three-hour sessions, is only enough time to begin to scratch the surface of historical, traditional, political, epistemological, and Indigenous knowledge about the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people of this country. These courses are usually a week apart and did not lend themselves to the necessary time required for an immersion into Indigenous knowledge and practices. I observed having taught both a single three-credit course and the Summer Institutes, that the institutes provided a more intensive immersion into learning and knowledge acquisition for the practice of Aboriginal education. The Indigenous knowledges that are the basis of this thesis, when implemented over a period of time, can influence to a greater degree the foundation developed with which teachers engage in Aboriginal education.

Over the years of the Summer Institute, the time in the institute was shortened to half days and even with this cut, I was able to introduce Indigenous pedagogy and facilitate seven ways of learning while immersing educators in traditional Indigenous teaching practice. As well, at this time during the institute, the learners were engaged in ways of adult learning that combined traditional Indigenous theory together with Brookfield's (1986) and Knowles's (1980) andragogical theory and praxis, thus the integrated learning model.

The physical arrangement, climate of inclusiveness, and environment conducive to learning had all the institute participants gather in a circle format. The development of mutual respect was facilitated in the teaching and Sharing Circles, collaborative modes of learning and mutual trust were created during the Oracle exercise, and the smudge and Sweat Lodge offered that supportive notion that learning can be pleasant both singularly and collectively. The hands-on participation in the learning opportunities created an

option for experiential apprenticeship toward self-directed empowerment and further praxis beyond the institute. The malleability between teacher and learner in the circles allowed for the mutual respect of each other's potential and self-worth. The assignments conjured the spirit of critical reflection.

One of the critical components of the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* is the movement of learning energy, which moves in a spiral fashion deepening and expanding the depth and breadth of the knowledge which is being transmitted during the STITP. The major goal of these ways of learning is to ultimately enhance the quality of our existence and use what is learned from this immersion into Aboriginal perspectives not only for the betterment of others; it is also primary in making our own lives better as well.

Achieving Mino Pimatisiwin through Spiral Learning

Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors, who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships we hold and are part of. Another friend talked about the relational quality of our existence. (Wilson, 2008, p. 80)

The following to concepts or subtopics (a) stepping into the spiral, and (b) Mino Pimatisiwin are key components of the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* (Laramee, 2013) by introducing footsteps that are taken when apprenticing in Indigenous learning models. How we look, listen, learn, and live the ways learned and knowledge acquired is important to receiving the knowledge presented. Therefore, stepping into the spiral requires one to embrace the knowledge, move onto the understanding, welcome the wisdom both intrinsic and extrinsic, while

developing relationality to all that is presented physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally so that healing may transpire.

Stepping into the spiral. Relationships were always of the utmost concern to Indigenous people of North America and involved an understanding of interdependency with the physical, mental, and spiritual realms (Cajete, 1994; Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995; WNCP, 2000). Even more so today, this understanding includes conceptualizing many different worlds in the universe, such as the earth world, the sky world, the animal and plant worlds, the water world, the metaphysical world, spiritual world, and all the components that are needed in the wholeness of life in this universe: the one we were given to take care of. Relations were of the utmost importance; an individual from birth would be encouraged to develop understanding of their role in such worlds by practicing what is considered by Indigenous people to be traditional pedagogy as an engagement of the learner and teacher in the motion of spiral learning. In this epistemology, our involvement with the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Traditional Teachers of our communities, children, youth, adults, and even the elderly were engaged in a process whereby they would be encouraged to:

- Look at their world to acquire *knowledge* in what they were seeing, and from there they would be encouraged;
- Listen to the sounds being made in nature, on the land, and from family and Elders so that when they heard themselves from inside, they could develop understanding of what it was they heard;

- Learn from the information imparted to them in song, ceremony, storytelling, and in everyday living by the wise people of the village so that they would be able to couple what they were learning with *wisdom*; and then
- Live the knowledge, understanding, and wisdoms accumulated so that their life's journey, their path, would be of balanced living and healing so that they could become a "person of peace" (; Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008, pp. 25, 34, 40, 46).

When someone had demonstrated the good living of this knowledge, it was recognized by others that the individual had earned the rights and privileges to now teach what had been learned, and in this way, constant healing and learning transpired amongst the people. The goal of any such learning transaction was to strengthen the reciprocity of knowledge acquisition across all age groups, whereby all individuals became active participants in the facilitation of learning.

Knowledge was passed to those who were deemed ready for its acquisition, and the display of readiness was perceived by those who carried the knowledge as it was demonstrated by those who apprenticed with them. In the development of understanding, an individual would demonstrate the ability to take their prior learning and meld their knowledge with new information acquired in their apprenticeship. This pedagogy is still practiced, and the facilitators of such teaching practices find themselves in a contemporary educational tension as to how to bridge the worlds found in Indigenous epistemologies. In this traditional pedagogy, the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Traditional Teachers are always watching to see if the wisdom of the ancestors has become one with the knowledge and understanding as learners moved through their life

path. How one makes his/her footprint on the Earth is a gauge for his/her readiness, both in this world and in the Spirit World. The future of humanity has strong significance in the responsibility for sustainable development and continued life on this planet.

The “Sacred Laws” that have guided the ways in which Aboriginal people lived and learned prior to contact with Europeans were relational to the land (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986; WNCP, 2000). Life came from the Earth, and to the Earth we return. Indigenous knowledge, Aboriginal education, and the practices of traditional ways of learning prior to contact were grounded in the very land that the First Peoples inhabited. Three laws of relationship (WNCP, 2000) guided the interactions between most Indigenous peoples of this land. The law of relationship with the self, the law of relationship with nature, and the law of relationship with the land each were interconnected, and all of them guided the behaviour of learning and living (Cajete, 2000; Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995; WNCP, 2000).

Mino Pimatisiwin. The relationships between the processes of apprenticing and capabilities found in the learning journey are visually demonstrated in Figure 1. As described in chapter one, the Indigenous pedagogical practices of looking, listening, learning, and living are activities with which an Elder or Knowledge Keeper would engage the learner or apprentice. The constant movement around this circle of Mino Pimatisiwin (Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, 2004; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Hart, 2002; Young, 2003; WNCP, 2000), or life’s lessons, becomes a spiral of experiencing relationships with all that exists. Repetition, consistency, and constant movement of the knowledge being transmitted are factors that develop depth and breadth in learning transactions. Knowledge acquisition, development of understanding,

recognition of the wisdoms of our ancestors through blood memory and the Elders, and finally, the ability to personally heal as we move through the spiral of learning allow us to learn and grow (Hampton, 1995). Hence, there are no finites in the expanse of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and healing one may undertake. Learning becomes limitless (Hampton; 1995; Johnson, 2007).

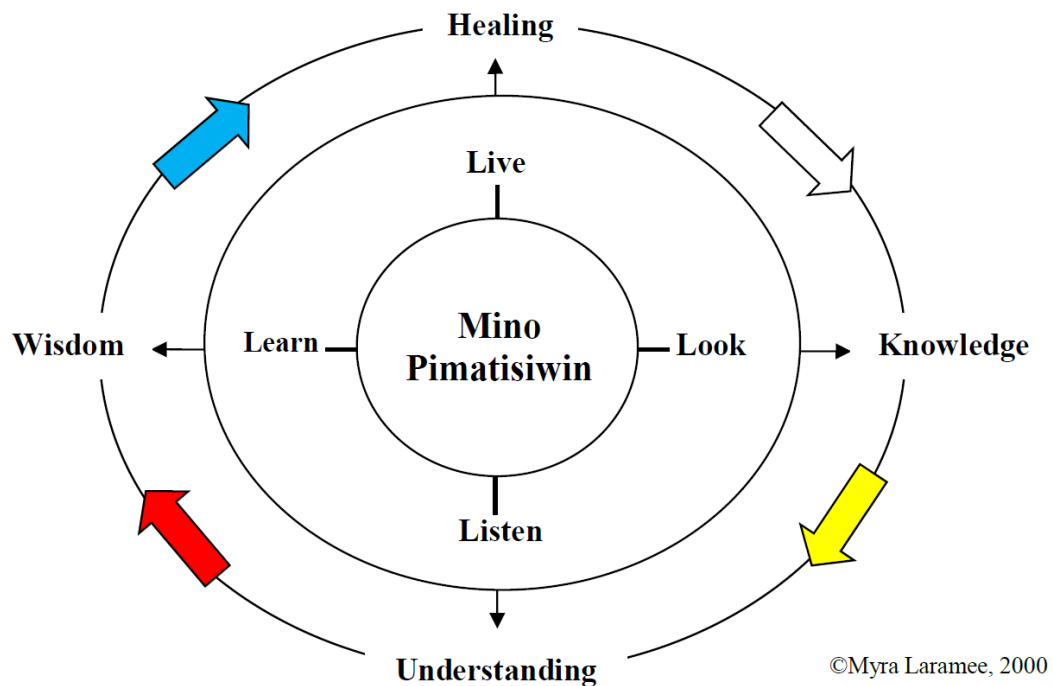


Figure 1. Mino Pimatisiwin as laws of life and living, the possibility of living a good life

The bodies of works of Knowledge Keepers, such as personal conversations with Knowledge Keeper H. Atkinson, and research by Alfred (1999), Battiste (2004), Brant (1990), Cajete (1994), Couture (1991a, 1991b), Ermine (1995), Fitznor (2002), Graveline (1998), Hampton (1995), Medicine (1999), and White (1996), have reflected varying representations about this epistemological spiral of learning. This particular representation is depicted in the works I have come to understand as that of the Midewewin people, whom I personally acknowledge as many of my mentors, guides, and teachers. This is a society of people who acknowledge and activate the Eighth Fire

Prophecy, which Herman Atkinson first shared with me in 1977, as a reality for modern living and learning through ceremonies and ways of living. With this respect acknowledged, the teaching practice of look, listen, learn, and live is the pedagogical typology for all learning transactions prior to others joining life on this land, and in our Cree language, we would recognize this practice as Mino Pimatisiwin (Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, 2004; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Hart, 2002; Young, 2003; WNCP, 2000). Historically, one did not acquire knowledge without developing the understanding that whatever knowledge was transmitted had purpose and meaning in the maintenance of balance in all relations. Understanding was earned by practising the knowledge one had acquired.

Spiral learning is anything but static (Ackley-Christensen, 1992; Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995). In fact, there is constant movement, where the recipient of knowledge is motivated to look at the information intrinsically and extrinsically, moving all the while around the spiral, whereby what they are hearing begins to resonate with their old knowledge. This spiral process brings about understanding, and the more the learner hears and experiences the continuous movement around the spiral, the more they are connected to the wisdoms of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The recognition of prior knowledge within the learner, whether they were born with such knowledge or if the knowledge was picked up along the journey, will make room for the new knowledge, and as this occurs, the depth and breadth of the transaction will transform us accordingly. As long as we are open to the new knowledge and are able to decipher what knowledge is important to us, our movement around the spiral continues. To reach the place where the knowledge becomes intrinsically and extrinsically

applicable, the learner forming the tools needs to keep one's self balanced and well. This constant movement around the layers of the spiral keeps the learning prospect continuous and dynamic so that learning, growth, and development are understood as ongoing and lifelong. As we move in and out of the spiral, the spiral also moves in and out of us, and along the journey, we get bumped up in the levels of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and healing required by us as humans being. The self-directedness deepens, and our ability to work with others broadens into collaboration, community building, and networking. Soon the lines between teacher and learner become obscure as we acquire confidence and competence, and the learning community we are part of becomes huge and multi-dimensional, and the empowerment and autonomy that we feel from this place of freedom, we now can facilitate for others. In the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* (Laramee, 2013), this translates to mean, in English:

A coming together of many different people learning from each other, doing as we did long ago, and now, we are doing this again in the places of learning, coming together, many different people, learning from one another, as our ancestors did, a very long time ago on now in the academic classrooms.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a description of the footprints I have made to this research study by explaining how the many different worlds in my life have come together. From my exposure the Elders, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keepers, I made my own footprints into the ceremonial lodges to apprentice and learn the seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices used in this research. Based on this time spent in the lodges together with the urgency of incorporating these ways into Aboriginal education, I was able to formulate the research question I felt needing answering. The

design, methodology, and language of this study were crafted from the relationship I made between the lodges and the Summer Institute on Aboriginal education. It has been important for me to make footprints toward providing a possible path for others who are making a similar journey to enable them to step into the spiral of learning so that they too can see the place for our ways in the academic setting. The next footprint I made was through my literature review to examine those who went before me by posing expectations, recommendations, and desired outcomes for the education of Aboriginal children during the time periods of pre-contact education, the imposition of residential education, and a more contemporary look at Aboriginal education from the 1970s to the present. In order to stay true to tradition I have included Chapter 4 to recognize the place that Elders and their knowledge have in the learning process. This chapter would usually be the discussion of research methodology but considering these individuals supported the work in the Summer Institutes throughout their voice is critical to the discussion in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As I move into the literature review from the introduction in Chapter 1, I continue with the notion of Mino Pimatisiwin and an acknowledgement that before me, there were many champions of the road called education. Pre-contact education is covered during the discussion on Elders. An important concept in the learning cycle of Aboriginal education is the idea that whenever you speak of things or write about things, an acknowledgement of the people who paved the path for one to walk is made, and as I write in the section, *We are All Related*, this acknowledgement is made. Change was imminent when people of other worlds arrived to share this land and the New Comer section in this chapter tells of the relationships forged. The first two documents cited and discussed here *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1991) and *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) speak to the idea that during the 50s, 60s, and 70s, the Aboriginal people had serious desires for the education of their children and demonstrated foresight in the expectations identified. The *MacPherson Report* (MacPherson, 1991), the *Education Framework Agreement* (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993), and the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (RCAP, 1996) all make it clear that culture and language were critical in the reclamation process of identity building, significant in restoring the sacred to a way of living amongst Aboriginal people. The last two major documents I have included in this chapter are the *Learning about Walking in Beauty* (CAAS, 2002) and the consultation on improving post-secondary outcomes for First Nations and Métis students in Southern Manitoba (Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007), both of which have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve all the outcomes discussed from the beginning of this chapter

to post-colonial life. This may occur if Aboriginal allies from other Nations (e.g., First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Aboriginal) are able to work together to achieve the outcomes stated. For Indigenous people of this land, peace and harmony have never been about a good life for a few, it has always been more so about a good life for all. In order to accomplish this, teacher education needs to consider the following:

1. That as educators try to change their practices to respond better to the needs of Aboriginal students, there is much uncertainty as how best to respond to the question: What constitutes “Aboriginal Education”?
2. Part of that discussion involves the question “Is Aboriginal education only for Aboriginal students”; should it include all Canadian students?
3. We need Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices that can be effectively integrated into teacher preparation that helps educators see their roles in Aboriginal education.

The use of the STITP is a footstep into the exploration of a way in which we may be able to pose some answers to these questions; these questions are summarily significant to the questions posed in each of the segments of this Chapter.

Those Who Made Footprints Ahead of Me

I included this section as an indication of the belief system that holds interdependency as a critical understanding of the human place in a global and universal existence. Within this section, I have identified two specific areas of discussion: Elders and New Comers. The first is about the Elders and their concern for oral knowledge transmission and the intergenerational continuance of ancestral language as the primary vehicle for the transmission of Indigenous knowledge. This discussion includes the

Elder/Knowledge Keepers' concerns about the land and its connection to the formation of the ancestral languages. As part of the explanation, I have included the great respect for interdependence with the Earth and the care that has been taken by our ancestors to maintain balance and harmony with the natural order. The second area for discussion has to do with the arrival of the new comers to this continent, which has had an impact on all of the things discussed in this Elder's section. It has been told to many of us who have listened to the stories, prophecies, and teachings of the Elders that in the beginning of their relations with those who came, they believed that they would share the land with the new comers, but lacked their understanding of a permanent residence. This was largely due to the fact that prior stories told of others who had come to this land, but returned to their homeland, hence the name, the visitors in this literature review. In the New Comers section, I outline new comers who came to live on this continent.

I have included the commentaries and documents I feel are relevant to the shared information in the Elder's and the New Comer's segments. Of significance is the fact that in two of the documents, *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (RCAP, 1986) and *Learning about Walking in Beauty* (CAAS, 2002), both Aboriginal/Indigenous people and non-Aboriginal people worked together. They affirmed that certain information and issues identified by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and political leaders must remain as critical knowledge necessary to all learners in Canada. The Aboriginal/Indigenous scholars, educational leaders, and school personnel confirmed the need for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children to be educated in the following:

- to the beauty found in the ways of Indigenous people;

- the scarred history of relations between “Indian” and “White” (this includes impacts of racism and colonization);
- in addition, the impacts of this history and what needs to be done now and in the immediate future for all of us so that the children of the future will not recommit the errors of the past 500 years (Battiste, 2000; CAAS, 2002; Cajete, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; RCAP, 1996).

The next part of the literature review is intended to draw attention to the need for all learners in the country of Canada to acquire critical knowledge regarding the ways Aboriginal Peoples lived prior to contact. Our life ways entailed a richness in the beliefs, laws, governance, protocols, relational guidance, and connections to all that is living (Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 2002; Hampton, 1995, Three Fires Society, 2007; White, 1996). These ways need to be understood, protected and lived. This study is one effort to contribute to this need.

The Need for Aboriginal Education: The Context

As this richness is now being realized by Canadians other than the First Peoples, there is an increasing desire by Canadians to learn how these ways can help direct and guide positive relationships in the future. Aboriginal/Indigenous people and the new comers who share the land with them (Battiste, 1998; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005) are now in position at this time in history to create healthier and more positive levels of understanding about who we are and how relationships can be different than they have been in the last 500 years. A first step to this understanding is recognition of the manner in which Indigenous foundational principles and ways of living and

learning were interrupted and interfered with by policy, legislation, and laws set down by those at that time who assumed the rule over the First Peoples of this land (Battiste, 1998, 2000; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Harper, 2008; Haig-Brown, 1988; Smith 2003; Smith, 2005).

Many people today are realizing the need for Indigenous traditional ways of teaching and learning to enter the academe (Castellano, 2000; RCAP, 1986; Graveline, 1998; Green, 2003; Jenkins, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The importance of such teaching and learning options are being viewed with a positive purpose for possibly restoring educational justice to Indigenous pedagogies that is rich with life changing practices and methodologies (Battiste, 2005; Cajete, 1994, 1995; Solomon & Posluns, 1990; Three Fires Society, 2007). The post-secondary learning environments in Canada and Manitoba can be enhanced by the integration of Aboriginal education and Indigenous knowledges into the mainstream practice of teaching and learning as it relates to teacher education.

As part of my literature review, I have included the introductory commentary on Indigenous knowledges as they relate to teacher education, in that pre-contact education was pragmatic and its foundation was based on learning that directly related to the enhancement of living. This commentary includes who was responsible for that education and identifies parts of the content information. Until recently, this information has not been required as general information for educators of today, but with the focus of Aboriginal education, there are two significant events, one national and the other provincial, which have made public the intentions of mainstream systems requiring action in the area of Aboriginal education:

- The very public Apology from the Prime Minister of Canada (2008), which identifies education in the second last paragraph of the Apology. Prime Minister Harper identified education as the mainstay in forging new relationships amongst Canadians and creating new partnerships that will ensure new history between Aboriginal people and the Canadian Government (p. 2).
- The mandatory course in Aboriginal education, which is now required in order to certify as a teacher in Manitoba, was made official in 2009 (Manitoba Government, 2009).

Both of these events have cast a very public eye on educational systems all the way from Nursery to Grade 12 and post-secondary teacher education programs. All systems are impacted, and in particular, post-secondary institutions, universities and colleges must now provide the proper course offerings for all students in their education faculties.

Finally, knowledge about our people that has lain hidden in the hearts of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers is now sought after and required in post-secondary institutions that are responsible for accrediting Aboriginal education courses.

We Are All Related

The areas discussed in this section of the thesis relates to those who were here long before the new comers, the Elders. Those who came are discussed in the sense of how Aboriginal people's lives changed. What follows are the discussions had by leaders, scholars, allies, and those committed to outcomes that would change how Aboriginal people are viewed and to what degrees education should play a role in this change.

The Elders. Throughout the world, Indigenous people have common beliefs regarding the critical place held by the aged and wise people of a particular land (CAAS, 2002; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; RCAP, 1996; WNCP, 2000). Manitoba is no different from the rest of the globe in this belief. The voices of the ancestors, as in other lands around the globe, have been heard for generation upon generation through oral knowledge transmission by aged and wise people referred to as Elders. Their ancestral languages have been kept alive with the dissemination of thought, knowledge, philosophy, and practice that has transcended space and time as translated from the Ojibwe word *Kaapimiwetimowaat*.

The Elders/Knowledge Keepers who still speak the ancestral languages of this continent are anxious and concerned about the future ways of oral knowledge transmission. They fear that the knowledge will not be voiced in the original languages of the First Peoples if we do not remain vigilant in the recovery, reclamation, and revitalization of these languages (Ermine, 1995; Kirkness, 1999; Leavitt, 1995; Young, 2003).

The ancestral languages are tied to the land upon which we raise our children, and the relationships we have with each other are guided by the truths of this land (Battiste, 2000; Kirkness, 1998a, 1998b; LaRocque, 2010). When we watch the animal, plant, water, and sky worlds, we can see the emulation of inter-dependence, mutual respect, and harmony. The creatures of the animal, plant, water, and sky worlds have their laws and ways to grow, live, and age into the spirit world from where we came. These laws forbid us from forcing others to try to be the same as the other. Everything in the universal construct demonstrates that all living creatures have their unique ways of keeping with

harmony (Bopp, Bopp, Lane, & Brown, 1998; Cajete, 2000; Fitznor, 1998; Three Fires Society, 2007; WNCP, 2000). The monarch butterfly, Canada goose, and eagle do not hold summits in the fall to decide whether or not to fly south, and the leaves on the trees do not turn any other colour in the fall except those programmed to turn. The laws and protocol of life are understood and not rationalized in nature (Alberta Education, 2005; Bopp et al., 1998; Cajete, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Three Fires Society, 2007; WNCP, 2000). It has been only the human creatures who rationalize their behaviours then end up in a contradiction to the balance and disrupt the harmony of inter-relationships amongst the living creatures of the Earth (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Little Bear, 2000; United Nations Assembly, 2007).

Prior to the First Peoples' involvement with the visitors to this land, the sound of our languages moved through time and space, with Kaapimiwetimowaat being voiced by the Elders/Knowledge Keepers only in the original ancestral languages. This sound was made on behalf of past, present, and future generations. Oral knowledge transmission was the primary manner in which the beliefs, history, teachings, laws, and ways of life transcended one generation to the next (Ermine, 1995; Medicine, 1987; RCAP, 1986; Solomon & Posluns, 1990; White, 1986). However, the voices of the Elders were interrupted and pre-empted upon contact by others who had come to share this land with the First People. The languages were impacted in such ways that have left First People in every territory on this continent in a race against time to maintain a way of communicating in the world that is distinct to each territory, the land, and the people of that land (Battiste, 2000; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Harper, 2008; Kirkness, 1998a, 1998b; Young, 2003).

External mechanisms foreign to the belief systems of the original inhabitants of this land have shaped the relationships in Canada amongst its inhabitants (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2004; Hampton, 1995). The impact has forced the original people to reconstruct the ways in which First People see their territory and how they live in it. Even though many of the original ways of speaking, seeing, learning, feeling, and living are no longer the same as before contact, the Elders still continue to teach and practice using language of the land as it has survived. Those of us who have been privileged to hear such voices speak about the old ways in the language, now have the responsibility to impart whatever it is we have learned so as to protect what remains only as it is remembered by some.

The newcomers. In the stories and prophecies told by Elders and Knowledge Keepers, there was more than one kind of visitor who came to North America. It has been told to some of us that long ago there were visitors who came to bring their knowledge, visions, prophecies, teachings, and worldviews, but these new comers travelled back to their homeland (H. Atkinson, A. Lightning, H. Roberts, M. Roberts, & E. Tootoosis, personal communication; see also Appendix B). It is the visitors who came, stayed, and continue to come to North America looking for a new life who have affected the pre-contact of Indigenous peoples' life here forever. As Indigenous people, we were to share our garden (H. Atkinson, A. Lightning, T. Porter, M. Roberts, & E. Tootoosis, personal communication). It is with this protocol and understanding that we have embraced those who came. The First Peoples of this land have endured the good, bad, and ugly of this relationship with those who came, and through honour and respect for the mindful ways

of the natural laws of creation, we embraced life with these people, and their visitor status changed forever.

Abiding in these ways has kept us in harmony with all living things and, subsequently, given us the courage and strengths needed so that it is now understood the time is right to stand up and again be heard (Bird, Land, & McAdam, 2002; Fitznor, 1998; Henderson, 2008). The impacts of relationship with those who came are deeply layered, so that for centuries to come, the Indigenous peoples of Canada will work to restore some sense of balance within themselves, their families, their communities, and their Nations, but life for them will never be as it was. It is the acceptance of the ebb and flow of the waters of change that will enable Indigenous peoples of this territory to move on to post-colonial life. This post-colonial existence will be filled with newfound understanding and meaning of the past, present, and future of all who live in this country.

In particular, the old prophecies and understandings will find new ways of interpretation and purpose in contemporary living. One such notion is that of *The New Buffalo* (Stonechild, 2006) as the new education and its purpose in the good life of Indigenous people. The buffalo and other four-legged creatures, such as the deer, moose, elk, and caribou, have provided food, clothing and shelter, tools for daily living, and pieces for ceremonial life in earlier times. In the present, we have been told that the buffalo will take on a new meaning and way of being understood as a provider.

According to Blair Stonechild,

In the past, the buffalo met virtually every need of the North American Indian, from food, to shelter; this animal was considered a gift from the Creator intended to provide for the peoples' needs. Today, elders say that education rather than the bison, education needs to be relied upon for survival. (pp. 2-3)

The new buffalo, as discussed by Stonechild (2006), is now being perceived as education (i.e., early years, middle years, secondary, and post-secondary). This view of education positions the world of education as the contemporary abstract vision for providing food, shelter, clothing, tools, and the means for keeping language and culture alive in the hearts of people as did the physical buffalo that roamed this land in earlier times. Options to transmit the sacredness of our Indigenous languages, perspectives, and ways of understanding to the youth of tomorrow are now real (Alberta Education, 2005; CAAS, 2002; Three Fires Society, 2007; WNCP, 2000). It has been told, in many prophecies and stories that this will be so. This understanding is what has spurred many leaders, spiritual, political, and cultural to model the need for maintenance and balance of relationships between our past, present, and the future (Kovach, 2009; Stonechild, 2006; Wilson, 2008).

Those who have helped to preserve the honour of our past and voice in their leadership and the visions for our future are recorded in documents of educational, political, and historical contexts, including the expectations they had about the rights and privileges in education (Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, 2004; Hawthorn, 1967; Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). Those of us who come behind these leaders, to follow in their footprints, recognize the need to defer to their voice and their written descriptions of intention. We do this so we never forget those who have gone before and that the work they anticipated is still critically important today. Many of the recommendations made during that time are current in that they are still being worked on, and attempts to facilitate them are as important today as they were in the decades gone by (RCAP, 1996).

Relationships code and guide all of Indigenous worldviews and traditional practices in the aspiration for Mino Pimatisiwin (Hart, 2002; Young, 2003). This aspiration requires the acknowledgement of creatures, inclusive of all forms, of the universe as relatives. Therefore, the following segments include consideration for the parts of Indigenous belief systems where the concept of interrelatedness has been consistently identified as foundational and remains integral to all relationships formed. I have included each of the segments to affirm the following:

- Traditional teachings include the protocol of repetition without variation or change to the stories, lessons, values, beliefs, songs, ceremonies, and foundational underpinnings;
- When traditional knowledge and information is shared, it is with an emotional presence outlaying the importance of such knowledge and the care with which the listener or learner must embrace it;
- Regardless of the tribal affiliation, linguistic group, and/or territorial land base, certain underpinnings will be the same or similar across all of these differences aligning all of the Indigenous People of Turtle Island as relatives;
- Relations formed across differences and even those relations formed with the new comers who came and stayed are included in the collective and must be treated with the same reverence and respect we would treat our relatives who are Indigenous to this land.

Wahbung: Our tomorrows. *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971), a document prepared by The Indian Tribes of Manitoba, considers the period from 1871 to 1971 and gives direct accounts to injustices done to Indian

people across Canada and, in particular, was written for change in policy. The term Indian used when discussing *Wahbung* is the title used during the era that this document was written in. This document is a united effort to educate the government, the Department of Indian Affairs, and the peoples of Canada about the importance of working together. The Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (1971) stated, “We trust . . . this is a new age in which the Canadian public will clearly encourage and support their potential representatives in working with us to achieve an honorable relationship with the original peoples of this land” (p. 1). In this document, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood gave recommendations for change within the education system that would allow Canada’s First Peoples to work with the government.

The inclusion of the synthesis of the *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971) is meant to honour the voice and insights of the Elders and leadership, who had the insights to document their voice as a legacy and blue print of advocacy for the future generations to look back and gauge where education is in this contemporary time. I draw upon this voice and insight to engage the discussion of why it is imperative to move forward many of the educational recommendations of this document that have yet to see any action. The leaders and Elders over 40 years ago knew what they wanted for their people. In the document created by them, they voiced their desires, intentions, and recommendations to the Canadian government about how they wanted to see education unfold for their children and grandchildren and the people of Canada who live here with us. As one of the writers of this document, Verna J. Kirkness (1999) expressed the following concern:

There is no doubt we have mastered the art of expressing what education for Our People should be. The rhetoric is there but is the substance? I believe that what we

are saying is inarguable. The problem comes with turning that rhetoric into action and doing those things we say are conducive to learning for our children rather than continuing to do the same old thing in the same old way. That is why I am advocating that we must first “cut the shackles”, free ourselves from mirroring a system that has not worked, then we must “cut the crap”, by less talk and more action and finally we must “cut the mustard” which is “practice what we preach”. (p. 20)

I believe that by implementing the STITP model or framework, which I am calling *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*, and by following through with this research, I have been cutting the shackles, cutting the crap, and cutting the mustard. My hope is that educators will see the possibility to find their way through their own Aboriginal education process and be able to find confidence in the practice of what they have learned.

Local control of Indian education. I have included the essence of the document known as *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) into this review. It was prepared for the Working Committee of the Negotiating Committee of the National Indian Brotherhood, today known as the Assembly of First Nations. This paper was to be used as the basis for the future action in the area of First Nations Education. This paper reflected the philosophy, goals, principles and directions of the First Nations which must form the foundation of any school program for First Nations children. The “Statement of the Indian Philosophy of Education” (p. 1) includes the core central values and desires of First Nations people of this time such as to see their children with “pride in oneself, understanding of one’s fellowmen and living in harmony with nature” (p. 1). As in the *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971), the national leaders of the time, the National Indian Brotherhood, wanted similar things for Indigenous children, and they expressed: “We want education to give our

children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them” (p. 1).

The values in this document were stated across territorial, tribal, language and cultural practices of the Indigenous people of Canada. The leaders of this era knew that a common voice and expression was required in order to effectively state the educational needs of the children. In her article “The Critical State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada”, Verna J. Kirkness (1998b) indicated that:

Our languages must be protected, preserved, promoted, and practiced in our daily live. It is our belief and understanding that language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared, and transmitted from one generation to another. Language expresses the uniqueness of a group’s world view. It defines who you are. . . . Most of culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Language is best able to express most easily, most accurately and most richly, the values, customs and overall the interests of the culture. . . . Treaty negotiations [with the Crown] did not mention that First Nations children would be prevented from speaking their languages...would be physically punished for doing so...and would be subjected to all kinds of mental and physical cruelties in the process of learning. . . .It is the position of the Aboriginal people of Canada that the protection of their languages is an inherent right, a treaty right, a constitutional right and an Aboriginal right. (pp. 95-96)

In the following statement of values, I find the same teachings and values that permeate all of the sounds made by the Elders and Knowledge Keepers who were central to the collective and individual upbringing of many who considered themselves as extended family to each other. Many of us who are related by this extended family of time and circumstance have heard the following statement repeatedly through time and over space.

We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture. The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values they will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian. (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971, p. 2)

When considering the research in this study on the Summer Institutes, the following statement has supported the need for research, which includes building Aboriginal education relationships, allies, and supports for all who live in this country to know about Aboriginal people. The gap spoken of by Kirkness (1998b) is similar to the void of knowledge present in modern Canada:

The gap between our people and those who have chosen to join us as residents of this beautiful and bountiful country, is vast when it comes to mutual understanding and appreciation of differences. To overcome this, it is essential that Canadian children of every racial origin have the opportunity during their school days to learn about the history, customs and culture of this country's original inhabitants and first citizens. (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971, p. 2)

All of the leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers I have read, listened to, and apprenticed with have made identical statements, encouragements, expressions, and prayers that consistently speak to the interrelationships with all the people who live in this country, excluding no one from their desire for inclusion of important practices in education.

Métis education. While the discussion of Aboriginal education has included the three identified Nations of people, the First Nations (Indian), the Métis, and the Inuit, the historical documentation of the Métis and Inuit as related to education was minimal. However, in 1985, there was planning for an important education conference to be held on Métis education in 1986. The following discussion is an attempt to capture the essence of Métis education within that particular timeframe. The relationship between the Government of Canada and the Métis greatly differs from that of the First Nations, even though the improprieties were significantly similar.

Interestingly enough, many of the people who were major players in the report of the Métis Education Conference, *Future Directions in Métis Education* (Manitoba Métis

Federation, 1986), and who were Métis at the time, are now officially designated as First Nations today. I cite this factor in that over time, the reality of Métis education has been impacted by the changes in constitutional identity options made available by the 1995 Bill 31 of the Indian Act of Canada (1985) that concentrated on Métis education (Chartrand, 2002; Frideres, 1993). With this in mind, the conference was one of the first gatherings focused on Métis education. This conference was one of the most significant gatherings in education for the Métis Nation. Participants included parents, students, Elders, and educators. Métis identity is very complex and rich with diversity, but in terms of power for change, a central theme remained that a unified front was needed for educational change to occur. The Louis Riel Institute, a Métis-run educational institute, is an example of what can happen with a common voice.

In one discussion at the 1985 conference one of the presenters describes that he first learned to express himself as a child. In the first ways that I learned to express myself in terms of love, in terms of understanding, in terms of knowledge, in terms of unity...I guess what I'm really saying is a person learns to respect themselves in their unique cultural identity. (Goulet, as cited in Manitoba Métis Federation, 1986, p. 29)

When I read this statement, a common theme rises from the First Nation identity, in that Rita Bouvier, (1994) also referred to the expression of love as a function of learning through her Mother Annie's explanation of why she taught Rita the knowledge she carries.

Educational themes that came out of Goulet's (as cited in Manitoba Métis Federation, 1986) discussion are the importance of Elders, learning through story, the importance of language, unity, and the natural world, which are closely aligned to what the First Nations have also voiced as important concerns. The educational desires of control, autonomy, equal representation in decisions made about education, and

ownership and control of research, curriculum, and programming are also evident for Métis Education. Métis ideas, concepts, and ways of looking at things were all cited as critical to the foundations of Métis education (Chartrand, 2002; Frideres, 1993).

I had the opportunity in 2003 to interview 10 people who worked at the Manitoba Métis Federation, and through a round table sharing, I asked them to tell me what they would want teachers of Métis children to know about their people before entering the classroom. As in the 1986 Métis Education Conference, some individuals, some of whom were at the actual 1986 conference, reiterated many of the same foundational values and perspectives in capturing the beliefs important to education. Interestingly enough, the people around this table reiterated similar or the same wishes and desires for the education of their children.

The notion that the time is now and that the Indigenous voice must be heard, including the Métis and Inuit, has permeated the decades from 1950 to the present and are reiterated in various documents (Couture, 1991a). What has been significant is the recognition that education is a right and should include learning strategies that will help First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children become educated with the same standards and outcomes, which will allow them viability in the labour market the same as any other Canadian student. What is important to also recognize here is that regardless of whether it is First Nations or Métis or Inuit people gathering and conferencing about the education of their children, the three groups were identifying similar value in education for their children; common aspirations for the success of their children; and the same desires for the children to become viable citizens of Canada before they were identified together as Aboriginal people in the Constitution of Canada in 1982. The constant dilemma,

however, was the seeming inability for the proper action to ensue, and even today, the need to fight for the rights of equitable education for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children is ongoing.

The MacPherson Report. The *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future* (MacPherson, 1991) consisted of six components, which provided a review of *Traditions and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future* (Charelston, 1988) published by the Assembly of First Nations in 1988. James MacPherson (1991) reviewed and examined the many complexities and issues covered in the Charelston (1988) study, which had engaged a comprehensive consultation process of a wide range of Aboriginal communities across Canada. MacPherson included the following topics: History of Indian Education in Canada, Current System of Indian Education in Canada, Native Education in other Countries, Constitutional Framework for Native Education in Canada, Reform Options, and Conclusions and Recommendations (pp. 2-3). He surmised that the *Tradition and Education* report was a substantial and significant document, which earned the respect of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development enough to render a response. The attention paid to this document had the potential to substantially enhance Indian jurisdiction over their own education and, secondly, provided the reformation options and preferred direction needed to accomplish a respectful place for Aboriginal people in this process.

MacPherson (1991) addressed the jurisdictional factors, directions, themes, and reforms outlined in the study. In the segment he called “History of Indian Education in Canada” (p. 3), he made an important recognition when he stated, “It would be entirely wrong to equate the history of Indian education with the history of the European

settlement in Canada” (p. 3). He went on to recognize that those who settled here affected the Indigenous people with their systems and version of pedagogy. Moreover, MacPherson affirmed what I have addressed in my work, in that: “The Indian people, however, had their own system of education long before the arrival of the European settlers” (p. 2), and he further remarked that the system was described as follows in an earlier paper Indian education:

When Europeans first came into contact with Amerindian peoples they were able to observe well-established education practices designed to ensure cultural continuity, and through which the youth were provided with the life skills necessary for their future roles in the societies. . . . This period in the history of Indian education was to date, the only period when the training of Indian children was designed, planned and implemented by Indian people for Indian children to prepare the children for the environment in which they were to live. (p. 2)

Children are the most precious resources of the First Nations. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations, and the hope for the future. First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and governments. Because education shapes the minds and values of First Nations young people, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over their educational programs in order to ensure that they have a lasting impact. When the children and youth are taught in their languages about their histories, values, and beliefs and how these fit in Canada’s milieu, First Nations children can again be prepared for the environment in which they are to live.

The inclusion of the *MacPherson Report* (MacPherson, 1991) reinforced my description of what Aboriginal leaders and Elders have always wanted for Indian children. He reiterated the evolution of education for Aboriginal children pre-contact to contemporary times and summarized it under five headings: Federal Schools, Provincial Schools, Band-Operated Schools, Post-Secondary Programs, and Cultural/Educational

Centres Program (pp. 2-3). The most significant educational option for Aboriginal children to hear about pre-contact life is often relegated to optional, alternative, and community programming. Interestingly enough, these major themes from 1991 are as relevant today as they were back then.

The current system of education struggles to improve the options and realities for Aboriginal children, and now it has become as important to include non-Aboriginal in this learning process because both have been robbed of the knowledge. Not only has pre-contact life become critically important for both to learn about, but the histories of relations to the Canadian government; the atrocities that have occurred in the relationship through policy, law, justice, and education; contributions made by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; and contemporary life for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are some of the topics that need much discussion in every level of schooling across all school systems in this country.

Education Framework Agreement: Interim Report (1994). The original Education Framework Agreement (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993) was signed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs on December 5, 1990 (see also Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2003, para. 1). This agreement set the stage for reviewing the status of First Nations education in Manitoba and bringing about educational change as identified by the First Nations of Manitoba (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993, Executive Summary: EFA Prioritization of education issues workshop, para. 2, p. 1). The goal as stated in the executive summary passage of the *Education Framework Agreement* (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993) was to ensure that by 1986, “a new system of education which is more community-directed and reflective of First

Nations needs and aspirations shall be in place with adequate resourcing to bring about an improved education system for all First Nations people in Manitoba” (p. 1).

The *Education Framework Agreement* (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993) contained the following highlights: governance, jurisdiction, quality, management, resourcing and funding, programming, human resource and training, and students. These were areas that formed the basis and overview of the consultations and dialogue that drew upon the voices of Chiefs and Directors of Education in Manitoba. In the areas of human resources, training, and post-secondary education, it was made clear that more First Nations teachers needed to be trained, and the quality of teacher training was of concern for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working in the communities. Cross-cultural specialists, educational leadership, and early childhood training were all of note in the Education Framework Agreement.

These same areas are the focus of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (2013) and have been since its inception in 1999. Even though the *Education Framework Agreement* (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993) was dissolved due to governmental funding phasing out this agreement, the following recommendations from the Assembly of First Nations’ (1993) *EFA Prioritization of Education Issues Workshop Report* had future implications for First Nations Education in Manitoba:

(A) Short-Term Implications

Among those identified included acquiring local control when determined by individual communities, implementing curriculum change with more Native content and providing Native language instruction programs in the schools. Other items included the provision of cross-cultural training for school staff, promoting more Elder/community involvement and building stronger communication networks in the community. . .

(B) Long-Term Implications

Among those identified were community-based secondary and post- secondary

institutions, additional funding for specialized services and improved facilities, expanding post-secondary opportunities and obtaining more jurisdiction and additional support from external agencies. (p. 46)

Again, post-secondary education was on the minds and in the hearts of the Indigenous people of this land. These implications are still apparent today in First Nations' educational reality. For some of us who reviewed these documents with their recommendations for educational purposes, the observation has been that when Indigenous peoples move in the direction of control over their educational destiny, the work is diverted or sunsets, as in the work of the *Education Framework Agreement* (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1993), and attentions are digressed to other initiatives. Again, the recurring dilemma faced by Aboriginal people is that regardless of consistent recommendations being made by them, the response from those who could change, fund, redirect resources, and/or support the recommendations have consistently ignored such recommendations.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. In their report, *Looking Forward, Looking Back. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, RCAP (1996) re-emphasized the critical nature with which education of the original people of this country needs to change. RCAP stated that education must now include all Canadians who have been robbed of the important knowledge about the First People who welcomed their ancestors to come and live with them and share this rich land. The imperative for cross-cultural education (i.e., Aboriginal education) for all who have not received this type of education is a theme that runs throughout their report. The information in this document reinforces the impacts and damage of colonial practices and draws attention to how the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people have the inherent right to be heard.

I will use the ideas in this document to further voice the imperative of inclusion of Aboriginal people who have inherent rights to not only the basics of safety, freedom, and life, but also the inherent right to an education that should be at par with every other citizen in this country. This emphasis includes a rightful place in post-secondary education, and the recommendations of RCAP (1986) indicated it is clear that this is still not the case. The need for doctoral work that speaks to the respectful inclusion of Aboriginal ways of teaching and learning is part of that inherent right.

Two more contemporary documents, *Learning about Walking in Beauty* (CAAS, 2002) and *Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes for First Nations and Métis Students in Southern Manitoba* (Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007), make reference to the need for education to change to meet the needs of all Canadians when articulating post-secondary practice and, in particular, some insights as to the needs of Aboriginal people as specific learners in those environments. I highlight the relevant works from these two documents to draw attention to the contemporary situation.

Regardless of the recent strategies to build awareness of treaty partnerships in Canada, too many Canadian learners are not able to articulate exactly what this means for them personally, and they lack the historical information, laws, policies, and/or details that place them in treaty relations with each other (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, 2012). Since there is such a void of knowledge related to the relationships between the partners of the treaty and the fact that Canadians generally do not know about the treaties, let alone their role in the education systems, those who do their craft within the education system are faced with an interesting dilemma (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, 2012). Further, the comment seen on public television, on

many billboards, and posters in classrooms are the creation of the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (2012); they state “We Are All Treaty People” (Banner). Even though there is much to discuss about the understanding of treaty (Treaty Relations Commission, 2012) this single statement has been the impetus for a series of educational initiatives made in educating all Manitobans about their collective place in the treaty relationships we have as Canadian people. For the most part, until this endeavour, the understanding that all Canadians are part of the treaty relationship has not been very clear and the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba has created a “Treaty Education Kit which includes a wealth of Treaty education materials for classroom teachers” (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, 2012).

Hence, education makes logical sense, as identified by the Prime Minister as the vehicle to address this dilemma (Harper, 2008). Knowledge Keeper and Elder, Ernest Tootoosis foretold that as people sharing this land, “we needed to be in better relationship with each other over the next five hundred years and do things differently than what we have done in the first 500 years” (personal communication to a Youth-Elder Gathering , July 20, 1980). What remains unclear are the strategies, resources, time, expertise, and capacity building required in education to assist in accomplishing the challenges to be met by all Canadian educators and their systems.

Aboriginal/Indigenous knowledge is now becoming understood as what Joseph Couture (1991a) would refer to as “Native Knowing”. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996) highlighted this information as “timeless human values” (p. 619), which reinforced the desires of the Elders with the “sense of obligation to continue to represent those values for the sake of future

generations” (p. 619). While some educators are beginning to realize the value of such knowledge, access to and readily available resources are in short supply. The looming danger of losing this knowledge has created the impetus for research and writing projects in all levels of the education systems. I argue that RCAP recommendations created the framework for the documents that have emerged since 1996 (e.g., CAAS, 2002; WNCP, 2000).

During the last few decades both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars, such as Battiste (2000), Haig-Brown (1988), Hampton (1995), Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), and Kovach (2009), have contributed to the task of attempting to embrace the need for discussion about Indigenous knowledge, including its meanings and value in educational settings and the ways of learning within its traditions, which has seen the importance of that discussion being visible and included in writing and research ventures. For example, they have written about the identity and value of Indigenous knowledges, explorations of transmission of this knowledge, the practices that were utilized by traditional Keepers of Knowledge to inform others, and the purposes that this thesis may serve in bridging the understanding of its space/place in contemporary educational mainstream learning environments (RCAP, 1996). When we contemplate the work in developing informed relations between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and other Canadians, we have to be mindful of many issues. For example, the learning technologies of the Indigenous people of this land are critical to the processes required to equip the educators with the proper tools needed to do what is necessary for the future generations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth to be in more peaceful relationships. The use of the Sharing Circle over many years has provided me with observations and evidence and has

demonstrated the possibilities for the development of mutual respect, the abilities to shift paradigms and change attitudes, and create a climate of safety and nurturance, whereby participants are able to learn about each other in ways that positively impact their minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions. It has been my experience as facilitator of these circles that people embrace each other differently because of the learning about each other that has taken place. There is a peaceful reverence for each other that does not occur without the circles being included in the learning space.

The majority of knowledge that has been imparted about Aboriginal people has historically been based in a Eurocentric construct. Until the past few decades, Canadian history has been written through the views and perceptions of non-Aboriginal authors (e.g., Blaut, 1993; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Green, 2003; Jennings, 1975). More recently, Aboriginal authors have taken to creating written documents that offer a different perspective on the truths of the relationships with Aboriginal people in this country (e.g., see Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2000; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Kovach, 2009). When facilitating courses in the Faculty of Education, I have observed that the students taking these courses were shocked to find out that there is factual chronological information about polices, laws, legislation, education, and treaties/acts, all of which has not been taught in public schools until recently. These include critical information such as information on the Indian Act (1985), establishment and impacts of the reservation system, outlawing of the ceremonies, the truths about the manner in which residential recruitment and schooling were implemented, the subsequent intergenerational impacts of this schooling, the legal impossibility of the First Nations people to access post-secondary institutions (RCAP, 1996), and that the Afrikaners came to Canada to study

how Canada was dealing with Aboriginal peoples and systems and eventually how this led the path to apartheid policies in South Africa (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; RCAP, 1996).

Even though this type of critical information is available in written documents (Blaut, 1993; Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Valaskakis, 2005), mainstream educators reveal that their access to this information has not been forthcoming, neither in their own schooling nor in their post-secondary training (Henderson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Newhouse, Voyageur, & Beavon, 2007). Furthermore, the public education systems are just beginning to reveal such truths about what has happened to Aboriginal people in this country.

Therefore, these best-kept secrets can no longer remain in the void of the shadows of ignorance, mistrust, and exclusion, and I have indicated throughout this thesis that I have a part to play in shedding some light on the void of knowledge for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in this country. The report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996) has outlined foundational underpinnings found in Indigenous thought and practice. These underpinnings depict a relational existence to all that has life. The Elders of our Nations are worried about the *slippery slope* we find ourselves on as Aboriginal people. Some of the traditional practices are at risk for influence and change, and it is the work of some of us who work in the mainstream, as pointed out by RCAP (1996), to be able to impart our voices through our memory to maintain, sustain, and chart the future “with insights from the past” (p. 663). Even though diversity exists amongst Aboriginal peoples in how traditions are practiced, some common values shine through as unchangeable and have withstood the test of time

because of the oral traditions (Hampton 1995; Fitznor, 1998; RCAP, 1996). It is through this understanding that I speak of authenticity, accuracy, and clarity of Indigenous foundational perspectives.

Learning to walk in beauty. The work from the CAAS (2002) report, *Learning about Walking in Beauty*, has contributed to the discussion of post-secondary education and how people of difference may come together to study Aboriginal perspectives in Canadian classrooms. CAAS attempted to describe how groups can work together to achieve tasks of integration using the walking in beauty framework:

This report comes from the hearts and minds of the volunteer members, Elders and advisors of the CAAS Core Working Group. Several of its authors have never met each other. We are of different cultures and stand in different places on the circle of learning. Yet the document demonstrates that we are of common purpose—that we have come together with a Good Mind. Our strength comes from our mutual commitment to build a world that respects all Peoples from all Four Directions. We strive for a world that must urgently act to honour, cherish and protect the children of today and of the Seventh Generation. Our urgency arises from the many challenges facing the human race, our ecosystem and All Our Relations. (pp. x-xi)

The four directions found in the walking in beauty framework are significant in hosting directional and time reference to organize a conceptual framework, which supports the necessary deconstruction in the following way:

- At the centre of the learning energy is the individual, both the learner and the educator
- East → Spring → Long Era of Survival and Resistance → Colonization
- South → Summer → Celebrating Strength and Identity → Many Nations, Many Stories
- West → Autumn → Time of Renewal and Rebuilding → Decolonization
- North → Winter → Wisdom, Elders → Aboriginal World View

Walking in beauty (CAAS, 2002) means learning how to get along with each other in a mutually kind, sharing, honest and respectful way by listening, learning, and knowing about each other—about one another’s cultures, histories, contemporary concerns, and worldviews. It means coming together in the Indigenous way, within a circle—where there is no start, not top, no end, and no bottom—where we all have our rights and responsibilities, and where we all value and respect difference.

By its development process, this report is an object lesson—a Teaching—in what we need to do to create a nation that respects all its founding Peoples. Mind, spirit, heart and body—the four aspects of human nature—guide us in how to conduct ourselves responsibly. In coming together to create this document, we acted from the heart as well as the mind, with the respect, honesty and trust for each other. As our many, many Teachers have tried to help the creators of this report learn, this approach is the basis of “right relations.” This manner of conduct lays the foundation for Walking in Beauty—for creating a community in which all our founding People are respected. (p. xi)

This document is a formal invitation to educators, policymakers, and all Canadians to work together so that we can begin learning about walking in beauty (CAAS, 2002).

This is a call to all people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, a call to end the cycle of oppression and honour the spirit of the Two-Row Wampum Treaty. It is a call for all of us to learn to live side by side and to honour the Earth that gives freely of Herself so that we can enjoy life here on Turtle Island. (pp. 2-3)

The consultation on improving post-secondary outcomes for First Nations and Métis students in Southern Manitoba. In 2006, the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba initiated a consultation to identify ways to improve post-secondary participation and outcomes for First Nations and Métis students in southern Manitoba (Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007). The main goals of this project were to develop a composite picture of the post-secondary education and training experiences of First

Nations, Métis, and other Aboriginal students and trainees in southern Manitoba. These goals were:

- identify what is working well for First Nations and Métis students and trainees, the in-place supports and systems that support strong outcomes for them, along with the barriers and gaps that hamper successful outcomes for them; and
- develop short- and long-term recommendations for consideration by the stakeholders. (p. i)

Both federal and provincial stakeholders were represented on a steering group, which guided the process, and a wide cross-section of Aboriginal leaders was consulted in this process. The Bear Spirit Consulting (2007) firm was hired to oversee the project posed the following key questions:

- What supports and systems are in place to enable successful outcomes for Aboriginal students and trainees?
- Are there factors that impact on the effectiveness of these supports and systems?
- What barriers exist to successful outcomes for Aboriginal students and trainees?
- What can be done to mitigate the impact of or eliminate these barriers?
- Are there relationships across existing systems that can be strengthened to enable better outcome for students and trainees? (p. 1)

Many of these works have contributed to the extension of my discussion on the examination of the past, present, and future of Aboriginal education in Canada. Those responsible for the big picture of education in Canada are demonstrating that partnerships and constructive challenging can have an impact on Aboriginal. In fact the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) has been mobilizing a large scale prioritizing of

Aboriginal education in Canada since 2004. Since that time, CMEC has made the following priority areas for their work in Aboriginal education. They have:

- undertaken significant work in support of Aboriginal education data collection and analysis;
- created a best-practices database for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education;
- begun work on teacher training as it relates to Aboriginal education; and
- established an ongoing dialogue with national Aboriginal organizations (NAOs) and with the federal government on a variety of Aboriginal education issues (CMEC, 2013).

There were two unprecedented national gatherings held in which CMEC was one of the catalysts for them to occur. A CMEC Summit in February 2009, on Aboriginal Education brought together to discuss issues related to Aboriginal education. Participants were ministers of education and of Aboriginal affairs, national and regional Aboriginal organizations, federal government representatives, and other stakeholders. In December of 2011 CMEC hosted an Educators' Forum on Aboriginal Education and educators and researchers from across the country came to participate in a face-to-face dialogue, exchange ideas with their colleagues and peers, and network on Aboriginal early childhood and K–12 education.

Throughout the rest of this thesis, the writers and researchers who have paved the way for me to make my research real will be included to support and emphasize different reference points in the unfolding of my doctoral work. One of my aspirations will be to bridge the traditional Indigenous knowledge and teaching practices to the learning environments of the academe and, in particular, teacher education. The following quote emphasizes the tenacity required to meet challenges faced in implementing Aboriginal education for all Canadian children:

The Aboriginal people of Canada, like Indigenous people across the world, have continually demonstrated that, through education and law, people can make a difference. We have developed the art of making visions come true, the art of the impossible. It has been difficult. We have had to have many beliefs. We had to believe that the future remains open to global and national renewal and personal transformation. We have had to believe that nothing in our heritage or culture could prevent us from lifting ourselves out of poverty. We had to believe that we could construct and transform the forces or interests that prevent us from living fully and freely. We had to comprehend that hope is more the consequence of action than observation. We must now place hope and action above memory. (Henderson, 2008, pp. 102-103)

The need to recognize Indigenous knowledge systems as contributing to the integrity of knowledge in the world of academe has been made apparent by a number of practitioners, researchers, authors and organizations such as the Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Alberta Education, 2005; Antone, 2001; Battiste, 1998, 2000; CAAS, 2002; Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline: 1998; Hampton, 1995; Henderson, 2000; WNCP, 2000 only to name a few. Over the last few decades, the compilation of research has resulted in literary works such as studies, articles, books, and commissioned reports. Many of these documents have been used for the purposes of informing systems in this country as to the complicated and tumultuous relationship that the Aboriginal people have with the Canadian government (Anderson et al., 2004; Battiste, 2000; Little Bear, 2000).

The literary work accomplished by these organizations and scholars such as the Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Alberta Education, 2005; Antone, 2001; Battiste, 1998, 2000; CAAS, 2002; Dei, 2000; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2003; WNCP, 2000) supported the following points: (a) Aboriginal peoples' knowledges and epistemologies must be known; (b) contributions from the past, in the present, and the potentiality for the future must be articulated in the education system; and (c) the impacts of certain laws, policies, and practices enacted by

the Canadian government present continued complications when attempting to connect the past, present, and future of Aboriginal people, which must make up part of Canadian education. Furthermore, one research document in particular, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996) has been significant, in that this report outlined clearly a need for mainstream institutions to create respectful space for Indigenous knowledge in all systems of education (Battiste, 2000; CAAS, 2002; Castellano, 2001; Silver & Mallett, 2002). As stated throughout this thesis, the Aboriginal people have been consistently requesting, imploring, and expecting that the education systems respond to the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal to better understand Canadian history as it relates to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people of this country, their Indigenous knowledges, their practices, and more.

Education systems need to deal with the lack of response specifically to addressing the needs of Aboriginal children regarding languages and Indigenous ways of knowing, living, and believing, which has been consistently requested over the years since the Wabung document (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971) was written. The lack of response has been equally consistent as much as, if not more than, the requests for change by Aboriginal people. I reiterate the idea of consistent request and consistent lack of response to implore the need for an understanding that this stalemate can no longer exist. While educators within the education systems are trying to meet the needs of these requests, they are often doing so without proper training, knowledge, and understanding, and they need the options for change.

The public and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education jurisdictions have partnered to create possibilities to address the requests, but need ways in which teachers

are trained to include options to change. Recognizing that the following credits are nowhere near enough to fill the void, Manitoba is a province where every teacher who graduates and certifies as a teacher in this province cannot do so without a required three-credit course in Aboriginal education. Post-secondary institutions are faced with facilitating compulsory courses in Aboriginal education without the student populations understanding why it is necessary to do so. The implications for teacher education are found in the Aboriginal Education Directorate's (2008), Manitoba Aboriginal education plan, which is an ongoing plan reviewed and revised regularly since 2001, and vary from:

- the creation of courses and degree programs with the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and the deconstruction of colonization;
- to increasing the number of Aboriginal educators;
- to creating professional development opportunities for educators presently in systems;
- to facilitating pre-service training or course work focused on program planning and integrating Aboriginal perspectives for Aboriginal education.

As educators find their way in and out of Aboriginal education and regardless of the ways in which people label this work, the values of respect and integrity for traditional knowledge and its practices are of concern to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers (Antone, 2001; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Couture, 1991a; Hodgson-Smith, 2000; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; LaRocque, 2001). Their concerns deal with maintaining integrity in the sacred teachings (Hampton, 1995) and the ways in which these teachings are used and integrated into educational systems (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Another concern is related to the respect paid to these methodologies within the education systems, when in the past, the whole existence of such methodologies was contentious and outlawed (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). If the general population in Canada is not taught about these actions imposed by the Canadian Government, then how will the integrity and respect for Indigenous ways remain protected and sacred (Harper, 2008; RCAP, 1986)? The policies, strategies, teaching and learning skills and tools, resource allocations and vision of Aboriginal education are different from one system to the other. As an example, when moving an oral tradition into a system that does not function in this way of transmitting knowledge, or facilitating teaching and sharing circles requires a knowledge base about the ethic and protocol, or establishing a climate of inclusiveness related to practices such as smudging and sweat lodge there needs to be further possibilities for research, teacher training, policy change, post-secondary education that lays the foundation for Aboriginal education and strategies to deal with issues of racism, raciality and privilege laid down before we can proceed conscientiously.

Hence, there are again implications of the responsibility for all post-secondary systems and institutions of education to train teachers in the aspects of traditional knowledge, including all First Nations education systems and training facilities as well as public mainstream educational systems. There is an intensifying need for the aforementioned learning communities to examine their environments to see if integrity and respect has been paid to Aboriginal peoples in how their processes of education are implemented, conducted, and assessed.

As an example, provincial outcomes for cultural and language programming have been identified in *The Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Language and Cultural Programs: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (WNCP, 2000). In relation to Aboriginal education, teachers in these territories and in provincial schools are expected to create programs accordingly, with the intentions that they would be supported by their school administrators and school division to ensure that there is a process for planning and implementing the Aboriginal education outcomes from the WNCP (2000) document. In their provincial *Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan 2008-2011*, Manitoba Education (2008) has identified four objectives intended to enhance the lives of Aboriginal people in this territory and the provincial education systems:

1. increase high school graduation rates,
2. increase access to and completion of Post-Secondary education,
3. increase successful entry into and participation in the labour market, and
4. improve the research base for Aboriginal education and employment. (pp. 3-6)

There are three significant actions required to accomplish these objectives, and they have been identified as part of this action plan. The intention is to:

1. improve the system
2. increase parent and community involvement
3. increase the number of Aboriginal teachers. (pp. 3-6)

These objectives and required actions impact teacher training for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators, including universities and post-secondary institutions responsible for the training of anyone who may become involved in an educational setting. The relationship between the provincial expectations in the Aboriginal education

action plan and present post-secondary teacher training is somewhat out of line.

Advocacy, partnership, dialogue, agreement in making commitments to the work between what is expected, and the opportunities that are made available have created challenges to a number of educational jurisdictions (Castellano, 2000; Silver & Mallett, 2002; RCAP, 1996; Stiffarm, 1998), in particular, teacher training programs.

Many educators who are already in the systems do not understand or realize their important place in Aboriginal education (Bouvier & Ward, 2001; Castellano, 2001; Silver & Mallett, 2002). Regarding teacher education and professional development opportunities, it has been my experience as a facilitator of Aboriginal education that there are many educators who have indicated that they have received little or no training about how to respectfully consider Aboriginal perspectives in their work (Graveline, 1998). Further, through my experiences conducting workshops, conference presentations, courses, and professional development activities, I have learned that there are many teachers in this province who are not even aware that there is a provincial strategy for Aboriginal education. For me, the lack of knowledge about the WNCPC (2000) document is an indication of how much work there is to do. There are integral pieces of knowledge that educators in the provincial education systems need to be aware of including:

1. the provincial action plan (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008) and the Western Canadian Protocol on Aboriginal Language and Culture program outcomes (Western Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000) exist;
2. what Aboriginal education is and/or is not; and

3. that all educators could benefit from understanding how to do their program planning and implementation in Aboriginal education respectfully and appropriately.

The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (2013) has been instrumental in working with First Nations in Manitoba regarding educational advancement and enhancement. As noted earlier, this organization was created out of the deliberations held by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs when considering a provincial mobilization in First Nations education. While these bodies of knowledge pertain to provincial work in Aboriginal education, First Nations, under the leadership of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre in March of 2010 adopted the provincial curricular outcomes and assessment processes to guide them in these two areas. Therefore, all of the aforementioned comments and ideas for educators in the provincial system now also pertain to First Nations systems.

While Indigenous knowledge is foundational to the work in Aboriginal education (Battiste, 1998; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; CAAS, 2002; Castellano, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) and is integral to implementing the outcomes outlined in the WNCP (2000) document, more needs to happen. Therefore, it is my contention that programming for teacher education and/or professional development opportunities needs to include awareness and capacity building, as well as the examination and critical analysis of all systems of learning in this province. Amongst First Nations education leaders at an Assessment Forum held on March 4, 2010, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre together with the Education Directors ratified that since the provincial curricular outcomes guide the classroom process, then so

should the assessment processes. All educators in this territory would benefit from being appraised of this information, even those school systems that do not identify the existence of any Aboriginal students in their system. Educators in this province and around the country are being challenged to realize that Aboriginal education is good for each and every Canadian (CAAS, 2002; RCAP, 1986; Silver & Mallett, 2002; WNCP, 2000).

However, capacity-building and awareness development opportunities have become available within these last few decades, and educators are beginning to receive educational and Indigenous programming related to traditional and Indigenous knowledge, which have enhanced understanding and skills in the areas of planning towards developing and implementing Aboriginal education. From my experience with teaching courses about Aboriginal perspectives, Indigenous knowledge, and being a provider of professional development opportunities for educators, I have come to realize that the university academe could be complementary partners with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Together, I believe there is a strong potential to create more Indigenous/Aboriginal places and spaces for all Canadians to learn and develop capacity in Aboriginal education (CAAS, 2002; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). In order for educators in schools to acquire the knowledge, competence, understanding, and confidence about working with Indigenous histories, knowledge practices, and traditions so that respectful integration can occur, opportunities need to be created for them to move from cultural awareness to cultural competency (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Ackley Christensen, 1991b; Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Delpit, 1998; Delpit & Dowdy 2002;). The cultural competency I speak of is that which facilitates the ability to discern

between the following elements as identified by Hartley et al. (2010), Johnson (2007), and Venne (1998):

- What Indigenous knowledge can be effectively integrated into schools and what should remain in the hands of Aboriginal people,
- The knowledge that requires Aboriginal Knowledge Keepers to facilitate and the universal knowledge from Aboriginal people that anyone can facilitate simply because it creates common understanding,
- Indigenous knowledge that can impact positively the lives of both.

When both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators understand respectful ways to integrate Aboriginal perspectives and how they can be utilized, school education systems will be greatly changed. In order for this change to occur, the training of the people working in these systems and the training in universities and colleges where they are trained must also change. These educators need to be trained so that they could begin to understand that not all Aboriginal people are the same, that society and the relationship with Canadian governments has changed them, and that this impact and knowledge is not widely understood or even known about (Battiste, 1998, 2000; Dufour, 2004; Haig-Brown, 1988; Hampton, 1995; Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2003; Piquemal & Kouritzin, 2003). Once educators have the confidence to deal with the “isms” that have plagued our understanding one another, then all children and youth can benefit from their participation in Aboriginal education/Indigenous education.

Various authors have discussed Indigenous knowledge/Aboriginal education and the need for its place in schools specifically as it relates to the teachers who become responsible for the implementation and the ways in which their training could prepare

them. In 2008, a four-day training document and support kit was published by the Manitoba Education with the Aboriginal Education Directorate (2008) as its lead called *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency*. Suggested approaches included in this training document were: (a) to prepare educators to become facilitators of Aboriginal education; (b) identify researchers who are willing to seek the Indigenous knowledge to become an effective practitioner of Aboriginal education; (c) prepare advocates for the advancement of Indigenous knowledges, practices, and tools for classrooms; and finally (d) develop agents for change willing to find ways through the barriers and around the issues raised by those who do not yet have the appropriate understanding for the need for Aboriginal education in all schools for all children (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008).

As writer of this thesis, I had the privilege of experiencing the beginning implementation of this tool with school divisions and First Nations education authorities.

In my notes, I explained how in my learning journey that:

It has been my experience over my lifetime, and in particular the last 14 years that all too many Canadians have not learned about Aboriginal people or who they truly are. This is due to lack of exposure, knowledge, and experience. This deficiency has been fostered by the public education systems and teacher education training programs, but Manitoba's current educational leaders want to ensure that this no longer continues in the educational reality of all children, youth, and adults in this province. (personal reflection)

In the realization that “people don’t know they don’t know”, I have developed certain tools in the process to enlighten educators and leaders respectfully, and without blame or shame, as to the:

- traditional pedagogy and ways of life that existed prior to contact,
- events that have taken place upon contact to change this prior life,

- impacts and results of such events,
- explanation of what exists today, and
- future directions that need to be sought.

As part of this learning curve, I along with others have been able to help educators identify the types of information people need to know when developing their strategies for Aboriginal education. The educators we have been able to influence have indicated that as part of this journey, their attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge have been transformed and that they have come to realize there is a great deal to teach and learn about the Aboriginal people of this land (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008, p. 3).

Interestingly, after this last five years, which included a retirement from Winnipeg School Division then curriculum writing at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, I now have come full circle to the Aboriginal Education Directorate and have the responsibility for implementing this training across the province. With that responsibility in mind and having had discussions with various colleagues, there still seems to be resistance from some leaders and educators to embrace the need for Aboriginal education.

Building awareness about Aboriginal people, their beliefs, histories, and knowledge requires work in deconstructing the power of privilege (Ackley Christensen, 1991b; Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Delpit, 1998; Delpit & Dowdy 2002). Privilege is foundational to the Eurocentric education systems, given that all of them have been built based on the values and beliefs of people who hold all of the power of resources and choice in this country. Those who have such privilege often may not realize that everything they think, and do, is founded on this Eurocentric construct. Notions of white

privilege, the power of privilege, and the misuse of power and privilege require critical analysis related to those who carry it by birth and those who do not. When educators in the mainstream systems are trying to understand why it makes sense for them to be engaged in Aboriginal education and understanding the place that Indigenous knowledge and practice holds in this work, it becomes important that awareness and capacity building occur for them.

The capacity building I speak of is about challenging and rethinking preconceived notions, biases, and misconceptions about Indigenous/Aboriginal people. Another important aspect of this exploration deals with non-Aboriginal Canadians and, specifically, educators finding out who they are in relation to preconceived notions, bias, and misconceptions. This requires what I am calling “in-searching”; rather than looking elsewhere outside of one’s self, “research” the journey is a look inward to search the caverns of the mind, body, spirit and emotions to see if any of these preconceived notions, bias, and misconceptions exist within. When the in-search reveals such negativity, the human consciousness must be able to somehow resist such notions in order to become free of them. Graham Smith (2003), in his theory of Kaupapa Maori, used the processes that emerged from the work of Paulo Friere. Smith (2003) spoke to the notion in the development of conscientization, building the capacity for resistance, and eventually creating the transformation praxis of one’s personal beliefs and attitudes related to the various aspects of Aboriginal/Indigenous people. The following six principles from Smith’s Kaupapa Maori Theory are quite similar to those found in the teachings of Indigenous people in Canada.

1. The principle of Self-determination or Relative autonomy,
2. The principle of validating and legitimating cultural aspirations and identity,

3. The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy,
4. The principle of mediating socio-economic and home difficulties,
5. The principle of incorporating cultural structures which emphasize the 'collective' rather than the 'individual' such as the notion of the extended family,
6. The principle of a shared and collective vision/philosophy. (pp.8-10)

In Canada, developing awareness or helping people become informed about their own oppression, involves both Aboriginal people who assume leadership, ownership and control of this cycle or spiral of critical change and, the non-Aboriginal people allies who support and involve themselves in such development.

In his article, "Aboriginal Epistemology," Ermine (1995) described when Indigenous Knowledge is transmitted and the knowledge is felt by the receiver, similarly to Smith's (2003) *Kaupapa Maori*, there is an energy called "mamatowisowin" (p. 104). Mamatowisowin is "the capability of tapping into the 'life force' as a means 'to be or do anything, to be creative' and it is this energy that is 'healing, creative, life-giving, [and] sustaining'" (p. 104). In my mind, this "capacity to tap the creative force of the inner space by the use of all the faculties that constitute our being" (p. 104) is the in-searching process that occurred for the participants of the Summer Institute. When Ermine spoke of mamatowisowin, he was essentially speaking of a life force "that manifests itself in all existence because all of life is connected, and all of life is primarily connected with and accessed through the life force" (p. 104). The notion of mamatowisowin refers

not just to the self, but to the being in connection with happenings. It also recognizes that other life forms manifest the creative force in the context of the knower. It is an experience in context, a subjective experience that, for the knower, becomes knowledge in itself. The experience [itself] is knowledge. (p. 104)

Therefore, when creating this awareness, complacency is not an option, and helping people find ways to counter or resist their oppression requires an education that

helps people become agents of change (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; CAAS, 2002; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 1998, 2012; Hampton, 1995). In order to accomplish this, we all would benefit from an examination of power and the skin that houses such privilege. Only in the last three to four decades has the inclusion of Aboriginal epistemologies become a serious consideration for institutions of teaching and learning (Anderson et al., 2004; Castellano, 2001; Deer, 2006; Hampton, 1995). The inclusion of Aboriginal epistemologies, histories, lifestyles, and practices in all aspects of education requires the knowledge and skill base needed when planning and strategizing with all of the educational outcomes to which educational institutions may aspire. When this work of inclusion of the other occurs, the breakdown of only one way of seeing, doing, and living in the world breaks down, and the deconstructing of colonial power and privilege has begun.

Through provincial outcomes and objectives, the impetus for change in Aboriginal education has demonstrated options to affect ways in which professional development, course offerings, and degree programs in the faculties of Manitoba's universities has become possible. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have made concerted efforts to effect change in these systems with the notion of developing equity in power relationships (CAAS, 2002; Castellano, 2001). In order to accomplish this development, Aboriginal people need to be part of the process (Haig-Brown, 1988). Given the magnitude of the work, the numbers of educators who are presently involved and committed to this work are far too few. Those involved in making people aware of this void situation need to grow in numbers and the general population in Canada requires consciousness raising throughout the education systems for both Aboriginal peoples and

their Canadian counterparts. With this in mind, teacher training options need to include more possibilities for educators to train in the specific areas outlined in the training found in *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency* (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008).

It is for this reason that Aboriginal education efforts must be inclusive and welcoming of both sets of learners. At the same time, a tension exists between factions of Aboriginal people as to the degree to which Indigenous knowledge will be affected by the inclusion of others in this prospect (Castellano, 2001; Henderson, 2000; Leo & Shaw, 1998; Little Bear, 2000; White, 1996; Young, 2003). Elders and Knowledge Keepers have reiterated that people need to know about who Aboriginal people are, and yet they are concerned that the integrity of the ancient ways and that knowledge will be dissolved into a skewed version of the truth (Couture, 1991a; Ermine, 1998; Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Medicine, 1999).

Some of my past experiences have revealed that many of the best intentions by non-Aboriginal people wishing to help have evolved into damaging and disrespectful events in history, such as in the residential school experience, largely due to the lack of understanding of their power of privilege (Dei, 2000). Those who have never been devolved of their intrinsic power will have great difficulty in realizing the power that they are standing in, unless they are consciously trained to do so (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Alfred, 1999; Battiste, 2002; Blaut, 1993; Hampton, 1995; Little Bear, 2000). Aboriginal education, therefore, can be a vehicle for including the examination and critical analysis by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators of the colonizing precepts, events, and policies that promote the continued existence of racism, classism, sexism, and ageism.

This analysis requires forging new space for us to learn about how to put these “isms” on the table and diffuse the power of separateness through honest, open, respectful ways of dialogue and communication.

Models of Aboriginal education may take on various forms (Cajete, 1999; Hampton, 1995; WNCP, 2000), but all need to be clear about the tensions and concerns held by the Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The balance needs to be restored. The power in relationships presently is held by the mainstream and, specifically, the place that the power of privilege holds in relationships for learning not in the mainstream. Those learners who come from places where the power of privilege did not previously exist will not have the same experiences in their learning venture as those who have been granted this power simply by the skin in which they were born (Antone, 2001; Battiste, 2000; Graveline, 1998). Both Marie Battiste (1998), in her article “*Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge*”, and Kirkness and Bernhard (1991), in their article “*The Four R’s – Respect, Relevancy, Responsibility, and Reciprocity*”, spoke to the approaches that need to recognize the care with which we proceed for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in the learning systems of the modern world. Most importantly, in my mind, is the recognition that the ways in which Indigenous knowledge is acquired (e.g., Indigenous Research) requires careful explanation (Deer, 2006; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2005). Historically, accepted forms of research have been defined by Eurocentric models for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing, and posing questions to identify recommendations and actions required from the conclusions made about the evidence or data collected (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Deer, 2006; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2005; Wilson, 2008).

These forms have not included models of Indigenous research and an accumulation of epistemologies and philosophies, which define and provide information about Indigenous thought, worldviews, and practices foundational to these ways. Battiste (2005), in her work *Indigenous Knowledge: Foundations for First Nations*, stated, “For as long as Europeans have sought to colonize Indigenous peoples, Indigenous knowledge has been understood as being in binary opposition to ‘scientific’, ‘western,’ ‘Eurocentric,’ or ‘modern’ knowledge” (p. 2). Therefore when seeking Indigenous knowledge that is to be utilized in the mainstream education systems, Battiste felt that the “immediate challenge is how to balance colonial legitimacy, authority, and disciplinary capacity with Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies” (p. 4). It requires facilitators who understand who they are in their own skin and can work with others who may be different from them. In other words, those who do this work need to be committed to notions such as *mamatowisowin*, conscientization, resistance, transformation, equity, self-determination, self-governance, and sovereignty (Ermine, 1995; Freire, 2007; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Johnson, 2007; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005).

The numbers of Aboriginal scholars, writers, and researchers are increasing due to the foundations built by people like Joanne Archibald, Marie Battiste, Greg Cajete, Marlene Castellano, Joe Couture, Billie Diamond, Willie Ermine, Laara Fitznor, Eber Hampton, Verna Kirkness, Bea Medicine, Mary Young, and many others. These scholars have made challenges to modern systems and bodies of research, each making a stand for ethical space for Indigenous knowledge and practices in the academe. I recognize that this list is not comprehensive, but cite these people as scholars whom I have become

familiar with personally and academically, in order to acknowledge them as colleagues and relatives who have made my work in the academe easier.

The task for those of us who follow in the footsteps of these scholars is to continue to decolonize the academe so that teacher-training endeavours can include courses in Aboriginal education, which will bring Indigenous knowledge to the children in all school systems. When this occurs, the children and youth in school systems will no longer have to wait until they are adults to acknowledge the gifts found in the Indigenous knowledge of the people of this land. The challenge for all educators is to understand how to approach the gathering of Indigenous knowledge and learn when to utilize it and respectfully implement the integration of it into their work with all children (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 2004; Hampton, 1995; RCAP, 1986).

It has been argued by Aboriginal leaders and scholars, Aboriginal people are the most appropriate ones who can knowingly ensure that the ethics and integrity of spiral learning are maintained (Cajete, 2000; Hampton, 1995). The work of integrating Aboriginal education into schools will be all the better when we work together with learned allies for this common outcome (CAAS, 2002; Fitznor, 2012; Graveline, 1998; Haig-Brown, 1988). This, however, would mean that Aboriginal people align their work with those non-Aboriginal people who support and advocate the development and creation of sacred places for inclusion of Indigenous ways in all learning processes (Battiste, 2004; Castellano, 2000; Fitznor, 1998, 2002, 2012) and in post-secondary systems of learning. The work in Aboriginal education is better served when we include partnerships with others who are not of Aboriginal ancestry, because when all Canadian

children are included in Aboriginal education, we can achieve *mino pimatisiwin* (Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 2012; Hampton, 1995; Hart, 2002; Young, 2003) in this territory we call Manitoba. There are scholars who are helping in this work to assist Aboriginal people find ways to continue to respect the ancestors' and Knowledge Keepers' integrity and truth (Fitznor, 2002, 2012; Kanu, 2002; Piquemal & Kouritzin, 2003; Young, 2003).

Natalie Piquemal (2005), in her article "*Cultural Loyalty: Aboriginal Students Take an Ethical Stance*," suggested that an ethical stance Aboriginal people are making in relation to "storying cultural experience . . . [is related to] cultural loyalty" (p. 523). She identified this loyalty as,

a way of living authentically and relationally in the world, which means living with, rather than enduring, or living against, the complexities of today's world... [She believed that] cultural loyalty has three voices: an ancestral voice, a relational voice and an ethical voice. (p. 523)

I believe these voices are the ones that will be the guiding voices to protect the integrity of Indigenous Peoples' Earth knowledge. This way of working together will include the protection and preservation of ancestral languages that is integral to the originality of such work (CAAS, 2002; Kirkness, 1998b; Leavitt, 1995; Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, 2005; WNCP, 2000). Partnerships of individuals, groups, and/or organizations of Aboriginal people and their non-Aboriginal allies will become critical in the coming years. These partnerships are a definite response to the aspirations of Elders/Knowledge Keepers who influenced many of us in this territory.

If we as educators, scholars, writers, and researchers in this territory are going to be successful in achieving the Government of Manitoba, Ministry of Education (2008) Aboriginal education action plan outcomes for improving the system, increasing parent and community involvement, increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers, and

improving graduation rates the literature has suggested that we need to work with each other across jurisdictional boundaries. When we erase the barriers for the possibility of working inclusively, we will assist all Canadians involved to become culturally competent in Aboriginal education (Aboriginal Education Directorate, 2008; CAAS, 2002; WNCP, 2000). Such endeavours will afford us the continued ability to recognize the integrity of oral traditions so that the importance and influence of Indigenous knowledge can affect, with positive power, the relationships we build in the modern world and in the future world.

However, there is a tension that exists within these processes, which was explained by Ermine (1995):

Indication that Aboriginal people are attaining knowledge of a very different nature and purpose from Western peoples is evident in Aboriginal language and culture. Ancestral explorers of the inner space encoded their findings in community praxis as a way of synthesizing knowledge derived from introspection. The Old Ones had experienced totality, a wholeness, in inwardness, and effectively created a physical manifestation of the life force by creating community. In doing so, they empowered people to become the “culture” of accumulated knowledge. The community became paramount by virtue of its role as repository and incubator of total tribal knowledge in the form of custom and culture. Each part of the community became an integral part of the whole flowing movement and was modeled on the inward wholeness and harmony. (p. 104)

The true test is whether or not we can engage educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to take that journey inward to become the repositories and incubators required to facilitate authentic experiences for all children in partnership with the Aboriginal community. I believe that the collective experience of the Summer Institute participants demonstrated to some extent what Ermine spoke of in the previous quote. Mary Roberts (personal communication, 1994) explained to me that what we are to bring to the schools is the most basic Indigenous knowledge, and in that understanding, I have found a way to help educators become an integral part of the whole flowing movement,

which was modelled on inward wholeness and harmony. It is my wish and intention to demonstrate through this research how this has become possible by creating the model presented in *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* when helping educators engage in the practices of Aboriginal education.

Indigenous Knowledge as it Relates to Teacher Education

In the previous section, I identified traditional Indigenous education as pre-contact education, traditional learning, and Indigenous pedagogy. More specifically childrearing practices were the prime responsibility of the family and speciality training occurred at a time in a young person's life often when they arrived at puberty. At this time, other people in the community would spend time mentoring and facilitating experiential learning and oral knowledge transmission. Pedagogy was very practical and survival oriented, with both personal and collective survival responsibility inherent in all that was learned. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) described this type of education in the following manner:

Traditional Indian [Indigenous] education took on a practical form. Children were taught by their parents and grandparents from a very young age. They were taught acceptable social behaviour and the means of survival in an often harsh environment. Girls were taught, among other things, how to prepare and sew garments made of animal hides, how to set up camp, how to prepare food to keep it from spoiling, and how to care for children. Boys were taught to be courageous, skillful hunters. Bravery was admired. Training for the boys and girls in preparation for adulthood was very important. . . . Learning per se is not a new concept to Indian people. (p. 6)

In order to establish a reasonable boundary around the work in this literature review, I refer to the introduction included as part of my original application to this PhD program. Until the last two to three decades, the knowledge carried by Indigenous Peoples of Canada has remained some of the best kept secrets in the historical development of education curricula in this country (Battiste & Henderson, 2000;

Castellano, 2001). Educational systems are slowly recognizing the value and application of such knowledge in the learning experiences being made possible for all Canadian learners (Castellano, 2001; RCAP, 1986). Early, middle, and senior years as well as post-secondary educators are becoming motivated, either by policy, priority, and/or interest, in the inclusion of Aboriginal/Indigenous knowledges and perspectives as part of the design and implementation of their programming practices.

Two significant events, one educational and one political, outlined earlier are having a direct impact on policy, priority, and interest as they relate to Indigenous knowledge, Aboriginal education, and its inclusion in teacher education. Firstly, the public apology made to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, in particular the residential school survivors and their families, has affected Canadian learners, including educators. By virtue of Prime Minister's words (Harper, 2008), education must now focus on how to assist in positively affecting how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people see each other. The words of the apology implicate every Canadian in this country as partners in the prospect of reconciliation, healing, and restoration from the impacts of the educational terrorism (Battiste, 1998; Haig-Brown, 1988; York, 1999) imposed on First Nation families in Canada. As indicated, Harper (2008) has made reference to education as the tool that will need to be the foundation of partnerships developed between the people of Canada and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in reconciling the wrongs of this dark era in education. This commitment made by Harper directly impacts educators and education systems, both provincially and federally, to forge partnerships that establish conditions that will encourage positive and equitable ways of educating Canadian learners to the truth and reconciliation necessary for learners to be equitably informed

about each other. Secondly, the decision made in 2009 by the provincial government and educational leaders to decree that every teacher graduating in this province requires three credit hours of Aboriginal education coursework in their Bachelor of Education program. Therefore, in order to certify as a teacher in the province of Manitoba has mandated the universities and colleges to develop such courses offered in all teacher training programs in this province (Government of Manitoba, Ministry of Education, 2008).

Chapter Summary

Early in this chapter, I believe that Indigenous life was laid out for us to walk upon the earth in beauty, striving nation to nation for a good life from the land. The Elders have told us that this was so until the coming of people who had different desires laced with ownership and greed, and this changed our lives forever. In this literature review, I have included documents written by the Elders and political leaders of this territory, which have identified concerns and outlined desires, starting with what is considered by First Nations people of this territory as a critical key outline of expectations for the education of our First Nations children. These expectations and recommendations for at least three decades were pretty much being ignored and little accomplishment transpired.

The document that began the literature review is called *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971). This written description of our leaders' views on education was considered by many as monumental and historical, as it was stating the obvious to First Nations. These recommended changes are still viable and current in today's educational processes; hence, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* is still seen

as a text for serious consideration in the betterment and enhancement of education for Aboriginal children.

A second important document was the *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), which outlined who was to facilitate this education. I believe the third critical document is the findings of the first Métis Education Conference in 1986, which again outlined an expression of expectation for Métis children and all Indigenous children. Included further were documents that continue to pose recommendations from not only Aboriginal people, but also the many and much needed allies who have pushed the walls of barrier to freedom of Aboriginal education for all people in this country. As noted by Prime Minister Harper (2008) in the *Statement of Apology* to Aboriginal people of this country, education will be the single best link in forging working relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal allies to achieve the required outcomes for truth and reconciliation.

The oral knowledge shared with us by the Elders and Knowledge Keepers also offer another perspective on Aboriginal education. A reflection of the three Elders/Knowledge Keepers' voices indicated how the experience in the Summer Institute constructively moved forward the agenda of Aboriginal education. They felt that the work of the institutes narrowed the gap, and addressed the void in knowledge that exists in mainstream education about Aboriginal people, their histories, contributions, and the historical relations with the federal government.

It is critical that these recognitions be shared at all levels of the education systems in this province and throughout Canada. It is my contention that the summer institutes in Aboriginal education that are the focus of this study attended to the multiple needs and

aspirations articulated in this literature review with an in-depth focus that was engaged through the STITP. In addition, it is important to note that the participants' stories in this study reflected the understandings, needs and aspirations for Aboriginal education that were articulated in this literature review.

Chapter 3: The Elders/Knowledge Keepers

During the Summer Institutes, there were Elders/knowledge Keepers who participated as co-facilitators, participants, and as regular guest speakers. The information I collected from them as part of an earlier course project, provided grounding in the role of oral history in Aboriginal education and the STITP model. The Elders/Knowledge Keepers who were approached to participate were those individuals who had been involved in the Summer Institute over a number of years and had experienced all aspects of the STITP with the students. They knew my work in the Summer Institutes and supported this work. All three of them became helpers in the implementation of the STITP. These individuals provided knowledge comprised of oral knowledge transmission in both the Teaching Circles and Sharing Circles through primarily storytelling and teachings. They assisted in the Smudge and Sweat Lodge ceremonies amongst others. This group of Elder/Knowledge Keepers connected the Indigenous knowledges of the traditional learning lodges to the Summer Institute classroom.

Elders' Voice: The Wisdom Perspective

From my extensive readings in the field and my apprenticed work with Elders over my life's career, I learned that prior to the First People's involvement with the visitors to this land, oral knowledge transmission was the manner in which the beliefs, history, teachings, laws, and ways of life transcended one generation to the next. However, as noted earlier in the literature review, through the oppressive and colonization policies of the new comers, the voices of the Elders were interrupted and pre-empted. The ancestral languages and cultures were impacted in such ways that would

leave every territory and it's First Peoples in a race against time to maintain a way of communicating in the world that is distinct to the land and the people of that territory.

Sadly, for all Canadians, Canada has been shaped by Eurocentric mechanisms of policy, law, and lifestyle that were foreign to the belief systems of the original inhabitants of this land. As noted in the literature review, the imposed segregation of First Peoples to the reserve system forced the original people to reconstruct the ways in which First Peoples identified their territories. Even though many of the original ways of speaking, seeing, learning, feeling, and living are no longer the same, yet in the face of these challenges, the Elders and Knowledge Keepers still continue to teach and practice the languages and cultures of the land. The ceremonies and the lodges where these teachings and practices are transmitted still continue this transmission in the ancestral languages; however, the Elders/Knowledge Keepers are concerned as to the continuity of the ways in which such information is practiced. Those of us who have been privileged to hear such voices now have the responsibility to impart whatever it is we have learned, to protect and to assert what remains from the abundance of a life only remembered by some.

As part of a student assignment in a Qualitative Research Methods class, I chose to conduct a research project to include the voice of three Elders/Knowledge Keepers who participated in the Summer Institute as students, co-facilitators, and/or guest speakers. These three particular Elder/Knowledge Keepers were helpers for a number of years over the span of the institute. They provided a culturally relevant voice, which came from the fact that all of them are grounded in cultural lifestyles and was felt by the participants as they interacted with them. This groundedness in traditional practices helped in developing a strong level of trust between the facilitators and the learners. All

of these factors reminded me of the importance and need for support from them in the work that we do. The stories told and sharing they did also drew attention to the need for all learners in the country of Canada to learn about the ways lived by the First People prior to contact. Because the policies, legislation, and laws imposed by those who assumed the rule over the First Peoples and their land forever interrupted and interfered with how the First People lived forever. Consequently, the resulting impact was the subordinate contemporary relationship the First Peoples have had with the Canadian government.

Another goal of this project was to demonstrate how we must embrace the critical nature of restoring educational justice to Indigenous pedagogies that are rich with life-changing practices and methodologies. I contend that Indigenous pedagogies used in the mainstream practice of teaching and learning, as related to teacher education, can only enhance post-secondary learning environments in Manitoba and Canada.

In the research study on Elders/Knowledge Keepers, I created awareness and gave voice to the need for such research as contributing to the bodies of Indigenous knowledges in education, which is one of the fastest growing fields in education. This study specifically dealt with the perceptions of Elders/Knowledge Keepers about the Indigenous knowledge and teaching tools and practices and their integration into mainstream adult learning environments, specifically, teacher education. This research is a reflection of the three Elders/Knowledge Keepers' voices of how the experience in the Summer Institute constructively moved forward the agenda of Aboriginal education, narrowed the gap, and addressed the void in knowledge that exists in mainstream

education about Aboriginal people, their histories, contributions, and the historical relations with the federal government.

The overall objective of this qualitative research study was to examine the perspectives of three Elders/Knowledge Keepers who have observed the use of the STITP during the facilitation of the Summer Institute. A connection was made by them to the theme of my doctoral thesis that relates to the use of Indigenous knowledges, teachings, and practices and their use in teacher education. Educators who participated in the Summer Institute course shared that their learning experiences had been life changing and that many paradigm shifts occurred for them during the course. Most of the participants in this study have indicated that it was due to the STITP and the other traditional pedagogies used in the institute that changed their attitude and perceptions about Aboriginal education and its necessity in schools. As well, the void of knowledge in Canadian schools about Aboriginal people, pre-contact, colonial, and post-colonial, is an expanse that has yet to be explored by facilitators of learning.

The Elders/Knowledge Keepers voices contributed to understanding the importance of using the traditional teachings tools and Indigenous pedagogies to teach educators about Aboriginal education. The following explanation is a critical understanding when working with those who invited to share their knowledge. The passing of tobacco is considered protocol in the teaching of reciprocity whereby this offering is placed with an honest heart between the giver and intended receiver. If the intended receiver is able to fulfill the request they will pick up the offering and commit to the most honest response they are able to offer. In this way the receiver is not left holding a protocol they cannot answer. At the same time the receiver may know

someone who will be able offer a response and they then can pick up the tobacco to assist in this request.

The following were concepts from this examination that I felt would support the work in this thesis:

1. The way in which these Elder participants described the philosophy and practices of Indigenous practices mainly the STITP.
2. The ways in which these Elder participants considered the philosophy and the STITP to be important in the facilitation of teacher education,, in order that educators may develop an awareness and understanding of their role in Aboriginal education
3. The extent to which these Elder participants regarded the importance of the STITP in narrowing the void of knowledge about Aboriginal education in schools and provided a foundation for all teachers to facilitate Aboriginal education strategies with knowledge, experience, truth, and confidence.

When I invited the Elders/Knowledge Keepers to take part in my study, their participation was confirmed through the tobacco protocol with the indication of their interest to participate. In addition to the verbal invite, an information letter was given to the participants with the tobacco protocol (see Appendix B). When the ethics approval was completed, I presented the participants with a letter of informed consent to sign as part of the research process (see Appendix C). I had consent from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers to include their stories as part of this study, and I was then able to access the data from this earlier research project.

Elders/Knowledge Keepers' Data

During the institute, the Elder/Knowledge Keepers contributed their Indigenous knowledge to better understand the value of using the STITP with teach teachers for Aboriginal education. The data collected on tapes during a Qualitative Research Methods course were transcribed verbatim for all three Elder/Knowledge Keeper interviews. I reviewed each transcription and provided a brief summary of each interview as noted later in this paper. In addition, I examined each of the STITP practices from the individual Elder/Knowledge Keeper interviews and separated their sharing into themes according to the STITP practices. Each participant's comments were then organized under pseudonyms in this order Beth, Wylie, and Willie, so that all of the comments made by all three participants about each STITP practice could be read together.

I used different coloured highlighters to capture varying themes and similar themes, and then other colours were used to delineate the quotations I felt were important to include in the summary. These themes and sub-themes were cut and pasted under each of the STITP practices, as the pieces that would contribute to the body of the summary. Again, I used different coloured highlighters to identify the different theme ideas and comments, which could constitute an overall impression of the institute. Once the themes were identified, any comments that might contribute to the final chapter on discussion and/or conclusions were saved together.

After a few reads of this data organization, I had difficulty deciding whether to summarize specifically under each category of the STITP pedagogy or to link the themes as a general section for the whole institute. I chose to focus on a general report from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers' research project and leave the information on each of the

pedagogies for my thesis work. I made this choice because I felt strongly that each of the pedagogies contributed to a positive and safe holistic learning atmosphere. In addition, I felt that each contributed their own significant influence to the learning that took place for the individuals in the institute. As I read through the identified information from the interviews, I cut and pasted the comments, quotes, and thoughts into each category and began my summary exercise. What I mean by category A, B, C, and D is that I referred to each interview question as a category, so interview question number one became Category A, interview question number two becomes Category B, and so on.

The Elders/Knowledge Keepers had much to share, and it was refreshing to listen to the wisdom from their stories that contributed to understanding the value of using the traditional teachings tools and Indigenous pedagogies to teach teachers about Aboriginal education.

Themes and Stories of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers Project

The information shared during the interviews was rich and full in depth and breadth. The stories, explanations, and examples volunteered by the Elders/Knowledge Keepers offered reflections that were impossible to represent in a 20-page report of this research project. Of the stories cited by one of the participants, Wylie alone deserves one whole segment for explanation and deconstruction of the pedagogical value and purpose in facilitation and critical consciousness building. While recognizing this limitation, I have identified four major themes that capture an overall reflection of the impact of the Summer Institute. Elders/Knowledge Keepers Beth, Wylie, and Willie surpassed any of my expectations about how their reflections supported the rationale of my thesis work regarding the educators who participated in the Summer Institute. I share a summary of

the Elders/Knowledge Keepers to provide an overview of the broad themes emerging from the interviews. I left out the individual practice reflections of the Elder/Knowledge Keeper participants of the Summer Institute mainly because those who were involved with them live the STITP pedagogies as part of their daily lives.

Each theme was reflected in the participants' stories. In addition, many of the key concepts about the teaching pedagogies and tools identified in the various segments were reiterated by them. If we were to consider a picture of the different types of learning that took place during the Summer Institute, we might have seen a gentle spiral motion of learning energy with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual interludes of individual stories melding with the collective synergy, which opened doorways of new ways of seeing, listening, learning, and living. Relationships of interconnectivity with this world, the natural world, and the enigmatic reality of the spiritual realm combined as the learning was felt by most participants and on all levels of their being (i.e., Mind, Body, Spirit, and Intellect). The Elders/Knowledge Keepers felt the four themes captured the important observations they made when participating in the Summer Institutes. The following four major themes emerged, embedded in the words of the Elder/Knowledge Keepers:

- i. Spiral learning;
- ii. Learning relationships;
- iii. Learning through feeling and experiencing emotion;
- iv. Learning in equity

Each contributed to the development of the model which has emerged from this work and will be explained in detail in this section.

Theme i: Spiral learning. When Beth spoke of the concept of spiral learning, for her it involved recognition by the Elders that the learner has exhibited the traits of willingness to become a receptacle for the knowledge the Elders might be ready to transmit. As this insight becomes understood, the learner becomes the apprentice ready to spend time with the Knowledge Keeper to look, listen, learn, and begin living what knowledge is shared. Once the Elders perceive that the learner has taken the knowledge into their own, and living this knowledge is to be a reality for the learner, they will indicate in a variety of ways that the learner has in fact earned the trust and responsibility to assume the work to now pass on the knowledge to others. These four levels of motion in learning are what may be considered the first level of spiral learning. Beth expressed the reciprocity aspect of spiral learning in this way: “The Teaching Circle is powerful. . . . There are so many methodologies.” The facilitator teaches and student learns; the student teaches, and in turn, the facilitator learns. Wylie understood the spiral of learning in this way:

Things don't always come back to where they started; it would be more like a spiral. As we are going around the circle, the knowledge, the inspiration, the aspiration allows us to go higher and higher. So when we came back, what should have been the point of beginning, we were actually far above than where we actually began. Then we were able to continue on from this point. It was like an upward spiral of knowledge of the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical levels.

Wylie believed that modeling is a deep facet of the Teaching Circle: “By doing these things with teachers they will in turn model these things with their students.”

Beth indicated that “active listening requires a specialized skill and note taking pre-empts learning that skill,” so that as part of the spiral learning, the main intent for all in the learning circle is to be present enough to engage in the process of active listening. When this occurs, Beth believed that “ownership” for the learning becomes a strong

outcome, and therefore, what is required is an engaging environment that fosters the acquisition of confidence and building of trust. Wylie emphasized this by sharing:

Once you're in the circle, emotional learning, spiritual learning comes into forefront, and those give you a good grounding in culture and allow you to flow to where things need to flow to, to achieve the outcomes that you want.

He believed that in this environment, it is an assumption that "sharing is respected and valued" and that when "the decision to be in this learning environment is made," this gives the indication those who have come are ready to learn something.

Therefore, according to Wylie, the environment that is created for learning must include four aspects of learning, and everyone must be given the opportunity to express so that the learners will realize the following: (a) mental aspect of learning is about "opening new thought processes"; (b) the emotional aspect of learning fosters the ability to "talk about feelings related to each experience"; (c) the physical aspect of learning happens by "doing things together"; and (d) a spiritual aspect of learning occurs by "inclusion in opening exercises" as an example of becoming active in the sacred, which is part of participatory learning. Beth further reiterated this type of learning fosters the applicability of learning to the work done in the institute, and when learners practice what is being learned, mastery becomes an option. She believed that the Elders/Knowledge Keepers' role in Aboriginal education is "internalized and responsibility assumed" in the work. Willie summarized the learning spiral in this manner:

When I go to ceremonies, . . . my spirit takes over . . . to receive every word. Every meaning that I hear goes into my heart, into my spirit. . . . Every word has to be heard, has to be received and taken into your being . . . so that you can cherish the knowledge that is being imparted, . . . [and when] I receive teachings, [I] let them become part of me, let them be my bundle.

In this way, the Summer Institute created a ceremony of learning by the use of the Indigenous knowledge, practices, and tools. Each person in the circle became a listening/

learner and speaking/teacher. Authentic and culturally accurate knowledge and information, clear understanding, new sightedness, and sound reasoning were part of the spiral forming new assumptions based on new information.

Theme ii: Learning relationships. In order to move through the learning spiral, there are important key concepts that must be delineated within the learning environment. Beth stated that in her philosophy of the Teaching Circle, she recognizes the “four directions” as having significance, in that “everything is interconnected—we are all interconnected.” She emphasized the importance that “we are to respect the circle so that everyone that is in there [and] works together to make sure that ‘everyone has a part’ to play in the learning arrangement.” In order to accomplish this, all participants shared that trust has to be established. Beth indicated that “the circle is powerful in the formation of relationships . . . [because] everybody has a place, everyone has a role and a responsibility”, and she made the observation of the students in the institute that “they took care of each other in the circle.” Wylie linked the Elders’ and Knowledge Keepers’ intent in his explanation about the Summer Institute Sharing Circle when he stated, “The idea of the Sharing Circle would be the same as when our Elders thought we were ready to learn something then they would teach us about a particular thing.” In the institute forum, the educators taking this course had made a decision to be there, and the Knowledge Keepers solidified the relationship by sharing what was intended.

Wylie captured the learning relationship between the Elders and the young people who they were teaching. He spoke of “learning from someone we care about,” and when I think of all knowledge transmitted to me, personally, I understood what he meant because those traditional Knowledge Keepers who we learned from really cared about us,

so much so that they would trust us with the most valuable information of our ancestors. Wylie believed that “relationship impacts learning outcomes, and learning information is made important from someone we care about.” He went as far as to state, “Only when the relationship is established can trust be built . . . [and that] building the relationship will result in trust.” Both, the teacher and the learner must be able to see how they fit in the learning relationship. Wylie explained that the relationship between the teacher and the learner dictates:

How we relate to each other based upon our relationships with the natural world, How we observe, interpret, and emulate those same kinds of relationships with each other, That “Eyes would be opened . . . to allow for new learning . . . able to make really profound decisions based on that information and that, as people learned and questioned, the option of growth for the facilitator or keeper of knowledge was enhanced.

Willie described the evolution of the circle from people who were strangers in the beginning to consider members of the institute as if they were members of a learning family. Willie stated,

In the beginning, the students really didn’t know what they should share, and they would share their emotional life stories. . . . As time goes on in the circle, people become more confident in their sharing and the focus is not as emotional.

Further, he felt that “the facilitator is part of the group and is not considered like an outsider.” He re-emphasized that “everybody feels safe” and believed that “creating belongingness is part of the circle and a needed strategy in classrooms for all children.” The Knowledge Keepers I interviewed all shared stories too long to include in the body of this thesis. Therefore, I have included two stories told by Wylie that are teaching stories and suffice to say that these stories expressed a deepened level of learning due to the caring relationship in which the Elders freely transmitted parcels of the knowledge they carried. As a result of the recognition by me that the Elders and Knowledge Keepers

who transferred their knowledge to me influenced the a title for my thesis, “*Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love*”, which has come from knowing how much they believed in me.

Theme iii: Learning through feeling and experiencing emotion. Willie made recognition about the comfort level of the participants deepening to a place where they actually began to feel good about themselves inside the circle when he shared, “They came to the circle. They came in tears, but when they left, they left with a smile on their faces.” He believed this was possible because:

Every participant would be respected. Everything that they shared was important, and the feeling of safety grew so much so that they felt that they really belonged in the circle and to the family of that circle. . . . [They] felt comfortable to share—nobody criticized them, they felt at ease.

Wylie commented about an “emotional aspect learning” and further explained that “feelings determine the next steps and influence how the learner embraces the knowledge transmitted.” This notion reiterated the importance of the learning relationship, but also spoke to the conditions of the learning environment, which needed to be carefully unfolded as a Bundle Carrier would do in laying out his/her sacred items to get ready to facilitate a ceremony. According to all of the interviewees, learning best happened when people begin “feeling through experiencing”, and Beth reflected that she observed the participants in physically moving, shifting, and gesturing as they were receiving the teachings in the institute. Wylie spoke of participants “feeling safe to see things in a different way” and that the institute offered “something different to look at, feel, and experience.” He cited an example of the embodiment of an emotional attribute as “using a soft velveteen cloth a participant used the idea of this cloth with one of the other students and explained how kindness feels.” He further explained that “I can still feel it

all through my whole being that somebody could come up with a way of helping someone else experience what they wanted to teach about emotion.” Experiential learning was one of the apprenticing ways in which our Traditional Teachers worked with the knowledge they carried, and Wylie explained his understanding of connecting learning to feeling with this example:

One of our Elders has said that if you read something, there's no heart in a piece of paper, so you cannot convey them to the other person's heart, only to his mind. So if you go out and you work, cut the wood for the Sweat Lodge, go out and carry the water, bring the Grandfather rocks, and you sit in the heat, you're experiencing the peoples' songs and prayers, and when you come out of there, and somebody asks you what you experienced, and you tell them, they will feel it in their heart.

In his interview, Wylie spent a good portion of the time explaining why learning through emotion is critical to shifting paradigms and giving learners authentic ways in which to go back to their classrooms to impart personal stories. He stated,

Experiential learning, on the other hand, will allow them to physically be there, to emotionally experience it, to think the thoughts that come to the experience [and] also to be spiritually grounded in the experience. One of the things, to me what this does, is allow you to talk from that experience, and people can connect from your experience from the heart at the emotional level. The people who participated in the Sweat Lodge or participated in the teaching lodge would be able to go out and tell people what they experienced and what it was like for them, and people will feel that because it's their feeling that is being passed to the other person along with the thoughts and everything else.

Beth talked about “historical guilt” that was experienced by members of the Summer Institute. Non-Aboriginal members of the circle tended to pick up guilt that really wasn't theirs. It was important at this point for me to clearly create an understanding that we did not need to pick up this guilt from the actions of our ancestors on either side. The care with which the facilitators and helpers in the circle deconstructed this particular emotion reframed the intent of encouragement from Elders, who taught them that this type of emotion should only ever be a catalyst to understanding the power

one has “to change how the next 500 years are lived.” This refrain has been commonly heard in ceremonies and lodges and one that Ernest Tootoosis (Ebun) had shared with those who heard his teachings.

Theme iv: Learning for equity. Beth, Wylie, and Willie each had strong beliefs about the Summer Institute learning environment being effective in creating a safe place for the learners to learn, feel, and grow. Willie set this stage in his words, which almost come like a poem, and I chose to cite them in a poetic style of citation:

*Everybody learns; everybody has a chance to express
Everybody had a chance to speak and in turn become a giver
Everyone had a chance to listen and in turn become a receiver
Everybody had a chance to contribute
Everybody was equal
Everybody put in a good part*

Beth further reiterated similar thoughts and considerations when she offered the understanding that they have a place in the circle:

*Everyone has a voice
Everybody has a story to share
Everybody has things go on in their lives that impact how you do your work.*

I believe this captured, in a succinct way, the parameters with which we can discuss equity as a right in the learning process. Wylie referred to the notion of equity when he stated,

To me, that is a sense of equality. You don't mean sameness, and sameness and equality are completely two different things. If everybody that came there went home with a smudge, the sage smudge, we would have created sameness. The people saw, I understand what this means, and I can do the part that I can do without putting your part down. That created a sense of equality in the classroom, and then people were able to then take home and to apply when they needed, both in their personal life and professional life.

Beth discussed the use of stories as a means to create the meaning of equity in the circle when she described her feelings about stories:

Well to me, like I believe that stories teach us, help us understand life, help us understand who we are, what our place is in the family and the community and the world, and so stories help us to understand those things, and to me I believe everyone has a story. I believe everyone has something to share.

In this way, she explained how the members of the institute were able to embrace equity as their right when she shared:

The evolution of voice and that everyone has a story to share, and I think what happened is [that] as people began with the various processes, especially the Sharing Circle, that people began to gain confidence in themselves, and they began to understand that “Hey, I do have a story to tell here.” I think part of it is that the students began to see that I can share something and feel good about it.

Wylie conferred further that expression was a form of breathing life into the motion of spiral learning and offered the following explanation:

When you have a Sharing Circle, there are some assumptions . . . assumptions that we are all equal. . . . We’re able to take care of each other in it. . . . We’re able to come up with the things that we need to inside the circle. . . . We’re going to be able to move as best we can forward, even if a forward is in a circle.

Willie simply believed in equity, as in this statement made by him: “Prayer makes us equal because we can realize our sameness when we acknowledge the ‘Supreme being’ in all of our lives.”

I recognized that I would not be able to give the individual STITP and the other traditional practices and activities the attention that was needed to fully explain the place they held in the work of the Summer Institute. At this point, I recognized that even though in this segment of the thesis the STITP practices are not delineated in a significant way, other than inclusion in the general, the information these Elders/Knowledge Keepers shared confirmed the conviction and passion with which I chose to use them as critical tools for educators finding their place in Aboriginal education. I felt that the information shared in this research project enhanced my thesis work by giving the proper attention in situating the voice of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers in an appropriate way in

the research of my doctoral thesis. The input from each Elder/Knowledge Keeper is presented with an individual focus in this section of the thesis.

Beth. Beth was able to provide clearer insight as to the notion of spiral learning and provided a significant key concept that became part of my thesis work. She also described the “look, listen, learn and live” pedagogy used when apprenticing with an Elder. In her story, Beth was able to connect my thoughts and aspirations about spiral learning to the integrated model I used during the Institute. The Elders/Knowledge Keepers were able to speak to these themes in ways for which the participants in the Summer Institute did not yet have the voice to describe this concept.

In the same topic of oral transmission, Beth explained what it meant to be a good listener: the special skill, the depth of the process, and the ability to determine what is most important from what is heard. She described how this active listening process began to determine the level of ownership held by the participants so that one became a listening learner, a speaking teacher, and someone with confidence and trust in their own learning processes.

Beth recognized the importance of filling the void and discussed how the Summer Institute provided accurate information, created opportunities for developing understanding, fostered the ability to shift paradigms for a new sightedness, and established the reasoning for involvement in Aboriginal education. She touched on the feelings of learning and explained her observation in the embodiment of the teachings through what she called “feeling through experience”. She confirmed the ability for students to find their role in Aboriginal education by creating opportunities for them to generate their own stories from the multiple strategies, activities, and methodologies used

in the institute. Through sharing, one can begin to see the “*Circle of Courage*” (*Reclaiming Youth International*, 2013) of “belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity” (para. 1) that was being built by the participants.

Beth reiterated the concepts and importance of relationships, equality, mutual respect, trust, validation, story making, and capacity building as themes that transcended through the institute. In particular, there were two references and possible citations that I felt were critical in my thesis work, as they described the process of collective development by including everyone’s gift to make one song, and through story, the experience of participants engaging in the *evolution of voice*. She reiterated throughout her interview the need for educators to create their place in Aboriginal education to assume their role in it and become responsible for the work of it. She stated,

I think what happens with the teachers is that they begin to understand. Through hearing the Knowledge Keepers by going to the ceremonies and by them internalizing that they begin to understand, I can use this process with my students, and now I have a story to tell.

This interview happened for a reason, and I have realized that the contribution made by Beth is actually the one that was needed to bring forward the notion of spiral learning as an impact of the STITP.

Wylie. In each and every STITP practice, Wylie was able to connect theory and perspective to classroom planning and practice. In the oral knowledge transmission practice, he described that learning through listening, feeling, processing, and experiencing the moment without doing anything would impact the knowledge to all levels of being mind, body, spirit, and emotion. He stated that when one is engaged in the act of note taking, “You are more of conduit of information” rather than the vessel that we were meant to be. In other words, we maintain what information we were supposed to

when practicing the ways of active listening. He also explained that “we have always learned beside someone we cared about, somebody who cared about us”, typifying the importance of relationship between teacher and learner in the learning process. In Wylie’s words, the “learner then must be able to trust that what they are receiving is the fullest and best knowledge this person can provide to them.” He described that mutual respect between the teacher, and learner is key to an open learning environment, and when this exists, we are doing the work of “opening thought processes.” Each member of the circle felt that their “sharing is respected and valued.”

Wylie, on several occasions, indicated the traditional practices of each of the seven types of teaching pedagogies and learning tools. In his talk on the Sharing Circle, he revealed the aspect of spiral learning and the mobility of learning as a spiral, moving higher and higher in depth and breadth. He spoke to the importance and facilitative aspects of these tools as empowering self-directedness in the learner. He spoke of the embodiment of knowledge through the feeling aspect of the experiences. Wylie provided a most profound use of storytelling in almost every segment. He brought emotion when I listened and filled feelings in me. The Elders had used the same tools with me, and when I have implemented these STITP practices, I knew in my own being how learning could become inclusive and nurturing for me, and the act of love became real. I used the STITP practices as they were used with me, and this research project has been very validating to actually hear from the participants that I have done well in respecting my teachers and mentors. Any doubts I had about this work have now left me, and they have been replaced with trust, belief, and conviction. Wylie had provided me with rich and deep information that has carried me through this assignment, but even more so, he has

affirmed the processes I have used as culturally appropriate, academically sound, and experiential at all levels of being, mutually respectful, and his input supported my thesis work on many levels. He stated that what we do in the Summer Institute “is based on something very traditional, something that has always been there with us.”

Willie. Willie, even though he was an Elder/Knowledge Keeper, also provided the perspective of the student. He came to the Summer Institute as a student, and it was from this viewpoint of being that he spoke. I could not have hoped for a more supportive articulation of the work done in the Summer Institute. Uniquely, he contributed the deep spiritual connection to the teachings that occur when one is actively listening in the learning circle. He was able to offer a description of the process that participants in the Summer Institute underwent as part of the learning growth, in that he recognized how the comfort level of the participants moved to a place where they actually began to feel good about themselves as learners inside the circle. He felt that “the Teaching Circle is a very valuable tool” and served a good purpose in the learning circle for all of us to have acquired knowledge from the Summer Institute.

There were a number of similarities in all three of the interviews, and each offered its contribution and clearly explained the connection between adult learning theory, practice, and traditional worldviews of Aboriginal people, which I have articulated in the literature review. Willie confirmed that these connections are, in fact, quite possible to be used together in teacher education. The Elder/Knowledge Keeper sharing indicated the critical need to deconstruct the oppressive mechanisms and systems that keep the void alive and well. The Elders who taught me stated that you know when you have accomplished something when you feel secure in the notion that you have made your

ancestors smile by what you have accomplished. Therefore, for the work in the Summer Institute, I felt that Wylie captured the essence of the work best and stated it appropriately in this observation:

To me, the whole experience would have made them smile because everything that happened from start to finish had the greatest learning value, even if it was break time. People were learning much more than I think you do in a regular university class setting. People were sharing at a deeper level, and to me, the feeling was there because we created a particular kind of relationship within a group. There was a sense of belonging in that group, that we could do this, and as individuals, we can do this, and we can do it in a good way. Everybody participated to their fullest, and it didn't matter what was your level of expertise or even what was your level of what would you call it—your ability to do things and not do things. . . . So to me, the whole process would have made all those that come before us smile because they certainly would have been there watching. Hmm . . . I think these kids learned something.

Interestingly enough, that afternoon when I was finished writing this part of the summary, I was called to a meeting as a result of having been part of a video production on Indigenous knowledge. I was pleased to learn that each one of the Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and academic scholars reiterated all of what was shared by Beth, Wylie, and Willie. I shared my research with them, and they all were very encouraging. I can now tell them upon completion of this thesis that their perspectives were all supported by my findings.

Chapter Summary

I included this chapter as an acknowledgement of the tradition called witnessing, which is a practice whereby an individual who is attempting to use the practices, concepts, and ways they learned while apprenticing involves respected members of the community as helpers, resources, and eyes to tell the story of what was occurring. This is an important piece of the work when involving Indigenous ways of doing things. These people provided feedback during the activity or event, offered constructive criticism, and

provided a dialogue base from which the practitioner can confer and hone his or her skills. They contributed to the learning process with their knowledge and expertise, and all three of the Elder/Knowledge Keepers were also certified teachers in the mainstream, which in my mind led to an increased importance regarding their support and input. As I said earlier in this chapter, these folks also carry ceremony bundles, which deepened the understanding they had as they witnessed the events that took place during the Summer Institutes. Their input reinforced the use of the STITP as a beneficial practice in teacher education. These Elders/Knowledge Keepers felt strongly that the work in the Summer Institutes deepened their potential for authentically practicing Aboriginal education because their role was made clearer to them. This notion was supported in the synthesis of the Sharing Circle interviews as well as in the individual interview stories of my current research. The Elders/Knowledge Keepers supported the idea that the void of knowledge regarding Aboriginal people was narrowed and the level of knowledge about Aboriginal education was not only deepened, but again also reinforced that a foundational path for all teachers to facilitate Aboriginal education strategies with knowledge, experience, truth, and confidence had been laid.

The Elder/Knowledge Keepers expressed their validation for me to do this research thesis by participating in the earlier study prior to me taking on the question to be researched in this study of the STITP. Their encouragement and validation for me to go ahead in answering the questions posed was important to me as a Knowledge Keeper.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

For researchers to be accountable to all our relations, we must make careful choices in our selection of topics, methods of data collection, forms of analysis and finally the way we present information. (Wilson, 2008, Back cover)

As indicated earlier in this thesis, working with educators was not new to me, as Aboriginal education development was very much a part of my extra-curricular activities as an educator. I had participated, attended, and/or led many professional development exercises, educational conference planning sessions, and various committees about visioning Aboriginal education and the places it needed to be. I have been in constant communication with the Aboriginal community about education and what it should look, sound, and feel like for Aboriginal students. Additionally, I have spent my whole career finding ways to include non-Aboriginal people in experiences in Aboriginal education. Therefore, when I was approached to coordinate and facilitate this Summer Institute, I felt ready, willing, and able to do so.

When considering the focus of my research, I felt that there was very little choice as to the *what* I would write about. This was mainly due to what I saw, felt, and experienced as well as the knowledge I acquired during that very first Summer Institute in 1994. It was then I realized that this amazing journey I experienced during that summer was not going to end and that it was going to become an integral part of my career as an adult facilitator of learning. I was certain it was going to be the focal point of some kind of research I would be doing in my doctoral studies. In this chapter and to this end, I describe the research focus and design of this study to include the people who participated, the seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices I asked them about, and the means with which I gathered the data. I also outline my data organization, marking, and reading in this chapter as well as the questions used to collect the stories and

reflections of the participants both from the Sharing Circles and the individual interviews. Even though the same questions were asked in each of the Sharing Circles and the individual interviews, I endeavoured to conduct an analysis that would recognize different aspects of the participant's experiences from the collective reflections and the individual reflections.

Research Focus and Design

I used the method of exploratory research within a context that recognizes that the integration of Indigenous knowledges and practices into the university setting was very new at the time of the Summer Institutes. Few studies focused on the use of such practices as the STITP, including the students' responses to the use and the impact on their classrooms and on them as educators. Even though the various institutes provided rich data for this study, there is still a need to cast footprints that would open the doorway for others to follow in similar footsteps and generate a wider variety of study and exploration into the use of traditional Indigenous teaching practices beyond teacher education and the Faculty of Education.

The focus of this thesis was a study of a three-week Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education. The research focused on an examination of the ways in which students made meaning of their involvement in the STITP used as the instructional practices in this course: the Smudge, Oral Knowledge Transmission, Teaching Circle, Sharing Circle, Storytelling, Group Oracle Project, and Sweat Lodge Ceremony. I wanted to know if teacher/learner involvement in these practices developed teacher capacity and/or cultural competency as well as informed their identity as an educator of Canadian children. Specifically, this study addressed the following overarching questions:

1. To what extent did the STITP have an effect on participants' professional identity and confidence as an educator of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children?
2. To what extent did the STITP have an effect on the way participants teach and feel in their classrooms, schools, and personal life.

I asked participants for their retrospective reflections of their experiences, changes in attitudes and feelings, what they learned, and if they are using anything from the institute in their practice while taking the Summer Institute. Further, the participants were asked to comment on their newly acquired knowledge base as it related to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people; their contributions to Canadian society; and their histories, beliefs, and ways of seeing, speaking, and living. Their stories reflected on Aboriginal education and on the ways in which their involvement in the STITP has informed and/or influenced their own facilitation of teaching and learning. They also reported whether or not they have or are currently using any of the practices learned during their time in the institute.

Data Collection

Recruitment process. The student participants were recruited for this study initially by sending out an advertisement (see Appendix E). When people responded to this invitation, they contacted me by email to volunteer to participate in my research. It was at this time I asked them if they had contact information for any other people they knew who had attended one of the Summer Institutes. I sent an invitation to those whose contact information was provided, asking them to consider participating in this study. I also had been in contact with students of the institutes through various means, such as conferences, common organization affiliation, committees, and educational work in the

communities. With their contact information, I sent an advertisement with information about how to participate. There were 28 positive responses in all between November and December of 2011. I sent each volunteer a letter of invitation that explained the focus of the research (see Appendix F) and invited their participation in the research process, which involved two data collection activities: Sharing Circles and individual interviews.

The Sharing Circles included members who were randomly selected from the pool of individuals who had agreed to participate in this research study and who had attended the institute between the years 1994 and 2007. As stated by Creswell (2007), the “meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences” (p. 57) should be reflected in the data gathered to inform the collective reflections enough to “describe what all participants have in common as they experience” (p. 57): for example, from what they shared in the Summer Institute. I tried to arrange Sharing Circles that would have a mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal male and female participants, the reasons for which I will describe in the next section. Furthermore, meanings should capture “a description of the universal essence” (p. 58) of their movement around the spiral of learning. Hence, the Sharing Circle data collection process collectively provided rich data from their lived experiences in the Summer Institutes, and this supported the collective learning aspects of this study.

Only 21 of the total 28 respondents were able to attend one or the other of the scheduled times for Sharing Circles and/or individual interviews. In total there were 18 participants who actually attended 1 of 3 Sharing Circles. When it came to the individual interviews I literally put the names of 21 individuals scheduled for the Sharing Circles in a hat and pulled out 10 names. There were 3 individuals from the original 28 who had no

desire to participate in the Sharing Circles and these other 3 participants made the total of 13 individuals for the individual interviews and were members of the 28 original respondents who did not have an interest in participating in the Sharing Circle process.

Study participants. The student participants in this study were drawn from the total number of participants in all of the institutes, grouped into three (early, middle, and recent) time periods. As shown in Table 1, over the initial two time periods (1994-2003), the enrolment was fairly consistent; from 2004-2007, the student enrolment increased, indicating growth in numbers, support, and the need for the Summer Institutes.

Table 1

Study Participants in Relation to the Sum Total Number of 3 Chronological Groupings of the Summer Institutes

	Total Enrolment	Participants
Most Recent Years 2004–2007	103	5
Middle Years 2000–2003	65	4
Early Years 1994–1999	63	4

When considering the break in the institute's implementation process at 2007, I had started the studies in my PhD program. The actual research period started around the time when the institutes were no longer being offered. At the same time that this was occurring, other faculty members were creating community partnerships, such as the one with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, to administer and implement a master's cohort and a Post-Baccalaureate Degree in Education Cohort. While these programs integrated Aboriginal perspectives, they were different than the Summer Institutes of this study. The other consideration to make was that the compulsory

Aboriginal education for certification purposes was phased in during 2009, which now requires anyone graduating with a Bachelor of Education to have at least a three-credit course of Aboriginal education on their transcript.

Even though there was diversity in gender, age, nationality, stage of study (i.e., beginning or completing), kind of work, and/or stage of their career, my focus for participant selection was on the educators who were currently working in schools and who took this course. There had been learners from social work, the City of Winnipeg Police Force, architects, and engineering, but my main objective was to seek knowledge from those who work in education and, particularly, with children and youth. Of the 21 participants, three quarters of the participants were Aboriginal, and approximately one-quarter were non-Aboriginal. The mixed grouping coincided with a teaching in the importance of reciprocity, in that both groups had a potential to bring different knowledge to the learning circle. When we come together as one, the knowledge base came from these two sides, making room for everyone to contribute to the learning process. As well, in consideration of the teachings, gender plays a huge role in the balance acquired when both men and women are in the circle. There were 12 Aboriginal women and two non-Aboriginal women, making 14 women. There were four Aboriginal men and three non-Aboriginal men, making seven men. Even though there were greater numbers of Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal, the fact that it was a mixed group by these two variables brought a good balance in the ways of working together in the learning circles (see Table 2). All learning was enriched by the presence of these individuals and the particular variables.

Table 2

Total Number of Participants for both the Sharing Circles and the Individual Interviews and both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal and Male and Female

	Total	Female	Male
Participants	21	14	7
Aboriginal	16	12	4
Non-Aboriginal	5	2	3

In *Table 2* there are 21 participants, which include the 3 individuals who participated in the individual interviews who were members of the original 28 respondents. The breakdown of participants of the 3 Sharing Circles according to their Aboriginality and their genders is presented in *Table 3*. In the sharing process it was important to have both the gender and Aboriginality as part of this research due to the fact that each had a perspective which lent to the richness of the data. Gender role in the lodge is important and contributes to the whole perspective of each STITP. As well, the fact that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people worked together to share their perspectives lent to the depth and breadth of the need for such learning opportunities to exist. I want to remember here in *Table 3* that there were 18 participants in the Sharing Circles with the three that volunteered only for the individual interviews which constitutes the number 21. Of the 13 that interview individually 10 were part of the Sharing Circles and that is why the numbers need this explanation.

Table 3

Sharing Circles, Number of Participants both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal and Male and Female

Circle	Number of Participants	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Female	Male
1	6	3	3	3	3
2	8	6	2	5	3
3	4	4	0	4	0
Total	18	13	5	12	6

Sharing Circles. The Sharing Circle process also provided me the opportunity to connect collective reflections to the experiences of the individuals I interviewed and to broader events of the Summer Institute that were beyond the STITP experiences. Depending on the connections that emerged, these connections were integrated into the analysis as part of the themes of the study. I conducted three Sharing Circles, which occurred at three different locations and times. Prior to beginning a Sharing Circle, tobacco was offered to each participant according to the traditional Midewewin ethics adhered to when seeking information from someone who has been chosen for reasons of sharing something of significance.

The questions posed to the student participants for the Sharing Circle data collection process focused on the engagement of participants as members of a collective or as an individual. Similarly, the same questions were posed during the individual interviews; however, particular attention was focused on inviting the participants to recall and reflect upon their individual involvement in the STITP and if any connections could

be found regarding the STITP learning insights to their present classroom/teaching practice.

1. As you participated in the _____ what were the things that you learned from the engagement in the _____ practice?
2. From all of the things that you learned in this practice what was the most significant and important to you?
3. Were you inspired by the _____ practice to use it in your classroom and/or your life? If so how have you used the Smudge and if not, could you explain why not?
4. What if anything about _____ practice made a difference in the way you see yourself as an educator of (a) Canadian children, (b) Aboriginal children, (c) non-Aboriginal children?

Each session was tape-recorded in order to capture the verbatim statements made by the student participants. Sharing Circles as a data collection tool is relatively new to mainstream research and it combines traditional ways with academic research protocols. While time intentions were made for each circle one of them went over the three hour time allotment with the consensus of the group. Two of the Sharing Circles took as long as needed, but did not exceed three hours in length. There was an exception to the second circle, which had eight people: one member left after the second round of sharing because she had the flu, and another participant had to leave because the group went over the three hours allotted for the circle. In order to recognize the time element in this circle, we combined the questions related to the Teaching Circle and Sharing Circle together and the Storytelling and Oracle together. The participants were then asked to share their recollections and reflections about their involvement and experiences with the seven identified teaching tools referred to as STITP. As the researcher, I followed the ethical protocols as per the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board processes for research at the University of Manitoba (2009); therefore, the participants signed the informed consent forms (see Appendix G) before the circles began.

Understanding the collective self, had been part of my own learning during my apprenticeship with the Elder/Knowledge Keepers and required me to understand my individuality as always contributing to the collective, and so the need to be constantly mindful of my actions became apparent. This membership in the collective has also been discussed in various ways by authors/scholars (CAAS, 2002; Cajete, 1994; Fitznor, 2012; Hart, 2002) and is considered to be critically important to the synergy and well-being of community. The balance and synergy between members draws upon the group as a whole, rather than a focus on individuality. Therefore, the focus on the individual becomes secondary and respect amongst members for each other's gifts prevails (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Kovach, 2009; RCAP, 1996; Wilson, 2008). All members learn to understand that their individuality contributes to the prosperity of the group life.

Regardless of the members of a group, I had learned from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers and through the writing of Brookfield (1986) and Knowles (1984) that inclusion and mutual respect will help to:

establish a physical and psychological climate conducive to learning. This is achieved physically by circular seating arrangements and psychologically by creating a climate of mutual respect among all participants, by emphasizing collaborative modes of learning, by establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust, by offering to supportive, and by emphasizing that learning is pleasant. Such a caring, respectful, helping and accepting climate is said by Knowles to be "a climate of humanness". (Knowles and Associates, 1984, p. 17)

The foundational and fundamental underpinnings of the Indigenous worldviews and traditional practices implemented/facilitated repetition and a cyclic sharing of individual and collective knowledge, so that the teacher becomes the learner, and the learner becomes the teacher intermittently and when needed. The Sharing Circle process was facilitated using the Indigenous construct and protocols of the Sharing Circle to

capture and describe the meaning of the collective learning engagement of the Summer Institute. When I conducted the Sharing Circles, I relied on our cultural protocol of a using a Grandfather (i.e., stone) as the focusing and organizing mechanism. As each individual shared his/her stories, the stones moved from the left of the facilitator around the circle, which facilitated each person in the Sharing Circle being able to share about each of the teaching tools (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Fitznor, 1998, 2005; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002).

It is important to note that this stone may be referred to Grandfather and/or Grandmother depending on the teachings followed by the circle facilitator. A stone or rock is considered a living being, and when one is picked up to use in our ceremonies or practices, we are taught that it takes on the demeanour of a past relative. Because the rocks have withstood time, we consider them old with wisdom as holding almost an Elder position in our bundles. When following the protocol of the circle energy, we try to move in the same direction as the sun and the moon, and since these relatives shape our day and night life energy, we try not to go against their movement (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2002). In this way, it is hoped that the continuity of the larger circle synergy will be felt in the smaller circle of the oracle group. I provided directions in writing so that the groups would move through each of the seven rounds in a similar manner. I was careful to indicate as clearly as possible that we must be observant of timelines and sharing protocol.

Individual interviews.

Regarding the individual interviews, the number of interviews held, how many Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal participants there were, and how many were female and

male are presented in Table 4. Approximately 70% of the total individual interviews were Aboriginal participants, and the women who participated also were at approximately 70% of the total individual interviews.

Table 4

Individual Interviews with both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Participants and Female and Male Students

Number of Interviews	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Female	Male
13	9	4	9	4

Through a semi-structured individual interview, I listened to the participants who described the ways in which they had made sense of their experience in the Summer Institute so as to better understand and integrate such knowledge as part of their work in schools and perhaps in their daily life. Each interview lasted up to two hours in length and was conducted at a location of the participant's choice. Similarly to the tobacco protocol used with the Sharing Circles data collection and the work with the Elders/ Knowledge Keepers Research Study (Laramee, 2008a), I offered each participant a tobacco tie. Each interview was tape-recorded. These recordings were transcribed by me, and number lines were applied to the verbatim transcripts. Each participant was given a pseudonym under which their particular story was written.

The individual interview focused on sets of questions and probes designed to initiate a conversation with the participants around their retrospective reflection of the STITP used during their involvement in the Summer Institute. The interview focused on each of the seven pedagogies, and after several readings of the transcripts, major key

concepts, important ideas, and significant examples identified by the participants were clustered into emerging themes relevant to the research questions of the study.

The research instrument was a semi-structured interview using the seven identified teaching pedagogies as prompts for discussion and the following open-ended questions. As I sat with each of the participants, I presented a version of the same questions for the interview. The questions posed were as follows:

1. As you participated in the _____ what were the things that you learned from the engagement in the _____ practice?
2. From all of the things that you learned in this practice what was the most significant and important to you?
3. Were you inspired by the _____ practice to use it in your classroom and/or your life? If so how have you used the practice and if not, could you explain why not?
4. What if anything about _____ practice made a difference in the way you see yourself as an educator of (a) Canadian children, (b) Aboriginal children, (c) non-Aboriginal children?

In the next section I describe how the data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

The Sharing Circles. As already described, data were collected from three Sharing Circles, conducted between December 2011 and February 2012. As I transcribed each Sharing Circle interview verbatim, I applied numbers to each line for each of the transcripts for reference purposes. After several readings of each of the transcripts, I highlighted them according to four categories identified during the two reads: the four categories consisted of (a) what I learned from the Institute, (b) what I am using from the Institute, (c) impact from the Institute, and (d) examples. I reviewed the verbatim transcriptions of the Sharing Circles, and I organized the groups' reflections in various ways, until I realized emerging themes. When reading each of the participant's views that I clustered under each STITP practice, I was able to recognize areas where participants

had similar experiences and other areas where their individuality opened different doors for their particular learning venture.

While this read allowed me to realize the richness of the data, I concentrated on the examples and content that supported the four themes mentioned by the Elders: (a) spiral learning, (b) learning relationships, (c) learning through feeling and experiencing emotion, and (d) learning equity, as critical to learning transactions of collectively shared experience according to each of the individual circle's data. These concepts were then highlighted into four colours, enabling me to effectively write about the findings as they related to the themes of the circles. This organization was the second look at themes beyond the four categories stated earlier in the Elders/Knowledge Keepers chapter.

Individual Interviews:

I read and reread each participant's interview. In the first read, a check for transcription errors, spelling, and sentence structure occurred. In the second read, the data was electronically highlighted in the colours as noted above, one different for each of the categories. When I organized the data for each of the transcripts of the individual interviews, I clustered the participants' views under each STITP practice in order to see what they reported about each practice. I then could read each person's views on Smudge and so on for each STITP. I wanted to be able to depict all of the comments from all of the participants according to their views on each of the STITP practices. Once I did this though, it became quite clear that the individual stories would be lost in the sheer volume of information from this way of organizing the data. The data organized in this manner were going to be unmanageable; however, I believe that there is room to deal with this

volume of data beyond this study. Therefore, I chose to focus on the sharing from the individual stories.

I included each of the participants' responses for each category. I then looked for the common themes in each category and organized the data so that the comments were highlighted to help in the writing process. The themes identified various types of comments, which helped me understand not only the importance of each of the STITP, but once the second organization of data was complete I was also able to see more clearly what the participants individually experienced from the Summer Institute. Each of the four categories identified how the areas of information were organized for the synthesis. The categories I organized here originate from the four questions that were posed to the participants about each of the STITP practices. In Table 5, I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which I have organized the data.

Table 5

Individual Interviews Coding and Highlighting Procedure

Category	Focus	Colour	Practice
A	What I learned from the Institute	Red	1 to 7
B	What I am using from the Institute	Green	1 to 7
C	The impact from the Institute	Yellow	1 to 7
D	Examples from the Institute of positive, negative, and personal thoughts	Pink, Pink Grey	1 to 7

I transcribed each participant's original interview transcript and highlighted their responses according to the categories and their colour code. Each participant's data were

organized under a pseudonym and then moved into the four categories according to the chart in Table 5. The appropriately numbered lines from the original transcription for the data were moved into the four categories, which were kept intact at this time to keep track after I removed the coloured highlights.

I recognized that the original way I chose to organize the clustering of the data from the individual interviews was causing me to lose the individual stories. These stories were strong as I read them separately from the way I had clustered them. The voice in each of the stories was so strong I was compelled to write each of the participant's stories separately. To that end, I highlighted each individual interview story according to the four categories: (a) things I learned from the Institute; (b) what I am using from the Institute; (c) the impact from the Institute; and (d) examples from the Institute. These stories are shared in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Once this organization was completed and the relevant data were under each of the categories with all participants' views for each of the STITP, a file was created for each of the practices with all participants' views for each category. For example, Tom's views on what he learned from the institute were moved under categories A: What I learned; B: What was important; and C: The impact felt, so I was able to read all of Tom's views

As I read and reviewed the information from the individual perspectives according to each STITP practice, I saw themes, and while reading through this way of organizing, the data were enlightening, but the participants' individual stories were lost in the larger picture of the practices. Consequently, I decided to organize the focus on the individual stories of the student participants. Through the stories of each participant, themes emerged, and even though this meant writing an account of each of the 13 stories,

I felt that the richness of the data could not be compromised. In my view, it was an important move and honoured our Indigenous values of inclusion and respecting an individual participant's contribution to the whole or collective.

Chapter Summary

As I offer this detailed explanation I recognize that the ways in which I could have completed writing this thesis may have been accomplished in a variety of ways. There is room in the future for further writing related to the Sharing Circles. I believe strongly that it was my methodology that led me to understand, in the end, how I must organize and reveal my data. I recognize that in revealing the themes of the Sharing Circles and telling each of the individual stories, I have created a larger than usual presentation of data, but in the end, it is my personal opinion that the voices of Aboriginal people and their allies in this study paved the way for others to see, feel, and connect with Indigenous knowledge and practice from a first-hand perspective. As in the CAAS report (2002) *Learning about Walking in Beauty*, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have entered the spiral and accumulated enough knowledge to begin their work with Aboriginal people as Knowledge Keepers. I now welcome the reader to see for themselves in Chapter 5 what I mean. The participants' stories have been created authentically from their engagement in STITP at the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education.

Chapter 5: Summaries of Sharing Circles and Individual Stories

In the first part of this chapter, I cover the three Sharing Circles that were held at three different times, each in a different location. Each theme is explained in more detail in the body of this chapter. The three Sharing Circles held guided me in handling the immense data found, which revealed the following themes: (a) individual and collective learning; (b) spirit, courage, perseverance, and integrity; (c) connecting to children and youth; (d) caution to protocol and the integrity of the STITP practices; and (e) transcendence across generations, countries, and nations.

The individual interviews are detailed in the second part of this chapter, which were organized according to each of the 13 participants' stories. Three themes were revealed as the focus of their stories: (a) what I learned, (b) what was important to me, and (c) how I am using the STITP. When considering the richness of the data, there were some moments in this work where I struggled with how to manage the amount of data I had collected. In this chapter, I present the data analysis in three parts through summaries and stories of the participants, beginning with the Sharing Circle stories and then the individual interview stories followed by highlighting the themes found in each data collection process. In order to highlight quotes from the research participants, I italicized their words to separate them from my own thoughts and analysis.

Sharing Circles Summaries:

Information from the student participants was gathered from three Sharing Circles, consisting of six, eight, and four students respectively, and 13 individual interviews conducted. Altogether, there were 21 student participants. When I thought about the combination of learning transactions that took place during the Summer

Institutes and what I was trying to convey from this research, I could not ignore the importance of the most recognized elements of the Summer Institutes. These elements came from the collective as feelings of support, kinship, safety, and comfort, all of which were identified as part of the Sharing Circles. Four themes from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers' sharing: (a) spiral learning, (b) learning relationships, (c) emotions of knowledge, and (d) knowledge for equity, evolved from the individual sharing as knowledge moved through the circle, and these four themes were also evident in the collective sharing with student participants in my research.

The process was clearly discussed by Eber Hampton (1995) when he explained that knowledge “progresses in a spiral that adds a little with each thematic repetition rather on an Aristotelian argument step by step” (p. 6). According to Hampton knowledge that is emphasized by repetition through stories and personal sharing “implies circular movement in both the natural and spiritual worlds” (p. 6).

Ermine (1995) referred to this movement when “knowledge is transmitted and the knowledge is felt as ‘mamatowisowin’; . . . [this movement of energy] manifests itself in all existence because life is connected and all of life is primarily connected with and through the life force” (p. 104). As well, this accumulation of knowledge by repetition deepens the breadth and depth of the learning transaction. For me, the following explanation by Hampton (1995) best describes the relationship between the group and individual in the circle process:

Indian education orients itself around a spiritual center that defines the individual as the life of the group. The freedom and strength of the individual is the strength of the group. I was struck by the intense feelings of group membership and individual freedom. This wider identity is celebrated and perhaps promoted by rituals. . . . The individual does not form an identity in opposition to the group but recognizes the group as relatives included in his or her own identity. (p. 21)

Even though each of the Sharing Circles was conducted in the same manner, I believe each had an individual uniqueness due to the individuals who were part of them. The Sharing Circles provided me with three distinctively different aspects of the collective learning process. As I unfolded the stories of the Sharing Circles, I shared them in the order in which they occurred and described the physical circle itself: some characteristics of each circle, the collective synergy of that group, and the connections made to the four themes identified as part of the collective learning transaction. However, some of these learning transactions may have occurred as part of the individual storytelling. In the Sharing Circles, they were subject to the intense feelings of group membership, which really depended on how that individual has seen his/her life within the group (Cajete, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995).

Each circle contributed to a varying discussion. In Sharing Circle 1, each of the STITP practices stood out, and the reflections from the six participants revealed the importance to both the individual and the collective learning experience. Within Sharing Circle 2, there were very strong leaders who introduced the need for collective spirit within the work in Aboriginal education, and their examples embraced the spirit, courage, perseverance, and integrity, both individually and collectively, that are required when being that leader. Many of them indicated that they found that spirit of encouragement during the Summer Institute, and the eight members of this group attributed strength of spirit as being the key to staying strong in the work. Participants in Sharing Circle 3 offered a direct reference to the children and youth and how they connect us to the Creator's intention in a way that the other circles had not. Perhaps it was this connection that provided the caution to protocol and the integrity of the STITP. This group,

comprised of four women, also connected the impact of our families on the work we do in Aboriginal education and how Aboriginal education changes our families. A particular spiral connection offered as a direct result of engagement with the Summer Institute was a story that reflected a prophecy connecting the Eagle (North America) and the Condor (South America) as an example of the relationship that Indigenous people have globally.

I struggled with how to handle the data from the Sharing Circles and did not want to repeat the way in which the individual stories were told, even though that is how I conducted the interviews. To this end, I decided to focus on the general outcomes identified in the introduction, and the following are the stories of the Sharing Circles. I pulled the identified themes, and as I wrote the summaries, I began to see that the conversations were not stagnant to one group, and so even though there are titles with themes, I have included participants from all three circles in each theme discussion.

Sharing Circle 1 had six participants, which included three Aboriginal participants and three non-Aboriginal participants. Sharing Circle 2 had eight participants, including seven Aboriginal participants and one non-Aboriginal participant. Sharing Circle 3 had four participants, all of whom were Aboriginal. As usual, for the thesis ethics of anonymity, I assigned a pseudonym to each person, and she or he will be called by that name in writing this summary.

Due to the sheer volume of data, I will not be able to do justice to the bulk of the information shared, but I recognize that much of the data are reinforced in the individual stories. In the next few paragraphs, I highlight the themes and sub-themes as:

(a) individual and collective learning experience; (b) leadership: spirit, courage, perseverance, and integrity; (c) connecting to children and youth; (d) caution to protocol

and the integrity of the STITP; and (e) transcendence across generations, countries, and nations.

Theme 1: Individual and collective learning experience. Within this circle, I could see two aspects of the learning circle: (a) the individual path and (b) the path of the collective. The following stories came to this focus from all three circles, and members from each of the circle contributed to this discussion in varying ways.

Individual learning experience. When considering the individual experience, I could feel what Hampton (1995) spoke of in his description of the individual within the group. For example, Samantha (Sharing Circle 1) was personally affected in a way that has changed her life and how she sees her world:

The Teaching Circle part of the Institute was probably the most significant for me, and that's due to the fact that I had lost my culture and that I had not the opportunity to gain any of this knowledge in any other format or any other time. I think this kind of opened up and set me on a journey . . . where I never looked back. Having been a product of the residential schools on both sides of my family, I came to realize that there was so much that I did not know, and in one aspect, I felt a really deep connection with my past, and on the other hand too, it also caused me to be somewhat distressed, and it was then that I realized how much I had lost and how much I didn't know.

Samantha found herself on a journey of discovery, whereby she “listened to every single word with such emotion and discovered even just the meaning of spirit” caused her to look at her faith walk in the Catholic way differently than she had before. She realized that even though “having gone through organized religion, I thought that was it for me and going to church and praying to my God and saying my prayers, and I thought that was enough to make me happy and feel whole.”

Stella (Sharing Circle 3) was another person who had not grown up with this knowledge, and she specifically commented, “I did not know anything about the ceremonial ways. I had not even heard about sweet grass, cedar, sage, and tobacco, these

medicines and how they were used in ceremonial ways.” Many of the participants found themselves in the same light as Samantha, and as the Aboriginal participants shared their stories, I was taken aback as to the numbers who had not heard anything about their culture.

Seth (Sharing Circle 1), a non-Aboriginal participant, believed that each person would “bring into their own being . . . to assimilate their own relationships [into] the oral teaching life”, which he felt is necessary in order for them to have the same good memories that he does:

I have good memories of listening to some of the people and how you could connect and how they would connect with you, not just on a factual or informational basis, but on a personal level, and that equality and sense of belonging was all part of that learning. I think the Teaching Circle symbolizes that.

When the individual is able to absorb the knowledge in the way Seth described the information, I believe it is transmitted into all parts of one’s being: the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. This experience is then taken to the daily Sharing Circle after spending some time with what they have learned overnight and in their journals. When they come to the daily Sharing Circle, the knowledge has already started to merge with the old knowledge in them to become information that they can use in their life and work, which can enhance their collective learning experience. There is a merge between the individual learning and the collective learning experiences.

Collective learning experience. The group process happened in two ways during the institute: (a) in the larger circles, both teaching and sharing, with all members of the course for that year; and (b) the second way was in the smaller group circles usually known as the Oracle groups. Kate (Sharing Circle 3) described a process that occurred long ago when it came to someone’s learning journey: “I guess the whole journey that

one went on in this process was very individual, but went through it with the support of a group, and that's kind of how our journeys are." This is as it is today, and during the Summer Institutes, I tried to convey this feeling of kinship support in the work of the Oracle. Kate felt that "there is a depth and a detail that goes in those storytelling, those circles, your own purpose, your identity, [and] your truth, all of those pieces are a gift to carry on a gift," while Dave (Sharing Circle 2) remembered:

Reflecting back now, storytelling was prominent throughout the whole day. I found it intriguing how personal the stories became so quickly a part of the Circle and how the stories were used more and more amongst people, and you didn't feel alone anymore because they were going some of the things that were going through your mind.

Regardless of whether the larger circle was where you were sitting or if you were in the smaller Oracle group, this notion of not being alone was a constant in the reflections made by participants. Julie (Sharing Circle 3) noted,

I felt that I was so different from everybody else. To find out that I am connected to certain people and here is how that connection meets. . . . I look back on that now and the person I was then and who I am now it is just unbelievable.

Once Julie knew she was connected to the circle, her views on aloneness changed because, as she stated,

When you are in circle and when you are sitting there, you are learning the story orally, you are learning from everybody who is sharing with you, and you are thinking about it, and you are processing it, and it is just a different way to do things, and I think it is important that we don't lose that.

Theme 2: Leadership—Spirit, courage, perseverance, and integrity. Sharing Circle # 2 hosted strong leaders of varying kinds from the administrative kind, leaders in ancestral languages, non-Aboriginal taking ownership of their role in leading Aboriginal initiatives, and classroom/school leaders. While leadership existed within the circles, the

themes that became quite important while listening to their stories were about spirit, integrity, and perseverance and courage.

Spirit. Lana and Herman (Sharing Circle 2) both were two fluent speakers of the Cree language and had spent many years teaching, creating resources, and working in community to ensure that the Cree language was spoken. Another fluent speaker of Ojibwe in this group spent her time in administration advocating for languages to be taught appropriately in her school and division. In my mind, and for this thesis, they represented all of the speakers of ancestral languages who participated in the Summer Institutes and the spirit that is required to undertake such commitments. Lana described to the children she was teaching how the spirit moves into the classroom to visit and watch what they are learning:

I tell them that whenever we are sitting around that the Grandmothers and Grandfathers are here to listen to us (Cree interjections), and they are so well behaved. It is like a gift when I talk to them. They just sit there and listen. They just don't fool around or fidget; they just listen. I just always say, "Thank you Grandmother, thank you Grandfathers." At the end when I am done, I am just so happy coming in here getting the kids to listen to me, and I to listen to them.

Lana was able to be honest with her children that she works with, in that reciprocity is very much a part of everything she does. She recognized the spirit of knowledge as it moves through her and the children and the concepts of honesty and respect were at the top of the behaviour list, and the children emulated that behaviour.

Herman (Sharing Circle 2) brought spirit into the Sharing Circle through his way of speaking about language and the spirit that comes with that. In his humility and the tears he shed on the day of the Sharing Circle, I felt his truth when he thanked me for inviting him to be part of "something that was bigger than us." His power of prayer that

day filled everybody's heart and was a reminder of the perseverance and courage we could learn through the seven traditional practices of Indigenous knowledge.

Perseverance and courage. Arlene (Sharing Circle 2) mentioned the Smudge practice: "When I need encouragement or courage just to get through something, and it has this calming effect." While trying to be an effective leader, she has run up against constant struggle with the use of the Smudge in her system. In frustration, she reflected, "I got my hands slapped big time for that. They took us to the work place health and safety and then to the Teachers' Union." This was an example of the need for continued efforts. As Arlene described,

It's that once you understand it and learn more about it, you give yourself up to it. It is something wonderful to have in your life. That was one of the big things that came out of the Summer Institute.

When Arlene described the situations of difficulty it is a good reminder that not all of the work in Aboriginal education comes easy and that there is still a great deal of resistance along the journey, but with support and guidance these issues can and are being resolved.

Integrity. Ethel (Sharing Circle 2) provided a good connection to the idea of integrity when she described that

When I was sitting the lodge, . . . there are so many times that people are telling such beautiful stories . . . [and] you will remember those things. You do remember them. It's amazing; it's amazing now that I see that.

The integrity came with the realization of why one cannot write down the stories. You may not remember what you are supposed to, and the stories might be compromised without the sound of the Storyteller. Ethel finished her piece on the lodge by saying,

I think that is what Myra was trying to teach us is that you don't take the notes. Because there has been a lot of times in my own journey that I will remember things. I will see somebody that I need to see for whatever reason, and I know that

through the Oral Transmission, you really have to listen with your ears, but you also listen with your heart and that is how it is in the lodge. So I am really grateful that Myra taught that in the Institute because it's really helped shape me now as a person who goes to ceremonies. I can see now how she teaches you to listen with your heart, not only to listen with your ears or your mind.

Ashley (Sharing Circle 2) spoke of Aboriginal as “good education”, indicating that whatever she heard and learned in the Institute was applicable to other learning environments like the classroom. Julie (Sharing Circle 3) spoke of the system that is not good for our children by virtue of “just looking at our kids and our youth and what is happening with them. Education doesn't work the way in which it is being pushed. It is not just with our people; it is with any people.” For her, “It is not a good system.” She felt strongly that “we need to go back to our oral traditions, and we need to go back to listening to people, and being part of a community, and being part of a group because that is what works.”

Theme 3: Connecting to children and youth. Julie (Sharing Circle 3) noted what she felt needs to be done if we are ever going really connect with our children and youth:

I think it is very important . . . that the schools need to go back to that oral tradition. . . . The old ways were the good ways to learn . . . that working with Indigenous knowledge and traditions is the best pedagogy that we have. [She felt strongly that], it's the way that worked.

Dave (Sharing Circle 2) supported this by describing:

We Smudge twice a day, so to teach the students to Smudge seems right to do . . . [and] knowing that we can do this in a school is incredible, and I don't think the little guys understand that yet. So it is what we are able to do in this building and it is something tremendous.

Kate (Sharing Circle 3) stated, “By sharing with the students, teachers also learn in that journey and as an Aboriginal woman who is responsible for Aboriginal Education I go to my core and ask what is it that they need to know.” She was quite comfortable saying that

she is “quite proud to show that this is part of my daily practice in working with the children that I do—the students.” She also believed that “the important part for me is that our students, our children need to know the pieces of our history our stories.”

Lana (Sharing Circle 2) referred to the little ones in her charge and described how the reciprocity of feeling is moved back and forth between the teacher and the learner:

So I have a lot of respect from the kids, just like we show a lot of respect when we sit there and we are listening to some of the things that bother them, and some of the things that I want to let out that does happen too. It's okay to cry about it, to feel about it, and to share. It takes the spirit when we are letting go of things we carry, and we grow from it, and I see that with my kids in [my classroom]. They are just so happy when I come out, and when I miss, they are like little people when they tell you, “You are not supposed to be missing school yet.” You know, but they show that kindness that you show them, and this is what we try and teach our kids. How to show kindness, how to be truthful (Cree interjections), not to lie. They will accept the truth, and when I think about listening, it was hard at first; it was very hard (Cree interjections), but after a while you got really interested in what everybody had to say.

Theme 4: Caution to protocol and the integrity of the STITP. On the other hand, Beth (Sharing Circle 1) had smudged on many occasions, but it was in the institute where “I learned the rationale of the Smudge, which still is significant that I carry. You just watch everything and listened to Myra—how we cleansed the mind the ears and why we do those things.” Beth related that Smudging as a routine or ritual is not something that she does all of the time. As an Ojibwe woman, she had learned to rely on the practice sparingly—as in only when you really need it.

Julie and Stella (Sharing Circle 3) presented a sound caution to the fact that by virtue of doing the Sharing Circles and even the individual interview tapings and transcribing them was foreign to the oral knowledge transmission of lodges, but each also recognized something that concerned the Elders/Knowledge Keepers. Both Julie and Stella recognized the need for us to have this knowledge accessible to children in schools

and to the teachers who will work with them. They also acknowledged that even though doctoral work was mainstream there is still a place for us to move ahead the agenda of Aboriginal education. As the women of Circle 3 nodded around the table, Julie captured the concern of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers in her comments:

It feels real different to be sitting in a circle and holding a microphone to my mouth. It is not something I am used to because usually when sitting in the circle, we speak from our heart, but with the microphone in front of us, it's not exactly the same as we would normally do this, and it doesn't feel the same. It almost feels more scripted. I think part of it is because you know somebody else is going to be hearing your story, and even though it's gone through, however, you will develop it, and how it's been developed as you write your doctoral thesis it is not what we are used to. You know, it's not the way we have been taught, and it is not the way we have learned.

Theme 5: Transcendence across generations, countries, and nations. The very first participant to share, Samantha (Sharing Circle 1), had not ever heard any cultural teachings or any knowledge of the ceremonies, so this was the first time she had ever participated in the Smudge practice. As an Ojibwe woman who considered her start in the Summer Institute “like my very baby steps that I took as far as being introduced and learning to walk the way that I was intended to walk.” She described that:

Years later, this was a couple of years ago the very first time that my Mom and I smudged together, and it was and for my Mom not being able to be part of her own culture was very , very powerful. She invited it, she enjoyed, she embraced it. You, it is something that we did together, and it was something that never happened before, so it was a very powerful moment for me. The smudge has become a natural thing for me, and it's kind of my way of looking at the world in a different way, and in my world [that] is starting off the day on the right foot. This part of the institute was very important. The whole Sharing Circle and the smudge exercise every morning was very important to me, and it still is.

When I read this piece of her story, I was reminded of the idea of the learning relationship that transpired between her and her mother and how that spiral managed to move between their two generations, but instead of the mother being the model, her daughter brought her back to the ceremony circle. Because she was able to feel the

knowledge though the experience with her Mother, this part of the institute became “very important.”

Stella (Sharing Circle 3) reflected about the need for us, in whatever way we can, to take back the responsibility for passing on the teachings our ancestors left for us:

They call it academics in the English word maybe, but those teachings are very, very powerful and sacred teachings for us to continue to take that responsibility back. To take that responsibility back of being mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, of being aunties and uncles. We are the teachers; we are the ones who are responsible to bring them back now.

To this end, I will finish the Sharing Circle experiences with one of the most exciting stories that came from the experience had by Julie (Sharing Circle 3). This story captured the need for us to be vigilant when sharing our teachings and not to be shy when doing so: humble yes, but not shy. She was one of the participants who had little experience with culture and language. Coming from an Inuit background and being raised in southern Ontario, she attended Mohawk ceremonies. However, it was not until her participation in the Summer Institute did she sit in a Sharing Circle. Her transcending story was about taking what she had learned from the institute to another nation, across a few countries, and finally, another continent. According to Julie, the Sharing Circle was a good way to connect with people, and she told a story of her work with some teachers in Chile:

One of the times I used a Sharing Circle I was teaching teachers down in Chile. So I went down, and I said to them I am not going tell you how to do it because I don't know how you work. But I will listen to you and I will share with you how we do things in Canada. I can share my experiences, but I want you to share your story and incorporate it however it is in your culture. One of the first things I said was I wanted to sit in circle. I talked to them about the circle and its purpose.

Julie explained about the use of a passing stone we call a Grandfather. She took them out to find one as we had done in the Summer Institute, where I had explained to

the participants that to breathe life into this stone was to pick it up and care for it. The teachers in Chile told her that when they are in a circle format, they go the opposite way to us in the North. Respecting the ways of the people of their land, Julie followed in their direction. It is important that wherever you go, to respect as much as possible the ways of the territory. Julie described the project: “There were 10 teachers from five different communities. It was a five-year process, and they met once a year with us. Other than that, they were connected on the Internet.” With this in mind, Julie needed to be able to instruct them as to the ways to “incorporate culture into their teachings in their community schools” and “gel as a group” while she was not there. Julie managed to complete this task, and when finished, she looked back and reflected:

Afterwards at the end of the five years of working down there, they said that the most important thing they had learned was the Sharing Circle and how to connect with each other. They felt that everything that they learned out of that whole curriculum, that was the most important thing, and they took it back to their classrooms and started using it with their students and started incorporating it when their Elders came in or chiefs came in.

They were so impressed that they were going in and starting to use some of their own traditional knowledge, and to me, it was knowing what we were doing in Canada and what they were doing down there was very similar. There were so many similarities. We began to talk about those that were so similar and what things were so similar within the cultures. The sharing that took place and the learning that took place among all of those people . . . was absolutely amazing.

You know I brought them here to Canada. I took them up to Fisher River, and when they were in Fisher River, the community embraced them and took them into the school and showed them what they were doing with their kids there. They had a Sharing Circle with them as well, and they were totally amazed about the transformation that occurred.

This project ended four years ago, and I still keep in touch with many of the people who were part of it, and they are still growing in their communities and developing and doing the same kinds of sharing, and they are still all connected with one another. They said it was because of what they were taught.

At the end of the program when they finished one of the things, they said that the Grandfather they had chosen to use had become something so special to them that they signed it. Then they pass it around to each one of them now so they

can get together and share and take turns keeping it so they can use it. They took from this program what we had done. It was just so amazing.

I am moved deeply by this story, because for me, it captured the essence of exactly why the Sharing Circles were so critical to the Summer Institute. Here was a woman who knew nothing of circle work, who embraced it in her own career so much so that she had the faith to take this concept away down south to another Indigenous people. The spiral of learning crossed through one woman's heart across time and space to another Indigenous people who learned through feeling and emotions what it means when the spiral presents learning relationships between colleagues of five communities, Elders of two territories, and through one group of Indigenous Peoples to another in an international way. The children of both territories are benefitting from this one woman's faith in the work of the Sharing Circle. All participants had so much more to share, but there was only so much space in this thesis, which leaves room for articles, chapters in a book or two, or personal reading for the rest of my days. Thank you to all Sharing Circle participants. Please forgive me if your story is written between the lines of this thesis.

As we have explored these values during the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education's STITP model, participants reported in the circles that they became aware of how these values parallel good things that happen in their schools and classrooms. When I shared such things as the seven teachings¹ and the Smudge practice, commonalities between Aboriginal people and those from other nations have become a starting point for shared belief in good-hearted relations. Members of other nations who have come to the

¹ The Seven Teachings are a series of sacred teachings learned from the Midewewin Society and are considered to be as old as time. They consist of values such as Wisdom, Love, Respect, Honesty, Courage, Humility and Truth. It is said that each one spoken in Anishinaabemowin is a positive path to living a good life.

learning circle have identified the similarity of these beliefs and have come to recognize how differences can play out positively in the practices of the similar beliefs and values.

Perspectives from the individual interviews. While the data from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers and the three Sharing Circles offered an abundance of information to write about. The Summer Institute journey was enriched and enhanced by virtue of the individuals who came to the circle (Hampton, 1995). Each and every year, the uniqueness of the whole was determined by the minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions of the learners who entered the spiral of learning (Cajete, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hampton, 1995). According to Hampton (1995), the strength of the whole is determined by the individuals who make up the whole. To this end, I felt strongly that the individual stories and reflections were of significant importance to the work in this thesis and a major consideration for the model I came to name the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* (Laramee, 2013).

This segment of this thesis caused me the most consternation, in that for me, the importance of the participants' voices and stories are the most significant piece of this research endeavour. So contemplating how to lay out the story path was not an easy decision to reach. During the first attempt at writing this segment, I synthesized each of the participants' words under each category and began documenting the data by category. The original intent of this thesis was to study the impacts on teacher education and classroom practice. I believe that the best way to capture what I intended was to write each of the participant's stories to reveal, on a more personal level, what had be learned, what was being used, and what impacts had been felt by each of them. With that realization, I have decided to present a summary of each participant's story.

Tom's story.

Tom is a Métis man who has slowly, over the years, found his identity. When he came to the Summer Institute, he was excited about the path he was on to finding himself through the teachings he was hearing. Tom teaches and administrates in a rural school division. He is a gifted guidance counselor, and he has integrated his philosophy of counseling with the traditions of the circle. Tom is a motivated leader in Aboriginal education within his school division and gathers around him educators who have a zest for learning and helping others, and he has encouraged them to involve themselves in the Indigenous path of learning. This journey has brought light and hope to his own way of seeing the world, and he has apprenticed with Elders who are willing to show him how to be at ease with Indigenous ways of this territory. Tom has shown me a real innocence when it comes to taking on this work, but at the same time, he is definitely not afraid to explore who he is becoming.

As Tom sat through the Summer Institute, the previous knowledge acquired from Elders merged, and the information solidified. He reported that his time in the institute assisted in contextualizing what he had previously learned from Elders into a “bigger picture” framework of Indigenous knowledge. He commented that had he not been in Summer Institute, this experience of a broader understanding might not have occurred. For him, the various activities of the institute affirmed his “old knowledge” and helped him relocate some old knowledge, refreshed from his memory, into his bigger picture. Tom related an example of this transference of the Smudge practice into his own self-knowledge. He shared that while he had used this basic ceremony as part of his regular cleansing routine, the way in which he received the teaching at the Summer Institute

provided him with enough background knowledge that he in turn “could pass it on to my students over the years since then.” In fact, he stated that still to this day he uses the Summer Institute’s classroom protocol sheet with his students. The most important part of the teaching was “how the smudge was used with students.” For him personally, “the idea of prayer in association with the things that one would hear, would see, would say, feel” when participating in the ceremony were strong teachings. He learned at the institute that “it is important to understand not just the how if it, but also the why.”

Tom has “consistently drawn a clearing of mind, a refocus when things are frustrating me through the day”, then he will stop and smudge. He identified that the smudge facilitates a connection to a part of him that is spiritual, so that when he is working with his students, he recognizes that he is “engaging the spirit, the whole person, the physical and . . . their whole being.” He felt that since his students do not necessarily “engage in much thought of their own spiritual development, their own holistic development”, the Smudge practice gave him “an avenue as an educator to speak to the whole student.” He said that fortunately, it is “still a way that is accepted in our school”: the notion of working with students in a holistic manner. In fact, when Tom spoke of the opportunities he has “to speak to students around the smudge”, when he “introduces the whole concept of clearing one’s mind, being able to turn to that when one is upset—all of those things are tied to the smudge.” Tom believed that “the Smudge is sort of an entry point; it’s a basic ceremony that we can actually engage in and begin to tell the kids this is something that comes from your background, from your heritage.” Tom also saw benefit from using the Smudge with non-Aboriginal students, and he has always been:

Amazed again and again, when I’ll have a group of students come together with all the energy that students always have, and they’ll be each one of them ten or 15

side conversations and so forth, and you pull their attentions together and say, "Now we're going to smudge." When that smudge has begun, it's amazing how there's just a calming that comes over the whole group and a focus and a respect, and you see that over and over again.

Tom identified that the Smudge is much more than a tool for gaining attention and that it is much deeper than that, but he also noticed that there is something very powerful about what the smudge can do. In fact, from the encouragement he got from the Summer Institute, he has found ways to use the smudge and has begun using the Smudge at the divisional level with his Aboriginal Education Committee, as he begins every meeting with a Smudge.

As Tom began to discuss the practice of oral knowledge transmission, he again referred to the "bigger picture" framework and that all of the stories that were told fit into that bigger picture of Indigenous knowledge, and he came to understand and view the world a little bit differently. In fact he said, "Each time, I'm transformed a little bit." Tom recognized that the engagement of knowledge transmission requires a building of relationship and, in fact, is quite simply an act of listening, not only with your mind, but also with your heart. He felt "the respect, the love, the courage that is shown by the Elders in their giving of themselves to allow not just the thought to go from a head, but from a heart to a heart." In other words, the way in which the Elders give of themselves when they share builds a relationship where feeling the knowledge becomes part of the transaction (Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995). He recognized that "these people sort of built that relationship, and then from that point, they were able to pass on their knowledge and pass on what I needed to hear, and they taught me to do the same with my students." I believe it is in this passing and receiving that the teaching of reciprocity is found between the teacher and the learner. Both parties of the learning relationship take

on a responsibility to become that giver and that receiver, which makes the learning transaction viable and true.

At some point though in this process, part of the responsibility the receiver assumes is to, in fact, become the keeper of the knowledge entrusted to them, whereby it then becomes their turn to transmit what they have learned. To this end, Tom stated,

I tell stories, and I hope that they gain knowledge from it. I surely don't consider myself an Elder, but I do know that just that [through] whole oral transmission of knowledge . . . the students who are sitting with me are not writing notes . . . they listen, they hear the stories that I tell. Sometimes, I repeat stories that I've heard from Elders. Of course I've always offered tobacco, so I have the right to pass those on.

This commitment made through that offering of tobacco melds the teacher to the learner in relationship, and Tom acknowledged that “there’s definitely a real issue of trust that is built during those conversations during those times where I’m able to first of all build a relationship and then talk about the things that I know they need to hear.” In his interactions with students, Tom used stories because he felt that “they [the students] are going to leave from that session, and they probably won’t remember a whole lot of the dates and facts, but they will remember the stories I tell.” His students engage well in the work he does with relationships, so much so, that he has often been called upon by colleagues in his schools who teach about various topics, such as Aboriginal issues, residential schools, and current issues in Canada, to come and share the stories he has acquired in this relationship with the Knowledge Keepers.

When Tom considered his own need to learn from the Knowledge Keepers, he remarked that the Teaching Circle as part of the Summer Institute was a method that caused him to understand that “there are people that hold that knowledge . . . [and] we need to respect them and we need to hear from them.” He felt that something out of the

ordinary happens when “somebody has something to share” who is a carrier of certain knowledge, and as Tom said, “It is about the passing of tobacco” that makes this passing of knowledge a special occasion because the person “standing in front” of you carries what it is we seek. Eber Hampton (1995) noted that “Indian education orients itself around a spiritual centre that defines the individual as the life of the group. The freedom and strength of the individual is the strength of the group” (p. 21). Hampton further stated, “I was struck by the intense feelings of group membership and individual freedom” (p. 21). This citation and quote have been used in the Sharing Circles section of this work, but was so applicable here, that I beg the reader’s indulgence to reread something important to Tom’s story.

Another factor that Tom commented on was that it seemed that people in the Sharing Circle were more focused and that the power of that occurs because “everybody sees everybody else, everybody is in the front row . . . [and] they feel respected and included.” While in the circle, he recognized “the need to think deeply about what other people are saying, to see beyond just the surface response . . . trying to hear both their perspective and to hear their heart.” He felt this occurs largely due to the mutual respect that is developed and the trust that is built by sitting together in this manner over and over again.

It has been my experience that occasionally this respect and trust can transpire even during a single circle, which is not scheduled to occur on a second occasion. Tom explained the following: “Sometimes, I was sitting there listening for 15 or 20 minutes to somebody speaking Cree or Anishinabemowin, and I was riveted.” Tom stated that he could not tell me why, and he could not understand what was being said, but he thought

“it’s because so much of what was shared in the Sharing Circle is not the content . . . but the spirit coming through.” According to Tom, in “that whole energy, there is something beyond just content.” He stated, “This is important to understand.”

Tom has extended the use of the Sharing Circle to both his classroom work and his counselling work. During times when he brings his individual students together as a group he exclaims the following: “I have used this; it is a powerful counseling tool.” He has taken groups out to a field classroom over a period of four days for Aboriginal awareness. These are daily trips, and during this time he would run a Sharing Circle, and he remembered “teaching on one day about the fact that it is possible to get beyond the point where the pain of the past has control over you and you can actually come to some healing.” One of the young women with a “rough exterior, street smart and very guarded” asked, “Is it really possible, can I really be free of this pain?” Tom felt strongly that without the Sharing Circle, her breakthrough never would have happened. He knows it would not have happened in individual counseling and that it would not have happened anywhere else except in this setting using this tool. The realization he made from these experiences was that after three or four days of gaining the trust, “she got the courage, and she was able to put that out there. It was a major point of healing, and after that one-on-one counseling with her, she was totally different.”

Tom had a mixed group of students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, called the Bindege Group, and he has used the Sharing Circle with them as well. According to Tom, “They see it as something coming, that’s from Turtle Island,” but no matter where it comes from, “they all eventually get to a point where they are comfortable with it, and they do open up.” As Tom began to discuss the practice of storytelling, he referred to the

students he teaches. “The content may remain, the date on which I am teaching that class probably won’t, but the stories that I tell from my own experience and also the stories that come from history . . . about what happened in the past” are the stories Tom knows the students will remember. He felt that “even in this day and age, we are still wired for stories our brains are still wired for stories.” Regardless of the trends toward technology and the immediate and instant gratification, they provide Tom still feels that “when I tell a story, the students remember.”

In speaking of an older group of learners (between 30 to 36 years of age) he spends time with on weekends, he remarked that stories are important when trying to help this group of learners to grasp concepts like “the importance of self-talk and talking yourself down when you are getting angry.” However, until I tell them a story about when

I was driving through this snow storm . . . [and] I had to use self-talk, . . . that is what they remember. . . . So, I know my own stories are essential in the process of teaching.

Tom felt “that the method itself is a powerful one”, and that for him, the age of the client/student did not matter; stories and storytelling seem to work with everyone everywhere.

Tom is committed in the use of storytelling in his practice due to his experience in the Summer Institute and cited two specific examples of stories told by the instructor that embedded certain concepts in his mind. He mentioned that these concepts are so embedded because they come from within the two stories that were told. Along the journey of the Summer Institutes, many, many stories were told by the guest speakers, the participants themselves, and the instructor. Tom now uses story teaching in his counseling practice as well. As a participant of the institute, he indicated that he

understands what they are experiencing. From his past, Tom remembered that somehow he was able to help a student by letting the student know

that they are not alone, . . . [and he] lets the student know that beyond that trouble they are going through, that they are going to get through it because other people have, and it is not a concept that I am giving it is life.

Tom has learned through the experience in the Summer Institute and through his own use of storytelling that “it has also been my experience that no matter where I have been on the Earth and no matter what group of people I have sat with, Storytelling has been an important part of their life.”

As Tom began telling about the Oracle practice, he reminded me that he was a butterfly, and for him “it started as an individual and became a synergy when our group was formed. . . . It almost became a sense of tribalism.” He described the reason that he was inspired to become a butterfly was because he had an entomologist in the family, and becoming a butterfly made sense to him. This choice was made amongst the choices of the unicorn, no name and the butterfly, which were three possibilities as part of the Oracle exercise. The group had seven tasks to go through, and Tom described being in a

room where we spent most of our time, and there was a common focus on creating an end product, and all of us had ideas that over circled the space, and these began to meld and mold together, to sort of tell our tribal story in a sense.

Tom used an analogy: “We all brought a stone and put it in a pot and got a pot of stones.” He said that for him, “It was like the stones all melted together and became one whole, as opposed to instruments that are compartmentalized. . . . It was synergistic; it was something that came together as a whole.” Tom then stretched this analogy to describe something that is presently going on in his school division as a “coming together of different stones.” These elements of the whole are like:

a bunch of different players coming together, working together to try to tell our story, what we have done, where we have gone, what is it that we could be doing better, and so I guess, in a sense, we are creating an oracle of the [xxx] of what we are and what we want to be.

One of the recognitions made by this group, which is at the divisional level, is that mentors with whom they have worked, both past and present, are considered part of the synergy of the Oracle that they are telling and are seen as energy they need as they go on their journey.

Regarding the Sweat Lodge experience, Tom held a unique role during this practice, in that he agreed to be the fire keeper helper, and his main task was to tend the fire, bring in the Grandfathers from the fire pit to the Sweat Lodge pit, and to look after everyone who had come to the lodge. This is a major role in this ceremony, and only a person who is open to learning new ways of doing things can take on such a task. He was able to recognize that even though he had been involved in many Sweat Lodges prior to this one, there were ways particular to this lodge that needed to be respected. Therefore, Tom was able to take teachings from the main fire keeper of the Sweat Lodge, and she taught him “just how to make the crib for the grandfathers and grandmothers, to be respectful when we burned tobacco in the four directions, how we do that, and why we do that.” As far as he was concerned, he learned many things that were different than somebody who actually went inside the Sweat Lodge. Being a helper, a servant of the people, requires the aspects of care, love, and kindness as identified by Tom, and he realized that playing his part in the bigger picture was to “make sure that all were cared for . . . [and] to do it well.” Tom recognized that:

The knowledge I have gained from the Institute is used again and again, most recently with a group of students . . . who say well I don't know if I will go in (to the Sweat Lodge), and I say that is ok because if you are outside, you are still a

part, and if you are outside, you can learn about being a helper and what that means. I take that and use what I learned there and pass it on to our young people.

On the other hand, Tom recognized that:

Again and again, they enter into the lodge, and they come out different people. . . . They gain the teachings from these individuals [Elders that help with the lodge], and they gain as well an opportunity because there are things that are said in prayer in that lodge that kids would never say elsewhere, and young people talk about the things that have been transformed for them. . . . Afterwards, they'll come to me and tell me about the things that really meant a lot.

From the use of the Sweat Lodge practice, Tom has observed students who had a vision in the lodge, and after a chat with an Elder, the student was put out on a vision quest or fast, which could be a totally transforming experience. Even though this student had never been raised with these ways in his life, he was brought to this place. Tom strongly believed that had this student never entered the Sweat Lodge, the next and eventual steps to the “Red Road”, he would not have found his vision quest. Tom commented,

I could tell you story after story, and when working with the students and the Sweat Lodge, the stories keep coming, like the young man who also went on a vision quest from the Sweat Lodge and recognized that he had to be part of carrying on the tradition of knowledge keeping and transmission of the knowledge as his Grandfather had done . . . the stories . . . keep going.

Having been part of the transforming pieces from the Sweat Lodge practice, Tom concluded that:

Too much of what we do is talking from a head to a head instead of from a heart to a heart and. . . . When you engage on the head, you have missed so much of what really needs to be happening in education. This way of education that we are talking about is so very fundamentally about relationships, and what happens [in those relationships]. We are not supposed to say the word love in education.

Tom indicated that on occasion, he violates the use of the word love, but that he does it in safe ways, where he will talk about loving all of his students. He seemed worried that:

Sometimes the methods we learn are cold, detached, and all about fact. Facts are important there is no doubt, but facts are not attained until there is some sort of a spiritual, emotional and sometimes even physical [reaction], . . . and sometimes in the institute, the learning was about what we are doing with our bodies, and all of that contributed to what we were learning and that is why it is retained.

When working with people through the years in the Summer Institutes, often people would remark that they were physically drained, or mentally saturated, or emotionally off balance, or even spiritually connected or disconnected to the rest of themselves. Tom believed that in education, we need to:

Recognize that we need to engage the whole person. We need to have relationship as fundamental to what we are doing in our classrooms and in our schools. And when the school becomes a warm place . . . that one place carries them through and I think delivers them to a place [where] they can take their own part in the circle and recognize their own value and recognize they have something to contribute.

Little Bear (2000) contended that in order for people to maintain a sense of balance, “if love and good feelings pervade the group, then balance, harmony, and beauty result” (p. 80). Put another way, “if a person is whole and balanced, then he or she is in a position to fulfill his or her individual responsibilities to the whole” (p. 79). When I combine the thinking behind Tom and Leroy Little Bear, I think about it in this way: When a person is balanced and whole in all of their parts, the mind, body, spirit, and emotions, they are better able to contribute to the balance and harmony of the group as a collective whole. In order to complete this circular movement of learning energy, the environment for such learning, according to Tom, needs to be filled with “love, kindness,

praise, and gratefulness”, and when this occurs in our classrooms, balance and harmony in both the individual and the collective are possible.

Donnas’ story. Donna is a teacher who came to the Summer Institute void of any knowledge regarding her culture or language as a member of the Ojibwe Nation. She had lived her life as a “happy Catholic” and thought that there was no more to life than going to church every Sunday. Donna is now a leader of Aboriginal education in her school division, and she attributed the movement in this area of leadership to her destiny and the knowledge acquired in her learning journey during the Summer Institute.

As Donna spoke about smudging, she revealed that “this was my actual very first time smudging during this course,” and went on to say that she learned “what smudging was all about . . . [and] the purpose behind it.” For her, it “became something I looked forward to in the morning to set the tone, and it allowed me to ground myself . . . to prepare myself for the days’ journey.” The Smudge practice gave Donna her “first kind of spiritual connection” and was her first introduction to who she was as an Ojibwe woman. As stated in the introduction to Donna, she had grown up without any kind of culture from her Indigenous background. For Donna, it was the “healing aspect” of the Smudge, and without the words to explain it, she indicated that this practice was working for her, and she felt that the “medicines were doing exactly what they were supposed to be doing for the healing” to occur and that connection between the medicine and the healing was important to her.

Even though introducing the Smudge as a regular occurrence has been a difficult task, schools are embracing the activity more and more, and in one high school in particular, students are able to come each morning and Smudge. Donna is part of a group

of individuals in her school division who have introduced the Smudge practice to their school board trustees and policy makers as well as the leaders/administrators in the division. By explaining clearly the purpose and meaning behind the practice as a non-religious activity to these individuals, Donna and her group have made it possible for anyone who wants to Smudge to be able to do so. She informed me that they have never excluded anyone from participating and that she feels that by doing this, all Canadian children may know firsthand of the smudge practice in her school division.

The practice of inclusion in this school division when it comes to Aboriginal education activities has helped all students to embrace such activities and express the desire to become part of the Aboriginal student groups. Hence, they have been invited to attend all of the Sharing Circles that have been held. This inclusion and participation has instilled a pride within the Aboriginal students about who they are, and their participation in Smudge and circle activities have become enhanced. Even the educators of these students have recognized the benefits of inclusion. Donna sees her role “is to educate people as far as who we are as people,” and by providing the actual experience, they can have “experience in feeling the connection to the culture and to the ceremonies that are part of our culture and part of who we are.” She believed that “it is not so much the knowledge as the experience that I am sharing with them.” She felt that she has been able to see herself “as a role model in their lives.”

During the oral knowledge transmission practice, Donna learned the importance of Elders in our community. Never being taught their role in the culture, and their significance in passing on the knowledge, she was able to realize these things through the activities of the Sharing Circle and Storytelling. Sitting and not taking notes was

something new for Donna, and she had been accustomed to the expected way of learning with pen in hand and note book on your desk. When she got comfortable with this way of learning, she realized that she did not have to take in every detail as long as she “understood rather than remembered,” which meant that she “understood the meaning behind the teachings” and “made the connections with the purpose of the teachings.” Donna commented on this learning experience by identifying the essence of purpose when asking participants to only listen to the spoken word and concentrate on the oral transmission of knowledge:

I learned to become more, more childlike and to really sit back and take things in that were at a very basic level and not give into things or over think it, to actually just feel and take in and to connect with what was being taught. It wasn't just me paying attention to the details so much as the meaning behind what was being taught.

Between her schools and her workshops, whenever Donna has a chance, she uses the oral knowledge transmission practice with both educators and students. A program in her division that was started by Donna was based on the circle work concept, and she is presently putting together a document and is in the final stages of its production. This tool guide “explains all aspect of that, the protocol of that, the medicines,” and she has made “different connections to literature, different stories that could be shared,” and she has also included “ideas of what you could do as far as topics.” When she considered her role in the school division, she discussed how it has changed from being a service provider to staff and students to becoming “change maker”.

Donna felt that by “quietly working in the background . . . [and] introducing all of these teachings” without pushing them onto anyone, other people in her division have come to recognize the importance of such work. Having realized that she “was meant to make change in the school division,” Donna feels that she “needed to take as much of

what I learned and share that with others.” In pushing the discussion on this comment, Donna is clear that her participation in the Summer Institute has been the impetus for this personal change and let me know that “it’s not only impacted what I do as a teacher, but it has impacted our schools, the school division, and the educators, but it has also impacted my life.”

Donna’s two children and her Mother are now actively seeking ways to become a part of everything that Donna does regarding culture and traditions. For Donna’s Mother in particular, “She has connected with that part of her.” Her Mother has always been a religious person, but now Donna sees her as a very spiritual person, and as her Mother is sharing her dreams with Donna, she is connecting with her Mother in a different way through the sharing of her Mother’s dreams. Her family life has taken on a new meaning with the exchange of information between her and her family members as she continues to participate in cultural learning and experiences while including them in the journey.

Donna indicated that she felt the Teaching Circle “was an important part of everything we did in the institute.” For her:

It wasn’t a case of us just sitting around and sharing our thought and our feelings. I think that there was purpose in that he sharing of knowledge and having those Elders come in and share their knowledge with the people that were there was a very important piece of passing on that knowledge.

The knowledge that was shared seemed to fill in the gaps of knowledge she had acquired growing up. Now as an adult learner, she “learned so much through that process about stuff that I did not know and stuff that I needed to know.” One of the particular experiences Donna commented on as impacting her in a very strong way, was the viewing of the music video by Aaron Peter’s called *A Perfect Crime*. Donna had not been exposed to residential schools and what had happened in them. Her development of

knowledge of the impact of residential school on her family brought together an understanding of intergenerational behaviour from her Grandmother's disconnection from the ceremonies and culture, the silence and where it came from, her Father and his drinking, and her Mom's losing touch with her family who also lost touch with their culture. She made the connection to the loss and the pain and suffering as a child. She recognized that:

I distinctly remember the feeling that I had when I saw that video and I remember the silence, and through the silence there were words that everybody was sharing that remained unspoken words. I am not sure how to explain it, but it gave me answers to question I didn't even have words for but I had knowledge of. I think that was the most powerful thing, the one thing out of that whole institute . . . the one thing that explained everything to me, in one minute, in two minutes, it explained it all.

Donna used the Teaching Circle process a lot, and her use with the "circle format" was mostly when she had the opportunity to work with students. The important piece for Donna was that she felt her students were able to see the connections better because they could physically see each other. She indicated that:

Everybody can see each other, and it is very important that we see each other as equals. If I am teaching something, I can share it with all of them, and I am making connections with all of them, and they can all see me like we are connected.

Donna has used the circle format in making a presentation to the school board. She reflected that it was "the first time that any school has ever come and done a presentation to them in a Circle format and from the feedback, . . .they learned a lot even from the physical setup of it they learned a lot." She commented that

having that close proximity, they were able to tell them what we do in the school division because they really wanted to know the kinds of programming that we do in the schools and we shared that in the Circle format.

The interesting part of this reflection was that Donna was able to model the Indigenous practice and provide evidence that the tools used in the schools worked by having the school board experience how the staff were engaging students in Indigenous pedagogy.

Donna has come to see herself differently now, and she identified that it was because of the trust, openness, and honesty of the circle format that she can accept herself as a visionary and a change maker in her work within the school division. She remarked that by learning about humility, she was able to learn about many of the teachings and what they truly mean. She had built up walls around her due to the pain experienced as a child, and trusting people was certainly an issue, but once in the Sharing Circle, the wall that she had built up started to come down. She stated, “It wasn’t all at once . . . and by the end of it. . . I felt as though I could truly trust people, and I felt as though I saw each person in that circle differently.” She felt loved and accepted in the circle because she realized that she was not the only one with pain and needing to let things go; there were others who were just like her in that circle, “all needing to heal, all needed connection and to feel that belonging.”

As a result, of the Sharing Circle practice, Donna has retained a sense of humility that has stayed with her in everything she does, in the sense that she sees people differently and does not judge them like she used to. According to Donna, “I didn’t think of myself as one who judged people, but I obviously did,” and she expressed that the circle

has given me a great deal of love, to love every child that I come in touch with. It’s give me insight to . . . think of every child as a gift . . . [and that] every child has its gifts and talents that they need to share.

Donna sees now that in her work she is not so quick to judge people.

Donna used the Sharing Circle as a teaching tool immediately upon returning to her classroom in the fall of 2004, and her reasons for doing so were in recognition that she “needed to make connections with the kids” in her room. She used the Sharing Circle once a week on Friday afternoons. The observation made by her in her use of the circle was similar to what had happened for her, in that “as a classroom, we bonded, and we developed trust and mutual respect for one another.” There was very little negativity amongst her students towards one another, so much so that her colleagues noticed that “it got to a point that other teachers recognized there was something going on in the classroom,” and Donna could leave the classroom and not have to discipline anyone upon her return because “they would be respectful of each other.” When participants reflected upon these practices, they often would flow one into the other, as in the case here between the Sharing Circle and Storytelling. I believe this is because, as a practice in holism, each of these STITP practices has their own qualities and characteristics, but when used together tend to enhance one another.

When it came to discussing storytelling, as Donna came to understand it, she stated, “The more you share, the more honest you are, the more that people will trust you and respond and be more respectful of who you are.” Some of the work around Storytelling became so much a part of what Donna did in her work that she began to use her own stories to emphasize, make a point, concretize an idea, or just relate on a personal level, and she attributed this level of comfort as having been part of the circle format in the Summer Institute. She remembered telling the story of why she became a teacher. She remarked, “I guess the storytelling is somewhat similar to the Sharing Circle, in that I learned to be open, honest, and sharing.” As an extension to her colleagues,

Donna also learned “that it is a thing that needs to be practiced with not just students, but teachers that I work with,” and so she has “shared with teachers and administrators some important facts that inform them of who I was.” It was through this personal sharing, not as a cathartic exercise, but as a tool of impact, whereby the honesty, openness, and trust deepened; each time she told a piece of her story, her colleagues deepened their trust for her. Donna explained it like this:

I was being really honest that I don't know all the things that I am teaching, but I am willing to share what I do know. I want to share my knowledge, I want to share my experiences, I want to share moments where I discovered who I was, and being part of that process, I learned how to be honest with everybody. That has really been something that they have appreciated and that I am who I am and what you see is what your get.

The impact of Storytelling has not just become a part of her professional work. Donna explains, “It’s not just with the classroom or the administrators, but the sharing has really taken over my whole life, my family, my work.” Most recently, she called all of her family together, and she videotaped two hours of footage in what she called a “family history.” Her parents, a newly found uncle, the children, grandchildren, and siblings all gathered and shared stories for this event. For Donna, “that sharing is something that not only affected the work I do in the schools it also has affected me on a personal level because I really needed to hear the stories of my family.” The ability to share openly has continued to impact Donna’s work and life because her relationships have become so much more trusting, open, and honest. She shared with me an incident whereby she had to tackle a quite delicate issue with her husband and was able to get through the event because “that whole aspect of sharing my voice, my history, my past is very important to me now, and it never was before, but it is now.” The “before” refers to a time prior to Donna taking the Summer Institute.

The belongingness aspect of the Summer Institute was built into a series of group exercises I called the Oracle, which drew participants into a group process for a number of purposes as outlined in the description of the Oracle as a STITP. Each person had to choose an identity from one of three symbols, each with a finite number of spaces to fill in. The symbol then facilitated discussion amongst group members that also gave them a connection to the group purpose and identity. Donna described their coming together like this:

We met as a group, the Butterflies, and I sensed that within the group, there was a mutual love and understanding for each other. There was no bickering . . . we shared a kind of spiritual energy. We were alike, but we were different. I don't know how to explain it; we were a family, we had connections that were not blood connections.

There was a structured series of exercises that the oracle process unveiled, but to begin with the identification process, revealed individual characteristics about participants, and over the years of the institute, I was able make observations about how participants chose who they were to become. Donna explained this best in the following manner:

I was one of the last people. I was one of the last people to get up and sign my name. I knew that we were down to two spots, and one was a unicorn and one was a butterfly, and I knew I had to be a Butterfly for whatever reason, I guess I felt like I was at that moment transforming myself, and I was not going to be the same person that I was. I tapped into a lot of my memories, a lot of my dreams. So I knew I had to be a Butterfly, and my group was the Butterflies.

My original intent was to help those participants who may have never known any such structure as the clan system to help them develop a collective connection and relationship so that some sense of familial bonding might happen around the particular symbol, thus shaping their interactions with one another. By moving them through a series of events as a group, they were able to develop one collective story, which would

be presented to the larger group of the institute. This single story of their collective was to be an oral rendition of their time in the Summer Institute and reveal collectively what they learned, what was important to them, and how they were going to use it. Many participants have not been able to put the Oracle practice into practice, but Donna connected her work to the Oracle practice when she referred to “this energy” and her “quietly networking” to develop “a lot of really meaningful relationships” and “some really close relationships,” both inside and outside of her school division. According to Donna, the energy of building relationships that enhance the potential in the work we do with each other comes from experiences like the Oracle practice presented to her, and she recognized that we have to work at building these transformative relationships; they do just not happen on its own. Therefore, even though she has not been able to use the Oracle practice, per se, she has gleaned meaning for herself from the participation in the Oracle practice.

In her discussion with me around the Sweat Lodge, Donna had never experienced anything like it prior to attending the Summer Institute, but she was willing to learn from the experience and had no expectations. Being open to the experience, I believe, is what allowed her the freedom to heal during the experience, and she was able to come to this understanding:

I think that one ceremony is what caused me to be spiritually connected to myself. It told me who I was and it connected me to my past . . . to my present . . . to my future and it made me see who I am. . . . It cleared up any blockage that I might have had that might have been restricting me from connecting me with my spirit.

According to Donna, attending ceremonies and learning the traditional teachings is a new path and one she would never have imagined for herself prior to the institute.

Now that she feels she knows better who she is, she was able say:

I know that I am an Aboriginal woman. I have a history, I have a past. I have things that I am meant to do. I am important. I have things that I should be proud of and not hide from people. It kind of cleared the air. It was brand new day. It was a new beginning for me that was the Sweat Lodge.

With regard to the use of the Sweat Lodge in her work, she has been instrumental in high school students being able to experience this ceremony, and now her colleagues are asking if they can participate, and they are planning to go to a sweat in the spring. The spiritual connection made by Donna is strong for her, and she believed that all people could benefit “regardless of your background, regardless of your culture or regardless of your skin colour, regardless of any of that, it is important that people have spiritual connection.” She felt very strong about the following need we all have as humans together on the Earth:

It is really important for people to take the time from your busy day and life from all of the demands you have in your job and your home and stuff. It is important to take the time to learn about who you are, to learn about your history, to learn about your culture. And even if you are not Aboriginal, I feel it is really important for people to make the connections and see each other on the human level.

For Donna, the institute “allowed me to understand that my past is part of my present; it is who I am,” and she needed that time in the institute because “it is not something you could do overnight,” but she felt that she needed that time in the institute to become whole.

Lori's story. Lori was originally a student in my evening course at the University of Manitoba and soon into the course there was a connection that developed over the following years into a friendship and mother/daughter relationship. This was an easy connection since I had been an administrator colleague with Lori's mother. Lori is of non-Aboriginal descent, but has taken to the ways of Indigenous people and has spent her whole career immersed in Aboriginal education. Her entrance into the Summer Institute

was a natural progression for her thirst for learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and learning how to best work with our children. During Lori's time in the Summer Institute, she found that, "In doing a Smudge every day, sitting with everybody every day . . . helped me to be able to learn to let go of things and use the Smudge to focus myself." For Lori, she was able to get her head in the space that she needed it to be in, "to be able to listen and learn for the day. . . . It helped me to focus on that work that needed to be done for that day." When she needed to bring things forward that she needed to use, the Smudge helped her approach her work in a more focused, clear way.

One of the most important aspects of the Smudge, for Lori, was its universal application. While the sage or medicine, the creation of smoke in a shell with the burning of the medicine was taught about as the Indigenous way of clearing or cleansing, Lori appreciated the ability to introduce other ways of teaching about this practice, and "getting them now to think of different ways they could smudge" was really powerful for her.

Lori described a place of safety in the school where she works, and having this safe place for students in crisis called for certain things to be facilitated for that child. Letting go of what was bothering them was an identified need, and a for-sure way to do this was to introduce the Smudge practice at this time for the child to feel safe, focused, and able to talk about their issues of that time. When she contemplated a child moving forward in their day, Lori needed to contemplate the whole child.

A lot of times before you even go into teaching math, science, social studies, language arts, you think of those things that kids bring with them and having the Smudge for the to release some of that stuff it always makes you think. There was all of this, 'stuff' that came with them and this baggage that came caused you to have to sometimes do that work with them before you can get to the math, science, social studies piece.

As Lori discussed the Oral Knowledge Transmission, she recognized that she was able to hone a lot of valuable listening skills. She remarked,

When the instructor asked you to put down your pen and paper . . . [and] all of a sudden being told . . . that all you need to do right now was to listen. That's what you really learned how to do. . . . You learned to trust your listening. . . . You are going to remember what you needed remember.

For her, the institute “gave the opportunity to really listen and to begin the practice of reflection. You don’t get taught to reflect a lot, you don’t get opportunity to reflect a lot.” She recognized that the Summer Institute was the only course that she knew “where you can or have to keep a journal about the impact of the work in the course,” which according to her facilitated one becoming a better listener and a reflective listener. Lori was able to recollect that for her, it was “the start of becoming much more reflective on what I do, what I am learning, when I am learning and how I am learning it.” Even though learning in this way was uncomfortable in the beginning, Lori became comfortable with the understanding that the paper product was an end result. It has not always been the benchmark in terms of this way of learning and listening to her students. Being able to talk with them about assignments gave them permission to not always have it written down on paper. As an educator, the impact of Oral Knowledge Transmission was evident as a good teaching/learning tool because she felt it was very concrete and very practical for the work she does with students.

Lori has, to this end, used the Teaching Circle to facilitate Oral Knowledge Transmission with both her colleagues and her students, and she has learned through this medium that there are different ways to meet the needs of students. In addition, she has become a model and a mentor in her school for colleagues who are attempting to embrace both the Teaching Circle and Oral Knowledge Transmission. In the mentoring and

modeling role, Lori has been able to help her colleagues see the benefits as building a community of learners and a sense of family within the classroom.

The other STITP that Lori has embraced, as part of her tool kit, is the Sharing Circle. According to her, this “had a more intimate feel,” and during the Institute she was

able to sit and listen to other people’s experiences and other people’s thought and emotions, reflections on what they were thinking about or what they were going through or what they had learned . . . [and that] everybody comes with a story.

Also, according to Lori, the notion of community developed using the Sharing Circle because “everybody has their own story to tell, and being able to hear those stories you were able to build a sense of belonging very quickly.” The Sharing Circle has become a tool that has given Lori a “way to have difficult conversations in a safe place with my students and with my colleagues.” All of the professional development days in her school start with a Sharing Circle, and the fact that the staff feel safe enough and comfortable enough to cry together has been important in the development of their professional learning community. For her students, the Sharing Circle has provided again a safe place to “talk about how they feel and share what is going inside of them . . . without fear of judgement or repercussions.”

During the Summer Institute, the practice of Storytelling, made Lori realize that “if I am asking for knowledge and looking for the answer to questions, it’s making sure I had the time to listen to the answers and hear the stories.” In turn, when the parents are with Lori, it is as important to listen to their stories about what is going on in their families. When she takes this back to the classroom, she has come to realize how important it is in helping “the students understand, helping them develop their own understanding within those stories or those legends, that they understand a lot of the history that they aren’t going to find anywhere else.” Lori stated, “Without stories and

without storytelling, I think education would be pretty boring.” She referred to an example of when the Vice Principal in her school

takes the kids over to the Sharing Circle at the Keekinan [Elders’ Residence] and while they are listening to the stories of the Elders talking, the kids are just enraptured and . . . the most behaviourally at risk children . . . are angels.

In this particular situation, Lori has the students who attend teach each other the protocols and how to behave what to do and not to do.

She took these two boys, and they struggle big time with their behaviour, one is in seven and one is in eight. Debbie was checking on them. When she looked back in the truck, one was saying to the other, “Okay, you can’t be a goof, you have to be respectful. If someone says you are not doing it right, you don’t talk back you just say, please show me how I am supposed to do it. You have to behave and don’t you embarrass us.”

Lori recalled that the Vice Principal did not have to say anything, not a word. They love going to visit these old people and just enjoy sitting and listening to the stories they tell them.

The students of the Summer Institute had opportunities to build community and work together collectively and it was “like there was something that told us what we needed to do.” She remembered that was what stood out to her: the fact that her group listened to what they were being told. By following these invisible instructions, the activity presentation was impacting them emotionally, and when finished, Lori remembered the “good feeling” she had. So even though she was not able to recollect the whole process or the members of her group individually, she did have learning memories that made sense to her growth.

Lori was unable to attend the Sweat Lodge ceremony and chose instead to make some final comments. She made this remark about the course itself:

If you were open to it, I can’t speak for everybody and I have talked to different people who have taken it over the years and it really makes you think about how

you view education and how you act with all kids and how you interact within the system of education.

Lori felt that the practices, teachings and activities for the Summer Institute were carefully chosen to “demonstrate that people can teach and people can learn” without it having to be what people typically think of as education. She also said,

I learned more in that course about myself, and if there was work that you needed to do on you, it came out there . . . [and that] there were different ways of doing things that were just as meaningful and just as powerful and you could learn just as much, if not more, by doing things in a different way.

Lori commented on the impact in this way;

For me, taking the institute helped set me on the path that I am on, and if I hadn't taken it, I don't know if my career would be going in the direction it is going in. It inspired me to work where I work and still be there ten years later and to now be working at my Master's learning about how we can move teaching in a different way into high school so our students can be more successful than they are right now. For me, it really changed things in how I see kids. That mind, body, and always remembering there is always four parts to every child. While school is there to nourish the mind, you have to be there to make sure there is a balance. No matter what you are trying to put into the mind, it is not going to get there if the balance isn't there.

Nathan's story. Nathan is a non-Aboriginal educator with an experience in both First Nations and mainstream schools. Much of his upbringing became reflected in the STITP, such as the Oral Knowledge Transmission, Sharing Circle, Storytelling, and the Oracle, were all practices that he had been part of in various ways. The notions of stories and people telling them were very much a part of Nathan's background. He has come to believe that technology will be a way of preserving the oral nature of cultures that provide transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next.

As a non-Aboriginal educator, Nathan had experience working in First Nations schools, but had never been exposed to the practice of Smudging. He felt that this practice helped him “set a very personal and thoughtful tone which provided a context for

honesty, for relationship building, and the worthwhileness of what you wanted to present.” He believed that due to the fact that, as the instructor prepared for the practice, he was able to see in the modeling how important the use of the Smudge was to her, and he felt that because it was important to her, he respected her willingness to share with the class. According to Nathan, it was this commitment by the instructor that “helped all of us to respond. Some people were a little more hesitant than others, but even so, it was I think a very important beginning” to the course and “each day thereafter.” Nathan recognized that “for children from that cultural background, maybe it needs to be introduced again as something that indicates that openness, that sharing, that caring, that relationship” building that each classroom and every child should feel while in school. According to Nathan, as an educator, the Smudge practice can be effective in helping students accept who they are and to accept class, and today this notion of acceptance is such an important value considering the huge place that bullying has in schools and classrooms.

As Nathan participated in the practice of Oral Knowledge Transmission, he was taken back to his youth, where in his cultural background, he heard his Grandparents and other people tell stories of the past. He commented “that this is probably the main way that children learn about culture and system and of values within their family, extended family and/or community.” Nathan felt that there “is not only a place, but a necessity for Oral Knowledge Transmission” in our professional learning communities, our schools, and in our school communities to learn more about Oral Knowledge Transmission and the retention of such knowledge. According to Nathan, technology could be a part of the retention, digitally and in video works, where we use these mediums to store the Elders’

and Knowledge Keepers' stories and knowledge transmitted. Using the First Nations or Aboriginal context to begin this knowledge acquisition could benefit not only the Aboriginal community, but the non-Aboriginal community would also be able to hear the voices of the Elders/Knowledge Keepers, so perhaps now is the time to initiate such projects in their communities. Listening to stories has been around since Nathan was a child and long before that. He felt that students still today have ears to listen to stories, which will be a way of learning long into the future.

Due to the fact that the Teaching Circle was new to him, Nathan felt that the positive, strength-based attitude provided by the instructor inspired a willingness to learn and understand the ways in which the Teaching Circle worked, hence the seriousness with which he took the practice. From what I was able to gather from his words, his perception of the Teaching Circle as a different way of teaching and learning came from the expectations, identified outcomes, and leadership that were modeled by the instructor. He believed that the strong encouragement or “demand” for respect made during the facilitation of the Teaching Circle supported him in forming the understanding that this practice is a worthwhile example of differentiated instruction—so much so that this way of teaching and learning needed to be included and explained in curriculum guides. Since the style of teaching is still predominantly standing in front lecturing, Nathan supports the notion that the Teaching Circle ought to a part of what we do in schools.

As Nathan participated in the Sharing Circle again, he observed that the clear expectations and acceptance of the instructor facilitated participants being able to feel safe enough to understand how they were to respond and felt free enough to do so. “So as you (the instructor) shared a little bit of who you were, we would in turn share a little

about of who we are with each other,” and this modeling inspired a willingness to learn about and understand the way in which the Teaching Circle worked. As part of the process, Nathan recognized “that kind of relationship building is necessary for other educators to get more out of the time spent together [in the Sharing Circle], so we could take it back [to our classrooms] with us.” Nathan felt that there “would be more retention because it involved the emotions, it involved is struggling with ideas, we’d challenge each other and those challenges helped us to remember more and it helped us . . . grow as people.” For many participants, the Sharing Circle became the place where ideas and knowledge were sifted through and critiqued, and sometimes, participants challenged each other to explore and reveal knowledge that they needed to learn. Nathan remarked that sometimes, the participants would challenge the instructor, and he felt that “it is good that you set up that way so you could learn as well.”

The Sharing Circle was a place where Nathan observed the giving and receiving aspects of telling stories. For Nathan, the idea of storytelling meant that:

We as people remember stories and we talk about the stories we remember and we tell the stories that we read, listen to and that are around us. He presents the aspect of reciprocity in during the Sharing Circles, it is often that we listen to stories and others listen to us . . . that becomes important to the teller.

The listener becomes the story keeper, and the story keeper becomes the listener. In this way, the roles of teacher and learner switch back and forth without much effort as the lines between teacher and learner dissipate. This becomes significant, as it causes us to remember what is important to us, both by listening and telling of stories that are important to the knowledge at hand. The emotions of storytelling were important to Nathan, when he said,

Humour has a place there as well; sadness has a place there, and dreams have place there. So, I love storytelling, and I tell stories in my classroom and that is a

connecting point when you can let your hair down so as to speak and tell a good story.

As each group was challenged to come together and tell their collective story as part of the Oracle, the symbol of Nathan's group was the Unicorn, and as a characteristic of this symbol, he recognized some of the members of his group had pretty "strong personalities." When they presented their story, symbolism became very much a part of the presentation. During this presentation made by Nathan's group, both the instructor and the audience did not remain separate from his group. In fact, they were very much a part of the presentation according to Nathan. Again, he commented on the emotions and the tears that were shed during all of the presentations. According to Nathan, "when you take storytelling to this level, you involve the physical, you involve the emotional, you involve the interrelationships, all of those parts that make us people worthwhile, then you get some very beautiful moments." Nathan addressed me as being the instructor by saying, "You have done that for many years, and I think you remember a number of them. . . . They were a highlight for most of us. Certainly for me, it was a highlight." Storytelling is done in this way as a guided journey of collective creativity, collaboration, community building, and clan behaviour, and the Elders/Knowledge Keepers are remembered in a good way when we are able to help each other learn holistically.

Nathan has worked with helping his students develop storylines in the computer lab after collecting information from their families about the history of their community. Some members of the community tell different stories of how this particular First Nation came to be, but regardless of the origin of the story, they would have to present their story to the class. Symbolism and imagery were two aspects of story writing and creation in Nathan's work with his students, and even though this work is not the same as the

Oracle, it is in fact an off shoot of the Storytelling process. All in all, the process of the Oracle and Nathan's participation in it was of benefit to him, which he identified as a "worthwhile experience."

When Nathan participated in the Sweat Lodge experience, he felt that "it was a worthwhile experience . . . a genuine experience for all of us." He addressed the fact that the instructor "took the time to explain to us how we would participate," and he remembered how we tied the Little Boy Water Drum before we went into the lodge. This drum was significant to Nathan, in that one of his wishes was that he had been able to understand the songs that were sung with this drum. From this experience, Nathan remarked the following with regard to life as an educator:

I think we need, as educators we need to understand the emotional, the spiritual context, contact, and the value that they are very valuable for any teacher to be in the classroom. If I am in there acting like a robot, then I think I have lost the whole value of teaching the human being in the classroom. I think that the human being in the classroom must be the number one reason for being a teacher, and so the training for teachers has to include how we develop as teachers, how we are able to share with students, not just the factual, but the personal the spiritual, the emotional, the values of life and that the classroom doesn't come out of the context to life.

Nathan was able to take the Summer Institute on two separate occasions, and after he took the second one, he was able to articulate the following importance for an instructor to be able to help teachers move in a direction we might call intrinsic and how the spiral of learning can move within. He explained,

When the emphasis is on the person as much as on the content then I think the instructor has remembered the importance of why the teachers were there. Most of us professionals could learn content anyway we want but to learn how to draw out people and how to help them to learn certain ways to be able to look beyond the facts.

He felt that was where the instructor was particularly helpful, and when he talked about it to other people who have taken the course, it was surely felt to be a worthwhile

experience. The basis of Indigenous pedagogy is to help people look, listen, learn, and then live, if not the whole, at least significant parts of the learning experience, meaning all have been successful in the learning process.

Mary's story. Mary came to the Summer Institute as a single Aboriginal mother going to university, to further develop in her knowledge, skills, and understanding of Indigenous Knowledge and the place that it could take in her classroom. She had very little background or experience with her ancestry, so most of the cultural practices were foreign to her way of life that she had been living up to now.

The Smudge practice was an important first aspect of the Summer Institute, and according to Mary, “Just learning about what it does for you . . . how it clears your mind, how it clears your heart and . . . to have an open mind and allows you to say truthful and clear things with an open mind.” Mary was able to have a sense that it was a good way to start the day or a class. She found it to be a good practice, which helped her deal with the barriers in her life. During that time, she was in an abusive relationship and all of what goes with that: trying to raise children and being a student. She said she needed something that would allow her “to leave those barriers behind and really engage with the classroom . . . to forget what was on the other side of the door.” According to Mary, she found that it was “the cleansing, because in order to clear yourself and be able to take in new knowledge because there was nothing fogging your brain.” Mary indicated that she does not use it in her work by choice because she feels she needs more experience with the medicines (i.e., traditional plants) and needs to be mindful of the care needed when working with medicines. She, however, does use it in her personal life because it does

calm her and allows herself to engage with what she is doing. However, she feels strongly that it is good practice to use with children.

Oral Knowledge Transmission was somewhat difficult for Mary, in that she called herself a “doodler”, and when she engaged in listening, this was what she tended to do. However, because she was not writing she was “able to take away more and was able to listen to others in a way. . . . No matter what, if you are using your hands, you are not listening with your whole body.” Mary was, in fact, able to listen with her heart and came away with much more, and she was “able walk away and keep those things in my head because I was listening so attentively.” The Smudging and the Sharing Circle are what Mary identified as leaving with from that institute. Using one of the practices she engages her staff in visiting and collecting knowledge and stories from Elders without writing or transcribing, just sitting and listening to what the “Old People” have to say. When her staff, go out to do this, she tells them, “You go in there without taking notes . . . as a sign of respect. You need to listen, and then when you leave, you put down what you remember.”

Mary uses the Teaching Circle at work and has found that she likes this practice because when the circle is in operation, “everybody is at the same level . . . there is nobody at the front.” The ability to become part of the learning in the circle is one of the aspects that Mary has found works for her:

It's a good concept because not only . . . are you on the same level, but it allows you and the students to not be intimidated to share [with each other] . . . because you are a part of that learning.

In fact, she still has a talking stick and a stone or Grandfather, and when her son had an altercation, she wanted to use her talking stick as a tool to deal with the altercation, and

because she wasn't skilled enough in the use at this level, she chose another way to resolve the issue between the two children.

Mary is an example of someone who has enough respect toward the practices that she has realized her limits in their use. On the other and when it was less close to home and did not involve a friendship, she has encouraged her facilitators of learning to practice circle learning, keeping all learners together, both with lower-level competence and higher-level competence in the area of literacy. She has found that with both levels in the Learning Circle or Teaching Circle, they help one another grow.

The Sharing Circle was a different experience for Mary than the Teaching Circle. She found it to be very emotional due to where she was in her life, and the Sharing Circle helped to "get a lot of things off my chest you know things that were not even related to the course." Mary was able to realize that she was not the only one in the circle who needed to release some things, and for her, "just people in general have a lot of barriers that they face daily, and if they don't get that stuff out, they can't participate really because they are too busy worrying about other things." For Mary, the circle "was a safe place to talk about the course and about yourself." She found it "emotionally relieving to . . . really get to know everybody . . . you really get to know everybody . . . the person for who they really are." Mary was impressed by the fact that in this circle, one was able to realize "your fellow peers, you get to know what they really face . . . the struggles they face and how they overcome them . . . it's almost like a unit in sharing with each other." As the course continued, Mary was able to see her peers had struggles just as she had, and however different those struggles were, the Sharing Circle helped them as a collective.

As Mary listened in class, she realized that the practice of Storytelling was something that she had learned from the institutes and that:

Storytelling is in our history and that's how we are as a people we tell stories. When we are teaching or educating the younger ones. I was just introduced to that when I started with you in the institutes and now that's what I have learned. I was young when I took the institute.

For Mary, she was able to embrace Storytelling as she realized that she “learned better through storytelling.” The part that she liked best about it is that

Storytelling, you know it has a beginning it has an end, you are going somewhere with a story. It's more interesting you get more into the person that is speaking and learning becomes more interesting.

She runs a literacy program, and the philosophy behind this literacy program is that what you have “is your own story, telling your own story and your community story. . . and letting those stories increase essential skills.” Together with her staff, Mary has learned a way to use the Storytelling practice to help people develop not only their literacy skills, but also to find their voice through their personal story. At this juncture in the interview, Mary stopped to remark, “I never really thought of it, but a lot of the things I learned from the institute I am using in the program.” This type of subconscious learning happens due the fact that we are not only learning with our mind we are also learning with the spirit, the body and the emotions. As was indicated earlier information will be stored and we are then able to recognize knowledge acquisition as a later time as was indicated by Mary.

Mary spoke to the notion of Spiral Learning as she connected her group or Oracle work with an experience she had in what was called the Banff Institute. During her time in the group work, she described her experience in this way:

If anything, it started me in my stage of coming out of my shell. It allowed me to come out of my comfort zone, because as a group you can't just be sitting on the

sidelines, especially if there are roles that have not been appointed and everybody is looking at each other. So, it only makes a person more involved.

Each group was challenged to work together to come up with a collaborative story about their collective journey in the institute, and many of the groups may have described their experience similarly to Mary when she explained:

I think out of that experience, I learned that out of chaos as a group you come together, and you start to play your role and whatever they may be. You come out with something that is true from all of you. Like a lot of us, we didn't know where we were going with it, but in the end it happened.

The Banff Institute was a planning course, and one of the things they talked about was Spiral Learning. They associated it with the drum, and in this institute, moving the learning energy around and through the learners, facilitated growth and development, much like when the groups came together in their collectives during the work in the Oracle at Summer Institute. Like the sound that the drum makes as it calls the people together, so did the sound of the voices as each group found the sound that they made in their story. Participants of the Summer Institute came together to collectively remember what happened for them in the Institute and through the voice of each collective group they made it possible for holistic learning or spiral learning to transpire.

From all of the stories I received from the participants, I do not believe anyone described what transpired at and in the Sweat Lodge like Mary did, and so it is simply a description I could not ignore:

The Sweat Lodge, actually that was my first Sweat Lodge that I went to. It was just an amazing experience. So much went on in the Sweat Lodge that I've never felt before or seen before. It really opened my eyes with our culture that I have only heard about. I never really took it as facts, it's actually being in something in a place that is so spiritual like that. It's like you learned so much in there that you don't experience outside the Sweat Lodge. It's the very praying, the singing, the drumming, it's almost like a church. I felt like was at peace when I was in there. Going through high school, going through university and all of the courses I have taken I think of everything out all of those courses, the Summer Institute is the one

that I put into practice the most. Definitely I didn't even realize till now that most of the things that I am using in my work come from the Summer Institute. It was one of the best learning experiences I have had. It was interesting, it was relevant to who I am. For me, it was meaningful because it involved me as a person. I was just taught all of these things. I was able to tell my thoughts and my own experiences.

The Institute was so meaningful to Mary because according to her:

I never knew where I was going. After the institute, I knew I wanted to be a teacher; it was things from the institute I use. It is the way that they used it there like the Oracle [which gave me a way] and an idea of planning. You are in a circle, but you are in a way of planning, you are always revamping, you are always changing and getting better. That is the way I relate. I found that it was a holistic way of learning, you use your mind, but also it looks at every part of us as a human being.

Andrea's story. Andrea is an Ojibwe First Nations woman who has become a leader, advocate and agent for change in the area of Aboriginal education within her school division. As an administrator in a large urban high school, Andrea finds that there is a great deal of work to do in this field and works closely with other Indigenous colleagues and the allies who support the work in Aboriginal education capacity building.

For the most part she was raised in the city and during the interview proclaimed that "I used to be white" and so when she spoke of the Smudge practice she indicated that; "Going into the Smudge I was familiar with but I wasn't familiar with it." In the beginning she had all of these thoughts running around in her head. "...am I comfortable with this, am I comfortable with what we are doing, do I look ridiculous, do I look like I don't know what I am doing." This rambling of questions and self-doubt unbeknownst to Andrea were the same questions that were probably going through the heads of most of the participants who were meeting Smudge for the first time. However in her history and background she saw this as behaving "white." However Andrea found that:

In having the opportunity every single day for those three weeks that we were there, by the end of it I completely embraced it so much so that it is . . . so

spiritual, not religious it's spiritual. . . . It makes me feel better. . . . It gives me a sense of empowerment, it gives a sense of calmness, if I am not calm it releases the (negative) feelings that I have.

Andrea feels that she doesn't use the Smudge as much as she might if she were situated in a classroom setting closer to students. In the beginning before she became more comfortable with the Smudge practice, it was simply lack of knowledge that kept her from it and now it is the busy schedule of being a leader where she says she has to consciously think about Smudging as it is not part of her regular routine. As for others, Andrea doesn't hold lack of knowledge or experience against those who haven't been exposed to such activities and is confident if people were to open their minds even a little then this practice would become better understood.

On a couple of occasions during her interview Andrea had scenarios or events that seemed to exacerbate her emotions to the point of anger and this would happen when people didn't open their minds or found excuses for not participating in the activities of Aboriginal education. In these frustrating occasions she can only remark in this way:

I just find them very small minded and you just have to shake your head, it's so frustrating, I don't even know how to talk about it. I guess because there is always controversy around it and people always have something to say because it is spiritual or religious or because it is a fire hazard or whatever so I am continuously feeling like I have to defend it.

She cited an example of how extraneous a situation can get when she described a professional development for a group of Canadian Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP) students who wanted to smudge in her building. She gave the okay for them to go ahead and to just open the window while Smudging. She described in the following way:

Little did I know that it would bring on all of these problems with our school association, work place health and safety and everybody got themselves into this big uproar. I guess there is probably a way that you can ease people more but

there are times when you think no this is our right and we are just going to forge ahead.

Another example of frustration around trying to help others come to some understanding unfolded as she sat on an Aboriginal research committee for approximately six years. The people on the committee wanted to do research about Aboriginal people without exploring or looking at Aboriginal perspectives before doing the research about such people. As her Mother is an Elder in that learning community Andrea brought her on board to help with the situation and as part of the work in the Sharing Circle they used the Smudge so that members of the committee might get comfortable with the practice. Andrea shared a frustration that because of the Elder and the sharing, “We are allowed to do it,” and it makes her want to tell them that “if you don’t like it then those are your issues.” She would like to do the smudge with her staff, but she has shied away from it because, “I haven’t been able to make the two fit or make sense.” In other words, there was a lived experience that created a philosophical internal conflict that Andrea felt prevented her from feeling okay to use the Smudge in her work.

According to Andrea, when it comes to the Teaching Circle, she made the comment: “I think that it is a huge gift that I don’t think people realized they had been given.” She didn’t see this practice as something separate but instead saw it as integral. She explains, “We were constantly in the circle and we were constantly learning so.”

What she received from this experience was described like this:

I am always working with students or in a meeting with people I look for, you do things and I am unaware of it, but I am constantly doing things within a circle without calling attention to it. It just makes more sense to me. I am sure that I must have gotten this from the Institute. It is something that is part of the way I do things now. It is just engrained in me, it is just natural. Everyone had a feeling of being allowed to have that voice.

It was having this voice in the circle where people felt safe to share what they needed, that Andrea spoke of the Sharing Circle. She laughingly commented, “Yeah the Sharing Circle, group therapy for the price of a university course.” The emotional aspect of the Sharing Circle for many participants in the Summer Institute was at first unexpected, for some it was uncomfortable and for many an unusual occurrence in a six credit course, but also for many it became a natural occurrence as the days in the institute passed. For Andrea: “There was no going into that Sharing Circle and not sharing.” Many participants who have spoken with me about the Institute have made similar comments and I believe it has to do with the synergy created when people are able to build a learning community that is safe and free from judgement. The Elders have encouraged this by modeling the very same way of sharing an experience in the sacred lodges.

As for Storytelling Andrea was quite surprised when she looked at the interview questions and saw the various STITP broken down as separate entities. She didn’t realize that they were separate because, according to Andrea, “. . . none of it was separate . . . it’s hard to think of it [Storytelling] as separate.” In other words, the daily agenda was similar each day: “we had the Sharing Circle and there were stories; we had the Oracle work and there were stories; we had lunch and there were stories; we had ceremonies and there were stories; and finally, we had each other and there were stories”. Stories are a very strong common theme regardless which group, circle, community, gathering or ceremony one might find themselves in and these are the basis of how people form relationships, they tell each other their story. However, Andrea felt that the Storytelling which transpired in the Institute “. . . was very much at a higher level and when we did that everybody was Storytelling . . . there was just so much value in it.” Personally, Andrea

was able to recognize that before the Institute she did not feel that her story had much value and her feeling was: “It was just kind of my story, who would want to hear it, why would anybody want to hear it” and because of her involvement with others telling their stories she came to believe “. . . now I know I have a story and I started to tell it in the Institute.”

As Andrea moved her way through the Oracle, she like others interviewed had a vague memory about the presentation, the content or the message, but she definitely does “. . . remember working together. . . being in the group . . . getting in the group . . . the group dynamics.” According to Andrea she felt that she:

learned a lot because any time you are doing group work you are getting out of your comfort zone and what a better place to do it, because you knew the people you were working with and it was okay not to know everything and to work to find those answers together.

As a result, she has come to use similar approaches with the administrative team she works with in Aboriginal education. In the school division where Andrea works the commitment and conviction to move the Aboriginal education ahead is strong and she remarked how various aspects of the Summer Institute have impacted how she does this work together with others.

On the day of the Sweat Lodge ceremony Andrea was not able to participate as one of the people entering the physical lodge, and even though this was so, she was able to comment on the ceremony in this way:

I didn't go into the sweat. So I was the technically the outsider but I didn't feel like an outsider because I was a part of this wonderful day and I remember just again giving up that control and enjoying being there and being in the moment. I remember just watching everybody come and I think that was interesting because it was a matter of watching everybody come out and you could see that something wonderful just happened and even though I wasn't a part of that it still affected me.

All participants were encouraged to attend the Sweat Lodge ceremony so they could come to look, listen, learn and live whatever part of the experience their comfort zone would allow. It is important when learning about ceremonies, that the impetus for someone's involvement is a matter of choice. Even though someone may not enter the lodge, the fact that one is there observing, you are still included as part of the event. This teaching practice over the years has done a lot to de-myth the enigma around the Sweat Lodge ceremony and each person in attendance will be able to recount their personal story of having attended a Sweat so when using this story with students it will be authentic.

Mike's story. Mike is a non-Aboriginal Administrator working in an urban school division. The school he presently works in has a very multi-ethnic population of both staff and students. He has a strong commitment to Aboriginal education and not only does he understand why we need to expand the knowledge found in Aboriginal education, he recognizes the void of knowledge in which we exist. Mike has been on a learning journey for quite a few years and attending the Summer Institute was one of the pieces of this journey.

As he participated in the physical aspect of the Smudge, he was reminded of his past and was connected to rituals of his past in his culture and religious upbringing. As Mike "experienced it day after day there was a comfort in that it was a way of transitioning, focusing and maybe collecting yourself." He was able to describe the impression made from the Smudge as being cleansed to be in the present and settle himself for what was to come. Mike has not continued to regularly participate in the Smudge practice but most certainly when the situation presents itself he embraces the

opportunity. Mike explained that it is through the Smudge that he recognized the power of having an activity whereby students find a way to settle, to be present, which can be extended beyond the Smudge practice demonstrated in the Summer Institute. Educators need to be in “sync” enough to find ways that mirror the effect of the Smudge practice and bring students, staff and/or parents into a present state of being when working together. Being and active listener requires this to be so.

When Mike spoke of the Oral Knowledge Transmission practice, he indicated that he learned that he could listen. For Mike, his way of being with others changed when he was in the circle because he used to be a “person who sometimes is just waiting for my turn to talk like a lot of people do” and while there was bantering back and forth in the Teaching Circle, he listened more than he talked and found that this was “connected to the circle.” He felt comfortable in the Teaching Circle because at home when he was a child an oral kind of space such as in the Teaching Circle existed where the oral teachings were transmitted, and there was a connection to the Knowledge Keeper and he was able to relax when receiving the teachings. The Knowledge Keepers struck Mike as the people who had learned the teachings and that somehow because they had taken the time to do this, it was important to sit down and listen to what they had to say.

He described the styles and mannerisms which made their storytelling unique to them. Many of the stories became engaging because you knew that the storyteller had something good to say and he described these times as engaging experiences. He ponders on the development of the Knowledge Keeper and remarks “it’s not a wonder that a lot of those people end up being called Elders and having wisdom and yet unfortunately . . . our particular way of doing school is not so much the point of growing wiser or

efficient.” Mike laments that we don’t grow Elders in school and when “teacher’s skills are transitioning out . . . that’s where some of the wisdom people end up or in fact they become disillusioned” and some leave the profession. Mike feels that “the question for us around this is who has the knowledge that will facilitate learning, the energy to capture and make these connections when people are ready.” He really captured a serious conversation that needs to occur in education in general not just Aboriginal education and that is the notion of succession. Who will take up the challenges when the learned can no longer teach?

He described that “you were hearing a teaching and having it explained” but he didn’t or wasn’t immediately compelled to “go and write or . . . read more about this.” He was not so inclined to worry so much about how “am I going to get the assignment done.” Mike linked his feeling of connectedness to a his upbringing and “the fact that I had been in many youth groups as a teen in church” or when “my family sat around the table like that and someone would tell a story,” and he found that in the circle, it was “very routine to be sitting around and listening and have a chance to talk, but in a kind of order.” Mike remarked that he had dreamt of a school where the circle was the structure, which was primary to connecting the students to what it going on inside the learning circle.

The Teaching Circle for Mike was a “focus of culture”; it was a time “where someone in talking in the circle . . . a time for learning and listening”, and for him it was the structure of being able to look across the circle and see that “the person teaching is one of the circle.” He indicated that wherever and whenever he is able to have talks with

students he uses this circle structure, because he values it. He felt “that structure that could be used for that length of time and remain engaging is pretty amazing.”

Regarding the Sharing Circle, Mike commented that “you ended up with so much gut shared feelings” and it is the idea that there was a lot of emotion and he remembered “I certainly shared, I felt emotions, I felt and I can remember what I shared, I remember not sharing too long, and not talking too much.” Mike shared about this particular memory about the Institute regarding myself and my helper in the following way:

I would be talking about this in the evenings. I would talk about you and Ethel in terms of your roles and it is interesting, the trust, the question of trust isn't divorced entirely from I think the tone set, the level of trust for the sharing it is significant. In terms of the trust set in the circle it is determined by who sets the tone. It isn't just what they say. I have a fairly strong memory of you and Ethel and whoever did the teachings being genuine like and that's important.

This memory captures what an apprentice to a Knowledge Keeper must take under consideration in their learning process and Mike realized many things that it takes to become a Knowledge Keeper in the traditional Indigenous sense.

Mike was able to articulate that the Teaching Circle, the Sharing Circle and Storytelling were blended methods in that he couldn't tell the difference between each but remembers:

I do remember that it was facilitated whether it was you Myra starting the Sharing Circle or giving a Teaching that the values would carry from where you are that day like when you came in here today and I started talking about art and you started talking about dreams which are different. What was on your mind or in your heart were stories that were not controlling or necessarily contrived. There was an element of improvisation in all of this and that was kind of refreshing.

Mike marvelled at how “people in the circle they were telling their own story or they were using life experiences to connect to however the circle started” and that even though there was no agenda he realized that:

I remember thinking wow this is bizarre I am here, we start the morning, we smudge, but there is not really a program under the day, there was a teaching . . . on a specific tradition. It was being made up it was constructing a curriculum. You didn't have a sense that there was a specific curriculum. We were coming into this and as we went, we learned the structures . . . we started to learn the stories.

During the interview when he saw the various STITP laid out in sequence, it astounded him because Mike had not anticipated seeing the various practices as separate entities. For him it was different to see them laid out that way. He questioned following a laid out curriculum with identified outcomes and the benefit of facilitating, integrating and counting on the value in the information, stories, ideas and experiences of the learners. Each of course influenced the impact of emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual connection to the outcomes needed for growth and learning within the parameters of the intended goals of the program.

During the Oracle Mike remembered thinking, "It is creative let's have some fun with it." He felt that it was an opportunity for "getting to know people in a different way." In the greater scheme of things in the Institute, the Oracle was a change in the way of doing business. He also felt that it "is something that I value when I work with staff and something that you would use to mix it up instead of always doing the same thing."

As a Unicorn he thought of the mysterious and didn't remember a lot of the group dynamics during the creation of the story but the "spiral" stands out for him and "people walking through the spiral" as his group was trying to convey the "mystery of learning." The symbolism of the Oracle has followed Mike in that he feels that today he needs more symbolism in his physical presence. As part of a conference held in New York, Mike remembers that stories within a similar exercise more than the actual names of the people in the group. He said "*when you are in a group process there is a measure of working to*

produce the product” but the forming of relationship with the people in the group comes from the stories and sharing that occurs in the creative energy coming to the end product. Even though it is not the same Mike has begun promoting a similar strategy of developing core groups within his division’s Administration group as a means of facilitating meaningful presentations to each other.

In terms of the Sweat Lodge activity, Mike made the realization that even though he had been in saunas and gone in steam baths *“this was different, this was another level of heat.”* Mike describes his experience inside the lodge in the following manner:

I found myself like some of the others in a pretty vulnerable place. In a survival mode and it taught me that I was also there were physical forces at play and I had to find a way to get through this and handle it. I was disturbed by the fact that Myra and Ethel didn’t even appear to be sweating. When the door opened they were glowing like a spirit and were completely at ease. Whereas some of us were trying to pick ourselves up, you know opening the door there was the most beautiful light. The little drink of water was the best water, the little bit of berries were the best berries I had ever had. It was bizarre how all of that happened in there. In the end it means a lot in terms of contrast, heat and cool, darkness and light, thirst and quenches, sweet berries and nothing in your mouth, survival and life goes on type of thing.

He described the Sweat Lodge ceremony as one which made him understand the aspect of relinquishing control and even though the tension of doing that exists, Mike felt that, “You relinquish control and there is something very good about that . . . I am just here, it is out of my control . . . be in the moment.” This realization also inspired him to look outside the Sweat Lodge experience and to think about schools in this way,

So those are things that I took away for me and when I think about kids in schools when we do things that are ceremonies, it could even mean something like grad and it is something that you just got to get through, but if you are part of it you are just kind of drawn into the ceremony of it.

The aspect of being drawn into something positive depends on how the facilitators of the experience conduct themselves and model the aspect of letting go in a positive manner. Mike was also able to recognize this as critical to a positive learning experience.

Anne's story. Anne is a Cree woman originally from Northern Manitoba and had moved South to Winnipeg over thirty years ago. She worked at many jobs before entering university and became an educator. She has worked in the urban area, in two Southern First Nations, and her northern home community. Her passion is the Cree language, and whenever she can, Cree Immersion or Cree Language instruction is the work she indicated as her primary area of work. Anne does not see herself as a speaker of sorts when it comes to the English language and feels much more at ease speaking her first language, Inninu. However, amongst the people who know Anne, they respect her as a Knowledge Keeper and a person of great integrity.

When speaking of any of the practices, Anne displayed a deep reverence and a spiritual connection, which seems to come much differently for those who are fluent speakers. She announced her spirit name and the kinship (clan) that she recognizes as her family. She was very observant of those around her as she described, "When I participate, I look around me I see how serious everybody is because of this Smudge." Anne reflected about the place that she observed people going to when getting ready with the Smudge. For her, it meant: "We all think about what we are going to be doing, what we are going to be saying and mainly talk about truth, that's what comes out for me, truth." This basic concept or law is a very important aspect of the practices for Anne, and she commented, "When I'm sitting there and I'm watching everybody, *motc* [no in Cree], I don't judge anybody." This preparation or getting ready to do a day's work was very important to

Anne, who expressed, “When it comes to me, I feel such serenity in my soul, I feel at peace.” She felt that this is what people are supposed to feel when they participate this way. Because of her belief in the Smudge as a sacred practice, she identified that the feelings and belief about this practice are a good thing for children and youth to also feel and learn about. She has used the Smudge when possible in her classroom and indicated that a lot of the teachings and practices learned during the Summer Institute have been used by her in the classroom. As she thought about her classroom, she commented, “It feels so peaceful when you are sitting there with your kids, and you’re telling them teachings and they are just so quiet . . . interested in what you are sharing with them.” She recognized that “it’s such a good inner feeling, and I think they need to experience that. The kids really need to experience that.”

Again, when it came to the reverence that Anne had for the STITP, she identified that in doing the Smudge, “I take my time and smudge everything . . . my ears, my eyes, my face, my heart. It brings confidence out of you. It brings this power that you have that you are not aware of, but it brings this power out.” She felt that with this confidence, anything that you do or say is powerful and that the energy you feel when you are teaching or talking to students or other teachers comes from the confidence gained by knowing and speaking her language, using the STITP to teach children and youth.

When I had asked students not to write during the circles, Anne indicated that she did not have a difficult time because during her upbringing, she was never told to write things down, she was only told to listen. So for her, listening in the circles came as natural way of learning. When it came time for her to do her journal, she would concentrate and go back to the circle and slowly bits and pieces would return, and as they

did, she would write them down in bullet form. She remembered that in the circle, people also tried to help each other learn, and even though other people found it hard to not write, they too found ways to remember. As she spoke during the interview, Anne recalled a time in her life that, in some ways, described how she is as an adult today. She described a time at the lake when the people of her village would move down there in the spring and stay through the summer: “That is where they lived, where they would sleep, that’s where they would eat, that’s where they did everything.” This is where Anne’s mind went when she asked herself, “What do you observe, what do you see?” She said that as a child, that was the most important thing to do: “that you watch everybody and wonder what they are thinking.” These are skills, she described, as helping her learning process when she came to the Teaching Circle and Sharing Circle. As for the Teaching Circle the most important recollection was trying hard to grasp what was really important in the teachings, because as a Knowledge Keeper, you never know when you are going to be asked about a teaching; therefore, focused listening was really important to Anne.

Speaking her language was of utmost importance to Anne, and she often would speak her language in class during her time in the circle. Anne told me that one of the critical laws about the sharing is the notion of confidentiality, being able to keep what is spoken in the circle within that group of people. She called this a sacred act and believes that this one of the reasons that the circle is so powerful, because people can trust each other when confidentiality is present. What Anne speaks of here was raised in the last Sharing Circle and what was reconciled that those who agree to participate in research such as this give their permission for their sharing and information to be used by the

researcher and the tobacco offering to extend the knowledge for the betterment of learning for children in schools.

As a teacher, Anne has taken the concept of the circle to her classrooms and teaches about all of the different ways that the circle is apparent in our lives. Her great emphasis is on the ability to listen with purpose. She remarked that “learning is about listening, . . . [and] when you go to a teaching, you’ve got to listen to what’s being said, and you’ve got to carry that on.” In other words, she tries to impress upon the students in her classroom that when they hear the stories of the Knowledge Keepers it is important for them to be able to one day tell the stories they have told you. However, I do not believe the children in Anne’s classroom understand the remarkable Storyteller they have in their midst, or maybe they do, because she also told me that when she is telling the stories of her childhood, the children are quiet and attentive.

I found that this next part of Anne’s interview is critical to understanding how Storytelling works. Therefore, I have decided to include the whole story she tells about one of the old women of her village who kept young children who had been abandoned:

Storytelling, well you know what – we had this little lady and us kids – we only had a one-bedroom house, and you could see everything corner to corner. And that little old lady would pull up her chair before we’d go to bed, and she used to tell us a story. And the reason that she did it was that the house was cold, we hardly had any blankets, she was trying to keep our minds off the cold. Because we were poor, and we didn’t have very much, whatever little blankets that’s what we used, sometimes our jackets. But to keep the cold out of our minds, she would tell us a story. She would say, “Lay down, lay down,” and we would lay down, and she would tell us a story. And I know now why she used to do that. It’s because she wanted us to see a picture, a picture of what she was describing. And as we lay there, we’d see this picture of what she was describing, and she would go on and talk in the Cree language, and she would tell us a story.

Then as we’re falling asleep, and we’re cold, we started to dream. We no longer hear her story because she took us into this dream. And as I’m in this dream, I reminded her, the next morning when I woke up, I said I know what that story is about. We all called her—we were all young kids at the time—she wasn’t

really my granny, but I called her Noogum anyway, she liked that. So when I woke up the next morning and it was still very chilly, the old woman was just getting up and I was the first one up. I said to her, "Remember when we were talking about that story last night, I dreamt of it," and she said, "What did you dream about?" That story you told me about and then I went on to explain the story. The story had to do with this thing that was outside and was pretty scary, and she was actually trying to get us scared so we would fall asleep faster. And that's what that story was about. They were good at telling stories, that's for sure. But this old lady was something else when she told a story, because all the kids fell asleep before she even got half way and you'd dream about what she was talking about. You wouldn't dream of cold.

The way in which storytelling was used by the Elders and Knowledge Keepers had purpose and was usually done in a way where one could picture exactly what was happening. As the Elders did, Anne has often told the young ones "to close their eyes and imagine." Often in the circle, Anne recalled seeing her classmates in the Summer Institute closing their eyes. Whether it was in the Teaching Circle or the Sharing Circle, some of them would almost fall asleep. Anne reflected about her time in the circle at the Institute:

The circle and the story bring out the reality in us. What that does, is it causes you to look at it in a very different way. We're all different and maybe they experience what we experience it's just that we don't know unless they share.

This sharing back and forth about each other's lives causes a learning transaction to occur which invites the development of learning relationships that, without the STITP, would not take place.

Anne became a member of the "No Name" group, and in the beginning, she did not like the title, until the group began sitting together and sharing about each other and why they had come to be part of the group. According to Anne, the people in her group were open to sharing and listening to the suggestions and ideas. People in her group were positive about the activities they had to do and tended to laugh quite a bit during their working time. They came up with a good presentation, and as Anne stated, "I thought it

was different because I found that we got closer. I found that we could laugh together. I found that being able to do our work together made us look at things with our hearts.”

When it came time to talk about the Sweat Lodge, Anne brightened up, and again she spoke in the language. She loved the lodge experience because this is where she was able to speak freely in her Cree language. She explained that when at the ceremony, her observations again came into play, and as a helper in the lodge, it was part of her responsibility to make sure she kept an eye on the responses people were making and that the general feel of the ceremony was in order. She left the discussion about the Sweat Lodge, remembering: “I feel so good when we leave, I feel so good when my job’s done. Not just me, not just Myra, everybody, because everybody’s participating,” which is the way we bring depth to the learning and living experience. Anne was very clear on her understanding of the purpose of the ceremony and related that what happens in the Sweat Lodge ceremony is similar to what happens during the Summer Institute:

It’s really fascinating to have the Summer Institutes go on. You never forget anything you’ve learned, anything that was taught, that you observed, the love that you felt, and the love that came out of your heart, of your eyes. After the institute, you want to carry it everywhere, anywhere. You learn so much, you care so much after. You’re eyes are open, your heart is open, everything about you is open. You get a better understanding who Aboriginal people are, what they do, what they’re about. If you see an old man, you look at them differently because of this understanding you took away.

Sally’s story. Sally is an Ojibwe woman and was raised back and forth between her reserve community and the urban life of Winnipeg. The practices of the Summer Institutes’ STITP were not new to her. Sally works for a First Nations organization as a Curriculum Specialist and works with schools and teachers to help them understand the curricula and keep the benchmarks at an academic level which would provide First

Nations students every opportunity that any other child attending schools in Manitoba might have.

Sally liked the idea that the Summer Institute facilitated in that non-Aboriginal people were learning and participating in practices that come from an Indigenous centre fire. She felt, “What is nice about the smudging ceremony is that when people haven’t taken part in it . . . it is that willingness to take part in it” and “that everybody is invited into the circle because that is our way we are very inclusive . . . just everyone is allowed to be part of that circle.” She welcomed the idea that there were those people of other nations who were willing to know our ways better that made her heart smile because “it is so great when people are respectful and understand how important that it is to us and to be able to respect” our ways. However, Sally had some concerns because in her experience in the academic realm of university, and in her work she described various situations whereby peoples’ lack of knowledge pretty much made a mockery of her attempt to demonstrate, show or explain some of the things we could do in schools. The following is an example one of the experiences she had when attempting to help others learn about our ways:

I had taken this course for my master’s and I had brought smudge into the class/presentation. I didn’t invite people to participate and I explained that it was because I didn’t want to make anyone feel uncomfortable. What happened in that classroom was this woman said she was allergic and said would you mind putting it out and for me, I’ve never put out a smudge because it’s supposed to burn out. It was so small the amount of sage I brought. She made such a production out of it and took my smudge out of the room, wet it and brought it back. I was so horrified and I thought that it was so disrespectful. What bothered me most was that when she asked me before I did it, ‘Are you going to smudge and she said do you use sweet grass?’ and I said no I use sage and she never said anything else to me.

So for Sally, the experience was negative to say the least. The lack of knowledge and understanding that this woman expressed, bordered on some sense of privilege in that

through her actions that she demonstrated that she believed she had a right to touch something that did not belong to her, without permission, and that her leaving the room did not seem to be an option in this situation. Sally explained during her interview that this situation had not deterred her from trying to show others about our ways. She visited with an Elder and received encouragement to move past the situation and learn from it.

One of the pieces of encouragement that came out of the negativity was that Sally is more convicted to work with those teachers both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal who are ready, willing and able to bring Aboriginal perspectives and practices to the classroom. She indicated that integrating our ways into classrooms seems a more open prospect in public schools than in First Nations communities and so she is careful wherever and whenever she is in discussion with educators about what is possible. Sally, however, was able to describe a situation in Pungassi First Nation whereby her experience was “an example of going into a community and seeing a rebirth.” In this community the language, practices, stories, and ceremonies are again being sought by the people of the community.

When Sally remembered the Oral Knowledge Transmission of the Institute she said, “We learned from doing” and this comment came from thinking about the “tikenaagin” or cradle board where we would be situated in a place where we could learn by watching and listening as a first form of learning. When we tried something, as we grew older we often had already seen it being done and so when we would try and made mistakes we could be encouraged to try again and according to Sally “this is how we learned.” She described an example of this way of learning that came from an article written by Dr. Mary Young who explained an experience she had fishing with her Dad:

She had put out her line and pulled it back in and she had got a fish and she was so excited and started reeling it in. She was getting worried the line would start to break and she kept looking at her dad expecting some help. He kept standing there reeling in his line and she was getting nervous and anxious. He said to her in the language, 'Let the line go a little bit back in', so she did and she felt the fish was getting tired and she was able to reel it in. It struck her afterward that he could have come over and got it out for her but what would she have learned. By doing it for herself she was able to learn how to tire out the fish without breaking the line which she would not have learned if her father had immediately helped her. Having the experience for herself she could take away what she could from it.

So when Sally contemplated sitting without writing she actually personally likes learning that way because in her mind, “It forces you to become a better listener you want to try and take in everything” and reminded me about the discussion I had with them in class about how this causes one to make connections to their own personal lives. She also felt that this was “more important because sometimes when you are writing you are not really listening.” Sally connected this to her own practice and that of teachers in the classroom when she made this comment, “we want our kids not doing this busy work with papers all the time,” so she realized that in order for teachers to change their strategies in classrooms related to “busy work”, handouts, worksheet and so on, she must model how to engage active listening. Even though she may have a power point presentation and handouts all prepared she will often present briefly and get them into a discussion; for an example how to make, introduce and effectively use learning centres. She uses the learning circle to do this and when some teachers ask for the power point and handouts she asks them to trust the process. Listening and interacting with each other, they were able to learn more about learning centres from Sally and each other:

This is more interactive and you get much more out of it. And actually that worked out very well because of all the knowledge coming from everyone and all the brainstorming and then taking them through all the activities hands on afterwards. They're excited and you actually see the excitement. I remember when I first started out doing this I needed power points to give them notes. I've changed so much along the way and I like seeing that change with my

participants actually seeing them engaging, getting them engaged, interested and excited.

She remarked that when I spoke in the Summer Institute about learners trusting in themselves during the learning process, “it’s not all about the right answers . . . so much of school has been about the right answer and what happens when you get the right answer,” and because of this very thing a lot of people don’t share what they know because they “just don’t want to be wrong.”

Sally knows “that we want to create these safe secure classrooms where these kids want to take that risk,” but at the same time there is still so much work to do with teachers who still want to give the hand outs and present the power points. She also has learned through discussion with teachers in the field that there are many who still feel like they are that child in the classroom who doesn’t want to be wrong and therefore never takes a risk to share what they know. In the circle format, Sally acknowledged that “everybody is equal in there and nobody sits behind, everybody sees everybody, there is no beginning, there is no end. It’s a natural thing . . . [and by] being part of the Sharing Circle, people always feel safe to say stuff about their feelings.” The development of the sense of belonging is possible in such an environment and Sally suggested that if this were used in more settings people would feel more like sharing what they feel.

One of the cautions identified by Sally is to be careful when gathering people into a circle setting that the facilitators be clear about the expectations. She comments, “I think we have to be very careful...is it a Sharing Circle or are we just talking about feedback about our work. There is a big difference. . . . This was not a Sharing Circle; it was for feedback.” There is a big difference between sharing about feelings and giving specific feedback about something else. When someone introduces the topic of a circle

there are certain things that need to be considered: Is it a workshop setting or a healing setting; Is this there time for a lengthy Sharing Circle; Is this circle about sharing or receiving information?; Is it a setting for releasing things that are bothering you? All of these different considerations have protocols according to the kind of circle one is hosting and as a facilitator you need to know which of these you are introducing. For the purposes of classrooms and learning circles the most used circles are those which are topical and the sharing tends to be about the topic at hand and generally free from feelings. Certainly with children and youth the caution shared by Sally will keep the classroom a safe environment.

Sally gave an example when discussing the idea of Storytelling about her use of examples from her own personal life stories and how much more real the explanation being given seems to be. She feels that:

Storytelling is who we are though, and . . . if you don't tell your story then how do we know our whole story. On Saturday . . . I was actually with my mom and she was telling her story about what happened to her in residential school. Those things are so important. That story is so important. Our whole story is so important for all of us and we need to know our story, we need to be able to tell our story, learn from our story and we need to get this right. It's such a big part of our learning to take those stories and not just lay stuck in them but to learn from them and have a future. Like with my mom being in a residential school knowing that, is part of who she is, it is a part of her story but not staying stuck there; take her story, share it and have others learn from it.

This idea of learning from one's life stories is a very old method of learning and teaching and in the traditional Indigenous communities, life stories have been told throughout our lifetimes from one generation to the next. Bill and Bob, who created the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve step programs, have storytelling as integral to the healing prospects from the disease of Alcoholism. Nations throughout the world have legends, mythology, fables, parables, fairy tales and folk tales which all centre around stories

which people can learn something from and the children, youth and students of such storytellers have heard these oracles from generation to generation as well. One comment about the traditional Indigenous stories is that the stories told from one generation to the next are considered to be true lived account of situations that actually occurred and are not wrapped into a mythological transference of knowledge.

When Sally entered into the Oracle, she entered the circle of the Unicorns, and as she sat with this group she commented that she had to learn about the dynamics of group association. The give and take of being with other adults in a group where you had to work together required the ability to share your opinion even when one of the group considers themselves as the self-appointed leader. Taking a risk and sharing your opinion according to Sally prevented the “bully” in the group from taking over and even facilitated that person being able to see the value in collaboration and collective synergy and in the end it was a “good learning experience . . . and was nice to have the input that came from all and the collaboration of it about how we presented it turned out to be a real good story of the little girls *Awasis and the Seven Teachings*.” Each person in the group took their own personal story and the collective weaved them into a story that included everyone’s perspective.

Sally remarked that this struggle that went on during the Summer Institute Oracle exercise is a struggle that is similar in so many work situations where people struggle to work together for some common good. Those who speak out are sometimes bullies, and others who speak out are sometimes ostracized because the way in which things are expressed are not always understood. She felt though that personal expression must

prevail and the way in which one does that though has to be thoughtful and without hurtful words.

Sally was one of the women who attended the Sweat Lodge but did not go into the lodge. Even though she remained on the outside Sally was able to feel a significant part of the Sweat Lodge experience and expressed that:

Even just being part of it even though we didn't go into the lodge, we still had a role in it. We were sitting around talking, cleaning the sage. It was such a good experience because it was something that was mine that can be shared with everybody. I will always be welcome to that circle because that is supposed to be our way ...and it was the first time at university I felt that that was so significant to me as an Indigenous person to take part in something that probably never happened before. You look at University and it is still so westernized. I mean your paper it has to be coming from a source and I need to back it up. Where with this, the whole (Summer Institute) experience and that part of learning, maybe everybody going into the faculty of education should have to take part in this as part of their orientation.

Sally's encouragement is something that has importance in the understanding that participating in such activities as part of the learning process for educators can broaden horizons and open the hearts and minds of all who participate.

Danielle's story. Danielle is a Métis woman who before the Summer Institute rarely engaged in traditional practices and when she came to the institute was in a management position at one of the urban universities. Danielle took the very first Summer Institute and she remembers “. . . spending a lot of time thinking that this was really neat – to have the culture and the traditional smudging happen before class every day. It just kind of grounds everybody.” Since the institute experience, she has made it become part of her work. In remembering when the smudge was instituted in her learning environment it was hard for her to recollect whether the Smudge practice happened as a result of her involvement in the institute but she does remember both of them becoming part of her work at the same time. She also remembers that getting the practice approved

as part of regular occurrence at the university was a gradual process and that there were students who wanted to smudge and it became part of the practices held for the Aboriginal Students Association. “Smudging was not even an issue, but I think it was because we didn’t make it a big issue. We just kind of did it. We did it in class, when we needed it.”

According to Danielle,

There’s the kind of gradual kinds of stuff you’re learning that you bring into your professional life. Much like with the smudging. It wasn’t a big issue, but when students wanted to come in and they really just needed to smudge, it was just always there. It was available. We never did it every single day to bug people. We did it just when it was needed. And then if somebody complained and said “Why are you guys smudging there”, well this person’s in crisis. You know who’s going to say no to that. This person really needs it. And that’s how it was just gradually introduced.

There were a couple of situations, one potentially negative and one positive, and now according to Sally, “Now it’s okay and even though it’s never been a formal policy, the president —because we talk about it as a policy—it has become a policy without it ever actually been written down, or approved or signed off.” In fact, the Vice-President wrote a letter in the university newsletter announcing that smudging is part of Aboriginal culture and it will be respected on campus. This is all that is in writing as far as the Smudge practices are concerned.

The “not writing” aspect of the Oral Knowledge Transmission was a little difficult for Danielle in that “Just asking us to not take notes was difficult enough. I just remember how hard it is not to take notes because then you can’t remember.” During the circle sessions, some individuals found it harder to not write or take notes. Danielle came to the point whereby she understood . . . “you have to trust you’re going to learn what you’re supposed to learn and don’t worry so much if you don’t remember some of it, because if

you need to know it will be repeated.” For Danielle the process in the circle was that of “learning a lot of faith and trust” and now when she goes . . . to ceremony or when you are meeting with other people it helps you be more of an active listener because those are both places when you really can’t take notes.”

As she thinks back on the Summer Institute she remarks, “It’s almost twenty years now and I remember some of the people, or ...some of the teachings but I don’t remember the details of the course.” Danielle came to the conclusion that, “you have to have that faith that what you learned or what you heard is important. If you don’t hear it and your mind wanders off it’s because you weren’t supposed to hear it. I remember learning that.” Constant in her mind even today, is the balance between being an active listener and needing to take notes. However, for Danielle she was able to confidently say, “I think that was the first time I’ve ever had a ceremonial type of teaching interaction with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that was done in such a respectful way.” She however raised a consideration about who should receive such knowledge and who should not. Danielle spoke of times where she has been in the presence of Elders transmitting knowledge in mixed groups of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and some of the Aboriginal people within “feel they have superiority for something” and according to her this is a “reverse discrimination or reverse racism.” She did recollect though that during the Summer Institute the facilitators treated everyone so respectfully and remembers being and feeling that people were being a part of it.

When she made reference to the aspects of the Sharing Circle the focus was more on what she wanted to share with the people and in listening to them while trying to figure out “why people are sharing what they are choosing to share,” and Danielle

understood that what people shared was not for her personal benefit, but simply to give an indication as to where they might be at on that particular day. While they shared some things about themselves she was clear that her work was not to personalize the information. Whereas when she reflected on the Teaching Circle Danielle remembered, that the “teacher is [sharing] information, that I am personally trying to integrate into my life...trying to understand it . . . to apply it to my life.”

As far as the Sharing Circle was concerned she learned different aspects of the human dynamic rather than accumulating information as in the Teaching Circle. She was able to develop a “better awareness or understanding of where people are at and people’s ability to grow and understand.” When dealing with people who are going through personal things at home or at work because she had been part of the Sharing Circles she was able to better understand “how peoples’ experiences and emotions and personal lives affected their professional lives” and that she did not have to personalize the different things that they were going through.

When opening the discussion about Storytelling and her involvement in the Oracle, for her they were two in the same, and she felt “it was a unique and awesome way to show the value of feeling, a sense of belonging.” Danielle made this comment that I have heard many Aboriginal exclaim about their capabilities. She felt however that:

Because the class was my first time in graduate class . . . [and] there were some knowledgeable people in it and there was a real mix between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and I didn’t know if I was going to be smart enough.

This lack of confidence usually shows itself when Aboriginal people who have been affected by colonization arrive at a certain place in their studies. I have made this same self-declaration in my own studies when I had arrived at a certain level. It is not always the same place for everyone, but through my own experience it hit me in my

Master's Program when I realized that all I had left to do was the 700 level course at the time and again in my Doctoral studies I hit that wall during the actual writing of this thesis. Danielle is not alone in this disclaimer and for some people it can be a devastating or debilitating time.

I was thankful that I had, as did Danielle, encouragement to pick myself up and keep going not to quit my studies. Danielle commented that she honestly did not know if she could handle the work. But when faced with the challenge as many do she realized that within the group, it . . . allowed you to kind of grow more . . . it made us into a little clan . . . that little sub-group which gives you courage and strength in the bigger groups because you're not just your own voice you have the voices of your others." In this statement, Danielle captured the essence of the work in the Oracle development process. Becoming and being part of a collective is very much what life growing up was like and found in one's nationhood, kinship and/or clan. This aspect of learning through the eyes, ears and voice of a collective engages the individual in a spiral of learning which adds depth and breadth to their learning journey. Certainly, this is an advantage for learners who find themselves in the traditional Indigenous learning spiral and for learners like Danielle it was like this "so even when you are up there, you have your backup singers, and you are the backup singer for them." It was actually during the interview that Danielle realized that dividing people up into these groups was intentional on my part. As part of the group making process, participants were asked to sign for a spot in one of 3 or 4 groups depending on the number of students in the institute. The fact that they chose their group caused Danielle to remark, "So that was intentional. When you divided

people up and you said to choose—it wasn't just a matter of people divided for group work, it was intentional. That was pretty amazing.”

What was amazing to me was that all during the fourteen Summer Institutes I used this process and every time students just like Danielle would tell me, “It was the most challenging thing about the course, but I also learned probably the most because of that.” The Oracle was intended not only to involve learners with others to work through what it means is to be part of a collective but also the impact and strength that group can provide to the individual if they will allow the spiral into their mind, body, emotion and spirit.

Danielle, I believe was the only participant who identified the Wolf Teaching as her intensive ceremony instead of the Sweat Lodge and she said it best in the following way as to ceremony in places of higher learning:

The wolf teaching—it's a very powerful teaching . . . and it was a very personal awareness thing. While I think that ceremony has a place in education, some people don't think so. I totally do think so – whether it be smudging or Sweat Lodge or in-depth all day ceremonies. When I did my masters I ended up doing much more of that [going within to find and know yourself. What was the original intent of university, way back when the universities were first created? Why?

Well it was to know yourself. That was the whole purpose of university – was to know yourself. You find you, get your place. Like all the stuff you talk about, right? That's what the ceremony was about; you've got to always bring it back. The knowledge, the head stuff always has to come back. Go through the heart and come back again or it doesn't do anything or mean anything, I don't think so. So that's what that reminds me of. That's what the value is. And I think . . . all of you, all students, all staff should be going through it on a regular basis to always bring that back.

Danielle in her comments alluded to the original concept and practice of university and where this way of doing university came from. She felt that “where university came from, was that old dialogue that used to happen with Plato and Socrates.” The students of that original university would sit around very often in a circle and the

teachers, Plato and Socrates, would transmit their knowledge. Danielle “found that quite fascinating that our people are on that level. That’s where we see them. They are our storytellers, knowledge keepers. So it makes sense, perfect sense” that the lodge, ceremonies and SITTP belong in university. Danielle wrapped up her interview by making her final comments in this way:

This course was much more than a course. It was a process, it was integration, and it was a learning process, a very holistic learning process. It’s different than the other courses. It’s not just learning from the books and then doing a presentation or writing a story board. Instead of just taking a class and learning about Aboriginal education, you experience Aboriginal education.

Louis’ story. Louis came to the Summer Institute as a proud Métis and an upwardly mobile educator on his way to becoming a leader in not only Administration, but in the field of Aboriginal education. He had great enthusiasm for learning. When I really think back to the place where he was during the Summer Institute, the notion of innocence comes to mind because I have had the pleasure of continuing to be this young man’s mentor and I still do not think he knows what hit him during the Summer Institute he attended. He embraced all of the activities with enthusiasm. His career took to him to Aboriginal populated and focussed schools. As part of the interview, he revealed that was not his original intention but when the positions came up at these schools he felt that he could not resist and was encouraged to apply for the positions posted. He did reveal in our discussion that he was travelling on a path that has made his parents proud and now his role in Aboriginal education is a lot more clear than in the beginning and he welcomes the things that come with this role.

The Smudge practice was not new to Louis and had the chance to partake in the practice at two previous schools where he worked. However, he commented that it was not until he got to Niji Mahkwa where he smudged daily and sometimes twice a day. This

regular use of the Smudge has made him see today “the importance of smudging as clearing yourself and getting ready.” In fact, Louis thought it is “vital to our success at Niji Mahkwa in getting ready for the day.” He found that Smudging every day during the Summer Institute was “awesome”. He saw the benefit of “clearing our thoughts and getting ready for the experience of the day.” In fact, he went on further to say,

I think with the smudge I was beginning to find out who I was, having it as a daily practice for the three weeks beginning my day. Knowing and finding my place within the group and having that smudge really made me think, really, helped me clear my head for the day and really made me think about who I was and where I belong.

At Niji Mahkwa School, he saw the Smudge as part of the regular day, but the interesting thing is that the majority of the students who attend this school do not know that other schools do not have this practice as part of their regular routine. Louis not only sees this as part of the school routine for students and staff but has come to personally rely on the Smudge at work. He felt that:

It inspires me when I am off or I need to clear my thoughts with smudge that is where I look to or if someone, one of the language teachers or our cultural support teacher sees that I am having a rough day, they will bring down a smudge and I will smudge. It's one of those, it just happens and still today I am still trying to figure out and trying to find the answers with regards to smudge and the importance of it. When you find yourself in need of something, I really find that the Smudge really helps figure things out.

He has come to realize that home is a place where he would like to have the Smudge as a regular routine for him and his family, but in order to do that Louis feels strongly that he needs to acquire the tools necessary to do so:

I could smudge at home. I think I would have to go through the process of getting my own sage. I think that I need to do that, I don't have sage at home. I have brought sage home and I have smudged at home but I feel that I will go out and pick my own sage and I think I will go out with the children and that is something I need to do for me, I need my own sage at home. It doesn't feel wrong to take Niji Mahkwa sage home, but it doesn't feel right either, in that I didn't pick it and clean it and go through the process of it. I want my own sage.

This drive comes from seeing and experiencing the Smudge practice as a “common practice” at Niji Mahkwa School where it is “every day, it’s routine, it’s embedded in what we do . . . [and] nobody questions it at Niji Mahkwa, there is no explanation needed.” Even though Louis is allergic to smoke he doesn’t feel that way when he is around sage and the cleansing. As a Leader in Aboriginal education Louis recognized, “At other schools, even at our MTS [Manitoba Teachers Society] House at McMaster . . . everything has to be done . . . in advance when you are smudging, everybody that is allergic you have to notify.” He also described that in other places outside of Niji Mahkwa School, “You have to go a step by step process,” and in many schools you can’t smudge unless you are in a room ventilated to the outside, or where there is a Smudge room that has been created for this purpose. He identified this as an area of work now and in the future there needs to be help for schools and school divisions who may choose to facilitate this practice into their system.

When it came to the aspect of Oral Knowledge Transmission Louis explained that “without being able to write down the day, I had to change my way of processing information.” Part of this was recognizing that he was only going to be able to write down what he was able to remember. He explained in the following way something that has become very important to him:

It is like you said the biggest thing that I learned and am still learning is that you can listen to a presentation seven different times when an Elder speaks. It might be the same topic or the same area, but you are going to find yourself . . . learning something each and every time. You will take away something different, something that is meant for you to learn.

Louis found it extremely difficult to remember without notes to rely on and he “really had to change my listening skills, my attentive listening skills to pick up on what was meant for me to learn that day.” He acknowledged that even though he had picked up

on two or three pieces of knowledge that day, by the time he came to reflect and write his journal that he would have perhaps lost one of two of those pieces of knowledge. For Louis this was a recognition that the information wasn't necessarily lost but at the very least it was "put on the back burner" of his mind. He felt that perhaps he wasn't ready at that time to learn about the things he couldn't remember and that the things he did remember he was "ready to move on and learn more about." So when it came to the journaling aspect of the class he took this work very seriously even though "it was a real switch and a 180 in the sense of course work in how you remembered and how you deciphered information and how you put it together in your learning process." As he watched others in the circle Louis observed "just visually seeing the stress on the conventional learners was evident . . . but you had to become comfortable with it and I could see that they really became comfortable with it." In fact Louis remarked, "It took a bit, I became comfortable with it and realized that this is the way, that there is purpose for it, that's the way it happened and that's the way it was." Louis summed it up this way:

I really think that when you are not writing anything down your listening skills and your observation skills take over. I mean body language, there are times when in the circle there was such peace within myself that I almost fell asleep, not that I was tired, but you know when you are just so relaxed that you are listening and everything is flowing nice. When you are sitting there you pick up your skills in [reading] body language and you can see in the circle you can see the people . . . when someone is really agitated, upset and it is going to be their time soon to talk and you know you are going to have to get the smudge ready, yep. You need to get the water and everything.

The Circle work for Louis helped him take a step back so that he was able to see that this work we did contributed to "making everybody comfortable with each other and seeing that everybody else was doing the same thing." He felt that the sameness was important and "as a group we were doing it the same way" and this "reassured you as a group that there were some things . . . I just accepted that there was reason for it" and "if

there is not a reason for doing it this way I will find out.” Louis identified in this comment that for me that somehow he was able to trust the process and saw the other participants in the circle doing the same thing. He was also able to articulate and describe for me through the following comment the ideas of spiral learning and importance of repetition as practice:

You know when I sit in the classroom pipe ceremonies I see it all of the time. When I am in the pipe ceremonies I go in because I need to go into the pipe ceremony, sometimes I go in because I am invited, and it could be the same message in the theme when our cultural teacher is running the pipe ceremony. The same message is being presented I will take something different from it. I look at the kids and they are learning that too. I am always learning and at times I say that's an 'aha' moment I need to remember this.

In his journey in Aboriginal education, Louis has become somewhat of a Knowledge Keeper and a transmitter of oral knowledge. He has come to understand that the notion of repetition is important because everyone who comes to the circle is at a different place and so the repetition accommodates these differences. A person who has already heard the teaching, knowledge or story may deepen their level of understanding as they hear the teaching, knowledge or story again and again.

In the spiral of learning some new awareness may arise as does the comprehension or level of understanding of the knowledge that is being passed on. This heightened awareness may act as building blocks and so even if the learner does not get the full impact of the knowledge being transmitted, they will have these building blocks to serve as the necessary steps to help them get to the next level of understanding when they are ready. Louis was able to identify that for himself as an area of work to enhance his Oral Knowledge Transmission, this notion of moving in that spiral from one level to the next deepening and heightening his level of conscientization. I observed that since the Summer Institute, he has begun to meld his own knowledge with the wisdom of the

Elders. Consequently, now as a speaker, advocate and agent of change he has found healing in the words he uses to transmit the knowledge and he has also realized that transmitting knowledge is a process that you have to be clear about. Louis identified that those learning from him are all in different places and his words need to accommodate those differences.

I have watched Louis come full circle around the spiral connecting the concepts in the teaching of Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom and Healing. The work that he has assumed in his school division now finds him becoming a Knowledge Keeper. What I find interesting in Louis' description of his own spiral as to how he moved through, between and from one school to the other as an evolutionary journey weaving his knowledge and experience together whereby creating a bridge to move the knowledge acquired from one place to the other.

When considering the Teaching Circle he commented, "I am thinking when I look at it now, what a gift it was and I don't think I appreciated the gift as much as I do now. I now know the process and who the players are." In other words Louis was in the Teaching Circle, but it wasn't until much later that he realized exactly the significance of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers invited to bring their "gifts." He said, "I didn't know the significance of those that you brought in and it was the who's who in Aboriginal Education" and "I didn't realize who these people were and I look back not and I say wow." For Louis when he looked "at who was involved or who were guests in that course" he came to understand the process of the Teaching Circle as sound because of the calibre of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers and for him, he "really liked the fact that

the more we did the smudge the more we learned and I really liked the teachings of the afternoon circle.”

Earlier a trusted colleague had said to Louis, “If you have three weeks, then it won’t be three weeks wasted,” when considering taking the Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education. According to Louis, “not knowing what it was all about, hearing good things about the course” he came to the conclusion that “that every educator in Winnipeg School Division should take this course.” For him:

It validated who I was as an educator and it got me to validate that deep down in me. Yeah and deep down it validated my Father and who he was. He didn’t really open up until I started working. Oh yeah he’s now a proud Métis man and he goes to everything he can possibly go to. Oh is that ever nice to hear.

These words speak to the kind of bridging impact of the experience from the learner to their professional work and even more to the kind of impacts that were familial in nature. When Louis speaks about his family the impact of this young man, learning about himself drew out the following story and since this family is a direct descendent of the Grandfather of the Métis Nation, it was important for me to include the pride inherent in this story:

Mom’s really proud of me and her parents are English and Irish. But they are really proud. She’s a proud wannabe Métis. But my dad had a choice and we lived down the street from a school and he had a choice as to whether I went to that school or I went to Lavallee and that was a French Immersion, the first French Immersion school in St. Vital., in fact. So I asked him one time why did you send me to Lavallee and he said, because I had to fight everyday walking to and from school because of who I was. I was a French speaking Riel. I had to fight everyday walking to Junior High and high school for who I was. He said I didn’t want that for you.

When I heard this story, I wondered if it was because the father was French or if it was that he was a Riel in Francophone territory. Either way it speaks to the notion of parents wanting good things for their children.

As Louis discussed the Sharing Circle, he stated that “it is one of those things in life you can’t talk about unless you experience it.” Even though people in his life had many different kinds of questions about what went on in the Sharing Circle like; “Why would you share that with people you don’t know? Like, how could somebody talk about something like that?, or how come it took two and a half hours? or why did it take all morning?” Louis did not have an answer for these questions. Even though he was not new to Aboriginal Education, he however was new to the energy of the Sharing Circle and its impact. He had this comment, which speaks to his understanding the power of the circle:

Some of that stuff was profound. Some of the people were talking about abuse in a family, talking about abusive relationships, death, talking about them not knowing if they were going to make it, talking about suicidal stuff, and you put that all together and you really got to wonder where does all that, the power of the circle come from. I didn’t really think about where the power came from until I began to understand that it’s the medicines, the tobacco the sage and when you put out tobacco whether it be for the course or the school year it makes that connection. I put out tobacco every year for the school in the four directions I do that before anybody else is there. I do that and I pray to each of the four directions so when I put out the tobacco and it helps. It clears the thoughts. I think it happens because I put out the tobacco, I really put it out there. That’s why the Sharing Circle took on its own life is because the tobacco was passed. I didn’t know that right away and I don’t think that other people would know that, because they weren’t in the same situations as myself.

When Louis considers the impacts of the Circle on his professional life he attributes the ability to “move on and get yourself to a place where you can accept” is what he believes the Circle did for him. He felt that by doing the Sharing Circle in the morning, it helped the learner to prepare for being honest with themselves in the afternoon learning. As in the institute he felt that, “There is a time and a place for everything and a time and the place was sometimes in the Sharing Circle for certain people . . . it was safe,” and now with his staff he is able to consider the same premise.

He has started each Professional Development day with a Sharing Circle, and “we sit in the circle every time. We do that, and what it does it gets everybody ready for the day.

It’s a fresh start to the day and gets everybody in the frame of mind for learning.”

Regardless of whether the Sharing Circle takes one hour or longer, Louis sees it as “a temperature check” for everyone.

As identified earlier when folks come to the circle each and every one comes with their experiences, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of where they are at. Every person is also at their own level of learning and that diversity contributes to making that particular group unique to any other group. So when it comes to Storytelling Louis understood that the stories told in the circle would be from the place where people had been and where they were at the time of the particular circle. It is interesting in my observation that during the fourteen year experience of the Summer Institute I was able to see a change in the questions I would pose at the beginning of the Institute while exposing the “Void.” So when Louis indicated that the stories were interpretive I agree due to the fact that no one in the circle is at the same place. He referred to the stories I told when making a point a little clearer for the participants he reflected:

I think the stories that you tell that are interpretive, I think everybody has their own interpretation of what you said and they take it in different ways. Somebody could say . . . what type of journey did she take to get here . . . I am interested in the journey. Others could say it gives her credibility; she could speak on it from experience. How one interprets what you said, I think the storytelling piece validates . . . gives you something to hold on to, it gives you something to remember by, it gives you a cue something tangible . . . to grip on to and when you [the instructor] start telling a story you [the learner] start thinking to yourself, do I have something similar, have I experienced something like that or do I even know somebody like that. It makes it real.

The idea of whether the stories might be perceived as true or fabricated for the purpose of making a point came to the Louis' mind and from his own reflections he surmised that,

At first when you don't know somebody you can think that they are not telling the truth because you don't know if somebody could have that similar a story or gone through that same situation but it's amazing they do and how they relate to each other.

As he listened to the individual stories that were shared around the circle Louis was amazed as to how there was a communal sense developed as each of the people shared "you almost had to become a community, you fed off of each other and a lot of the teachings came from each other in the discussions and listening." Louis again referred to the spiral in that,

It is just like that spiral that we are learning about right now in action research . . . it is like a wire or a spring that keeps on going around and around and around. You are processing, then you are validating and you keep going through it all going around and around and around.

As far as practice, Louis had come to use the term "analogies" when he spoke of stories that he used with the children at his school and when he would make his point to them he would do so by choosing and using his words very carefully. He felt strongly that if a child is to become vested and responsible the stories told or analogies made had to make sense to them and draw them into the spiral.

When Louis remembered the Oracle work, he described the group as diverse and they had fun trying to make their production. Since he had not come to like group work very much he felt that the symbol gave the group an identity they were proud of and this identity leant to the kinship that was developed during this Oracle time. They were *No Names* and very proud of it. Louis refers to something that not many other people had

recognized and that is the notion of “time.” He describes the importance of time in a class situation as follows:

It was time. The time that we got together and I don't think nowadays we don't give enough time. I think when you [instructor] give a product enough time to evolve. But time is everything. When you [instructor] say we have this amount time to produce something you [instructor] are validating the importance of that by giving it time. When you [instructor] say the presentations are due on Thursday afternoon and you [learner] have to meet after school and stuff, you [instructor] are not validating, but when you [instructor] are giving up valuable class time, because it was valued. The class time was valued, like there was no down time so the class time was valued.

The time that people had to spend together was part of what we were doing and did not take any more time from the participants' families than they were already giving to a summer course. For Louis this was important and lent to the validity of the Oracle. He felt that because I, the instructor was prepared to give valuable class time to this work the group recognized it and in turn they felt valued and respected as learners.

Because Louis did not know what to expect when it came time to go to the sweat and he also recognized that this event was going to be big in his career and he was becoming more aware of his place in Aboriginal Education he did not want to make any mistakes going into the Sweat Lodge activity. It was the uncertainty, and excitement, that created interesting butterflies in the belly of Louis. He was acutely aware of the protocol of tobacco as it related to his purpose for going into the lodge. He remembered lots of energy in the lodge and people suffering, folks yelling “burn tobacco” and also that there were a lot of things that took place in that lodge. He felt strongly that the Sweat itself was part of his educational journey and:

It has validated everything I have done, who I am, what I am, it makes me understand why everything has happened. It's not even the Sweat Lodge itself, it goes back to the medicines, I think the medicines we use, the four medicines, I truly think that that is where it starts and you could be in any circle anywhere and start these conversations and if the medicine is passed correctly the work begins.

In his work at the school, the Elder who works with him has helped him to deepen his understanding that “it’s the tobacco, it’s the sage, it’s the medicines and if you believe and support the medicines and let them do their work, that’s where the power comes in, that’s the powerful piece.” His final comments made somewhat of a prologue to the reader of this thesis and were as such, “If you are going to read this make sure you are in a place of openness and truthfulness and clear your thoughts of anything at all and go in with an open mind when you are reading this.” Louis makes this exclamation about the experience itself:

Because some people are going to think you are actually making this stuff up. They have to come reading this thing with the mind that; I am open to whatever it says and I am open to interpret whatever it says and make sense of it. They are not going to believe it. For the nonbelievers, it’s not witchcraft or anything out there, it’s not therapy either, no it’s not, it’s thirty three people coming together honestly with an openness to learn and that’s what it was about.

Edith’s story. Edith is an Ojibwe woman and she was a graduate of the Winnipeg Education Centre. She started working in inner-city at a school in the North End. In fact, this is where I met Edith as she happened to be my son’s grade 6 teacher and this is where we got to know each other. Edith was able to gauge my son and kept him occupied by using his gifts of being artist and writer. To this day he considers Edith not only his teacher but sees her as an Auntie to himself, his wife and their children.

She went on to teach in high school and was quite successful working with inner-city youth in particular those young people of Aboriginal descent. Edith’s supervisors at RB Russell School felt that she would be well suited to teach in the newly formed Aboriginal High School. This high school was the first of its kind and even though Edith was concerned about leaving the work where she was, in 1991 she began a different

journey at this new school. She was very instrumental in the school's development particularly around culture and language.

Edith has gone on to become one of the most important leaders in provincial education. She has become an important voice in Aboriginal education and a significant advisor to various leaders within the provincial education system as well as an esteemed partner with members of First Nations, Métis and Inuit education. Throughout the overall experience of the Summer Institute Edith held various roles first as student, then as co-facilitator, as a sponsoring partner and finally as a Knowledge Keeper. However the interview I conducted with her was focused on her role as a student participant during the 1994 Summer Institute.

Edith was most clear about what the Smudge was able to do for her in the following ways:

Well for me one of the most important things that I learned from the Smudge practice . . . was the cleansing part . . . the smoke. When that smoke was rising you would use that smoke to cleanse your mind, your sight, your eyes, your ears, your mouth, your body, your heart so that you could prepare yourself for the work you were about to do . . . to prepare ourselves for learning. So for me the smudge really helped clear things, especially if you had a bad day and needed just to calm down. The smudge for me would do that for me as a learner. The other thing . . . was hearing it [the Smudge teaching] at the institute was a validation of what I had learnt from my Elders and my teachers. Coming to the institute validated that for me, so for me that was the thing that I learnt.

During the conversation of the interview, it was difficult for Edith because she had so many roles within the Institute that sometimes we could not differentiate between the stories she provided. As an educator in the field, she was inspired by the workings of the Smudge and when at Children of the Earth High School she found “having the smudge [every day and sometimes twice a day] was really beneficial in the work environment [and] was very beneficial for me. I was teaching at the time where the school was

infusing cultural content and practice into the curriculum, [as well as] everyday life of the school. She felt very fortunate in that not all schools are like that:

For us, it was an expectation that we have a smudge for the students not only once a day but twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. I knew how to smudge, learning how to go and pick the medicines, and how to prepare them and how to use that in the classroom. So for me having the Smudge in the institute and learning more . . . about how to do the cleansing part with the students and that really helped me and really helped the students.

Developing capacity has always been part of Indigenous models for learning and as she moved the Smudge practice into her work she was able to recognize:

What I also did that even though I am the teacher in the classroom or facilitator I would like to say too that I had the students become responsible for taking care of the smudge, so that it wasn't just only me. I had them build that capability, so it didn't always have to be me as the teacher but that I am teaching the students and showing them by example as to what to do.

Modeling was also one of the ways of transmitting knowledge and showing the learner firsthand what the expectation was. Working with educators to take these practices and tools from the modeling was explained by Edith to be huge in the way in which she does this work:

I can show educators and ultimately their students through the educator, that here is something that you can use in your classroom or in your daily life. Here is something that you can use to help you to ground yourself to focus and that they can use it in that way. Plus I think too because right now in some schools it is a real challenge for them to have a smudge . . . because of health, safety and fire regulations and all of those different things. So it is a real challenge for some people.

But sometimes the climate in which you work does not align with your belief system and pedagogical views so you find yourself in either tension or conflict with the protocols, policies and foundations of the system in which you have tried to integrate the Indigenous ways. For Edith she was able to discuss the following:

But one of the things that I really like about the smudge is that you can still talk about it with students and show them the different medicines, you can still show

them sage, you can still show them cedar, tobacco and sweet grass. You can still show them those and say, 'here is the Smudge and here is where they come from'. You can still teach about the shell or whatever you burn it in, so to me that is what I find that the smudge can help people to understand.

In other words Edith was talking about ways in which the knowledge about the Smudge can be transmitted without ever lighting the medicine that you are talking about. The nice part about this way of doing things is about helping people see our ways as similar to those of others who use smoke, fire, water, song and prayer [talking with a higher power] which may be slightly different but interestingly enough are strangely more similar than we think. She emphasized this notion in the following way:

And not only that, you can compare it to similar practices in other cultures . . . so for example like when you go to some of the churches, it has that little container for incense [a thurible], and we used that for cleansing the air. They might not smudge parse or use it individually but they cleanse their building. So to me that was what I find you can teach ultimately through educators to children that there are similarities and you can teach that there are differences and there are similarities, that's what the smudge is to me can be used as.

More recently, in the position she now holds with the Manitoba government, Edith has been able to physically create an environment whereby she and her staff have the right and capability to Smudge during work hours anytime that may be needed. She commented:

We can smudge anytime we don't have to call the fire department or managers, so it is a way of life. So if it is two o'clock in the afternoon and 'man I need a smudge', we can pick it up, just like you could have an aspirin or lay down. You can take the smudge shell and use it.

For Edith it was not always that way because in the previous environment she was required to follow a long step by step process to have just one Smudge on occasion. According to her you were not “allowed to smudge everyday if you wanted to, you were lucky if you got to smudge once a week, you know. So what we did, what our solution was that we went down stairs and smudged out at the back.” When Edith moved to a new

building with her staff, the insides had been gutted and there was opportunity to make specific requests because they were starting from scratch in the design of the building.

As a result of a discussion with the architect, who was of First Nation ancestry and understood about our ways such as the Smudge they were able to integrate a physical setting with a sky light, windows that opened to the sky accommodating the ceremony practice of burning medicines. A round room was created at the centre of the space because the staff thought that:

the center room would be a place for people to use rather than it being an office space so that was constructed specifically for that purpose. So that the community could come in there and they could Smudge if they wanted to and have ceremony so that the windows could be open.

So as far as the Smudge practice they “pretty much left it open and said that if people wanted to Smudge they can” and this is part of the relationship building with community members and organizations.

As we moved in the interview to discuss Oral Knowledge Transmission Edith found that this practice “just validated for me everything about the way in which I grew up.” She was taught from a very early age “to watch and listen” and explained that her first language was “Anishinaabemowin, which is Ojibwe.” Her parents were cited as those first teachers in her life and left her with the teaching of our ways, such teachings about our hair and braids and that we were to keep clean our hair and our body. She noted the role of her Grandparents who lived in the same household as her. Edith remembers that her upbringing was during a different time where technology was not significant and so “it was very different at that time you spent a lot of time with people.” According to Edith “human interaction” was key and there were “always people in our house, my aunts, my uncles, and there were always people around. It was very community

oriented.” She referred to when she first came to the Summer Institute as a learner, “I saw that, because there were always people coming, the various teachers that were there to come and share their knowledge.” Edith was quite taken with one memory in particular and remembered a time when Dan Thomas came and spoke about the Teaching Lodge and “how he used that teaching lodge; and how he talked about it in reference to the Seven Stages of Life; and he had these dots . . . on the chalkboard” as he was talking and sharing the teaching he managed to connect all of those dots “to the Seven Stages” and “when he finished that teaching, it was a lodge. It was also an Eagle Feather.” I was amazed not only about the teaching and the way in which Dan conveyed it, but how it stayed with her. She identified that this experience was what she remembered most from the Summer Institute as a learner because not only did she get this teaching she ended up in the Teaching Lodge for the first time that fall.

In the same way that the Institute had various visitors in and out of the Teaching Circle, Edith brought in people from the community to accomplish a variety of things like pipe ceremonies, honouring ceremonies, teaching on different curricular topics, Elders to give teachings and at Niji Mahkwa she had different Elders to Kookum’s Corner when she was a librarian. Edith believed that:

A part of how I do things is getting peoples’ knowledge and experience and using their gifts wherever or whatever environment I am in. I am no longer in schools I now am in a job that I do so the way I structure my staff meetings, You know that most places you would go they all have business meetings and that’s the way they do things. I too have business meetings, I have two business meetings a month with my staff and one staff meeting time is actually called a teaching day. So each staff is responsible for bringing one teaching to the staff.

This she said was something she observed during the Summer Institute “in the teachings in the lodge at pipe ceremonies.” In her work that is where the teaching of “vision, patience, reason and motion” was given by Garry Robson a well respected Knowledge

Keeper and staff person of Edith's at that time. This teaching ended up revealing itself through a dream when Edith had been asked by her supervisor to think about a strategic plan. This teaching became the foundation for Manitoba Education's Action Plan for Aboriginal Education. She had used tobacco under her pillow and when this teaching revealed itself she took it to her director who in turn recognized the significance of the teaching and the staff, Edith and the director developed this conceptual framework as the Action Plan. So for her, "that is how powerful it is in our Oral Knowledge, keeping it and using it." Oral Knowledge Transmission has preserved our knowledge from one generation to the next and the exciting part in today's work is that this knowledge is being sought and is revealing itself to be significant to mainstream education systems.

Edith found that it was the Teaching Circle part of the Summer Institute where she acquired a lot of knowledge. This part of the institute "set a journey for me in my own life [and] it started my journey learning about our traditional ways" according to Edith. Even though her parents were extremely uncomfortable with Edith partaking in ceremonies and teachings and warned her about the word "culture." Edith saw her very own parents as the most cultural people she knew: "but the one thing that for me that separated that was the ceremony part. They had all of the traditional knowledge but they just didn't have the ceremony part of it." She wanted to "mention about the Seven Teachings and that was where I really learned about them was in the Summer Institute where we could actually see them written down and what those teachings are." According to Edith:

I remember my final paper when we had to do that final paper for you what I wrote my paper on, I compared the Seven Teachings to the fruits of the Spirit in church because that's where I learned them from, and that's where I was raised. I compared those because there really is no difference and if you look at the Fruits

of the Spirit, one of them is about Love and if you look as the Seven Teachings one of them is about Love. You know so for me hearing the teachings in those circles was very powerful for me.

Over the years she has become comfortable learning and using the teachings and has done so in a variety of ways. As a Knowledge Keeper now she was able to explain that;

It really helped shaped me today as Anishinaabekwe [Ojibwe Woman] and hearing them over the years, it's been over twenty years now and you know ever since the boys have been small I have been teaching them as well too. Teaching them both ways, you know I taught them this way and their Grandparents taught them the ways of the Church, which is really good. I think they are well balanced.

This is something that many Aboriginal people do these days because they are able open their mind, body, spirit and emotions to include the truths of both ways of seeing the spirit. They demonstrate by accomplishing this, that we are overcoming the torture of having been told that our ways were evil. Edith also described an event that deepened this sense of acceptance she was building for herself and her family.

Like one time I went to the pipe ceremony . . . and I heard this lady . . . giving a teaching about the pipe and when she was talking, because I understand the language fluently and when she was talking it was like she was . . . giving a church service. They use exactly the same words, because there is no word to separate the saying of love . . . So you know like . . . she spoke it sounded like my parents talking. So that's what I learned in the Institute like there were so many similarities rather than differences.

Edith's concern about this is that many people are still not able to do this and when she observed the non-acceptance happening she realized that there is quite a bit of work left to do within our own community and with the non-Aboriginal community as well. I have watched Edith maintain her steadfast belief of an integrated life and in her work in the field of education and in the community she has become a role model for an integrated life. As we move into accepting the work of our Elders/Knowledge Keepers because many of them are no longer here as they have gone to the spirit world, people

like Edith who was able to move through her learning journey of the institute and apply it to her life are so important:

The way I see the Teaching Circle work, everyone has a gift to share, everyone has a gift, has a teaching to share from their own perspective from their own life. Because when I hear the story about the Little Boy when you go to a Sweat Lodge and you hear that story, like I have heard that story so many times from so many different people and yet it is the same story. So that I how I see the Teaching Circle too because you will hear the teaching, you will interpret it to your life to your work and you'll hopefully apply it and that is how I see the Teaching Circle working. Like you are receiving the information and you apply it to your life and you hopefully make it work in the work that you do. That is what it is like for me it is the Teaching Circle we model that as much as we can in our work.

I was commissioned to write a training package for school divisions around the province, which would help them facilitate Aboriginal education and integrate Aboriginal perspectives to their schools and classrooms. This four-day training was named 'A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency', and Edith was largely responsible for its existence knowing that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers require encouragement to become Facilitators, Researchers, Advocates and Agents for Change in Aboriginal Education. This is what Edith had to say about the Summer Institute and its connection to the training:

And even with the Journey Training because the Journey Training is like a mini Summer Institute. a crash course. Because in there you are doing the Teaching Circle and they [the teachers] become the connection right, so it's that they are the extension [of the Summer Institute] and everything is always connected. That is what I learned and I continue to learn from the Teaching Circle, from the teachings.

When doing the work in Aboriginal education Edith felt that the Teaching Circle as facilitated in the Summer Institute was critical to building a community of learners who are able to continue their journey long after the actual course is over. She further discussed the Teaching Circle work in this way:

The way I see the Teaching Circle work, everyone has a gift to share, everyone has a gift, has a teaching to share from their own perspective from their own life. Because when I hear the story about the Little Boy when you go to a Sweat Lodge and you hear that story, like I have heard that story so many times from so many different people and yet it is the same story. So that I see how I see the Teaching Circle too because you will hear the teaching, you will interpret it to your life to your work and you'll hopefully apply it and that is how I see the Teaching Circle working. Like you are receiving the information and you apply it to your life and you hopefully make it work in the work that you do. That is what it is like for me it is the Teaching Circle we model that as much as we can in our work.

As Edith moved from her discussion about the Teaching Circle, to that of the Sharing Circle she explained that the Sharing Circle was “*time for me to really internalize everything and connect with the other people in my circle*” and she also referred to the content and how the “*sharing helped to internalize it*” and the sharing from the circle revealed “*how I could use it.*” Another aspect of the Sharing Circle was that the participants really learned how to look after each other. She explained:

People really learned how take care if somebody broke down, . . . people would go and . . . give the smudge, give them water. People had a chance to learn, I think people learned that compassion [that] it's okay to cry and this is a safe place to do this. You know that this is a safe place and that people are going to take care of you and things are going to be okay. I think that is what the Circle helped and helped me to do. At least that is what I learned.

Edith reflected on both the Storytelling and the Oracle together. She felt very strongly that as others who were interviewed have shared that everyone has a story to share but she included that aspect that even though they may not know it yet even those people have a story that will eventually be shared. During the Oracle work she recollected that there was a man in her group, the Butterflies, who really did not believe that there was a story for him to tell. Hence much of the group work they did ended up focusing around this participant. He had made reference to the fact that many of the participants had a connection to the Creator, but for him this was not so. It was important

to the group to help this man while accomplishing their task of telling the group's story and so,

We ended up making our story about how he meets the Creator. We used all of the various elements of all of the Teachings we heard. Then all of the teachings we learnt and heard and all of the different teachings became a part of the lodge. The Little Boy Teaching is about that little boy and discovering who he was and ultimately this is what storytelling is all about its like finding your voice and it is really what we wanted him to understand in the end. When we finished our Oracle he was bawling his eyes out because he didn't realize he had a story and he had a voice. And that is how we did that and so and because we had to symbolize the Butterfly in our story, our teaching we showed how he was just a cocoon and how he was this Butterfly he was free to share his voice.

In the end Edith and her group accomplished both tasks and the combination of their use of the Sharing Circle process, the teachings, Storytelling and the Oracle exercises all contributed to the final impact and she recognized that:

For me, the Oracle was interpreting and applying all of the knowledge you had heard and all of the teaching processes . . . to interpret all of those components and be a part of a group process while you still had your individuality. I know it sounds really complex, but your individuality and what you were learning might not have been what the person next to you had learned. But you could, the beauty of the Oracle, you could express it your way, and you had the opportunity to do the group process because that is part of it, to learn how to internalize it. So it has its little multiplicity of circle but to me that is what the Oracle taught me. You could still be part of the group process but you could still ultimately have individuality how you interpret and how you use that teaching for your own life but ultimately how you view it. The Oracle was a very powerful tool to use for understanding your learning.

Since Edith has been part of a ceremony community for many years she has attended many, many Sweat Lodge ceremonies and when it came to the sweat at the Summer Institute she really enjoyed watching people learn. She recalled a story about this young man who told the group of the raspberries which were an offering as part of the Sweat Lodge practice and how he was having a hard time in the Sweat Lodge. Part of this hardship was because he was deaf and hard of hearing and wore hearing aids. When coming into the lodge he had to take his hearing aids off which technically made him not

only deaf but blind because when the doorway is closed there was absolutely no light in the lodge. When the raspberries were passed around he grabbed a handful and kept them. When the doorway was again closed, to continue the ceremony this young man smeared the raspberries across face so that smell, the only sense he had left besides touch, gave him some peace during the rest of the Sweat Lodge. Edith remembers that this young man told the group that raspberries had never tasted so good.

One of the things that she commented on was that the lodge keepers she has met in her time and how they truly and sincerely took care of the people who came to the lodge. It struck her that the manner in which the caretakers of the lodge recognized visitors to the lodge as relatives and again truly took care of the people who came. Edith remarked that:

You can't learn that in any other course. You can't learn that in any course in the university, we learnt it at the Summer Institute and . . . that ceremony in the institute and having it as a course, I see you as being very vulnerable because some people are so new they don't know what or how to expect it. And yet I see it as you know when you talk about it as an act of love and I really see it because this is a gift that was given to me and I use for people to help them in whichever way they may need. And so what I really loved about the way you taught about the Sweat Lodge is that everybody felt a part of the ceremony, it didn't matter if you went into the lodge or you sat outside. And that everybody had a role and a responsibility and I think that this put everybody at ease. That really helps people feel comfortable about going to ceremony and it helps them feel comfortable about coming back. Some people will say that oh you have to go into the Sweat Lodge.

Inclusion was always a part of the way in which we do our work whether it is a university course or whether it is a ceremony. As part of the work also is about helping giving choice and Edith remarked “you really did a good job of teaching them and helping them understand the Sweat Lodge and what it is, and then actually to experience it.” It is important to me that when helping understand their role in Aboriginal education that they have their own personal stories to tell the students they may encounter. She

recognized that “giving people the choice to go in and doing it when they are ready. I think that that is a really good teaching to have.” When Edith works with her staff today she includes Learning Visits, Teachings and Ceremonies when and if her staff want or need them to happen. This is part of her regular planning for self-development and an example of this is that twice a year Edith calls for a Sweat Lodge and her staff all go on the Learning Trip as they call them and only those people who want go in, do. Choice and readiness is important to her as an encourager. Edith wished that:

Every educator could experience the Summer Institute. I wish we could do that for them to experience it, because it's like it is not even a course, it is a beautiful process for educators to experience; you learn about the traditional ways; how to internalize it; how to use it. I just wish that everybody had the opportunity to experience that because it is such a beautiful, rich experience where people can actually take it one step further from what they hear, and actually experience. That is what makes the big difference, they get to experience.

Edith's final reflection provided this regarding the bigger picture of Aboriginal education:

You know I really see it as transformation, I see it how it is impacting young people the next generation. So if I see what we are all talking about and we think what is all good and it is actually impacting someone, if it is impacting the next generation or generations even then, I think to me that is transformative and that is what they talk about isn't it.

She has come to a place in her work whereby she influences not only the provincial system but has an access to education officials that are at the high end of educational bureaucracies across the six western territories, educators in the field, at the postsecondary level, in research and at the grassroots level. I have walked with Edith in this Aboriginal education journey for many years and it is my observation that many transformative changes have come about as a result of her conviction, fortitude, commitment and love for the children in our schools. Edith is a gift to Indigenous

education, and I can honestly say I have felt encouraged, supported, loved and protected by her presence in my life.

Gail's story. Gail came to the Summer Institute as a veteran educator and proudly spoke of her Scandinavian background. She was working on a Master's in Education when she took the Summer Institute and as soon as she heard that I was going to do my thesis on the experiences of students from the institute she quickly volunteered to participate. Many of the students along the way had done so but many of them did not respond when the time came. Gail was the first to respond and when it came time to do the interview, she had prepared a written version of her responses to each of the segments in the information sheet provided to participants. It is very hard to chop up her stories and reflections, due to the fact that, when asked the questions in the interview she would simply reply with what she had written. Everything in her interview is concise and to the point and became difficult to write as a story in which I place myself. To this end I will try, but most of what you will read will be her reflection as was prepared by her.

Gail started her story by citing a piece of scripture “[may the lord be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart]—in gestures and thoughts—many people around world had similar thoughts about the lips (speaking) the mind and the heart” and she reflected on her time in the institute as an experience which had affected the way in which she remembered the Smudge rationale which spoke of the way we think, the way we speak, the way we feel and the way we behave about ourselves and others; and it brought “a feeling of peace and great, soothing smell sage from Manitoba—I looked forward to it each morning because I knew what to do, and it felt good to focus, to come together again as a community.”

She told me, “I wouldn’t disrespect Smudging by just using it. I would encourage or teach my students/staff to use it if a guest came to my class. Also I have explained what it is to students.” As the years have passed by, she feels that she has become “more confident that I know something about Aboriginal cultures, which is part of Canadian culture and history.” She believes that “as Canadians, Aboriginal histories are a part of our culture as Canadians, the good and the bad.” She pointed out that the more she has learned, “I feel I have something I can talk about with Aboriginal students—mentioning I am familiar with it—and helping non-Aboriginal students understand it.” Gail is no longer a member of the void, although she knows there is still much to learn the confidence she mentioned gave the encouragement to continue her learning beyond the institute.

The following opening comments to the discussion of Oral Knowledge Transmission leaned to the notion that Gail was in a reverse setting to learn about Aboriginal/Indigenous ways to what many Aboriginal children have felt:

I found it a very difficult way to learn and remember, but only because I wanted to get a good mark in the course . . . I used to listen to a lot of cassettes/CDs for information, so listening is comfortable for me, when I’m just listening for pleasure. I see how it would be difficult for Aboriginal students to learn and understand that books are so important, if they are used to oral knowledge and they could be under the pressure to do well in another way of learning that is foreign to them, - it’s also interesting to see that another way of learning exists.

As Gail observed in the Learning Circles of the Institute, she realized that “the knowledge came directly from the person telling it, they have to have some knowledge . . . [and] there is a connection to that person, and it is special and memorable.” This connection to the transmitter is a powerful consideration in Aboriginal/Indigenous learning transactions. Gail has come to realize however that she is “finding more and

more that students do not want to sit still long enough to listen to anyone – they are so used to sharing with others right away, even educators are rude that way and chat during someone speaking.” The immediacy of technology, face book, twitter and the like, have our society in a place where human interaction is becoming no longer the norm. Hence the protocols of respect and consideration during such interactions in my mind are disappearing. Despite this, Gail was so inspired because of the knowledge acquisition she had made and had written up a lot of what she had learned. However she is concerned that her work may be to no avail, and she commented,

I have given them away to the History department. I try to get the History department involved because they give the perspective of what happened in Canada. If they don't include Aboriginal perspectives, racism will continue because of the stories they've learned from homes, media, and myths.

When it came to the Aboriginal students, Gail made no mistake in considering both sides of the knowledge transmission in that she didn't “take for granted that Aboriginal children have no knowledge passed down, but [didn't] assume they do either.” Because she felt that:

It's a very different way of learning—it's also very emotional to share personally, and it cuts to the core of people—one can be closer to the person sharing because it's personal. I see that there are different ways of learning, it's not all about memorizing periodic tables as facts—learning as a human, through emotions, thoughts, relationships is a valid way of learning too.

Gail recognized that earlier in time when life in an Aboriginal village was much simpler, “that Aboriginal people had very cozy, comfortable relationships as a community, or at least promoted them.” Constantly living in a circle made learning a daily activity and Aboriginal people in the village did not set specific time aside for learning every part of the day was a learning circle. She acknowledged that:

Sitting in a circle puts everyone on a more equal level and makes you also be part of the circle; you can't hide in a circle. I liked seeing everyone face to face, or at

least closer, everyone is on an equal base, no one is higher, or removed behind a barrier (desk). It brings students closer, and they either like it, or it makes them feel uncomfortable but they are aware of each other and they have to listen and look at others and be aware of others' thoughts.

Gail discussed her unique way of acknowledging that she is mindful of the role that she plays as a non-Aboriginal ally in the work of Aboriginal education when she described how she uses the Circle:

I have used it, for a while it was only to teach an Aboriginal unit in my English classes (literature, history), then more as a technique, with Français as a second language classes. I am very conscious of not using it as a practice of Aboriginal culture but as a way to bond. I could tell students about Aboriginal cultures, but we're not pretending to be Aboriginal.

She believes that; “We have an Aboriginal liaison person and I have stepped back for some years and tried to let her do her job.” It is important to Gail to be respectful of the cultural ways she learned about in the Institute and at the same time understands and respects her role as an ally. She explains that she is not “teaching specifics of the cultures . . . but if students are used to circles and then are introduced to Aboriginal circles, they will feel comfortable because it’s something they know and might already like.” A very important recognition that Gail makes as she reflects about learning from the Institute:

It helps me see and use another way of teaching and connecting with kids. I also learned I have a responsibility, now that I have this knowledge, to let others know about it and not keep it to myself. That was a clear message from Myra. She never spoke as if there was any blame or guilt on the part of the adults who took her course, because we didn't know about the past. But she did stress that NOW that we do know, we have a responsibility to acknowledge it and not ignore it. I don't remember if she said we need to do something about it, but that is how I interpret it for myself.

So when she embraces her work in Aboriginal education she remarks; “Now that I do know, I have to do something positive.” Some of the activities that Gail has been involved in are as follows:

So far, some things I have done as an educator of all children is to advocate for a Native Studies course at my high school. It took a couple of years, but it was finally offered for 2 years, but then it was cut due to budget. I will continue to advocate again this year. I have bought hundreds of Aboriginal fiction and history, issues books for our library as the school's teacher-librarian. I've written notes from my general understanding of Aboriginal cultures for all History students, (teachers choose to use or not). I taught a comprehensive Aboriginal Unit in the ELA classes which included Aboriginal literature, history, map of former Nations in current Canada, general cultural knowledge I have learned from the course and in continuing to attend conference when I can. Now I try to support the "catch up" program which has a lot of Aboriginal students who fail at regular classes.

Gail was able to capture the notion of reciprocity when it came to her reflection on the Sharing Circle and how the line between teacher and learner merges allowing the participants and facilitators to become both:

As a non-Aboriginal person, I don't see a huge difference between the Teaching and Sharing Circles, other than the titles/names "teaching" "sharing" which I'm guessing means in a Sharing Circle everyone shares about their own thoughts and in a Teaching circle there is an elder who teaches. I see that difference, but also in the spirit of learning/teaching/sharing—it's all the same—when we share, we teach others.

She also identified key areas where and how the Sharing Circle impacts its participants:

Everyone is equal in the circle, only one person speaks and no one interrupts or asks questions. When someone shares personal ideas and feelings, it can bond people together from the sharing, and the "rule" about not interrupting makes us reflect rather than jump in with our own ideas—which is one reason the Institutes were so moving and so popular—because they touched and affected people on a core level.

When Gail uses the Sharing Circle as a classroom strategy she is also mindful of the age group and dynamics which were played out as she facilitated the circle. Her observations and insights provided her with the ability to create an atmosphere described in the following way:

I have used them to share on Monday mornings, what students and I did on the weekend. We learn about each other that way, especially because in high school students have their small group of friends they hang out with and because they change classes and groups every hour, they tend to cling to the people they know.

It makes me move out of a comfort zone of standing at the front of the class—comfort zone because I know it blindfolded and, students expect the teacher in front of the class so it's familiar to them too. I have to make sure the Sharing circle is comfortable and safe for students; otherwise, they won't want to do it or may feel unsafe.

When it came to Storytelling Gail told me that she “really [didn't] see a huge difference between Storytelling and Teaching and Sharing Circles. To [her] they are all the same.” She said that:

We teach through story. But I guess I learned that Storytelling is important and a valid way of learning and teaching. When I was much younger (as a kid and as a teacher), due to Western traditional educational philosophy, stories were considered just for fun, for pleasure, or a waste of time; they weren't considered serious, or learning. I learned how Stories ARE teaching and learning. I also learned that Stories are serious and the truth, as in Creation Stories, they are the telling of events that happened, and Aboriginal cultures see them as the truth, not as made-up fiction.

She explained that:

I learned an insight into Aboriginal cultures about how important and respected stories are. It's not just a bunch of old people sitting around reminiscing about their past. And even if it was, it is still valuable. Every story has a lesson. I learned that when anyone, but especially an Elder in a teaching situation, tells something, there is an intended lesson behind it, even though it may not be evident.

According to Gail, “I listen to the stories told by Aboriginal people at conferences and tell them to teachers when I have someone to listen.” She finds herself “speaking up more at staff meetings and university courses by relating examples of discrimination or invisibility regarding Aboriginal peoples.” While taking a recent literature course she did a presentation on Aboriginal fiction “to make teachers aware of books that are well-known, good reading and to point out some names of well-known Aboriginal writers and their works, in the hopes that a teacher will assign one of the books in their classes.” One story impacted Gail when she “heard from an Aboriginal speaker at a conference was how she had never, even once heard anything positive” about her people. This woman

had never even taught about Aboriginal people or culture from grade 1 to 12 in her own career. According to this speaker, “she felt invisible, like she didn’t exist” and she “vowed that would never happen in my classes.”

In preparing for her interview Gail had “re-read her reflections from the course” and realized that she had totally blocked out that part about the Oracle. She said that the “only thing I remembered was that it had ended well.” Gail recollected that “Myra told us that whatever we were meant to learn, we would.” For Gail, she “learned about working with people in a group project . . . [and] that to get a project done with others, one has to go slower and one might not get everything done.” In her group, there were two types of people those who were overly creative and pushy and those who were very traditional (mainstream education) and stayed in their ways. In the end Gail was somewhere in the middle between the two and observed the impact of one on the other whereby the older more traditional teachers facilitated success through the younger participant, by using their strictness to guide him and put some parameters on his creativeness. Gail felt she was gifted with this insight:

I learned they had something to add after all with their strict methods and I could not have gotten him to do that. In the end, the unicorn guy admitted maybe he talked too much about unicorns and he needed to back off a bit—I learned people have to go through with their mistakes, or journey, until they can realize things. Our group presentation was about a journey, and in the end, it had been a real journey of learning for the presenters. Myra burst out crying at the end of our presentation and at first I thought we had done SO badly. But we all felt good about it, our presentation and the crying, at the end. I learned I wasn’t the patient and clever person I believed I was. That other people have something to contribute, and I have something to learn, from everyone. I remember the saying ‘When you point fingers at others, there are three pointing back at you’.

Since the Institute Gail has done some things “to promote Aboriginal perspectives in my classroom” and one of the things that she felt passionate about was “learning about theatre” and she “did some work with Collectives in theatre and ended up guiding a

Collective on Aboriginal stories which was presented to elementary schools. I took stories from an Aboriginal writer and adapted them to skits.” The presentations made to the schools where we offered the Collective went very well and the schools “were eager to have us perform, no one turned us down. I was most happy when we performed at an elementary school, where 60% of the students are Aboriginal because I hoped they would see something of their cultures celebrated.”

Gail is ever vigilant to “create opportunities for all students with anything to do with Aboriginal cultures because we all need to learn as Canadians.” However, when the opportunity arises she tries “to keep Aboriginal students in mind if there is a special opportunity because they have much less access to opportunities than some of my students” [and] “for example, when I directed *Beauty and the Beast* musical last year with elaborate costumes, I insisted that the feeder school with a majority of Aboriginal students AND their parents be invited to a free afternoon performance/dress rehearsal. Gail knew that these kids would probably not have been coming to the evening performances because their parents probably wouldn’t have been able to afford tickets. Conversely, Gail indicated

I learned from Myra that she wanted her students not only to learn about Aboriginal cultures, but all cultures, to be immersed in all aspects of life. There are so many things I learned from Myra’s stories that come back to me at many different times and help me decide what to do.

The following statements are from Gail’s comments about the last STITP that she was involved in during the Summer Institute, the Sweat Lodge, and I can only place her words in the order they were spoken when she speaks of trust, responsibility, cultural similarity, comfort and competency. She described trust in the following manner:

I learned how much trust one has to have in their teacher to take part in a ceremony where one sits in complete darkness, almost naked, near a pit that

could cook a person if one fell onto the rocks. I can also only imagine what a huge responsibility it is for the teacher to take a group of people into this situation.

Gail was able to correlate her Sweat Lodge experience to one of the practices her people and family part take in the Sauna. This tradition from the Finnish ways is very similar and her description of both experiences bridges practices between her people and mine. Gail achieved an outcome I dreamt about and made this a reality for the sharing in this research.

I realized again, some similarities to my Finnish culture which has the wood burning sauna. It is like a womb in a way: It was used for birthing in olden times. My mom was born in a sauna. It is warm, one doesn't have clothes/sheets around, it is easy to cleanse and wash away. Families bathe together in saunas, communities do too. It's a sanctuary in a way, one strips away all inhibitions and just feels clean, and the breathing in a sauna is so clean and fulfilling. So I felt comfortable in the Sweat Lodge in a towel.

The respect between two women, each on a learning journey, both facilitating knowledge about each other's backgrounds, affect each other's paradigm through this respect and ultimately both know they are privileged to be each other's presence. Brookfield (1986) called this "mutual respect" and the Elders/Knowledge Keepers called this "the Law of Relationship with Others." Regardless of coining this transaction both Gail and myself know that "teaching and learning has occurred as an act of love" and she was able to describe by saying, "I am glad I took part in an authentic experience guided by an Aboriginal woman who lives her culture. I am proud of having experienced that, and it is something I can explain to others about Aboriginal cultures." She knows that while;

I can't use it, but I can explain its importance to students in a positive way. I saw another positive aspect of Aboriginal cultures. And it gives me a feeling of wider competency in knowing about Aboriginal peoples. I have actually experienced something and can speak about it positively. That is the essence of

good teaching- to let students learn things by trying and doing, and learning through experiences. That's how we know something for sure, by having done it.

The notion of providing authentic experiences, for the participants in the Summer Institutes so that they would have their own stories to tell when working with students and/or staff is very much an intended outcome. Hence the use of the STITP and the other traditional Indigenous teaching practices as the foundational components for the Model of the Summer Institutes as teacher education. As participants move through their memories of the institutes highlighted the aspect of Retrospective Learning - reflecting back through something that was said in a story. Consequently, learning from it today by an event that is current, has emerged as one of the key impacts that Gail and others have discussed when learning continues to help them learn and grow more confident and competent.

Last comments. Gail asked if she could have some space for free thoughts (outside of the interview questions) to end her interview with and again her words in the following paragraphs make the most sense just the way they are said:

Shifting paradigms through stories that bridge ideas, thoughts, and concepts;

This course changed my thinking and belief system. It is the one of the most important courses I have ever taken in my life. From Myra I learned so much about the history of Aboriginal peoples, cultures, perspectives and her own personal thoughts. Myra's stories that come back to me at many different times and help me decide what to do. I learned how to think about bridging Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives.

Bridging knowledge, opportunities for story building, and using inclusion to help both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people become advocates and agents for change;

So many things that I know, and the way I think, is due to the way Myra taught this course. She never made us feel guilty about Aboriginal history, we always felt welcomed into her world, she opened shared the good and the bad about her experiences as an Aboriginal person and we were there to learn what we were meant to learn. She passionately wanted to teach and to create bridges and future

opportunities for Aboriginal children, as well as everyone. And she was honest and upfront about it. She knew that the way to educate non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal peoples was to educate all people, especially those who have influence over the education of all people, teachers. I believe that too.

I know as a non-Aboriginal person, I could be listened to more easily by some non-Aboriginal people, rather than an Aboriginal person, against whom they may already have a learned prejudice.

Learning is lifelong and continuous;

I learned so much from Myra, which inspired me to continue learning about Aboriginal perspectives. It has become one of my life works to teach and include perspectives, information, and opportunities for Aboriginal students.

Accountability and responsibility are integral to balance and wellness;

I have come to the point where, if a crime were ever to happen to me by an Aboriginal person, I would not blame all Aboriginal people, I would only look at the person who did the action. But even more, if it were an Aboriginal person who committed the crime, that person is already forgiven too. I would understand why and where that action came from, (the history of abuse and discrimination). However, I would also hold that person accountable for restitution. I believe that although one can understand and forgive, it wouldn't help that person to be able to get away with everything out of pity. I remember Myra understanding why some Aboriginal children would come to school late, but she would still hold them accountable for their lateness, and give and teach them to use an alarm clock to get to school on time.

Opportunity for authentic learning transactions for future teacher education and ultimately children and youth in schools;

This thesis will make a huge impact on research, on education regarding Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It will go a long way in helping improve situations for Aboriginal children because it will create a bridge for educators, administrators and even for making policy in education regarding Aboriginal children, and all Canadian children. I, for one, am eager for the publication of this thesis to use as "proof" in creating opportunities for Aboriginal students.

Commentary on the STITP:

In order for the STITP to move into the academic classroom, the doorway needed to be opened. As stated earlier in the body of this thesis, I was fortunate to come across a model (andragogy) that closely resembled the same principles found in the traditional

Indigenous teaching lodge. To this end, circular seating arrangements, development of mutual respect, relationship of facilitator and learner regarded as critical, and self-directedness all leant to the smooth transition of the STITP into the post-secondary setting.

Through the voices of the Sharing Circles and individual interview participants, I have been able to reveal that not only did the use of the STITP have an impact on the personal lives of the participants, but their classroom practices changed to include facets of the Indigenous knowledge and practices gleaned from the Summer Institutes. The following comments focus on each of the STITP.

The majority of the participants reflected that Oral Knowledge Transmission in various forms is practiced by bringing guests such as Elders, community people, and Knowledge Keepers to speak with the children and youth in their classrooms. Those participants who do their work in the classroom feel very strongly about the need for continued reinforcement for this way of working with students. Coupled with circle work, the skill building for active listening, development of respect, and creation of the sense of community is activate. Passing on knowledge in this manner is felt to be a definite enhancement to learning in the classroom.

The Smudge practice has found its way into many classrooms beyond the participants' classrooms and has become common practice in some schools and their divisions. The creation of a safe learning environment where respect and dignity grow happens where the Smudge is used. Participants overwhelmingly commented that this practice helps all who participate to focus and settle into what is to come. The cleansing

of mind, body, emotions, and spirit were described as opening the doorway for focused and engagement in students' learning.

According to the participants, the Teaching Circle is often used when an expert is invited and available. A few of the participants had continued their learning beyond the institute and have become confident about learning to step up to be a Knowledge Keeper in their own classroom. Sharing Circles seem to be the most used of all of the practices, and the ways in which they are used varied from topical, subject-focused theme circles to those types of circles that have students revealing parts of themselves that require some positive type of change. The indication from the participants was that regardless which type of sharing circle was facilitated, those who were conducting such circles were aware of the need for safety, respect, and support from community and parents. In discussion with the participants who are using the Sharing Circle in their work as classroom teachers or counselors, they have commented on how powerful a tool they feel the Sharing Circle is for their students.

Many of the participants told of the use of Storytelling as being the most versatile of the STITP, in that the ways to integrate this tool (a) cross subject areas, grade levels, and age groups; (b) allows for a range of stories that can be told and by who; as well as (c) whether they are oral, graphic, poetic, written, or dramatically demonstrated. Becoming Storytellers was identified by certain participants as a goal for their own development, and they have continued attending Aboriginal education learning opportunities. Some have even begun or continued visiting with Elders or Knowledge Keepers to gain access to knowledge and stories.

The group synergy developed as part of the Oracle exercise were spoken of as a risk-taking venture by some, but in the end, most of the participants acknowledged the ability to almost become a family of learners. The various gifts each participant brought to that smaller circle were spoken of in ways that allowed for individuality, but facilitated group support and a learning journey for a smaller group of like minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions. The Oracle allowed for people go grow both singularly and as a group. This particular practice is one of the least used, but two of the participants described their own adaptations made to the Oracle used in the Summer Institute, and one discussed the way in which technology has been incorporated with this work.

According to participants, the Sweat Lodge experience or Wolf Teaching are the least used of the STITP, mainly due to the respect for the intensity and an acknowledgement one has to earn the right to facilitate such an in-depth ceremony. However, having said this, a few of the participants felt confident enough to arrange for the Sweat Lodge experience in their organization, and they also felt comfortable becoming helpers in the process of engaging their students. I felt that this synopsis of the STITP was important to the thirteen stories as a reflection of the participants experience in the practices.

Chapter Summary

I have presented thirteen stories, and at this juncture in my work I would like to say that the number thirteen has all kinds of importance, value and blessings for someone like me who has not taken lightly the trust placed on me by the participants of this study. The thirteen voices in my mind and heart represent “Thirteen Moons on a Turtle’s Back”

(Bruhac & London, 1992, p. 292). An old Abenaki Grandfather was teaching his Grandson about the scales on a turtle's back:

There are always thirteen moons on Old Turtle's back and there are always thirteen moons in each year. Many people do not know this. They do not know, as we the Abenaki know, that each moon has its own name and every moon has its own stories. (p. 2)

Thirteen times the moon gets full during the year to let us know that life is full and plentiful and because those who participated did so with all of their hearts, minds, bodies and spirits, I ask that their life be blessed and plentiful. As I pondered on the number of people who shared their stories out of a possible two hundred plus I come to the conclusion with these thirteen individual stories I have also been blessed with rich data that has bountiful depth and breadth. The story of the turtle, as in anything in the realm of learning, the Turtle, in our ways has always been the leader of learning, what we call today education. It is her footprints we follow to find a good life. Through the stories of the Grandmother Moons, we learn how to be good people and find in our relationships within the natural order all of what each moon has to tell us. In this way, I hope I have done justice to the stories shared with me because I truly believe that each story is as precious as each of the moons of our night sky. Thank all of you for your trust.

Chapter 6: Footprints Made and Lessons Learned

Introduction:

In this chapter, I present a conceptual graph of an overarching framework of steps that were taken as a doorway into the future that I called ‘Footprints from the Lodge to the Academic Classroom’ (see Appendix H: Components of Various Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education). I do this in order to provide a wholistic picture of the model that has emerged from the work in the Summer Institutes, and to create a possible doorway into a future of Aboriginal education in post-secondary institutions. The first step was about the tools of the model that I took to the university setting, the STITP, which were those I learned about when apprenticing with Elders and mentors of the Traditional Indigenous Lodges. Although these lodges provided a safe place for Indigenous pedagogy to be unfolded, the integrity of ceremony as they have been practiced since ancient times require protection. When consulting with the Elders who taught me, they encouraged me to take certain main principles to the university, rather than bringing the university to the lodge. Members of one of the sharing circles reiterated the caution for the protection. With this caution in mind and as part of Step 2 (see Appendix H), I chose Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices to include as part of the Summer Institutes. Consequently, they have become major components of the *Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*. They will be discussed in the context of their importance to the model and the significance they hold in the learning environment of teacher education.

In this framework for integrating the STITP into the university setting, there were two key facets found in Step 3: Components of Andragogy and Step 4: Elder/Knowledge

Keeper validation (see Appendix H), which not only facilitated, but also endorsed the use of the STITP in the Summer Institutes, hence in the university academe. Step 5 was the actual integration of the STITP into the Summer Institutes. As part of the study and the impact of STITP, it was important to me to identify whether or not so Steps 5, 6, and 7 would be discussed together.

Footprints to the Model

During my discussion in the body of this thesis, I have mentioned the Eighth Fire Prophecy (H. Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 1977; Fires Midewiwin Lodge, 2007), which in its own right describes the potential for a good life in the future, and I believe that the eighth footprint is similar to this prophecy. Beyond this study, work will be continued in the field of Aboriginal education. I believe the *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* (Laramee, 2013) is part of that future. The model still requires full development, and the discussion in this thesis will end with a glimpse into that future. These footprints have been made in a particular sequence, as can be seen in Figure 2.

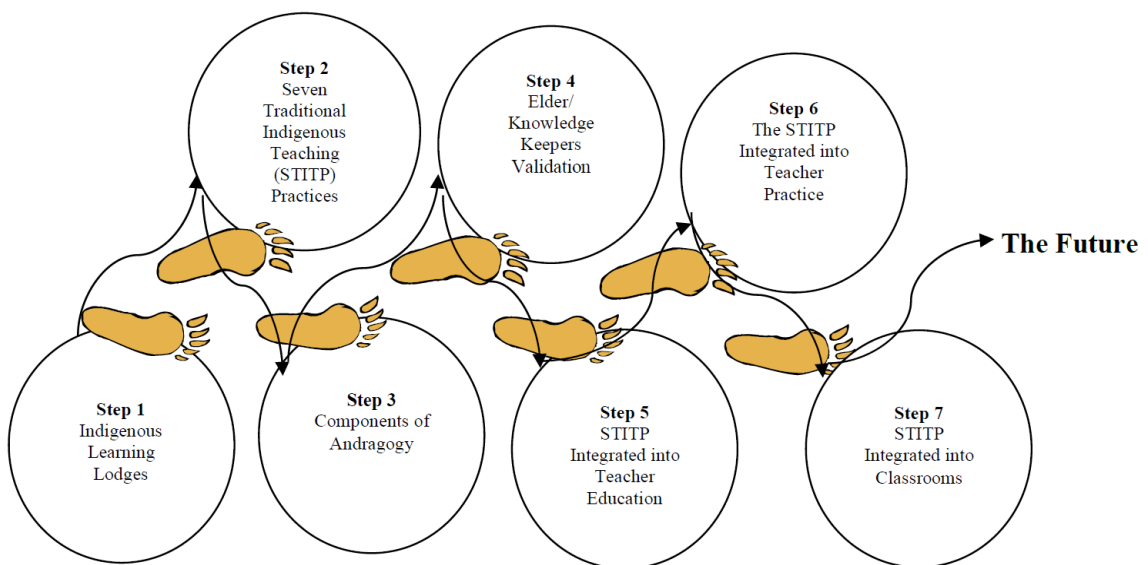


Figure 2. Footprints from the Lodge to the Academic Classroom.

I begin the discussion with facets of the over-arching framework that has provided the birthing place of *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*. The set of seven footprints presented in Figure 2 have provided a connection between many people from long, long ago who were diverse from each other, and enabled their coming together like they once did after much time has passed all the way into this present where we are coming together again to learn from one another. Many different kinds of people were said to have counseled with each other a very long way back in time. As I resume teaching in the university setting at the University of Manitoba, I continue to use and hone various aspects and practices of the Summer Institute, but this time with the focus of Aboriginal education. Therefore, the footprints outlined are only one way. They form one set of steps merging our Indigenous ways into the academic classroom, which were made as I moved the STITP into the university setting during the Summer Institutes.

At this point, I would acknowledge the work of Elders, Traditional Teachers, Knowledge Keepers, educators, and scholars for their perseverance, ethics, and stamina in keeping Indigenous knowledges and practices from the lodges alive. It is cultural protocol to provide this acknowledgement as an understanding of humility and reverence for their place in history, in education, and in this study. They have left enough by the trail for others to pick up ways to help all of the children of our schools realize that Indigenous people have a purpose for being a significant part of humanity. I also need to acknowledge those who have supported and worked at integrating Aboriginal perspectives, knowledge, and practices as part of their work. To the scholars and leaders

who have gone before me, I give thanks. Your footprints have supported the work of this study.

We, the new people, are emerging in a place Stonechild (2006) called the *New Buffalo*: the university setting. It is like a new beginning to study with one another and again learn from each other. It is as if this is a new venture due to the causality of colonial interference and interruption, but all of the stories and teachings shared by the Elders remind us of times when visitors from other lands came and went back to their home places. In my mind this is the way it was supposed to be, from the beginning of our relationship with the New Comers to our lands. Irrespective of the way we have arrived at this time in Canada, the following footprints have paved the way for this particular learning about one another to continue.

The Indigenous Learning Lodges in Step 1 have provided a variety of traditional Indigenous teaching practices, which made it possible for me to bring such practices, in particular the STITP, to the university setting. At this time, I would also like to acknowledge the various Indigenous scholars, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, mentors, and teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and all of allies who have made similar attempts to bring Indigenous ways to the academe and who have left their footprints in the halls and classrooms of university settings.

In order for the STITP to move into this academic classroom, the doorway needed to be opened. As stated earlier in the body of this thesis, I was fortunate to come across a model that closely resembled the same principles found in the traditional Indigenous teaching lodge. To this end, circular seating arrangements, development of mutual

respect, relationship of facilitator and learner regarded as critical, and self-directedness all lent to the smooth transition of the STITP into the post-secondary setting.

The six components and seven principles of andragogy identified earlier in this work (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1980) were so similar in philosophy and familiar to the way the Indigenous lodges creates the climate for learning, which lent to my encouragement for using the STITP in the Summer Institutes. The fact that these pieces of andragogy were reflective of an academic theory and close to the ways of the lodge opened the doorway for the entrance of a model of Indigenous knowledge and practice to the academic classroom. The second key facet was that over the years of the Institute were the four themes from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers. Included in the development of the model are four themes, which emerged from the Elder/Knowledge Keepers observations and sharing and which are critical components to the model presented as *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model*. These will be discussed in relation to their importance in moving knowledge through learning circles.

Connections of Original Research Questions to:

The Literature

There were five major areas, from the literature review, that were reinforced during the reflections from both the Sharing Circles and the individual interviews. When the political leaders, educators, Chiefs provided direction from the 1950's to present day the quality of education received by their children has remained of utmost importance. The fact that most participants both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal have recognized that Aboriginal education is good educational practice and ought to be on par with many

contemporary mainstream strategies reinforces that previous leaders' priorities were visionary and transcended to this future. Cultural knowledge transmission and Indigenous practise means different things to different communities around the province, and it has become a focus for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who find themselves allied in the Aboriginal education endeavours today. They reinforce the aspirations of the leaders to support and work together across jurisdictions, nationhood over both national and international boundaries.

Even though control and active participation in decision-making had begun during the time in which the documents of the literature review were being written, various participants in the institute have described their own vision and involvement in leadership activities and development of control possible within their individual jurisdictions. Though the levels of involvement have increased over the decades there certainly is still a need for continued efforts to deal with outdated colonial legislation, racist attitudes and behaviour, assumed privilege and racialization.

While the institute participants have described the feeling of pride in their endeavours, they have also described gaps and lack of knowledge as an enemy to all children, educators, parents and communities. The one most outstanding recognition was that "not knowing they don't know" had a powerful impact on the participants once their minds, bodies, spirits and emotions were opened by acquiring what knowledge and practise that has be left by the trail. I have come to treasure the moments in the institutes for revealing the continued need to engage teachers in professional development. Post-secondary both pre and post teaching or as learners in the endeavour I have had rich experiences observing what the Elders/Knowledge Keepers before me knew when they

transmitted the knowledge to me and others like me. After 12 years of the institute, I have realized that as we pass this knowledge on to those who affect children in schools we are creating a basic version of *Keepers of Indigenous Knowledge* who can work towards lighting the “Eighth and Final Fire of eternal peace and happiness”. I have watched and heard from participants crossing national and international areas to make space for Aboriginal education. They related stories of moving knowledge and practice inter-generationally to influence their family practices in Indigenous ways. They shared about the using their tools of the institute to seek their own visions and family history. Finally, they encouraged and strove for support in alliance development between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students using inclusivity, integrity, humility, honour, courage, and honesty in passing on their truth realizing its gift and the boundary of that truth.

The Data and:

Question 1: To what extent did the STITP have an effect on participants’ professional identity and confidence as an educator of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children?

Question 2: To what extent did the STITP have an effect on the way participants teach and feel in their classrooms, schools, and their personal life?

All participants indicated their realization that Aboriginal education must engage all Canadian students, Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, newcomer, and those born here. They described ways of how the STITP and topics in Aboriginal education contributed to an increased awareness of the histories, worldviews, lifestyles and contemporary issues faced by Aboriginal people and their communities. The acquisitions of Indigenous knowledges provided in the institutes related to practices and lifestyle prior to contact, the effects of contact, and issues being dealt with today helped participants realize the

holistic ways of Indigenous educational practices. The knowledges acquired increased confidence to deal with the various topics presented. The participants developed their own personal stories related to the STITP. Many are using what they as the most applicable to the classroom setting such as the Oral Knowledge Transmission; either through their own stories or by inviting guest speakers using proper protocols to do so.

The confidence increases according to participants in the use of the Teaching Circle more so than the Sharing Circle. Certain participants have embraced the use of the Sharing Circle as a tool for community building within the classroom while others are using the Sharing Circle for students to open up and that the Sharing Circle has become a confidence builder for students in their classrooms. A number of participants indicated that the experiential learning aspects of the Summer Institutes leant to their ability in taking risks to use Storytelling as means of passing on knowledge to their students. Storytelling has become one of the most positive, and well-used tools, in classrooms for integrating a variety of subject areas together.

A few of the participants spoke of engaging their students and staff in the use of the Smudge practices and all participants in one way or another indicated the recognitions of the benefits of using the smudge to focus, calm down, prepare themselves to listen, and prepare themselves to get ready to begin the day. Others indicated the difficulty in using the Smudge in their work place due to policy, procedure and the frustrations behind these inhibitors. A few of the participants describe how they are working to change policy, procedure and protocol in the school divisions and schools. One individual indicated that she uses the Smudge in her personal life, but does not feel confident or knowledgeable enough to personally use it in her work place, although she teaches about it and

encourages her students to find someone to help them with smudge on a personal level. For some who did not actively use the Smudge, the ideas behind the Smudge became the important reminder of gratitude and mindfulness.

Most of the participants indicated that the Sweat Lodge and Oracle experiences were the least transferrable to school and classroom activity, but some shared that they do arrange for their students to attend a Sweat Lodge ceremony. Very few of them are using the Oracle, but a couple of the participants have taken various aspects of it to work storying into their classroom.

Participants indicated that some are engaged in a leadership capacity to change policy and procedure related to Aboriginal education and in that capacity now arrange for knowledge transmission and professional development for colleagues in their school divisions. Other hold leadership positions and roles outside of the divisional and school setting where they are able to influence legislation, policy and practise at the provincial government, post-secondary institutions and community levels.

There are those participants who have described the impacts of the institute on their personal life. A few of the participants indicated how the STITP influenced family members, their children, and their parents to engage in knowledge acquisition about Smudge and Sweat Lodge in particular whereby the whole family now attends and does both regularly. The mother having remembering childhood memories now is comfortable in the two ceremonies. Another participant who in non-Aboriginal indicated that it was her participation in courses in Aboriginal education, including the Summer Institute, that has provided the direction her career has taken as an active member in one of the two Aboriginal schools in Winnipeg and as a member of Aboriginal education in general.

Two of the Metis men described how their participation in Aboriginal education has drawn out the confidence and feelings of pride in them to actively assume leadership roles in their schools, and school divisions as administrators. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants alike indicated that Aboriginal education is good education and continue to be positive about their involvement. There is a collective pride in becoming Keepers of Indigenous Knowledge amongst all members of their study, both for their personal growth and their part in the repatriation of Indigenous Knowledge to all children in the education systems. In fact one participant cited the story of the Sharing and Teaching Circles transcending international boundaries all the way to South America and back to Fisher River Cree Nation when she use them as tools in an international project to assist Indigenous teachers in South America to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into their curricula.

Beyond the impact of the STITP on participants' professional and classroom work, many described the impacts on their personal, family, and community life. The movement of knowledge and practice across generations within family, where doorways of memory for parents and family have been opened, were described as unifying and strengthening family ties. Most of the non-Aboriginal participants described connecting to parts of their own cultural upbringing as they engaged in the various STITP, while the Aboriginal participants all described connecting with their own cultural aspects. One aspect spoken of during an interview was that of blood memory: the memory whereby connection is made through a spiritual connection. A number of participants, in particular the Aboriginal participants, commented that their lives have been forever altered in very positive ways.

The themes described from the Sharing Circles also flowed in and out of the stories of the individual voices. Safety, integrity, and protocol were very much considered when discussing the actual STITP, but comments also related to modeling the behaviours of these themes with students, colleagues, parents, and family. Caution to protocol in the form of respect was very much threaded throughout all sharing from the Elders/Knowledge Keepers, Sharing Circles, to the individual interviews. Connecting with students by modeling and authentic engagement was a main thought when considering the classroom atmosphere for inclusion, integration, a positive climate, and a safe atmosphere. According to the participants, the STITP is having life-long lasting impacts.

Therefore, footprints left by the STITP are found in the themes coming through the voices of the student participants, which tell the story of the learning journey in the Summer Institutes. Each footprint made by the STITP, will perhaps lead others interested in making a similar journey to help teachers learn about Aboriginal people. The voices in this thesis have confirmed for me that Indigenous knowledge and practice have a place in an academic classroom: not only in teacher education, but also in all places of learning.

The data collected in these stories and reflections of participants in the summer Institutes on Aboriginal education have and continue to have an impact on policy at the university and provincial strategies. The Summer Institutes were referenced as changing attitudes and shifting paradigms by members of this study, and have encouraged and influenced a number of participants who are actively engaged in roles within university settings and at the provincial governmental levels. These individuals continue to make the necessary risks for changes needed to see our ways as valid in these settings.

Extension of discussion to ministers Council of Canada of Education and the Importance of study to work being considered across Canada

Many scholars, educators and communities are working hard to keep up with each other across this land we call Canada. Initiatives undertaken in each Aboriginal jurisdiction overlap each other, and from my observation, they are positively influencing the way we do Aboriginal education in this country. For me the time is for all of us to work together putting aside our differences by enhancing our similarities as modeled by the Western Northern Canadian Protocol partnership. This reference I make in particular, has made great strides in my opinion to helping all Canadians understand that our way is a valid way for education. Having said this it is imperative that teacher education remain at the top of Aboriginal education lists for future steps in creating opportunities for us to grow our own Indigenous educators and to assist with educating our allies.

Ways and means of education have erupted and some of the very popular, contemporary ways of educating are in fact an extension of Aboriginal education even though mainstream has yet to validate such endeavours as Indigenous in nature. The concepts of land-based education, project-based learning, and site-based education (MFNERC, 2013) are becoming familiar names for some ways of making space in schools and classrooms for students to achieve outcomes in Aboriginal education. If there is space made for these types of education in schools and classrooms, then teacher education will need to make room for such learning by teachers. What is truly interesting about this is that all of the above-mentioned types of education fall within the realm of Aboriginal education.

As part of CMEC's key activity areas Aboriginal Education has been identified to eliminate the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal students. In order to accomplish this, all those who can and must participate in meeting these goals — parents, educators, key stakeholders, and other orders of government will be brought together by Canada's education ministers. They will encourage the federal government to meet its constitutional obligation and work with provinces and territories to provide equality of opportunity for Aboriginal peoples. As well a new Aboriginal education strategy is currently being developed by CMEC which will see ministers continuing their work together on pan-Canadian data collection and research and on teacher training. CMEC will also be making further efforts to facilitate information sharing among key Aboriginal education stakeholders and will continue to engage with the federal government on Aboriginal education issues.

Future Footprints

A Book: Mikiinewak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin – Indigenous Lifelong Learning Model

The *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Life-long Learning Model* is very much in its development stages as a documented model. However, since 1994 I have carried out a form of action research where the aspects of the model have been dreamed about, implemented, honed, and now researched. The overarching framework exists, the components from andragogy and the traditional lodges are clear, the STITP have become the main authenticated practices, key concepts from the Elders and scholars validated the philosophy, and the themes for function have been identified. The eighth footprint for this model is for me to write the next book.

I believe that while this *Mekiniiwak Kayas Itutooskewin Kiskinomakewin: Indigenous Life-Long Learning Model* has its place in the university setting. The work in this thesis simply is a beginning place for others to try, as I have done, to implement

traditional Indigenous teaching practices that work for them. I teach evening courses which run two days week with offerings in Aboriginal education. As I resume teaching in the university setting at the University of Manitoba, I continue to use and hone various aspects and practices of the Summer Institute. I have been pleasantly surprised that the thirst for this way of doing things has increased. There is a deepened level of respect in the students once they realize that the mandatory aspect of the course is secondary to the paradigm shifting and attitude changing that goes on while engaged in the class. I know there is room for future Summer Institutes, and a revelation for me is, to now train others to implement possibilities like the Summer Institute utilizing the STITP, or at least some aspects of it.

Three Articles:

Further to the book there three articles that I consider necessary and would add to the contemporary discussion of Aboriginal education and the work with teachers both pre-service and those in the field. These articles extend the discussion beyond the Summer Institutes and could lend themselves to the creation of possible courses at the post-secondary levels. The first article I would call; *The Sharing Circles and Collective Learning* and this article would focus on the way in which Indigenous moves around the circle and how each member of the circle is influenced, and they in turn influences the knowledge transmission possible. The second article; *The Elders and the Four Themes* would lend itself to the discussion about how Spiral Learning, Learning Relationships, the Emotion of Knowledge Acquisition and Educating for Equity all contribute to the dynamic found within the learning circles where Indigenous knowledge is transmitted. The third article; *The Four Knowledges* will focus on these four sets of knowledge which

evolved out of the work in the Summer Institute. The first set being, Knowledge for the Sake of Life and Living; the second set being Knowledge as a Means of Oppression; the third Knowledge as a Form for Freedom; and the third Knowledge as a Function of Transformation create a circle of movement by which we can help others see the extent to which our sovereignty has been eroded. Understanding these knowledges may at the same time influence some to realize that even though we have been interrupted, influence and diverted, we are still achieving Mino Pimatisiwin and have sovereignty over this land Creator gave to us to be stewards over.

There is still plenty of work to do in many areas of Aboriginal education around decolonized historical accounts, stereotype, racism and bias, and incorporation of Indigenous ways into the systems, but most clearly to me is the work to be done around decreasing the mass of the void or lack of knowledge that still exist amongst Canadians.

I pray that I have done justice to the voices in this work, to the students in our schools, to the Elders who had patience with me, and to my committee who has been extremely humane during this journey. Again, I give thanks to my family and friends who have stood by me and most of all to the Creator for the dreams, aspirations, and spirit helpers sent to encourage this story.

Ekosi, Niiogahbawiik – Woman Who Sits at the Centre of Four Directions

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Appendix A: Glossary

The language and terminology use in this thesis are explained and/or defined formally, as I see the words moving in and out my experiences and/or both.

Aboriginal People	The term Aboriginal is used in the context of the indigenous peoples of a particular country. The term is defined in the Constitution Act of 1982 as referring to all indigenous people in Canada, including Indians, (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit people” (WCP, 2000, p. 131).
Apprenticeship	According to <i>Webster’s Dictionary</i> (1993), an apprentice is “one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers” (p. 57). The skilled workers in the Indigenous perspective would be the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Bundle Carriers, and/or Medicine Keepers. The pedagogy of look, listen, learn, and live (Laramee, 2008a).
Bundle Carrier	Will be a person who has picked up the responsibility for knowledge keeping, knowledge transmission, ceremonial ways and who has committed to carry the tools necessary for healing and the betterment of the people. It is understood that he /she has been taught that the bundle of sacred items that they carry has a life to be cared for as one would look after an infant. Due to the fact that a person who carries such responsibility must walk softly and be gentle in their ways is reason for them to be highly respected in their community (Laramee, 2013).
Capacity Building	The conceptual or vision piece of capacity building I have drawn upon from the Elders’/Knowledge Keepers’ Adult Learning Theory of Andragogy, Paulo Friere’s liberative education perspectives and Linda and Graham Smiths’ Kauppapa Maori view in that the facilitator of learning is only instrumental in providing opportunities for the learner to develop mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally to the point where they have empowered themselves to do the work. When I have done my job as a facilitator the learner have the capacity to make motion with what they have learned (Laramee, 2013)
Ceremony	In Webster’s Dictionary (1993) ceremony is “a formal act or series of acts prescribed by ritual, protocol, or convention” (p. 187). According to Wilson (2008) research is ceremony. The Elders/Knowledge have taught me that as in the formal definition our conventions of work in the lodges, sacred sites, our homes and in our work ceremony is perceived to be of importance for structuring daily life. There are tools we use, reasons we use the tools, and a protocol for good life and living (Laramee, 2003, 2008a).

Cultural Competency	When the learners have sufficient means and confidence to impart the knowledge they have acquired. As their role intensifies they become freer to share what they have learned with others. The facilitator's mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional fitness must be balanced and in a state of wellness. Culturally competent facilitators know when they have sufficient strategies, tools, resources, and qualifications to adequately cover topics that are important to Aboriginal Education (Laramee, 2008a, 2008b).
Cultural Continuity	Cultural continuity is simply that the things one perceives to be their way of living (culture) flow from one generation to the next (Cajete, 2000; Laramee, 2008?).
Ebun	This is an Ojibwe term used as a sign of respect for someone who has passed on (Laramee, 2013).
Elder	Any one person regarded or chosen by an Aboriginal Nation to be the keeper and teacher of its oral tradition and knowledge. Elders, as individuals, are seen to have their own unique strengths and talents (WCP, 2000; p. 131).
Indigenous	Indigenous, according to the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (2006) refers to the descendants of the First Peoples of the land and refers to: identity of a distinct cultural group; attachment to a geographic habitat and ancestral territories; language tied to the land; political and economic institutions; spiritual, social, intellectual and cultural knowledge.
Indigenous Research	The relationship between the seeker and the one who carries the information in Indigenous research is considered to be one of mutual respect. There is a difference between doing Eurocentric Research about Indigenous Knowledge and practice and walking, talking, eating, traveling, learning, watching living with and listen to another person. Indigenous research for me means apprenticing on the land with those who are knowledgeable about how the cosmos works (Laramee, 2013).
In-Searching	I refer to this term when considering the apprenticeship with Elders/Knowledge Keepers as the need to look inside of one's self in order to grapple with the understanding of what knowledge it is you as an individual are seeking and how this new knowledge fits with your old knowledge in the wisdom place inside of you. This wisdom place I speak of is considered to be the place in our being that houses the ancestral knowledges that traveled to the physical realm with us when we were born. Some have spoken of this knowledge as "blood memory", which is knowledge stored in our being to be accessed at the proper time in our personal development and learning journey. The practice of in-searching, unlike researching which facilitates us looking for knowledge outside of our being, is to look inside one's self and connect with this blood memory.

Knowledge Keepers	Keeper of Knowledge is a person designated or acknowledged by other Elders of a cultural community as being knowledgeable about the culture and its perspectives, practices, and products (WCP, 2000; p. 131).
Learning Circle	This circle can be physical and/or metaphoric. The group forms a circle and spends time together for the common purpose of engaging in situations whereby information, new or old, experiences, events, or activities are usually guided by a facilitator. The learning energy moves through each of the members. In this circle, the lines of teacher and learner blur. As each person shares his or her knowledge with the group, they become both the teacher and the learner. This experience is not confined to the time and the space when the group is actually gathered, but transcends beyond, creating an everlasting journey of learning.
Medicine Keepers	Are those individuals who have committed to become knowledgeable of the medicine world. They obligate themselves to keep the knowledge, transmit it when necessary, and help the people learn how to take care of their families in every day with herbal cures.
Midewewin	The Midewewin are an Ojibwe society of people who continue the sacred ways of the Seven Birchbark Scrolls and gather people in the learning lodge to teach these ways and initiate those who take a vow to live by such teachings and laws. They follow the teachings of life and living by seven teachings found within the writings on the scrolls. Only those who understand the language and have been initiated a number of times will be able to teach these Scroll Teachings.
Mino Pimatisiwin	Translated from the Cree language means to live a good life.
Old Ways	The use of the word “Old” in this context usually refers to the time before contact with those who came to visit and stayed to share this land we call Canada. The use of the word “Ways” refers to the beliefs, practices, life styles of the people, and the processes of how things were done. When considering the Old Ways, people who lived here pre-contact had particular ways of doing things, and upon contact, many of these ways were interrupted and interfered with so much so that many of them are no longer practiced because they have either been forgotten or no one has asked those who know to teach them.
Oracle	In this institute, the oracle is a group process consisting of seven layers of activities whereby the group is responsible to create a story that tells of their collective learning journey in the institute. The task is to use as little written information as possible and to use their creative faculties to inform their colleagues of the oracle that comes from being a Butterfly, Unicorn, or No Name.

Spiral Learning	Repetition, consistency, and movement are key features of the concept of spiral learning. The learner is in constant movement in the circle of life, gathering knowledge, developing understanding, seeking wisdom, and using what they learn to help themselves and others. Each time this circle of learning is transcended, the depth and breadth of a person's learning deepens. The circle never ends; hence, learning is life-long.
Traditional	Traditional signifies and describes the teaching practices used prior to contact that were implemented by First Nations as a function of daily life before the colonizers came to this land.
Traditional Knowledge	This kind of knowledge refers to the knowledge of pre-contact life.
The Void	Schools in Canada have failed to teach about Aboriginal Peoples, their values and beliefs, governance and social structures, laws which govern life, languages, histories, protocols, pedagogies, teachings, etc. Lack of knowledge about Aboriginal people has created a large vacuum or hole in the fabric of Canadian life. In this thesis and in my work, I refer to this lack of knowledge as the void. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike live in the void. Lack of knowledge has been a destructive mechanism to the relationships between Canadians and Aboriginal people. Not knowing about each other fosters negative perceptions to grow and fester into stereotypes, biases, isms, and misconceptions, which are never healthy and inhibit positive relations to occur. Only by sharing knowledge to those that don't have it can we shift paradigms and change attitudes, thus creating more positive understandings about who Aboriginal people are, what they believe, what happened to them, and the need to stop, look, listen, learn, and live a new way of being human on Turtle Island.
Turtle Island	Turtle Island is referred to by many Nations as the land formed to allow life to continue, and in many Creation stories, there are references made to the Turtle who offered to let the creatures of Mother Earth recreate a new world on her/his back after the Great Flood. It is the North American continent that is referred to when speaking of this recreation: A small muskrat in the Ojibwe story who gave his life to swim through the depths of the flood waters to find a handful of earth in which there was a twig with a green leaf budding from it.

Appendix B: Information Sheet for Elders/Knowledge Keepers

Oral Knowledge Transmission

The old people have told us that we have the best tool for learning and this tool takes the form of our mind, body, and spirit. The relationship we have with the natural order will ensure that we retain the information needed to guide us on our life's journey. To this end they do not allow recording devices of any kind in the lodges or ceremonies. The process required in this type of pedagogy is for the learners to believe in themselves to receive from the experience the necessary information, tools and skills for living. Trusting in one's self as a learner is what is required. The goal is to encourage the individual to listen with all parts of your being. My purpose when I forbid notes to be taken during the class sessions is to help the participants understand the value of this traditional type of pedagogy and its value in their own personal learning processes. They are asked to do a journal reflection each evening to identify what they learned, what was important to them from that learning and how they might use it in their life and/or work.

The Teaching Circle

During this time the facilitator will use stories, symbols, visuals, humour and/or artefacts to share information that has been passed from one generation to the other. The main transmission of knowledge during this type of circle is oral. This circle may be topical or may respond to questions asked, suggestions made or needs of the learning group. Participants will be given an opportunity for sharing their insights to the information following the knowledge transmission. This part of the teaching circle is facilitated in the traditional cyclical process always sharing from left to the right. During part of the circle the lines of teacher and learner disappear and each member of the circle becomes both as they share their insights.

The Sharing Circle

The Sharing Circle is facilitated in the traditional cyclical process always sharing from left to the right and is usually held each morning unless time or need does not permit. The goal for this activity is to help the participants get to know each other on a personal level differently than can happen in a linear, row upon row seating arrangement. As adult learners there it is rare that one gets to know their classmates as a collective. In the traditional philosophy it is imperative that "teaching and learning is facilitated as an act of love". During this process participants through their life stories in family, their work and their beliefs become disseminators of knowledge, which contributes to the overall learning processes in the institute.

The Oracle Development as Group Process

This exercise has seven layers of group work and the groups are formed by the facilitator rendering a traditional song and during this time the group is to visualize which of the three or four symbols with which they most identify. Through seven sessions they must

develop a collective story, which includes their own personal learning during the institute. Quite quickly the bonds of a familial structure form and the purpose for this experience becomes apparent. The group will identify themselves from here on as their symbol and the “Butterfly”, “Unicorn”, “No Name” or “Eagle” becomes a bonding symbol. As a facilitator of Indigenous Knowledge this exercise serves to help make the clan structure, kinship models in the traditional organizational structures a real experience for the participants and they come to have some idea of the roles and responsibilities of such structures.

Storytelling

The old ones have said in many ways not to talk about what one does not know. To this end each helper in the institute have used personal, lodge and ceremony stories to transmit knowledge and explain how they understand and perceive what has been given to them. Participants are given opportunities through journal reflections, sharing circle and the oracle development to work with stories. During the institute the goal is to help participants realize how important stories are in the oral transmission of knowledge and how these stories help make the learning relevant. The stories connect the people to the teachings.

Basic Ceremony – The Smudge Cleansing Practice

Elders have made it clear that when we work with people that traditional Aboriginal practices are demystified and explained as very concrete and practical strategies for life, learning and living. During the institute the participants are given the rationale for the practice of this most basic ceremony and are encouraged to become helpers in the process during the sessions. The facilitator helps participants to realize that all people practice this rationale but do it in other ways. It is explained that this basic ceremony is the way the Aboriginal people of this territory choose to smudge or “dust themselves off”. The various ways in which people smudge to cleanse their minds, bodies and spirits become strategies to help learners focus on their work.

Traditional Experiential Learning Opportunities–the Sweat Lodge Experience

A journey to one or both of these traditional ceremonial places transpires during the institute and the purpose is to give people the first- hand experience with traditional indigenous learning and cleansing places. These experiences give the participants actual memories and hopefully break the enigma of such learning places. They now have first-hand experiences to talk about with child and youth.

is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to contact Myra Laramée at [phone #] or email at [email address] . Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Description of Purpose:

There is general agreement among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike that schools are not yet meeting the needs of Aboriginal children by almost any educational indicator one wishes to use. In order to address this issue, teacher education needs to consider the following:

- That as educators try to change their practices to respond better to the needs of Aboriginal students there is much uncertainty as how best to respond – what constitutes “Aboriginal Education”?.
- Part of that discussion involves the question “is Aboriginal education only for Aboriginal students”; should it include all Canadian students?
- We need Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices that can be effectively integrated into teacher preparation that helps educators see their roles in Aboriginal education.

Between 1993 and 2007 the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba hosted an annual Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education that was built around the use of seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices. This study seeks to examine the impact of these teaching practices and will specifically address the following research questions:

- *What were the perceptions of selected participants’ experiences with the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) as facilitated in the summer institute they attended?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their personal life and/or worldview?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their relationships?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their professional identity as an educator of Canadian children?*

I believe that the interview held with you previously has strong merit and the inclusion in my thesis is an important extension of the integrity for the use of such teaching practices in teacher education. I am deeply honoured that you are consenting to allow me to include the data from the One-on-One interview and that your feedback will be kept anonymous and confidential. I will maintain the same pseudonyms which identified you in the previous study. Your data will be integrated with feedback from the data collected from the participants in the Sharing Circle and the One-on-One interview in this current study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to let me use the data collected from you. *Because the Sharing Circle is a group activity your identity and the identity of all other participants will be known to all of the participants. However, in signing the Letter of Consent you, and all other participants, will promise not to divulge who participated in the Sharing Circle and to keep confidential all that is said at the Sharing Circle". This promise will be required of everyone present at each Sharing Circle, including Elders and witnesses.*

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. You can call Myra Laramée at [phone #] at any time.

When the study is completed, data will be kept in a locked cabinet three years, after which it will be shredded as confidential documents and destroyed. A summary of the research results will be made available to you. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Boards(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality management/Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact me or the Human Ethics Secretariat at [phone #].

Elders'/Knowledge Keepers'

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: Poster Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

Announcement of a Research Study
by
University of Manitoba PhD Candidate
Myra Laramee

Invitation for Participation in a
A Research Study by Myra Laramee
as part of her PHD Thesis called:

**Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love:
An examination of the impact of seven traditional
Indigenous teaching practices in teacher education and
on teachers' classroom practices**

To
Students Who
Participated in one of the Summer Institutes
During the Years 1994 - 2007

Summer Institutes in Aboriginal Education

116: 521 Recent Developments in Education

63: 538 Recent Developments in Curriculum

Note: Please feel free to share this advertisement with any other participants who you know of.

Contact Information for Myra Laramee:

email: [email address]

phone: [phone #] (home)

(call collect in evenings after 5:00 pm)

Appendix E: Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study

Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love: An examination of the impact of seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices in teacher education and teachers' practices

Researcher: Myra L. Laramée
Letter of Invitation to participate in the Study

Date:

Dear _____,

As you may know I am now a PhD Candidate and I am conducting a research study on the Summer Institutes in Aboriginal education offered by the University of Manitoba between 1993 and 2007. I am inviting you to participate in this study. I have limited this research project to include up to forty participants from the Summer Institutes in Aboriginal Education. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may opt out at any point.

Your participation in this study will involve either one or two data collection processes. One will involve you participating in one of two Sharing Circles of up to 15 participants that will be audio-taped. I will be using a random selection of the participants for this study to manage my numbers. If you are selected to participate in a Sharing Circle there will be a possibility that you may also be invited to participate in a subsequent One-on-One interview.

The Sharing Circle will take up to three hours and will be held in a place that is comfortable to those participating. The One-on-One interview will take up to two hours and will be held at a place chosen by you. Both the Sharing Circle and the One-on-One interview will be audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. You will be requested to sign an Informed Consent Letter at the time of Sharing Circle. Because the Sharing Circle is a group activity the individual identity will be known to all of the other participants in signing the Letter of Informed Consent the individual and all other participants will promise not to divulge to anyone the identity of who participated in the Sharing Circle and to keep confidential all that is said at the Sharing Circle. This promise will be required of everyone present at each Sharing Circle and through signing of the Letter of Consent confidentiality is requested. Due to the fact the fact that I have limited contact information I am also asking if you know of any students who took the Summer Institute to let them know I am conducting this research by forwarding to them the attached advertisement for the research.

You may respond to this letter of invitation by phoning me at [phone #] (call collect in evenings after 5:00 pm) or by e-mail [email address].

I look forward to your inclusion and participation in this very important documentation of the work in Indigenous/Aboriginal education.

Respectfully,
Myra L. Laramée

Appendix F: Letter of Informed Consent

Research Project Title: *Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love:
An examination of the impact of seven traditional
Indigenous teaching practices in teacher education and in
teachers' classroom practice*

Researcher: Myra Laramee
 Doctoral Candidate
 Faculty of Graduate Studies
 Phone: 783-2450 (home)
 594-1290 ext. 2020 (work)
 Email: myral@mfnerc.com

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Dear _____,

I thank you _____, for participating in this case study. As indicated in the Letter of Confirmation you have the opportunity to voluntarily submit your name to be included in the selection for participation in a One-on-One interview. Both the Sharing Circle and/or interview will be audio-taped. Sharing Circles will take up to three hours to ensure and encourage all to have the opportunity to share. If you were selected for the interview it should take no longer than two hours and will be held in a designated site of which you will feel most comfortable.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of selected participants in Summer Institutes in Aboriginal Education and their involvement in Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices on their identity as an educator of Canadian children.

Do the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices taught in the Summer Institute develop teacher capacity and cultural competency related to Aboriginal education?

Specifically this study will address the following questions:

- Did the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices have an effect on participants' professional identity and confidence as an educator of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children? If so, in what ways?
- Did the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching practices have an effect on the way participants teach and feel in their classrooms, schools, and personal life? If so, how?

Between 1993 and 2007 the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba hosted an annual Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education that was built around the use of seven traditional Indigenous teaching practices. This study seeks to examine the impact of these teaching practices and will specifically address the following research questions:

- *What were the perceptions of selected participants' experiences with the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) as facilitated in the summer institute they attended?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their personal life and/or worldview? If so explain and/or describe in what ways. If not would you explain?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their relationships? If so explain and/or describe in what ways. If not would you explain?*
- *Do the participants perceive that the Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices (STITP) have an effect on their professional identity as an educator of Canadian children? If so explain and/or describe in what ways. If not would you explain?*

This thesis is a qualitative research study. The data collection processes will involve information from the three following sources; **1) Sharing Circles, 2) One-on-One interviews and 3) data collected as part of the research study called *Elders' Reflections on the Use of Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Teaching Tools and Practice in Teacher Education* (2008).** As you know you have been invited to participate by the researcher through a letter of invitation. A random selection was conducted following the responses from the invitation process.

You have now received your Letter of Confirmation to participate and at this time, I am asking you to sign this Letter of Informed Consent as an indication of your voluntary willingness to participate. The Informed Consent is a protocol of conducting research. As participants in this study your identities with regard to the individual interviews will be kept anonymous by a pseudonym and/or a number code. Both the Sharing Circles and the One-on-One Interviews will be tape recorded and the researcher will take notes. All data collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher and the pseudonyms and/or numbers which code the identity of the participants will be kept in a separated locked storage unit separate from the data. The data (audio-tapes, researcher's notes and transcriptions) will be kept for a period of 3 years, November 2014 after which time the audio-tapes will be erased and the transcriptions will be shredded.

The risk for you as a participant in this study is minimal to none. However, because the Sharing Circle is a group activity your identity and the identity of all other participants will be known to all of the participants and in signing the Letter of Consent you, and all other participants, will promise not to divulge who participated in the Sharing Circle and to keep confidential all that is said at the Sharing Circle. This promise will be required of everyone present at each Sharing Circle.

There are no emotional or physical safety issues to be concerned with and each participant is aware that you are voluntary members of this research project and you may withdraw at any time during the research activity. If you withdraw after participating in a Sharing Circle all of your comments will be deleted from the transcript of the Sharing Circle and none of your comments will be used in any of my research. The study is not an evaluation of your performance. This study is a respectful reflection of a how you made meaning of your experiences in the Summer Institute you attended.

Any information gathered will be available to you at any time during the study. You will be asked to voluntarily engage in a member check (described below) for your particular transcriptions or you may choose to opt out of this member check. The researcher's Advisory Committee will review data initially and upon the successful defence of this thesis; it is the hope of the researcher to have the final paper published. The only people who will have access to the tapes and/or transcripts would be (i) myself, (ii) a transcriber, (if I use one), and (iii) my thesis examining committee (Drs. Young, Fitznor, Halas, and Bracken, along with an external examiner yet to be named). When not being used the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and will be destroyed no later than December 2014.

As previously stated, in a previous class assignment, I interviewed three Elder's/Knowledge Keepers in a case study called *Elders' Reflections on the Use of Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Teaching Tools and Practice in Teacher Education (2008)*. I will ask permission from them to use the data in this study. I will seek permission from them via a consent form current to the university ethics review process to allow their data to be included in a meaningful way in this research.

Since you have the opportunity to be informed and provided with feedback during and after the implementation of this study deception should not be a factor for consideration in this study.

The final successfully completed thesis will be provided to you. At any time during the study you are encouraged to contact me to address comments or questions you may have about the work in this study.

There will no remuneration or compensation for you as a participant. A one-page report will be provided to you as a participant for your records.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. You can call Myra Laramée at [phone #] at any time.

When the study is completed, data will be kept in a locked cabinet three years, after

which it will be shredded as confidential documents and destroyed. A summary of the research results will be made available to you upon your request. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Boards(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality management/Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact me or the Human Ethics Secretariat at [phone #].

At this time I will require a signature for the following:

I promise not to divulge the identity of other participants in this Sharing Circle and to treat as confidential all discussions that take place during this Sharing Circle

(signature)

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Ethics Research Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at [phone #], or e-mail [email address]. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's signature for Sharing Circle

Date

Participant's signature for One-on-One Interview

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix G: Components of Various Summer Institutes on Aboriginal Education

1. Components of various Summer Institutes

University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Summer Institute
116: 521 Recent Developments in Education
63: 538 Recent Developments in Curriculum

ABOUT THE SUMMER INSTITUTE

The Summer Institute on Aboriginal Education is designed for educators who want to explore learning and teaching as process of life and living from an Aboriginal world view. Teaching approaches, educational / curriculum development opportunities, cultural teachings and Aboriginal perspectives will be included as part of the experience.

The Summer Institute in Aboriginal Education is an intensive all day, (8:30 am – 4:00 pm) three week journey/experience which will provide an immersion into learning from an Aboriginal perspective. Through personal experience and guidance from local Aboriginal traditional teachers, educators and specialists on Aboriginal education participants will examine developments and issues in the field of teaching and learning. Participants will have opportunity to experience traditional ceremonies outside the urban setting.

Name of Institute: (e.g. Miniigowinan): A Celebration of Differences

Summer Term (Year)	Coordinator/Instructor:	Myra Laramee
Dates	Site:	Address:
Phone:	Email:	

Students are requested to register for both courses. Office hours will be held between 3:30 and 4:30 each day during the length of the course.

2. Course Outline:

Outcomes: The students will participate in a variety of activities with the following Objectives in mind:

1. Examine the multiplicity of the Aboriginal community, in areas of education, culture and contemporary lifestyle.
2. Review historical, present day and future looking perspectives from an Aboriginal view point with regard to languages, traditions, education, and lifestyles.
3. Enable participants to become familiar with resources in the Aboriginal community, both human and material.
4. Participate in various ceremonies and activities that are culturally-based.
5. Develop an oracle for presentation on the traditions, languages, education and lifestyles, histories, issues, knowledges from their involvement individually and collectively in the institute.

Opening Circle: Each day we will be opening the working times with a smudge, a prayer and a song.

Working Times: There will be three working slots:

1. Oral knowledge transmission (lecture/seminar)
2. Group work – sharing circle style
3. Cultural teachings – teaching circle style

3. The Summer Institute will consist of the following segments.

THE PAST, THE PRESENT, THE FUTURE:

Each week will have three common themes: traditional Aboriginal teachings, curriculum design and educational issues. Students will participate in sharing circles as part of the whole group, both as a team member and an individual. The teams will be guided by an experienced team leader whose main purpose will be to help the participants through their group process. Various community and educational leaders as well as traditional teachers will be asked to share their gifts with members of the Institute.

CIRCLES:

The circle, based on Aboriginal teachings is a useful process to create a safe environment for discussion. Circles allow everyone to be heard, teach respect for everyone's point of view and helps build consensus as each member hears the views of others. All participants will have an opportunity to be involved in the sharing circle process. The circle can be utilized in a variety of ways. The circle can help transform vision into practice and the various applications of the Circle Methodology will be explored. The concept of the circle is a practical teaching and learning tool.

THE ORACLE:

The participants will work through a process of team development guided by a team leader. The outcome will be a storytelling venture called the Oracle. The Oracle experience must demonstrate the participants' collective and individual synthesis, analysis and knowledge acquired during the course as related to the histories, cultures and contemporary lifestyles of Aboriginal people.

2001 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON ABORIGINAL EDUCATION JULY 3 - 25				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Canada Day Holiday	3 Introduction Circle <i>Program Overview</i> <i>Setting the Direction</i>	4 Traditional Concepts And Philosophy <i>The Medicine Wheel</i>	5 Aboriginal Education Historical Perspective <i>Clan Teaching</i> <i>Tipi Teaching</i>	6 Star Power <i>Symbolism and Culture</i>
9 Wolf Teaching Teulon	10 Pipe Teaching <i>Making Choices</i> Group Work Session 1	11 Aboriginal Education <i>Native Education Directorate</i> Group Work Session 2	12 The Four Directions <i>Educational Change</i> <i>A Process</i> Group Work Session 3	13 Sweat Lodge Teaching Group Work Session 4
16 Sweat Lodge Teulon	17 Curriculum Development <i>Native Studies</i> Group Work Session 5	18 Curriculum Development <i>Integration</i> Group Work Session 6	19 Curriculum Development <i>Assessment</i> Group Work Session 7	20 Group Work Closure Oracle Finalization
23 <i>Oracle Presentations</i>	24 <i>Feast and Giveaway</i>	25 Research Study Time		

Schedule for 2004 Summer Institute

Week 1: July 2-5

The focus of this week will be on the past of Aboriginal people and their experiences.

July 2	Introductory activities
July 3	History, Colonialism/Star Power
July 4	Cultural Teachings of the Sweat Lodge
July 5	Sweat Lodge

Students will be expected to conference with the team to determine the direction of their oracle seminar. The seven stages will be followed by the group.

Week 2: July 8-12

The focus for this week will be on the present day situations of the Aboriginal people and the experiences of today.

July 8	Contemporary Issues: Personal Frame of Reference
July 9	Curriculum
July 10	Self Government
July 11	Ancestral Languages
July 12	Sweat Lodge

Students will be expected to conference with the team to determine creation the of their oracle seminar. The seven stages will be followed by the group.

Week 3: July 15-19

The focus for this week will be on the future and the healing possibilities of Aboriginal peoples, their communities and the children. The healing work must include all nations, as well as Mother Earth.

July 15	Knowledge as a Healing Tool
July 16	Aboriginal Educations and the Blue Print
July 17	Youth/Elder Perspectives
July 18	Seminar Presentations
July 19	Feast and Give Away

Students will be expected to conference with the team to determine presentation of their oracle seminar. The seven stages will be followed by the group.

2007 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON ABORIGINAL EDUCATION				
JULY 3 -25 8:30 – 12:45				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Canada Day	3 Introduction Circle <i>Program Overview and Schedule</i>	4 The Prophecy <i>Aboriginal Education</i> <i>The Void</i> <i>What it is?</i> <i>What it isn't.</i>	5 The Circle <i>Powers of the Circle</i> <i>Indian Prayer</i> <i>Seven Teachings</i>	6 Residential School <i>Gladys Cook Story</i>
9 Development <i>Self-Reliant Children</i> <i>Stages of Relationship</i> <i>Stages of Learning</i>	10 Aboriginal Education <i>Provincial</i> <i>Helen Robinson</i> <i>Settee</i> Group Work Session 1	11 Aboriginal Education <i>Contemporary Perspective</i> <i>Niji Mahkwa School</i> <i>Inner City Principles</i> <i>WCP Adaption</i> Group Work Session 2	12 Aboriginal Education <i>Ceremonies</i> <i>Questions</i> <i>Ponderings</i> <i>Protocols</i> Group Work Session 3	13 Seven Teachings Exercise <i>Sweat Lodge Teaching</i>
16 Sweat Lodge Experience	17 Aboriginal Education <i>Aboriginal Perspectives</i> <i>Garry Robson</i> Group Work Session 4	18 Aboriginal Education <i>Aboriginal Perspectives</i> <i>Garry Robson</i> Group Work Session 5	19 Aboriginal Education <i>Niji Mahkwa School</i> <i>Four Directions</i> Group Work Session 6	20 School Based Model <i>Curriculum Integrating Perspectives</i> Group Work Session 7
23 Oracle Presentations	24 Feast and Giveaway	25 All Assignments Due		

Oracle Assignment Instructions

Step 1: Oracle Development - Making Choices

The facilitator introduced the idea of symbols and described the significance of the 3-4 symbols utilized for this process of the oracle development. The facilitator placed each of the symbols at the centre of the circle. During the singing of a traditional song, the participants attempted to visualize the symbol that held the most meaning for them. They moved from their seat in the circle and placed their name on one of the 3-4 signup sheets in a place outside of the room. This process identified the group in which they would begin their oracle development.

Activity: The group gathered in a sharing circle to share why they choose this symbol. They then brainstormed what meaning this symbol held for them as an individual.

Step 2: Oracle Development - I Believe

Activity: The group gathered in a sharing circle and brainstormed the meanings, values, characteristics and traits inherent in the symbol with which they had chosen to work. They also brainstormed the strengths and weaknesses of their symbol.

Step 3: Oracle Development – Internalization

Activity: The group held Sharing circle for a personal reflection as to what the characteristics and traits were inherent in their symbol and were part of them as an individual. The second part of this step was to give voice to group strengths and identify how the meaning of the group symbol could be a source of strength in the development of the group's story about the journey in this class. What were those things that really stood out in the symbol and were part of the collective self of their group?

Step 4: Oracle Development - Important teachings and Contemporary Issues

Activity: The group brainstormed all the important teachings from the course that were important to group members and that the group wanted to use in the development of the oracle. In this step, it was important to identify, as many of the issues that the group felt were important to deal with in learning environments in contemporary educational settings. The second part of this exercise was to select the main issues that the group felt they would like to tackle in their oracle. These issues might not have been all that existed but at the very least, they were the ones that the group decided to combine with the important teachings they identified and addressed in their skit.

Activity: The group work here was to tie all of the pieces the group identified and they created a story that was to be demonstrated in skit/play format. Expression of their creativity was important, and encouraged. Everyone had a part to play and even the silent background participants were considered important to the success of the story they told.

The ultimate goal was to have their audience see how this all tied to the classroom and the impact the story had on imparting the importance of doing something about the issues with all learners - children, youth and adults.

Step 6: Oracle Development - Explore Options for Oracle

Activity: The group worked together to identify what tools they needed, the props necessary to implement the oracle, who was going to do what and how they answered the questions and what mediums they needed to do the work.

Step 7: Oracle Presentation - Storytelling

Activity: The oracle could be up to 30 minutes in length and everyone needed to have some role in its creation, design and implementation. There was 15 minutes for a debriefing session at the end of each oracle for group and audience feedback. (Myra Laramee, 2003)