

“How Do We Look?”: Discourses of Truth and Reconciliation
in Select Manitoba School Divisions

by
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Abstract

Since the publication of the TRC’s Calls to Action, Manitoba school divisions must publish yearly Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) as an accountability measure to report on progress toward reconciliation. Divisions, as organizational entities, use particular language in their documents to align with the goals of Truth and Reconciliation in order to maintain their reputation and relationships with education stakeholders. This study has one major research question: What discourses of Truth and Reconciliation appear to be constructed by Manitoba school divisions? Concepts, perspectives and methodologies from Indigenous scholarship, including ethical relationality and Indigenous Métissage, inform a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of CIPs and CRs from school divisions from each of the five Treaty territories in Manitoba. Organizational Impression Management (OIM) is used as a theory to understand the motives of each division and how they wish to be perceived by the public. Themes emerging from the data include the prevalence of “achievement gap” discourse, individual vs. collective responsibility for facilitating education for reconciliation, and presenting reconciliation as foundational vs. additive in divisional priorities. Recommendations for practice include consistency in terminology, and a pedagogical and linguistic shift away from “achievement gaps” to “education debts.”

Keywords: Truth and Reconciliation, Critical Discourse Analysis, Organizational Impression Management, Indigenous Métissage, Indigenous education, education for reconciliation.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all my relations, particularly those who encouraged me at the start of this journey and continue to guide me in spirit at the end; Victory Jones, Merv Farrow, Joan Farrow, Irene Harder, Frank Edwards, and Ted Kozak.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and context

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools continues to inform the complex relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada¹. Indigenous children were forcibly confined to institutions based on their Indigenous identity and through official federal legislation that aimed to strip them of their connection to family, culture, language, and identity. The impact of the “schools”² has been profound for survivors, and their families and communities. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) is a landmark legal agreement in Canada that was negotiated “in response to over twelve thousand individual abuse claims and several class-action lawsuits filed on behalf of approximately seventy thousand former [Indian Residential School] students” against the government and religious organizations responsible for the schools (Regan, 2010, p. 7). The IRSSA was finalized in 2006 and includes five elements to address the horrific legacy of Residential Schools including compensation and healing supports for survivors, an assessment process for claims of abuse, memorials for the victims, and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC³) (Government of Canada, 2021).

In June of 2009 Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched in an effort to undertake a truth-telling and reconciliation process. The commission was charged with the complex and difficult work of gathering testimony from residential school survivors, former school staff and administrators, and government and church officials in order to create a report

¹ For a more detailed account of terms used in this document please see Appendix A.

² Recently “school(s)” has been placed in quotations by some Indigenous writers in order to recognize that these institutions were sites of assimilation and genocide, not places of learning. No schools should require graveyards (Yerxa, 2021).

³ A list of acronyms used in this study can be found in Appendix B.

on the truth of Indian Residential Schools and make recommendations to the government (Regan, 2010). The work of the commission was carried out over five years⁴. The TRC hosted seven national events to gather statements from Indian Residential School survivors in the ensuing years, culminating in the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015). The final report was released in 2015 with a heavy focus on education and on the responsibility of educational institutions to engage with and act upon each of the TRC directives.

The implications of the work of the TRC are particularly important within the context of the province of Manitoba in which 17% of the population identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in 2016, the highest percentage across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). However, the political will for renewed relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within the province has been seemingly at odds with the attitudes and beliefs of some Manitobans. The same year that the TRC's Calls to Action were released, *Maclean's* magazine published an article declaring Winnipeg, Manitoba the most racist city in Canada (Macdonald, 2015). The article was met with criticism from those who felt that it unfairly characterized the city including then Opposition Leader Brian Pallister, and the general public including a Winnipeg high school teacher who was placed on leave after posting anti-Indigenous racist comments his social media feed, and still others who questioned the criteria used to determine what made the city more racist than others in Canada as if the issue at hand was the scientific method used by the author (Dorries, 2019).

One survey, conducted in March 2020 by the Association for Canadian Studies in conjunction with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), found that Manitoban and

Saskatchewan respondents had the most negative views of Indigenous peoples compared to other provinces (p. 8). Beyond perceptions of racism, or outright racism, other major obstacles in reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships are apathy, misinformation, and ignorance. A 2021 CRRF and Assembly of First Nations survey reveals that “only 34% of Canadians say they are very or quite familiar with the residential school system,” and when asked if Indian Residential Schools were framed positively or negatively during their time in schools, 41% said they “can’t recall” or “didn’t learn about it” (2021, p. 11, p. 19).

Survey data on the perceptions of Manitobans scratches the surface of the deeper roots of anti-Indigenous racism in Manitoba. The province has an ongoing history of settler-colonialism in which colonizing forces continue to attempt to replace existing Indigenous societies with settler colonial societies. This is achieved through the systemic marginalization and elimination of Indigenous peoples to the benefit of settlers (Dorries, 2019). One catalyst for marginalization, and the anti-Indigenous views of settler Manitobans, is media coverage that “focuses on the extreme conditions faced by Indigenous people while ignoring historical complexities that explain these circumstance” (Dorries, 2019, p. 30).

In the years since the publication of the TRC’s Calls to Action, stakeholders in education have begun to respond by making formal commitments to Truth and Reconciliation⁵. For example, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) released a statement in 2017, which states that members commit “to create reconciliation opportunities through education” (p. 2). In Manitoba, six universities, three colleges, and the Manitoba School Boards Association signed the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint to “advance Indigenous education and reconciliation” (2015). More recently, in April of 2022, Manitoba Education

⁵ ‘Reconciliation’ is capitalized throughout this document when referring to reconciliation efforts that are directly responsive, or framed as responsive, to the TRC mandates.

released its K-12 Education Action Plan which emphasizes “a deep commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action” (p. 2). Despite these commitments and demonstrations of support for the TRC directives, there is skepticism that political engagement is genuine and not simply performative for the sake of political correctness (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020). Efforts toward Reconciliation place the focus on Indigenous students themselves as the recipients of targeted initiatives, inherently positioning them at a disadvantage or as a deficit that needs rectifying, rather than turning the focus inward to the systems that consciously or unconsciously maintain the hierarchies and power that permeate their institutions and prevent meaningful systemic change (see Chapter 4).

Statement of the problem

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action and previous reports such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) commissioned by federal and provincial governments, as well as policy papers like Indian Control of Indian Education (1972) from the Assembly of First Nations, reinforce the message that racialized inequalities for Indigenous Peoples have existed and continue to exist in this country, and that Canadians have a longstanding responsibility to do something about it. The discourses⁶ around the TRC’s Calls to Action have been inextricably influenced by subjective truths about race relations and treaty history in Canada. The initiatives are repeating patterns that have been observed in engaging Indigenous educational initiatives within mainstream settings, namely that this work is fraught with tensions, resistance, indifference, and anger (Dion, 2007; Regan, 2010; Rice et al., 2020; Tupper, 2011). In certain contexts, Reconciliation seems unachievable, but as Justice Murray

⁶ For the purposes of this study, discourse and language are seen as a means of social construction, “therefore, discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of those processes and structures” (Blackledge, 2012, p. 24).

Sinclair asserts, generations of education “got us into this mess, and education will be what gets us out” (Sinclair, 2016). I take Sinclair’s meaning here to consider the term ‘education’ in two ways; first, ‘education’ as the systematic assimilation of Indigenous children in Indian Residential Schools, and secondly ‘education’ as a broader concept referring to the catalyst for all Canadians to learn the truth about these institutions in order to prevent the perpetuation of harm done to Indigenous Peoples now and in the future. Ideally, efforts to address Truth and Reconciliation should go beyond *what* is taught in schools, and with what terminology, through literal and hidden curriculum, but also critically question *how* students are taught, and by whom. It seeks to dismantle the structures responsible for systemically disenfranchising and discriminating against Indigenous Peoples.

A recent study by Wotherspoon and Milne, 2020, looked at education frameworks across Canada to assess what they reveal about Indigenous and settler relations in education contexts. The need for transformative change in education has been touted as a national priority, particularly in light of the well documented disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020). The study found that policy frameworks have a “tremendous variation in the depth and intensity” of reconciliatory efforts across the country which “raises questions about whether commitments to reconciliation can be realized in many contexts” (p. 16). The study suggests that education frameworks for Reconciliation are rhetorical and performative, consisting of “idealized broad statements and wish lists” with very little specificity in terms of concrete actionable tasks (p. 16). For example, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning’s Indigenous Education Policy Framework, *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With* (2022), includes “strategies and actions” like “respect and listen to students,” “employ a holistic approach to supporting students” and “value and celebrate

differences” (p. 9). While these strategies and actions are admirable, it is unclear from the document how specifically school divisions are meant to make them happen. In fact, at present there is no clear picture of what Truth and Reconciliation discourses look like in site-specific contexts in each province, or a clear understanding of how the promotion of the TRC’s Calls to Action can be manifested in diverse educational contexts. However, it is clear that school divisions wish to appear actively involved in education for Reconciliation and the improved academic achievement of Indigenous students. Despite the prevalence of Reconciliation rhetoric in the broader context of K-12 education in Manitoba.

At present Manitoba Education has implemented mechanisms to have school divisions tangibly respond to the broader TRC mandate. These mechanisms have included reporting on Indigenous Academic Achievement (IAA) initiatives, professional development, and education for Reconciliation. However, Reconciliation is a complex and multifaceted process, and progress is not easily quantifiable or measurable. In the spirit of transparency and accountability that the TRC calls for, Manitoba school divisions are required to make Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) publicly available each year in an attempt to quantify progress toward Reconciliation. These plans and reports are first completed at the individual school level and then compiled into a single document by school divisions and shared publicly on division websites. While these CIPs and CRs consider the responsibilities of divisions toward Reconciliation, Manitoba Education itself should consider how they are enacting Truth and Reconciliation through the curriculum and policy documents they produce. For example, some of Manitoba Education’s curriculum documents have not been updated since the release of the TRC’s Calls to Action, and do not reflect the province’s stated commitments to Reconciliation efforts. These include *French: Communication and Culture* (2014), *Senior Years Information*

and Communication Technology (2007), *Kindergarten to Grade 8 Mathematics* (2013), *Grade 9 Social Studies: Canada and the Contemporary World* (2007), and *Grade 12 World Geography – A Human Perspective* (1991) among others (Manitoba Education).

CIPs and CRs have no identifiable authors and are presented as official communications from school divisions. The lack of specific authors for these documents is curious, and begs the question, to what degree are they effective measures of progress towards Reconciliation and what mechanisms exist to hold school divisions accountable for these plans? Regardless of the answers to these questions, I believe that the amalgam of information pieced together from school reports and plans can provide insight into the *ideologies* of the *places* from which they are generated. Using Gerring’s (1997) framework of ideology definitions, my understanding of ideology is rooted in the location of language. In other words, ideologies are the values and beliefs of a person or organization embedded in linguistic norms (Gerring, 1997). Drawing from Gieyrn (2000), I use the term *place* to encompass geographic location, the material form of the location, and the meaning and values attributed to the location that are constructed through interpretation, narrative, and perception.

Therefore, this thesis uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) of CIPs and CRs to construct a snapshot of the current discourses and ideologies of Truth and Reconciliation in Manitoba school divisions across all treaty territories. In keeping with the CDA approach outlined in Chapter 3, I use the term discourse interchangeably with *language* and *texts*. These terms differ slightly depending on the underlying theories grounding particular branches of CDA which are further explored in Chapter 2. The goal of CDA, and in turn this study, is to critically analyse social inequalities as they are “expressed, signaled, legitimized” and constructed, transparently or opaquely, through language (Blackledge, 2012, p. 2). CDA views language as a means of social

construction, “therefore, discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of those processes and structures” (p. 24).

Positionality

In this section I share and reflect on the overlapping identities and experiences that inform my role as researcher. Former Senator, and TRC chair, the Honourable Murray Sinclair has often said that the four most important questions to ask oneself are; where do I come from, where am I going, why am I here, and who am I? (Sinclair, 2018). My responses attempt to clarify how I see myself in relation to my research.

Where do I come from?

I was born and raised on traditional lands of the Anishinaabe peoples, in Kenora Ontario, in Treaty 3 territory. My family ancestry traces back to England, Scotland, and Ireland. On my mother’s side, my great grandfather immigrated from England in 1914 and settled in Oshawa, Ontario on the territories of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. In 1923, the same year my grandfather was born, the Mississaugas of the north shore of Lake Ontario and the seven First Nations of the Chippewa of Lake Simcoe entered into the Williams Treaties, the last of the land treaties signed in Canada (Wallace, 2018a). My maternal grandmother immigrated to Oshawa from Reading, England after WWII, and it was there that my mother was born and raised.

On my father’s side, our family history in Canada dates back at least four generations to my great-great-great-grandfather. He was born in York County, New Brunswick in 1788, on the territories of Wolastoqiyik Wamsipekwik/Maliseet and the Mi’kma’ki/Mi’kmaw. In 1725, the Peace and Friendship treaties were signed in the same area (Wallace, 2018b). My paternal

ancestors continue to live in the same area of New Brunswick. My paternal grandmother's family immigrated from Ireland to the U.S.A. in the 1800s. One of my great-great grandfathers was born in 1847 in Baltimore, Maryland, the lands of the Piscataway, Susquehannock, and Nentego. Generations of my family have occupied traditional territories of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, making me inextricably linked to peoples and treaties in a way that I have largely taken for granted or ignored until now.

Looking back, I acknowledge that I had a very charmed and privileged childhood as the youngest of three children in a middle-class white family in the 1980s. My parents both earned multiple undergraduate degrees and worked in education and government. My mother was an elementary school librarian who often lamented the lack of contemporary books written from Indigenous perspectives. My father developed a close relationship with members of Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows) and Wabaseemong (White Dog) First Nations, as a Scouts Canada leader, as a youth probation officer, as the local director of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, and also as a member of a Mercury Disability Board that oversaw the distribution of a large sum of money both First Nations received in 1985 as reparations for the mercury poisoning caused by nearby pulp and paper companies.

During these years, we attended powwows and funerals, camped and fished on One Man Lake, empathized with the many challenges of life on reserve (while always returning to our large comfortable house in town), and collected a great deal of Woodlands style artwork and gifted beadwork. I received an informal education about my place on the land, and the history of Indigenous Peoples who had, and have, always been there, that was often incongruous with what I was taught in school. The disconnect I felt when trying to reconcile disparate discourses of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships was uncomfortable for me and left largely

unchallenged, though I certainly understood that my whiteness and relative wealth set me apart. Formally, I was never taught about the generations of people affected by mercury poisoning. I was never taught about Cecilia Jeffery residential school, mere minutes away from my high school, or the story of Chanie Wenjack. Instead, I was taught about first contact and the brave Europeans who discovered Canada. I witnessed racism towards Indigenous peoples (strangers, friends, and neighbours) in the form of subtle micro-aggressions, blanket stereotypes, and sometimes acts of violence.

As I grew up in that time and place, I felt an internal growing tension between responding to what I knew was true and just and choosing “willful ignorance”; what Paulette Regan defines as a “selective denial of those aspects of our relationship that threaten our privilege and power – the colonial status quo” (2010, p. 35). Lenape and Potawatomi scholar, Susan Dion, calls this assuming a “perfect stranger” position, where I was informed simultaneously by what I knew, what I did not know, and what I refused to know (2007, p. 330). Teme-Augama Anishinabai scholar Sheila Cote-Meek similarly writes about “white amnesia” as “a disease rooted in racism [that] is a common strategy used to ignore the historical and ongoing injustices perpetrated on Indigenous peoples” (2020, p. xiii). Papaschase Cree scholar, Dwayne Donald, writes about “relationship denial” which is foundational to the ways colonial logics are perpetuated (2021, p. 60). Each of these concepts involves the deliberate and intentional choice on the part of white settlers to ignore or forget the continual subjugation of Indigenous peoples and relationality, and I know that I have made this choice before.

Anishinaabe writer, Jesse Wenthe, calls on “white people” to confront their privilege and work toward correcting the systems that have benefited them directly, despite the fact that “it will force [white people] to come face to face with an image of who you are that could cause you

great pain and confusion” (2021, p. 146). I had, and have, the privilege to position myself outside and away from uncomfortable truths and am now choosing to turn toward them.

Where am I going?

In the years since I left Kenora, I became a high school teacher, teaching primarily English literature and Visual Art in private and public schools in Toronto and Winnipeg. In my personal life I got married, took a hiatus from teaching to begin grad school, and became a mother to twins. These experiences have made me more reflective about the choices I make in my career and personal life to address systemic and institutional inequities.

As a student, this has meant learning from Indigenous educators, attending and presenting at conferences on decolonizing pedagogies and Indigenous resurgence, copy editing a collection of essays on Indigenous Perspectives on Education for Well-Being (2016) and researching and reflecting on Indigenous concepts of lifelong learning (Draper, 2016). Professionally, this has meant dedicating myself to doing what I can to address Truth and Reconciliation with my students, in my classroom, with my colleagues, and the broader school community. These actions have included learning from Indigenous peoples and organizations like the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM), advocating for Indigenous students, teaching about the legacy of residential school and colonialism, choosing classroom texts by Indigenous writers, organizing workshops and human libraries for staff and students that celebrate and showcase Indigenous resilience, and understanding that my place as a white settler Canadian is not to claim knowledge or experience that is not mine.

As an educator and researcher, I acknowledge that I can “never fully know the Other; nor should [I] aspire to do so” (Regan, 2010, p. 26). I am grateful for the knowledge that has been, and continues to be, shared with me from Indigenous knowledge keepers, Elders, and scholars.

Through the course of this research, I aim to examine the complex responsibility of enacting Truth and Reconciliation in public education as an educator and Treaty person; not by examining Indigenous peoples as the subject of research, or by contributing to research burnout by seeking answers from Indigenous educators who are often charged with educating non-Indigenous people in the face of resistance and criticism (Cote-Meek, 2014; Dion, 2009; Donald, 2013; St. Denis, 2007). In keeping with the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), my research is designed to focus on settler systems and actors, namely public-school systems and myself as a product of and participant in those systems, rather than be extractive of Indigenous peoples.

I would also like to acknowledge the guidance and support of my thesis committee members, particularly Ojibwe scholar Dr. Amy Farrell who is offering guidance on how to engage with Indigenous methodologies in a holistic and good way, and Dr. Jeannie Kerr who has contributed to a body of scholarship on the complexities inherent to non-Indigenous researchers engaging with Indigenous theories and methodologies.

As an inhabitant of lands which are not mine, and as a mother, I want to teach my children about our responsibilities as people inherently connected to treaties in the hopes that their generation will value and nurture relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Why am I here?

My interest in research focused on decolonizing pedagogies and Indigenous education has been present since I became a public educator and began to question my beliefs and assumptions based on teaching experiences that disrupted my understandings. Being a white settler Canadian, I have been questioned about my place in research on Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation. *Why am I here? What is my role?* I am keenly aware of often

repeated mantra of Indigenous leaders and scholars, “*Nothing about us without us*”⁷,” meaning that Indigenous Peoples must be involved in all aspects of Indigenous research and Reconciliation. At times this has caused discomfort, as I have been concerned that others might perceive that I occupy spaces in academia that should be taken up by Indigenous scholars, or that my use of Indigenous theories or methodologies is appropriative or just plain inappropriate. For that reason, it is of vital importance that my role and intentions with respect to this study are clearly understood. However, I fully understand that some may not agree with my presence in this research area.

On March 23rd, 2016, I attended a conference, hosted by the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba entitled, *Re-Visioning Teacher Education: Responding to the TRC’s Calls-to-Action*. Newly appointed Senator, Justice Murray Sinclair, spoke passionately about the work of the TRC. During a discussion period at the end of the panel, Senator Sinclair was asked to comment on what kind of mechanisms and procedures could be employed to address the TRC’s Calls to Action. He urged the audience, full of academics, educators, and students, to support the work of the TRC through their research. He emphasized that academic work in support of the TRC should be done by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission states that:

Research is vital to reconciliation. It provides insights and practical examples of why and how educating Canadians about the diverse concepts, principles, and practices of reconciliation contributes to healing and transformative social change. The benefits of research extend beyond addressing the legacy of residential schools. Research on the

⁷ This phrase originates in Europe and emerged as a common phrase in disability activism in the 1990s, eventually being used by other marginalized groups (Charlton, 1998). It has been used more recently by Indigenous scholars, leaders, and activists in the context of Indigenous rights (Cote-Meek, 2017).

reconciliation process can inform how Canadian society can mitigate intercultural conflicts, strengthen civic trust, and build social capacity and practical skills for long-term reconciliation. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b, p. 242)

As a supporter of the TRC’s Calls to Action, I felt compelled to dedicate my M.Ed. thesis to contributing to the academic and informal discourses on Truth and Reconciliation in professional and personal contexts.

To me, Reconciliation is about questioning my assumptions about existing systems of education and governance that continue to marginalize and harm Indigenous peoples, and therefore all peoples. It is about continually seeking to understand and learn from Indigenous communities on whose land I occupy, and from Indigenous students and families I have come to know and relate to in my role as an educator and settler. More than understanding and listening, Reconciliation is how I conduct myself as an anti-racist educator with the acknowledgement that my efforts and actions in this regard may not always achieve the outcome I hope for or imagine.

I view my research, and the inevitable personal reflections that bubble up throughout this journey, as part of the process of “unsettling” myself and taking responsibility for my own education for Reconciliation (Regan, 2010). While my approach to research is informed by Indigenous concepts and frameworks, my understandings of these concepts and frameworks are coloured by my lived experiences and my identity as a white settler. This research helps me to better understand my place within the settler system of education in order to understand how to support Truth and Reconciliation efforts, and in order to locate barriers to Reconciliation within the system. Following the work of Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Cornthassel (2013), I recognize that the impetus is on me as a settler “to change the nature of the relationship [to Indigenous peoples] by taking direction from Indigenous nations” (p. 17). Furthermore, I must acknowledge that

despite this research, settler colonialism “will not be undone by analysis alone, but through lived and contentious engagement with the literal and stolen ground on which people stand and come together upon” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2013, p. 22).

Who am I?

Like most people, I claim a multitude of intersecting and seemingly dissonant identities. I am a white settler, a Canadian, a teacher, a student, a child, a mother, and an academic. All of these identities inform how I approach my role as a researcher. It is my hope that through the process of conducting and sharing research I can also endeavour to earn an identity I was not born with, or can claim for myself, that of Indigenous ally.

Purpose and significance of the study

This study uses concepts, perspectives and methodologies from Indigenous scholarship as a theoretical framework to inform a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) from school divisions operating within each of the five Treaty territories in Manitoba. Organizational Impression Management (OIM) is used as a theory to understand the motives of each division and how they wish to be perceived by the public. I then return to Indigenous scholarship to make sense of the emergent themes in the documents and make recommendations to meaningfully address Reconciliation. This study is unique in that it aims to address how historical, geographical, and cultural contexts are reflected in the ideologies expressed by Manitoba school divisions, and how those ideologies may be perceived by the public. Developing an understanding of these ideologies allows me to locate and discuss potential barriers to Truth and Reconciliation within the system of public education. My position as a researcher, and as both a product of and participant in public education provide me with a distinct perspective from which to reflect on discourses of Truth

and Reconciliation. The secondary purpose of this study is to facilitate my own active process of Reconciliation.

Research questions

This study has one major research question, 1) What discourses of Truth and Reconciliation appear to be constructed by Manitoba school divisions? This question presents an opportunity to examine how school divisions situate themselves in discourses of reconciliation and offers a snapshot of the current state of reconciliatory efforts reported across treaty territories in Manitoba. Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) present concrete examples of the language and discursive practices employed by school divisions and should therefore elucidate how these divisions have responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action. Furthermore, these texts represent the public face of Reconciliation through organizational impression management. See Chapter 3 for more information about the origins of CIPs and their relationship to CRs in Manitoba school divisions.

Three additional sub questions are used to further interrogate both the transparent and opaque ideologies present in the texts by examining the identities presented by the communicators (school divisions) and how those identities are positioned in relation to Indigenous peoples and other potential social actors present in the texts. To clarify, drawing from the literature of Organizational Impression Management explained more fully in Chapter 2, people tend to personify organizations and view them as “coherent and purposive social entities (i.e. as conscious actors or ‘wholes’)” rather than a collection of individuals (Love & Kraatz, 2009, p. 316). Organizations can become well known over time for particular ideologies and actions which are judged favourably or unfavorably by observers (Lang et al., 2011). In other words, organizations develop identities over time. Though people personify organizations, it is

difficult to know how outsiders understand the identities of an organization. Goffman (1959) posits that individuals or actors (or groups like organizations or institutions) deliberately or unconsciously adapt their behaviour depending on the context, and the impression they wish to convey to their audience. In this sense, the actors within the organization contribute to the construction of an organizational identity. These identities can elicit positive associations between the organization and its stakeholders. With this understanding of identity in mind, three sub questions of this study focus on key aspects of CDA: identity, context, and relationships. The sub questions include: a) What do the CIPs and CRs of select Manitoba school divisions say about their organizational identity? b) What kinds of contextual information about Truth and Reconciliation appear to be conveyed in select CIPs and CRs? c) How do relationships, specifically between select Manitoba school divisions and Indigenous communities appear to be constructed by the textual features of their CIPs and CRs?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section begins with an overview of the history of Indigenous education in Canada from the 1600's on in order to contextualize the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released in 2015. The TRC is also discussed in relation to its objectives, and the ways it has been critiqued. The critiques of the TRC are followed by an exploration of the federal and provincial responses to the Final Report and Calls to Action, and how various groups quantify and report on their progress toward fulfilling the calls. The focus then shifts to the theoretical underpinnings of Organizational Impression Management (OIM). Finally, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is discussed broadly as a research methodology.

History of Indigenous Education in Canada

Indigenous peoples’ systems of education have been in place since time immemorial, and most certainly prior to the introduction of Indian Residential School (IRS) institutions in Canada. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) explains that “Nishnaabeg children grew up within the milieu of Nishnaabewin, not within the institutionalized schooling system” (p. 9). Nishnaabeg knowledge “originates in the spiritual realm” and “fosters and cherishes individuals with particular gifts and skills” that are integral to supportive and nurturing relations between all living things (p. 10). While traditional Indigenous conceptualizations and practices of education exist in the past and present, the first documented European-led day schools for Indigenous youth were “established near Québec by the Récollet missionaries in 1620” (White & Peters, 2009, p. 13). The day schools aimed to turn young Indigenous boys into Frenchman, and Christians, in the hopes that they would spread Christianity to their home communities, and were not successful (White & Peters, 2009, p. 13). By the 1800s the day school model was abandoned in favour of residential boarding schools. These institutions, predominantly operated by religious organizations and later the Canadian government, were largely phased out by the 1960s (though the last one closed in 1996) and gave way to federal run “Indian Day schools” on reserves (Kirkness, 1999, p. 15). At this time the federal government put an integration policy into effect that accommodated the closure of Indian Residential Schools by forcing “Indigenous students to attend public schools,” “often having to travel and board in other communities in order to attend” (Kirkness, 1999, p. 16). Kirkness argues that the “integration concept was a continuation of government control over the lives of Indian people. It was introduced with no consultation with Indian parents, Indian Bands, or Indian organizations” (Kirkness, 1999, p. 16). Integration policy was enacted through recommendations in the *Hawthorn Report* (1966) which guided funding models for education, economic development, and social welfare systems. This system of

integration has more or less remained in Canada to the present day and has resulted in the continual separation of Indigenous children from their families and communities, not to mention poor education outcomes, and other major challenges related to relocating and transitioning from one culture and community to another (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022).

Canada has a long history of research, reports, position papers, recommendations, and directives related to Indigenous education. It is important to place the TRC’s Final Report and Calls to Action in the historical context of these documents in order to understand that Indigenous leaders have been advocating for Indigenous sovereignty over Indigenous education, and that the Canadian government has created commissions, committees, and panels to report on Indigenous education for a very long time. Further context for the work of the TRC can be found in the many volumes produced by the Commission, particularly the volume *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015c). For the purposes of this study, what follows is a brief overview of major documents relating to Indigenous education in Canada and more specifically, in Manitoba from the 1970s to the present day.

In 1969 the Canadian government, under then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, released a white paper on Indigenous policy, titled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* and more commonly known as the *White Paper*, which was meant to eliminate the Indian Act and the special status of Indigenous peoples. In response to this paper, Indigenous organizations issued their own position papers about their relationship with the federal government and their inherent rights, “strongly stating their positions in education, housing, health, and in social and economic development” (Kirkness, 1999, p. 18). In an ironic twist, the

government proposed *White Paper* was the catalyst for renewed efforts among Indigenous leaders to organize and assert their rights as sovereign nations.

On June 4th, 1970, Cree chief and lawyer Harold Cardinal, along with a contingent of Indigenous leaders from the Indian Association of Alberta travelled to Parliament Hill and rejected the *White Paper* by placing it in front of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien (Weaver, 1981). The Indigenous leaders countered the *White Paper* with their own *Red Paper*, titled *Citizens Plus* (1970), which proposes a review of the Indian Act, new aims and scope for the Department of Indian Affairs with a new Indigenous appointed Minister of Indian Affairs, and a re-examination of land claims (Weaver, 1981, p. 184). The *Red Paper* also includes a proposal for education reforms specific to Indigenous peoples in Alberta.

In 1971, the Indian Tribes of Manitoba published *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*, which expressed frustration with the large gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduation rates in the province among many other grievances with Indigenous education. “The federal government must recognize the total failure of the present education system for Indian people. It must recognize the need for change in the assimilationist policy of education perpetuated for decades” (p. 28). Recommendations in this document include the federal government upholding responsibilities stated in the Numbered Treaties to fund Indigenous run schools on reserve, and that “it must recognize the need for change in the assimilationist policy of education perpetuated for decades” (p. 28).

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood, later known as the Assembly of First Nations, also published a position paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* presented to the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It consolidated a vision of education

shared by position papers from First Nations across Canada, including *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*. Its common themes include an emphasis on local control of education including parental consent and involvement, Indigenous specific curricula including language instruction, and proper resources including modern facilities and teacher training. It also expresses concern over the integration of Indigenous students in public schools: “Indian children will continue to be strangers in Canadian classrooms until the curriculum recognizes Indian customs and values, Indian languages, and the contributions which the Indian people have made to Canadian history” (p. 26). Even though it was written almost fifty years ago, it echoes the TRC Final Report in regard to the role of non-Indigenous peoples in education for Reconciliation.

The success of integration is not the responsibility of Indians alone. Non-Indians must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history, customs and language; and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices.

(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972).

After a national review First Nations Education, the National Indian Brotherhood and Assembly of First Nations released *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future, a Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education* (1988). As the title suggests, this document was yet another declaration of Indigenous control over Indigenous education. It too advocates for parental involvement, equitable funding models, and ends with recommendations and calls to action to address shortcomings in Indigenous education. Like the TRC’s Calls to Action, Tradition and Education advocated for non-Indigenous educators to “take courses in cross-cultural education and First Nations cultural studies” (p. 17). A major aim of the document was to assert the need for an end to paternalistic practices and policies used by the government to interfere with Indigenous jurisdiction over Indigenous education.

In 1996, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) was released. RCAP was established in 1991 and spent five years researching and compiling a detailed five-volume report that included forty-four recommendations for the improvement of Indigenous education at the K-12 and post-secondary levels. Like the TRC’s Calls to Action, the RCAP report called for a funding strategy for early childhood education (3.5.3), for curricula that “reflect Aboriginal cultures and community delivery” (3.5.5), for Indigenous language instruction (3.5.6), and for “education programs that combat stereotypes, racism, prejudice and bias” (3.5.9.e) among many others (p. 209, p. 211).

In 2007, the United Nations released their Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This document was created to assert and protect the rights of international Indigenous Peoples, more specifically individual and collective rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, and the protection of traditional lands and the resources they contain (United Nations, n.d.). Articles 14.1 and 15.1 declare that Indigenous peoples “have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions [...] in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning” and the right “to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education” (United Nations, 2007, p. 7). Though it was released in 2007, it was not officially adopted by the Canadian government until 2016 due to concerns over the legal implications the declaration had in regard to articles pertaining to land rights and natural resources among others (United Nations, n.d.). Canada’s revised decision on the declaration was partially due to the TRC’s Call to Action 43, which explicitly called for all levels of government to “fully adopt and implement” UNDRIP “as the framework for reconciliation” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

In 2010 the Assembly of First Nations revisited and revised their 1972 policy paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, now titled *First Nations Control of First Nations Education: It's Our Vision, it's Our Time*. In the preamble of the updated paper the AFN reflects on the improvements to Indigenous education that came about due to the 1972 policy, but also the lack of meaningful support from the federal, provincial and territorial governments despite the fact that the Canadian government affirmed the policy when it was first released (p. 6). Much of the paper is dedicated to strategic recommendations to support lifelong learning at all levels of education for First Nations peoples. Key recommendations concern “language immersion, holistic and culturally relevant curricula, well-trained educators, focused leadership, parental involvement and accountability, and safe and healthy facilities founded on principles that respect First Nations jurisdiction over education” (Assembly of First Nations, 2010, p. 3). *First Nations Control of First Nations Education* employs discourses of reconciliation by framing the state of education at that time as a “time of crisis” in education as well as making “a call to action” (p. 22). Given that the TRCC was created in 2009, it is likely that the TRCC Commissioners were following the work established in the AFN document, released in 2010.

One year after the revised AFN policy paper was released the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples of Canada published a report titled *Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope* (2011). The Senate gathered information from education stakeholders on reserve as they were “keenly aware that many aspects of First Nations education have been extensively studied” (p. 2). Instead, they focused on identifying solutions to structural barriers to K-12 education on reserves and concluded the report with four major recommendations for a new education framework for First Nations education in Canada (p. 62-65). This report also used discourses of reconciliation, stating “we are now all on a path toward reconciliation. To walk this

path honourably we must [...] also transform our fundamental relationship with the First Peoples of this country, from paternalism to partnership” (p. 2).

More recently, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) released its final report in 2019. This report also includes recommendations related to education in its calls for justice. These include a number of calls related to education more broadly in a number of areas, but specifically calls for educators at all levels and in all institutions, to develop and implement curriculum focused on MMIWG in partnership with Indigenous peoples. “Such education and awareness must include historical and *current truths* about the genocide against Indigenous Peoples through state laws, policies, and colonial practices” [emphasis added] (National Inquiry, 2019, p. 79)

The documents, policies, and reports summarized here are a few of many. Although the general public may have learned of the TRC’s Calls to Action in recent years, it is clear that discourses of Indigenous sovereignty in education that underlie the Calls to Action been present for at least the last fifty years. It is important to recognize that many of the key themes across these texts are very similar, and that the TRC’s Calls to Action are the latest in a succession of texts that ask for the same things from federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Ry Moran, the founding director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation asserts that the framework created by the TRC “needs to move beyond the repeating cycle of incident – inquiry – recommendations to a new type of relationship based on ongoing mutual accountability and pursuit of equality, safety and justice for all.” (2018).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (K-12 education)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada emerged from the largest class-action lawsuit in the history of Canada and was funded by the survivors of the Indian

Residential School System (de Bruin, 2020). The TRC’s Final Report and Calls to Action are two documents in a long history of documents with comparable themes in that they also address a myriad of concerns and systemic and institutional inequities across political and social spheres (2015). The question is, how do the TRC reports differ from the rest, and what is the likelihood that they succeed where other initiatives have failed? The answer perhaps lies with the TRC conceptualizing Reconciliation as “a multi-generational journey that involves all Canadians” rather than a one-off event (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). The TRC reports also emphasize that Reconciliation is not the sole responsibility of Indigenous peoples as all Canadians have a role to play in demonstrating “an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour” (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015b). However, there are many people who are skeptical that Reconciliation will ever be possible in Canada. The next section of this chapter aims to highlight those criticisms.

Truth and Reconciliation in Canada is somewhat paradoxical. It was Indian Residential School (IRS) institutions and ideologies imposed on Indigenous peoples through federal legislation that created “the mess” of residential schools, and all the inter-generational trauma and genocide that came with them, and yet education is presented within the Calls to Action as the pathway to successful Reconciliation (Sinclair, 2015). As the TRC’s Commissioner, Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair has stated many times, “Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it” (2015). I take Sinclair’s meaning here to consider the term ‘education’ in two ways; first, ‘education’ as the systematic assimilation of Indigenous children in Indian Residential Schools, and secondly ‘education’ as a broader concept referring to the catalyst for all Canadians to learn the truth about these institutions in order to prevent the

perpetuation of harm done to Indigenous Peoples now and in the future. While many of the 94 Calls to Action involve or address education, for the purposes of this study the subsequent section of this chapter aims to review only the Calls to Action related to K-12 education. These calls are from the Education, and Education for Reconciliation sections of the TRC’s Calls to Action and are discussed in relation to the federal and provincial responses to those calls thus far.

Criticisms of Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has defined the spirit and intent of Reconciliation, as they envision it, as “coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward” (2015b, p. 6). However, there are other conceptualizations of reconciliation when considering other examples of Truth and Reconciliation commissions around the world. Indigenous scholars from North America and even members of the TRC have expressed valid criticisms of Truth and Reconciliation as it is conceived of in Canada. These criticisms are summarized below in an effort to look beyond the potential “feel-good” narrative of Truth and Reconciliation. These critiques also demonstrate that there is ample reason to be skeptical that Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada will ever be achieved through the framework provided by the TRC and in conjunction with existing systems of government.

The Connotations of Reconciliation

To begin with, the word “reconciliation” is loaded with connotative meanings and assumptions. The denotative meaning of the verb reconciling is “to restore to friendship or harmony,” “to settle or resolve,” or “to accept something unpleasant” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). While the latter two definitions contain some negative connotations, the first makes it seem as

though reconciliation is a relatively positive act. It is the first definition and the assumptions it implies that critics of the TRC take issue with. How can a friendship or relationship be restored when it was never particularly friendly to begin with? The TRC acknowledges this criticism in the opening pages of its Final Report: “To some people, reconciliation is the re-establishment of a conciliatory state. However, this is a state that many Aboriginal people assert never has existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people” (2015b, p. 6). Similarly, a friendship implies a relationship that is mutually supportive and equitable. Kahnawà:ke Mohawk philosopher, Taiaiake Alfred, believes that the concept of reconciliation is “fatally flawed because it depends on the false notion of a moral equivalency between the Onkwehonwe⁸ and Settlers and on a basic acceptance of colonial institutions” (2005, p. 151). Alfred suggests an alternative to reconciliation that is explored later in this section.

Further to this point of moral equivalency and equal partnership in engaging in reconciliation, is the perception among non-Indigenous Canadians that Reconciliation is somehow the work of Indigenous peoples. Many efforts toward Reconciliation at the federal, and provincial level, and within school divisions come from Indigenous peoples who are asked to lead this work. For example, at the federal level, the Honourable Murray Sinclair leading the TRCC and Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, the ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, or in Manitoba Treaty Commissioner Loretta Ross leading the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (Reconciliation Canada, 2022; Treaty Relations, 2022). When the work of Reconciliation is perceived by the public as one-sided, rather than reciprocal, it can be extractive of Indigenous peoples. In education contexts, Indigenous leaders and educators experience resistance and burnout as a result of shouldering the work of Reconciliation (Cote-Meek, 2013; Dion 2007).

⁸ Onkwehonwe is a Mohawk word meaning “original people” and is used by Taiaiake Alfred (2005, p. 288).

Ironically, these Indigenous leaders are not the ones in need of reconciliation, but rather their settler or non-Indigenous Canadian peers. In this way settlers and non-Indigenous Canadians can lay the responsibility of Reconciliation in the hands of Indigenous Peoples. This has been evident in recent Manitoba politics, as explained more fully in the section titled “Provincial Progress on the Calls to Action” further in this chapter.

Past Wrongs Obscure Present Wrongs

Another criticism of Truth and Reconciliation comes from Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. She is concerned with the historical underpinnings of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada, namely addressing Indian Residential Schools specifically and how it situates the wrongs of the government toward Indigenous peoples in the past. If the non-Indigenous perception of Reconciliation is that “the historical ‘wrong’ has now been ‘righted’ and further transformation is not needed” then in a post-TRC Canada “Indigenous Peoples no longer have a legitimate source of contention” (2011, p. 22). This view of Reconciliation erases or obfuscates the myriad of actions taken by the Canadian government that have harmed, and continue to harm, Indigenous peoples and undermine Indigenous sovereignty. If Truth and Reconciliation is reduced to a checklist that can be perceived as completed or focused “only on residential schools rather than the broader set of relationships that generated policies and practices aimed at assimilation and political genocide” then there is a possibility that Reconciliation will “‘level the playing field’ in the eyes of Canadians” (p. 22).

Too Easy for Settler Canadians

Taiaiake Alfred is similarly critical of how relatively simple the concept of reconciliation can appear to settler Canadians. He asserts that reconciliation is perceived by settler Canadians

as “non-threatening, requiring [...] only a trite statement of regret ceasing of the practice of the most open forms of racism – such easy things for liberal-minded Settlers to agree on” (p. 152). This type of reconciliation is palatable for settler Canadians because it does not ask them “to forego any of their ill-gotten gains personally or collectively” (p. 151). The privileged position settler Canadians bring to reconciliation means that they have nothing to lose. The same cannot be said for Indigenous peoples in Canada who will continue to experience injustices should reconciliatory efforts fail or fade into the background, as has been the historical trend. Ry Moran (2018) has argued that prior efforts to address injustices appear optional to Canadians: “Each of these efforts [RRCAP and similar committee reports] came to a necessary end, leaving governments and general society at liberty to either adopt, or not adopt, the Calls to Actions, findings and recommendations issued” (para. 8).

Victim Centered

Another criticism of Reconciliation in Canada is that it focuses attention on the victims and survivors of residential schools as opposed to shedding more light on the people and organizations responsible. Anthropologist Ronald Niezen states that the “victim centrism” in the TRC results in Canadians hearing “a great deal about the pain, struggle and redemption that characterize a particular kind of survivor experience, while our knowledge of the ‘perpetrators,’ their motives, and the institutions that harboured them are left obscured” (2017, p. 168-169). Furthermore, this focus on the victims and survivors creates an impossible task for them to appear as “perfect models of dignity and worth” in order to gain sympathy and be deemed worthy of justice in the eyes of the general public (Niezen, 2017 p. 168). If the testimony of residential school survivors is not considered truthful to Canadians, then their participation in reconciliatory efforts seems unlikely. Indigenous youth leader Max FineDay points out that truth

and reconciliation are siblings, therefore we should not turn away from Truth in our haste for Reconciliation (2020).

The Paradox of Reconciliation

The greatest criticism of reconciliation efforts in Canada gets at the paradox of the Canadian government as an amalgam of settler-colonial institution positioning itself as neutral in supporting the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the first place. The Canadian government is itself a settler-colonial institution, so how can meaningful institutional change come from within those same institutions? “It is impossible to transform the colonial society from within colonial institutions or achieve justice and peaceful coexistence without fundamentally transforming the institutions of the colonial society themselves” (Alfred, 2005, p. 152). The concept of Truth and Reconciliation is considered popular and progressive, but it does not require an upheaval of our political, legal, or education systems, and for some this is not even close to good enough. Taiaiake Alfred believes that “reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice” (p. 152). This begs the question, if Reconciliation is not the goal, then what should take its place?

Alternatives to Reconciliation

Indigenous scholars suggest replacing reconciliation in favour of other “r” words: regeneration, restoration, resurgence, and restitution. For Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, the only way for reconciliation to be a meaningful force for change it “must be grounded in cultural [re]generation and political resurgence” (2011, p. 22). She thinks of regeneration as “a collective rebalancing” best encapsulated by the “Nishnaabeg concept *Aanji Maajitaawin*: to start over” (p. 22). Regeneration involves the rejuvenation of Indigenous languages, and political and justice systems based on “Nishaabeg values and philosophies” (p. 23). Grounded in this concept of

regenerative and restorative justice, residential school survivors and Indigenous peoples would have the agency to “hold the liberal state accountable” themselves, rather than “the perpetrators” in positions of power deciding on their own reconciliatory actions (p. 23). Simpson does not define what she means by Indigenous resurgence because she maintains it means different things to different people, and that her own conceptualization of resurgence continues to change (p. 24). However, the term implies rebirth and revival, and brings with it a sense of hope.

Taiaiake Alfred is less hopeful when it comes to the possible effectiveness of Truth and Reconciliation as a catalyst for meaningful change. He asserts that reconciliation may help us move beyond “overt racism” but that there can be no reconciliation without restitution (2005, p. 26). Restitution “is based on the notion that real peace-making requires making amends for harms done” and is “the precondition for any form of true reconciliation to take place” (p. 151). Restitution in the form of returning what was stolen or offering other reparations for what cannot be returned, would forge “a new socio-political relationship based on the Settler state’s admission of wrongdoing and acceptance of the responsibility and obligation to engage [Indigenous] peoples in a restitution-reconciliation peace-building process” (p. 26). Restitution would force us to go beyond apologies and disrupt the colonial paradigms that are the foundation of our government. This type of drastic transformation seems unlikely to occur without a radical dismantling and rebuilding of our system of government.

Indigenous Education post Calls to Action (Federal and Provincial)

The Federal Response

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action in 2015, the federal government has made some progress to address the 94 Calls to Action. What follows is a brief summary of the calls pertaining to K-12 public education, and the current government

response to those calls. The Education calls 6-12, and the Education for Reconciliation calls 62-65 are listed on a Government of Canada website with some details as to what specific response the government has taken. In some cases, the calls have not been heeded, such as call 6 to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada which allows teachers and parental figures to justify the use of force as a means of disciplining a child's behaviour “if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 1; Government of Canada, 1985). In other cases, a general overview of actions taken to address the calls are provided. For example, in response to call 7 to “develop a joint strategy to eliminate education and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians,” the government has invested \$2.5 billion over five years, starting in 2016 (Government of Canada, 2019a). This investment is spread across a number of areas including funding for literacy and numeracy programming, repair and maintenance of First Nations education facilities, skills and work experience programs, and charities and scholarships for post-secondary education (Government of Canada, 2019).

Calls to Action 9, 10, and 12 specifically address K-12 Indigenous education in off-reserve provincial public schools. Call to Action 9 calls on the federal government to “prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared to non-Aboriginal people” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The most recent report that partially addresses this call was released by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (formerly Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)) in 2017 for the 2016-2017 school year. The report includes a breakdown of what percentage of Indigenous students attend First Nations operated schools, provincial schools, private schools, and federal schools as well as

funding breakdowns for expenditures per student in each province (Indigenous Services Canada, 2018). However, the report does not offer any information about educational and income attainments.

Call to Action 10 calls on the federal government to “draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples” including “a commitment to sufficient funding” and incorporating many principles, including closing “achievement gaps within one generation” and “enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 2). In response to this call ISC, in partnership with the National Indian Education Council (NIEC), have developed “a new policy framework for First Nations elementary and secondary education” (Government of Canada, 2019). A closer look at the framework reveals that it is focused primarily on First Nations operated schools with the objective of ensuring consistent funding for eligible students by moving away “from proposal-based programming and adopting a new funding approach based on the respective provincial funding model with adaptations to support the unique needs of First Nations” (Indigenous Services Canada, 2021).

Call to Action 12 calls for “federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 2). In response to this call, the federal government has committed \$1.7 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018, “to strengthen early learning and child care programs and services for Indigenous children and families” (Government of Canada, 2019). In addition to funding and adjustments to budget models, and Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care framework was co-developed by the Assembly of

First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council in 2018 (Government of Canada, 2019).

This Framework is meant to support, coordinate and guide the design, delivery and governance of Indigenous ELCC that is anchored in self-determination [of distinctive First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples], centred on children and grounded in culture, through new policies, processes, partnerships, authorities, capacities, programs and investments that will strengthen Indigenous ELCC in Canada. (Indigenous Early Learning, 2018, p. 5).

This framework also provides a guide for policy makers and educational administrators on how to develop culturally strong early learning and childcare programs within local contexts.

Calls to Action 62-65 address Education for Reconciliation. Call 62 calls upon the “federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators to” address a variety of areas pertaining to infusing Indigenous content, history, and teaching methods in all areas of K-12 and post-secondary education (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 7). To address this call, the federal government “is working with the Council of Ministers of Education [CMEC] to enhance knowledge and awareness of First Nations, Inuit and Métis history and culture across Canada” (Government of Canada, 2021). The CMEC has developed a three-year plan (2019-2022) for Indigenous Education, outlined in a two-page document on their website to address Call 62, and also Call 63 which calls on the CMEC to “maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues” (Council of Ministers of Education, 2019; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 7). It is unclear from the document the degree to which Indigenous peoples were collaborators in the creation and implementation of this plan. In addition to the

work of the CMEC, the federal government has also pledged \$3 million per year to the First Nations University of Canada “to develop a National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education” (Government of Canada, 2021).

In terms of the Calls to Action pertaining to K-12 education, a great deal of funding has been earmarked for Reconciliation, but the effectiveness of this funding as a catalyst for closing achievement gaps is unclear. The long-term impact of the actions and proposed actions taken by the federal government to address the Education calls to action remains to be seen.

Federal Progress on the Calls to Action

In the years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action were released, various organizations have assessed the progress that has been made on specific calls to action (The Assembly of First Nations, 2020; Yellowhead Institute, 2020; Historica Canada, 2021; KAIROS Canada, 2018). Two reports on the state of progress on all of the Calls to Action come from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) (2020) and the Yellowhead Institute (2020). Both of these reports suggest that there is a long road ahead for Reconciliation in Canada, though the AFN report is slightly more optimistic in its assessment of the progress being made.⁹

The AFN is “a national advocacy organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada” and facilitates “relationship building between First Nations and the Crown” (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.). AFN reviewed all categories of the Calls to Action and rated their progress on a scale from no progress, to little progress, to moderate progress, to significant progress. Of the twenty-two categories, AFN found that nine had made little progress, eight had

⁹ Other Indigenous institutes have reported on Indigenous achievement gaps in education including the Louis Riel Institute in Manitoba and the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan. However, these reports were written prior to the TRC and were omitted from this review in favour of the Yellowhead Institute report that specifically addresses progress on the TRC’s Calls to Action.

made moderate progress, and five had made significant progress (Assembly of First Nations, 2020, p. 4). Very little detail is included to explain the basis of the AFN’s evaluation of the progress in each category.

In the category of Education, particularly calls 6-12, “Moderate progress has been made in this area. Most notably, the ongoing efforts towards the completion of Call to Action #11. Future budget announcements must continue to commit further funding as there is still a persistent backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education. Further progress on Action #8 is possible if the government reduces funding discrepancies between on- and off-reserve First Nations” (Assembly of First Nations, 2020, p. 2). In the category of Education for Reconciliation calls 62-65, the AFN found that little progress has been made. “Although the CMEC released its Indigenous Education Plan for 2019-2020, it has since provided no update and some provinces have withdrawn plans to implement curricula” (Assembly of First Nations, 2020, p. 3).

The Yellowhead Institute,

is an Indigenous-led research and education centre based in the Faculty of Arts at Toronto Metropolitan University. The Institute privileges Indigenous philosophy and amplifies Indigenous voices that provide alternatives to settler colonialism in Canada today. Rooted in community networks, Yellowhead offers critical and accessible resources to support the reclamation of Indigenous land and life. (Yellowhead Institute, n.d.)

Their most recent report concludes that “at a rate of 2.23 calls completed each year, we could only hope to see substantial change over four decades” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 20). They identify three major barriers to the completion of the Calls to Action including “a vision among policy makers of the ‘public interest’ as generally excluding Indigenous peoples; the deep-rooted

paternalistic attitudes of politicians, bureaucrats, and other policy makers, and; the ongoing legacy and reality of structural anti-Indigenous racism” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 20).

Furthermore, the report alleges that the additional funding provided by the federal government actually “pads [non-Indigenous] institutions who enact temporary project-based initiatives that skirt the institutional change reconciliation demands” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 20).

In terms of the Education Calls 6-12, the Yellowhead Institute acknowledges that there has been some progress made since 2015 to address the funding gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. However, it criticizes the Interim Funding Approach (IFA) announced by the government in 2019, as being based on a “deeply flawed” model that does not take into account “a range of deep structural issues unique to First Nations schools” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 10). The report also points out that the government has not released any complete data on funding gaps, as requested in Call 9. As mentioned in the previous section, the ISC report on investments in K-12 education “contains mostly references to the 2016 federal budget” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 10). Furthermore, they question the Canadian government and CMEC’s commitment to Indigenous education issues by citing the delayed pandemic funding for First Nations as another cause of the widening education gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. “In a world where reliable Internet means access to education, Indigenous communities that lack infrastructure or capacity to deliver education opportunities on-line must make do with far less than mainstream Canadian schools” (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 10).

Apart from the federal government and national groups like CMEC, the Calls to Action pertaining to education have also been taken up by provincial governments with varying degrees of success.

The Provincial Response

The Manitoba government department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations has published annual progress reports on the Path to Reconciliation Act since 2015. Except for the most recent report, most of the reports are available in Cree, Dene, Inuktitut, Ojibwe, Ojibwe-Cree, Dakota, Michif, and French as well as English (Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, n.d.). The most recent report, published in December 2020, highlights actions taken at the provincial level to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action. In the category of the Education Calls 6-12, the provincial government has primarily invested in projects that aim to provide employment assistance for youth, paid work experience, and in the Indigenous Northern Initiatives Fund (INI) which “provides funding for projects that have the potential to improve Indigenous well-being” (Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, 2020, p. 10). These investments are meant to address education and employment gaps.

To improve Indigenous education attainment levels and success rates the province has “recently introduced the Indigenous Identity Declaration Manitoba Schools online training course” meant to provide administrative staff “with key information to help them better inform parents and guardians about the Indigenous identity declaration process” (Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, 2020, p. 10). The IRNR department has also highlighted a partnership with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) to “administer the Early Development Instrument (EDI) questionnaire to First Nations schools in Manitoba to measure ‘readiness to learn’ at school entry” (Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, 2020, p. 11).

In the category of Education for Reconciliation, Calls 62-65, the IRNR reports that in the area of K-12 education, Manitoba Education has partnered with MFNERC, the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to implement a five year Treaty Education Initiative which “will ensure that all students grade k-12 [sic] and teachers learn about Treaties and the Treaty Relationship by providing classroom teachers with intensive professional development and treaty kits” (Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, 2020, p. 20-21).

In addition to working on the Treaty Education Initiative (TEI), Manitoba Education has also partnered with MFNERC and the Assembly of First Nations on a support document, released in 2020, for educators titled *It's Our Time: First Nations Education Tool Kit*. The objectives of this document are twofold; one, it aims to “promote and enhance First Nations student success by preparing and collecting relevant resources” (and specifies that student success is defined more holistically in First Nations communities), and two, it aims to “increase understanding of First Nations history and culture among Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations” (Manitoba Education, 2020, p. 4-5). The tool kit organizes lesson plans or “learning experiences” into four clusters relating to the historical and cultural foundations of First Nations peoples in Canada and Manitoba, understanding the ongoing impacts of colonialism in our current context, and considering next steps for relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians and Manitobans. Each learning experience is tied directly to Social Studies curriculum for grades 7-9 (Manitoba Education, 2020, p. 23). However, the learning experiences can be tailored for other grades and subject curriculum.

Two more documents recently released by Manitoba Education pertaining to Indigenous education and Truth and Reconciliation are *Creating Racism-Free Schools through*

Critical/Courageous Conversations and Race, published in 2017, and *Black History and Anti-Racism in Canada*, published in 2021. Both of these documents contain overviews of the history of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada and Manitoba, provide examples of the ways in which racism is manifested in various contexts, supports for educators and other education stakeholders to create safe environments for courageous conversations about race to occur, and lists of resources as sources for information and to foster critical literacy (Manitoba Education, 2017, 2021). The goal of these documents is to provide “a vision of how our education system can prepare students to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse society and create local and international communities characterized by diversity, justice, and equity” (Manitoba Education, 2017, p. 3).

It is important to note that Manitoba Education has produced other resource documents and curriculum documents related to Indigenous education, language instruction, and anti-racist education that were published prior to the TRC’s Calls to Action (Grade 12 Current Topics in FNMI Studies, 2011; Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures: Manitoba Curriculum Framework Outcomes, 2007; Policy for Heritage Language Instruction, 1993; From Apology to Reconciliation: Residential School Survivors: A Guide for Grades 9 and 11 Social Studies Teachers in Manitoba, 2013; Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula, 2003). In addition to these documents, a cornerstone for Indigenous education initiatives in Manitoba Education is the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate which “provides leadership and coordination for departmental initiatives in Indigenous education and training” and works in the areas of “research, policy development and strategic initiatives” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-d). Supporting Indigenous students, and working towards Reconciliation and cultural awareness for Indigenous

and non-Indigenous students and education stakeholders, have been ongoing objectives of Manitoba Education for many years.

Provincial Progress on the Calls to Action

Progress reports on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action assess the progress made toward answering specific calls by each province in Canada. One prominent progress report was issued by Kairos Canada in of 2015, and again in September 2018. Kairos Canada is an organization uniting “Canadian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to ‘do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God’ (Micah 6:8)” (Kairos Canada, 2022a). It must be stated that an objective assessment of the progress of Truth and Reconciliation compiled by religious institutions (primarily the United Church) is ironic given the role of those same institutions in the creation and operation of Indian Residential Schools. However, the United Church issued an apology to residential school survivors in 1998 to “apologize specifically for its role in Indian Residential Schools” and acknowledge its responsibility for “15 residential schools operated between 1849 and 1969” (Kairos Canada, 2022b). The very creation of the Kairos Report card on Reconciliation is presented as a reconciliatory act by the United Church.

The 2018 Education for Reconciliation Report Card issued by Kairos Canada uses six grading categories including “the teaching of the curriculum from Kindergarten to grade 12” and “the consultation between educators and Aboriginal Peoples” (Kairos, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, each jurisdiction was assigned a grade based on “Public Commitment” and “Implementation” on a four-point Likert scale (Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement, Significant Work Required) (Kairos, 2018, p. 5-6). Under the category of Public Commitment, Kairos rated Manitoba’s commitment to Call 62 as “Excellent” citing the fact that Manitoba has “legislated supporting

Indigenous learners as well as mandating Indigenous content within the education system” (Kairos, 2018, p. 15). They also praise the creation of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework 2016-2019, which is currently under revision and not yet available through the Manitoba Education website.

Under the category of Implementation, Kairos rated Manitoba’s implementation of Indigenous curriculum as “Excellent” because of the content on Treaties, residential schools, and the historical contributions of Indigenous peoples found in the curriculum, as well as praising the consultation with Indigenous peoples (Kairos, 2018, p. 16). Furthermore, Kairos lists many of the existing curriculum support documents and resources available to educators as proof of Manitoba’s progress in the area of Indigenous education. However, many of the cited documents, such as *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula* (2003), were created prior to the release of the 94 Calls to Action in 2015. No doubt, these documents support Indigenous education initiatives and Truth and Reconciliation, but their inclusion in Kairos Canada’s assessment of Manitoba as proof of current progress towards the Calls to Action is perhaps inaccurate.

Another more recent progress report, examining the state of Indigenous content in social studies and history curricula comes from *Historica Canada, 2021*. *Historica Canada* is an organization known for its Heritage Minute commercials and its creation of the online Canadian Encyclopedia. Its mission is to acknowledge “the impacts of historical injustice” and to commit to “helping to build a better Canada that amplifies missing voices; that recognizes multiple perspectives; that celebrates our achievements and acknowledges our failings” (*Historica Canada, n.d.*). The 2021 Canada’s History Report Card assesses many aspects of Social Studies and History curriculum, but also focuses on “how stories of Indigenous, Black, and racialized

communities are taught, if at all, in classrooms” and “how well they adhere to specific Calls to Action regarding education” (Historica Canada, 2021, p. 4).

Each History and Social Studies course across Canada was assessed based on the content present, skills that must be demonstrated by students, and on the presence and coverage of the history and legacy of residential schools, the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples, Treaties, and Indigenous knowledge (p. 6). According to Historica Canada, Manitoba received a grade of 65% (or C) and ranked 10th compared to the other Canadian provinces and territories (p. 7). This is largely due to the lack of mandatory History courses beyond grade 7, and the way in which essential questions, which should allow for exploration and inquiry, are used more as leading questions. Also, “politics, economics, and military endeavours are covered thoroughly, but social and cultural experiences are largely overlooked” (p. 13).

There cannot be a discussion of the current context of Manitoba’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation without addressing the recent tone deaf and incendiary comments made by former Premier Brian Pallister, and current Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, Alan Lagimodiere. In May 2021, the recovery of the remains of 215 children found at the former site of a British Columbia residential school began a chain reaction of similar recoveries across the country and became the catalyst for renewed calls for action to address the harms done by the Canadian government to Indigenous peoples of Canada (Dickson & Watson, 2021). Many cities and towns across Canada cancelled Canada Day celebrations in July in order to mourn the children being recovered, and churches across the country were defaced or burned. In Winnipeg, statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth were pulled down on the grounds of the Legislature.

On July 7th, premier Pallister asserted that the statues would be restored, admonishing the parties involved in their destruction, saying “There were failures of character on display the other day that are not helpful, that in fact are most unhelpful to the struggle for real building and real reconciliation that must be pursued” (CBC News, 2021). Pallister also rehashed a common story about colonization in Canada saying, “The people who came here to this country before it was a country [...] didn’t come here to destroy anything. They came here to build” (CBC News, 2021). Considering that the passionate emotions behind the destruction of two prominent symbols of colonization and genocide must be acknowledged and addressed in order to facilitate healing and Reconciliation, these comments were triggering to Manitobans, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Pallister revealed his true feelings about Truth and Reconciliation by choosing to banish the truth of residential school survivors – “Truth is what happened in the past” – while envisioning Reconciliation as the only aspect of the process as relevant to current and future relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians – “reconciliation is what we can make happen in the future” (CBC News, 2021). When further pressed to apologize for his comments, the premier continued to defend his position.

Shortly after Pallister’s comments, Manitoba’s former Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, Eileen Clarke, resigned from her position. Her successor, Alan Lagimodiere caused more controversy mere minutes after accepting his new role in the cabinet by defending those who operated residential schools saying they “thought they were doing the right thing” (Bernhardt, 2021). He added: “From my knowledge of it, the residential school system was designed to take Indigenous children and give them the skills and abilities they would need to fit into society as it moved forward” (Bernhardt, 2021). Manitoba NDP leader and honorary witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Wab Kinew, was

present during Lagimodiere’s remarks and interrupted the minister to correct him saying, “It was the express intent of residential schools to kill the Indian in the child. It is not cultural relativism, it is not revisionist history, for us to say that that was wrong” (Petz, 2021). As an Honorary Witness to the TRC proceedings, Kinew had (and continues to have) a duty to correct others when they share false information about residential schools, and to share his knowledge of the stories of the people who shared their truth. Lagimodiere later apologized for his remarks, and remains in his position, but his comments were damaging and condemned by Indigenous leaders.

In response to premier Pallister’s comments, and minister Lagimodiere’s comments, the Summit of Treaty 5 Sovereign Nations held a press conference on the steps of the Manitoba legislature (STFSN). They presented an action plan to address hate crimes and racism and called for Lagimodiere to resign from his position immediately (Bernhardt, 2021). Grand Chief, Arlen Dumas, began by condemning Pallister.

If Pallister wants to rebuild that statue so quickly, a statue that some of my non-First Nations friends in Manitoba didn't even know the significance of, then he may as well be building them on those graves. (Bernhardt, 2021, para. 14)

Chief Clarence Easter of Chemawawin Cree Nation also expressed how damaging Pallister’s words were.

At a time when our people are recovering children's bodies and our survivors are finally starting to be acknowledged by the general public, the comments by the PC government has caused a setback by the use of such irresponsible and volatile words. (Bernhardt, 2021, para. 23)

As of the time of this writing, Alan Lagimodiere still holds his position as minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, but premier Pallister has left office. The extent to which

these missteps had an effect on his decision to step down has been the subject of much speculation.

More recently, Premier Heather Stefanson and the PC government have received criticism following a report from Manitoba’s auditor general, Tyson Shtykalo. The audit report, released in April 2022, says that the provincial government has “failed to develop a plan to advance reconciliation efforts despite committing to do so” in legislation passed by the then NDP government in 2016 (Hobson, 2022). To deflect from the criticisms contained in the audit, Stefanson claimed that the government welcomes recommendations for enacting Truth and Reconciliation but that decisions on Reconciliation would need the input of Indigenous communities: “This is going to be driven by them, not by us” (Hobson, 2022). The implication of her comment echoes statements made by her predecessor – the onus for reconciliatory efforts lies with Indigenous peoples. Ironically, Stefanson’s comment was meant to emphasize the government’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, but further exposes how it continues to view Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations as an “us” and “them” binary.

Has Manitoba succeeded in making meaningful progress towards addressing the Calls to Action in the areas of Education and Education for Reconciliation? The answer seems to depend entirely on who is determining what constitutes progress, and how one defines reconciliation. Indigenous generated reports from the Yellowhead Institute and AFN would suggest that Manitoba is not doing a good job (to put it mildly), yet other sources like Kairos Canada think Manitoba is doing an excellent job. Clearly these sources have drawn vastly different conclusions about the progress towards Reconciliation likely because some cannot choose to be neutral. The Yellowhead Institute and AFN reports, both written from Indigenous perspectives, are better positioned to recognize the impact that the lack of progress on the Calls to Action have

on Indigenous communities. They do not claim neutrality, or objectivity as Kairos attempts to do. It is important to consider the source of these progress reports when determining where Manitoba currently stands and how far the province has to go. These progress reports also bring into question the ways in which organizations, such as governments and school divisions, attempt to manage their reputation in regard to their reconciliatory efforts in the eyes of the public. The section that follows provides an overview of the sociological theory of Organizational Impression Management (OIM) (Goffman, 1959), drawing primarily on Gee (2005, 2014) for the development into educational research, and its significance for my study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study begins with concepts, perspectives and methodologies from Indigenous scholarship, including decolonization, cognitive imperialism, ethical relationality, and Indigenous Métissage. These concepts, or Indigenous Research Sensibilities, inform a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) from school divisions from each of the five Treaty territories in Manitoba. Organizational Impression Management (OIM) is used as a theory to understand the motives of each division and how they wish to be perceived by the public. What follow is an overview of each component of the theoretical framework, starting with Indigenous Research Sensibilities, moving to CDA, and finally OIM.

Indigenous Research Sensibilities

This study turns to Indigenous scholarship to weave together a research sensibility through which to conduct CDA. A qualitative research sensibility refers to an orientation towards research based on the mindset of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is also based on the skill of the researcher to approach research reflectively and consider other perspectives. Since

Indigenous methodologies can be perceived as being used inappropriately by a settler researcher, and since their conceptualizations and applications are still emerging in empirical studies, this study draws on Indigenous scholarship but combines key concepts with the theory and methodology of CDA. Three key concepts that inform my research sensibility are decolonization (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020), cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013), and Indigenous Métissage (Donald, 2012). These concepts are explained broadly in this section, and more specifically in relation to their implications to CDA in Chapter 3.

A note on terminology:

Decolonizing and *indigenizing* have become very popular terms in education circles as of late. Due to the influence of the work of Paulo Freire, colonization has become synonymous with oppression (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Therefore, decolonization has been thought of as anti-oppression, though it means much more than that and these terms should not be conflated. It is important to note the danger of using decolonization as a metaphor, because it “allows people to equivocate contradictory colonial desires” and “turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track toward liberation” (p. 7). Indigenizing can be a similarly empty signifier in academia that can sometimes be realized through meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples and transformative institutional change, but more often than not means maintaining existing hierarchical structures while adding in Indigenous content or hiring Indigenous peoples (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This does not mean that the efforts of institutions and advocates to address colonialism have been entirely in vain, but it does echo the paradox of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) mandate in the sense that it seems impossible or unlikely for transformational change to occur from inside existing states of power. Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, conclude that true “decolonial indigenization” (indigenization that seeks redress for the historic

and ongoing oppression of colonialism) is “almost unintelligible, difficult to imagine, and ‘too radical’ to merit serious consideration” from the perspective of those participating in existing colonial institutions (p. 223). While this study aims to conduct CDA with Indigenous conceptualizations of decolonization as a research sensibility, it is understood that some may view this effort as metaphorical rather than transformative.

Decolonization and Cognitive Imperialism:

Decolonization is defined differently in different contexts. This study draws on concepts of decolonization shared by Indigenous scholars Marie Battiste (Mi’kmaq), and Sheila Cote-Meek (Teme-Augama Anishinabai). In order to understand decolonization, we must first define colonization. Cote-Meek, 2014, defines four critical dimensions of colonialism; one, it concerns the land, two, it “requires a specific structure of ideology to proceed,” three, it is “violent”, and four, it is “ongoing” (p. 18). She defines decolonization as “putting an end to ongoing colonization and addressing the impacts of colonialism” by returning lands to Indigenous peoples, ending violence toward Indigenous peoples, and “addressing racism” (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020, p. xvi). Decolonization also requires “a divesting of power back to Indigenous Peoples so that self-determination is fully realized and in a meaningful way” (p. xvi). Furthermore, Cote-Meek views the process of decolonization as transformative systemic change that is significant and ongoing, changes institutions and institutional culture, and “continually pursues an idealized future” (p. xvi).

Marie Battiste (1986) coined the term ‘cognitive imperialism’ to describe the cognitive manipulation that devalues and whitewashes Indigenous knowledge and values. Cognitive imperialism in practice is a form of colonization. In the context of education, cognitive imperialism “defines success as assimilation to dominant Eurocentric values, norms and

languages,” it privileges the English language, it normalizes forms of oppression in discourses and hidden curriculum, and results in “damaged identities, negative self-concept and lack of confidence” (Battiste, 2016). Cote-Meek (2020) explains that colonialism, or cognitive imperialism, is revealed through the ways in which educational institutions act as gatekeepers to knowledge and knowledge production.

One of the challenges of decolonization is that all peoples of Canada are “marinated in Eurocentrism” meaning we have all been living with established Eurocentric ideologies and paradigms which makes it difficult to envision an alternative (Battiste, 2013). For Battiste (2016), decolonization requires a two-pronged approach. First, a deconstruction that exposes the political, moral, and theoretical inadequacies of colonialism in education; and second, a reconstruction that is transformative (like Cote-Meek also envisions) and engages with diversity as the norm rather than the exception or the additive to the norm. For this type of reconstruction to occur we must consider what educational institutions would look like if Indigenous peoples had been involved in their construction from the beginning.

The work of decolonization is significant to all peoples and is not solely the responsibility of oppressed peoples. Maori scholar Taima Moeke-Pickering calls upon non-Indigenous educators to “be part of the heavy lifting” of decolonization by educating themselves (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2021). Similarly, Battiste (2013) sees value in bringing diverse knowledge systems together so that “neither Indigenous knowledge nor Eurocentric knowledge systems can be the sole arbiter of the work involved” (p. 103). Rather, we must move beyond a false binary of two systems of knowledge in order to create more fair and just educational systems that benefit all learners. This notion of braiding seemingly disparate ways of knowing is echoed in the work of Dwayne Donald (Papaschase Cree).

Indigenous Métissage and Ethical Relations

This study is highly influenced by the research sensibilities of Indigenous scholar, Dwayne Donald. His paper *Indigenous Métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility* describes the dilemma of engaging in discourses of Indigenous and Canadian relations; “As a researcher, inquirer, writer, and teacher educator, I struggle to locate a research standpoint that attends to the complex difficulties of these relations and frames them as shared educational concerns” (2012, p. 534). Furthermore, “The ambiguous and complex relational standpoint that I brought to research questions did not fit well with most of the methods and frameworks I encountered and studied. I found myself piecing together aspects of different ideas and influences and working them in ways that maintained a focus on what I wanted to say” (p. 535). Donald uses his metaphor of colonial/fort relations¹⁰ (Donald 2013b) to discuss the tension of the false binary of Indigenous/Non-indigenous identity, and the problem this creates with identity, particularly because Donald is both “an Aboriginal person *and* a grandson of European settlers” (Donald 2012, p. 534). To combat this false binary and rebuke the pressure to choose a side to align with academically, Dwayne suggests that our challenge is “to find a way to hold these understandings in tension without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate” (p. 534).

Ultimately, Donald proposes that we consider Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility that allows us to hold multiple perspectives and acknowledge discomfort “without the need to deny, assimilate, hybridize, or conclude” (Donald 2012, p. 536). A central goal of Indigenous Métissage is “enacting ethical relationality as a philosophical commitment” (p. 535). Ethical Relationality “is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny

¹⁰ Colonial frontier logics are “those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations” (Donald, 2011, p.92)

difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 535). Donald offers some further clarification of this concept in personal communications shared in the work of Kerr & Adamov Ferguson (2020). As Donald writes, ethical relationality is positioned as “a way to *unlearn* colonial logics that disregard Indigenous peoples’ knowledges and perspectives, and that portray Indigenous and settler peoples as occupying separate realities, and their different perspectives, experiences, and knowledges as incommensurable” (p. 708).

It is important to note that Battiste, Cote-Meek, and Donald share their work in the spirit of complexity and their theories are not specific to Indigenous or non-Indigenous researchers. This research is guided and framed by their work so that I may direct my understandings to the Euro-western critical theories and approaches of CDA and OIM.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological framework. In this study, I use CDA as informed by Indigenous scholarship on the context of my study, as well as the principles of Organizational Impression Management (OIM) theory to engage the motivations behind the discourses present in Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) of select school divisions in Manitoba. Discourse analysis has been used to analyse documents related to Indigenous education in Canada including an analysis of provincial education for Reconciliation policy documents (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020), grade 7 History curriculum in Ontario (Clausing, 2015), Manitoba’s Safe and Caring Schools policy (Colorado & Janzen, 2021), and the names of Manitoba public schools (Ferguson, 2017). However, the application of CDA to CIPs and CRs in Manitoba is unique to this study.

What follows is a summary of the previously mentioned studies that have used CDA in relation to Indigenous education in Canada. To conclude, I provide an overview of the origins and objectives of CDA, definitions of CDA terms, the assumptions that ground CDA, and how CDA relates to education research. Further discussion of the criticism and limitations of CDA, as well as a more detailed explanation of how this theory is being applied in the context of this research can be found in Chapter 3.

Wotherspoon and Milne, 2020

This study examines the reforms in elementary and secondary education systems since the release of the TRC’s Calls to Action. With a focus on policy frameworks, discourse analysis was used to examine overt and hidden messages conveyed through discourse. The two main research questions in this study are: “What do current education policy frameworks and actions regarding Indigenous Peoples reveal about government approaches to education and settler–Indigenous relationships in Canada? To what extent is effective reconciliation possible, and how can it be accomplished in the context of institutional structures and discourses within a White settler colonial society?” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 1). The theoretical framework for this study is based in the work of Bourdieu (1998) and the concept of cultural capital; “Reconciliation processes involve, in part, efforts to reshape the kinds of cultural capital that matter by recognizing and according significance to Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 4).

The researchers draw from van Dijk’s (1993) definition of discourse analysis which “seeks to understand ‘the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 6). The authors read policy statements from a wide variety of provincial and territorial frameworks to identify “key words, phrases and context,” with a

particular focus on “particular actors or groups, mandated activities and objectives” that indicated “power relations” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 6). These key words and statements were then categorized by organizational principles and analyzed in relation to what they “signify in relation to reconciliation objectives and orientations” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 6).

Common statements that emerged from the discourse analysis include widespread “Formal Commitments to Reconciliation” across all provinces and territories, and public commitments and goals related to Truth and Reconciliation in the form of “Policies and Official Statements” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 6, p. 7). Four additional themes were identified, exploring “messages and relationships conveyed” relative to “purpose, voice, knowledge and worldview, and teaching, learning, and assessment” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 7). These themes examined the wide range of stated objectives in framework documents, the degree to which Indigenous voices are present, and the how the document is positioned relative to Western and Indigenous conceptualizations of education and success. One discouraging findings states that “Indigenous perspectives are more often presented as means to achieve official state ends than as crucial features of a fully rounded educational experience” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 10). Analysis of the broad theme of teaching, learning, and assessment resulted in further themes. These include, “Alignment with Education for Reconciliation Calls to Action,” “Curriculum”, and “Teacher Training and Standards” (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 12, p. 13, p. 15).

The conclusion of this study offers a number of observations that articulate the complications inherent in enacting Truth and Reconciliation in educational contexts beyond the “public performance” of official statements (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, 16). These include the need for further research to examine how teachers perceive and understand Reconciliation as it is

enacted in classrooms, and the lack of meaningful and critical examination of existing “dominant structures and practices” inherent in school systems and curriculum (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020, p. 17).

Clausing, 2015

In her M.A. thesis, Clausing (2015) draws from Indigenous and critical race theories to apply critical discourse analysis to the Ontario Grade 7 History Curriculum and two history textbooks commonly used in the course (iii). Clausing (2015) used three overarching research questions with many sub questions under each: “What do we not know?”, “Why do we not know it?” and “What difference might knowing it make?” (p. 17-18). Further research questions were used to explore the history textbooks including “How are Indigenous Peoples represented?” “How are the land and geography of Canada represented?” “How are European settlers represented?” and “Are any other groups represented and if so, how?” (p. 40).

The study draws from Fairclough’s (1992, 2001) and Padgett’s (2008) definitions and conceptualizations of CDA to inform the methodology used. As Clausing (2015) explains, “Situating discourse analysis within a critical framework enabled me to analyze the language and images used in history textbooks and provincial curriculum, exploring the production of discursive formations of settler privilege and the marginalization of other voices and knowledges” (p. 23). Clausing also draws from the work of Jim Gee (1990) to make the distinction between big “d” and little “d” discourse (p. 24).

Clausing collected data from common textbooks that were determined as most common by a survey of four large school boards in southern Ontario. She conducted this informal survey by contacting a random selection of middle schools from these school boards over the phone (p. 28). Clausing’s analysis includes text as well as images from the textbooks and curriculum

document. Common themes were organized into categories including the use of language when referring to Indigenous Peoples and White Settlers, the absence of histories, the use of past tense to situation oppression and colonization in the past, the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples as hunters or warriors, and the dishonest representation of assimilation (p. 43, p. 46, p. 48, p. 50, p. 57, p. 69). The study found that “themes of denial, ignorance, Euro-centrism, racialized sexism and White settler colonial hegemony are pervasive in the history curriculum and textbooks, while information regarding distinct Indigenous peoples and their nations, their histories, and their contributions to Canadian history, are largely absent” (Clausing, 2015, iii).

Colorado and Janzen, 2021

This study consists of a critical discourse analysis of policy documents associated to Manitoba’s *Safe and Caring Schools* document as responding to student (mis)behaviour (Colorado & Janzen, 2021). The study suggests that the policies created as a result of the *Safe and Caring Schools* document, and the policies developed based on it, can potentially marginalize students and make them more susceptible to “segregation, exclusion, poor academic achievement, and low graduation rates” (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 64). The authors present literature on (mis)behaviour into themes of violence-prevention, blaming the bully, and socio-economic and cultural factors to misbehaviour (Colorado & Janzen 2021, p. 66-67).

Drawing from post-structuralist understandings of (mis)behaviour, the study turns to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) who state that critical discourse analysis “allows us to examine texts as social interactions” since “discourse is an important form of social practice” (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 67). The study grounds its use of CDA in the methods of van Dijk (1989), linking discourse with ideology. Using this method, CDA begins with “identifying signifiers

utilized in a text or texts to identify themes used within documents, and to ascertain which ideologies are being upheld by those particular discourses” (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 67).

The study used open coding to examine a variety of policy documents and determine what common signifiers were used; the signifiers were then coded and sorted by theme to consider the dominant ideologies in the documents (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 68). The five discursive themes presented in the findings of the study include: Management Responses, Restorative Responses, Intervention Responses, Disciplinary Responses, and Future Planning Responses (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 68). The study concludes with recommendations for “re-envisioning policy” as a result of a lack of a common or aligned ideology within the documents analyzed (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 72). These recommendations include requesting that education policy-makers “engage in the literature review and develop a shared vision for responses to children’s (mis)behaviours in the school system” informed by a number of considerations highlighted by the study, and “using reconceptualized understandings of responses to children’s (mis)behaviours to align provincial documentation” so they include a number of further considerations brought to light by the analysis and literature reviewed (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 74).

Ferguson, 2017

In her M.Ed. thesis, Ferguson (2017) “analyzes how discourses contribute towards institutionalizing hegemonic practices that marginalize Indigenous peoples and their perspectives” (p. i). Ferguson uses Critical Discourse Analysis and arts-informed methods to answer two main research questions: “How can a critical inquiry into language, texts, and discourses highlight and raise awareness of potential issues and sources of resistance to reconciliation within educational establishments, policies, and practices?” and “How does one

teacher undertake processes of reconciliation in respect to her own practice?” (Ferguson, 2017, p. 8). CDA is applied to three different discourses, including: “the discourses of Aboriginal and Indigenous academic achievement,” “the names of schools in the Winnipeg School Division,” and Ferguson’s “own discursive practices” (Ferguson, 2017, p. 1-2).

Ferguson uses “Bricolage” as a methodology to connect CDA, arts informed methods, and an auto-analytical approach (Ferguson, 2017, p. 52). The study draws primarily from van Dijk (2009) to make the distinction between critical theory, critical analysis, and critical application (Ferguson, 2017, p. 54). More specifically, at least to analyze the names of schools in Winnipeg School Division, Ferguson draws from Bloor & Bloor (2007) to inform her understanding of names as a specific discourse genre (Ferguson, 2017, p. 54-55).

CDA was used to examine a variety of texts including sections of the Manitoba Education and Training website, particularly the AAA (Aboriginal Academic Achievement) Grant Support Document, as well as a screen clipping of a list of 80 school names, and finally a number of personal texts and narratives from Ferguson’s course work, personal writing, and thesis writing process (Ferguson, 2017, p. 55-57). The analysis of these documents differs slightly, but broadly speaking, Ferguson first looks at the macrostructures, the memorable aspects of a discourse, and then microstructures and mental models (van Dijk, 2009) (Ferguson, 2017, p. 60). The emergent themes were grouped, and a larger arts-informed reflection informed a number of recommendations including highlighting the importance of considering the language position of Indigenous peoples relative to school and education program names, and critically examining the authorship of school and divisional publications among many others (Ferguson, 2017, p. 107-113).

Origins and Objectives of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach that is used to examine the relationships of “dominance, discrimination, power and control, as manifested in language” (Machin & Mayr, 2001, p. 2). Originally drawing from the work of Foucault, CDA analysts conceptualize power from structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives, meaning that power is derived from structures within which social actors are forced to act, and achieved through the manipulation of discourse (Blackledge, 2012). In CDA, *language* can also be referred to interchangeably with *texts* and *discourses*. These terms differ slightly depending on the underlying theories grounding particular branches of CDA. The aim of CDA is to critically analyse social inequalities as they are “expressed, signaled, legitimized” and constructed, transparently or opaquely, through language (Blackledge, 2012, p. 2). CDA views language as a means of social construction, “therefore, discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of those processes and structures” (p. 24).

CDA developed from the work of critical linguists in the late 1970s, namely Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Gunter Kress and Tony Trew, who were interested in demonstrating how language and grammar can be used as “ideological instruments” to convey underlying beliefs and values in texts (p. 2). From there, CDA grew through the foundational work of a few key scholars in the 1990s, including Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Gunther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 3). Each of these scholars has written about their varying approaches and theories of CDA, meaning there are a lot of interpretations of

CDA used across many disciplines, but primarily philosophy, sociology, anthropology, education, and psychology (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 18)¹¹.

Discourse analysis, broadly speaking, refers to the analysis of written and spoken language. There are two major approaches to discourse analysis: *language-in-use*, which is concerned with “the micro dimensions of language, grammatical structures, and how these features interplay within a social context,” and *sociopolitical*, which is most commonly used in the humanities, and is concerned with “how language forms and influences the social context” (Salkind, 2010, p. 368). CDA falls under the sociopolitical approach to discourse analysis, as it is concerned with the way language influences social contexts, and how social contexts influence language (Salkind, 2010). The term “critical” in CDA refers to the study of power relations as rooted in the Frankfurt school of critical theory (Rogers, 2004).

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), there are eight major theoretical approaches to CDA: “French discourse analysis; critical linguistics; social semiotics; sociocultural change and change in discourse; socio-cognitive studies; discourse-historical method; reading analysis; and the Duisburg School” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 206). Each of these approaches overlap to some degree and vary depending on how they define text and consider historical and political contexts, among other factors.

Critical linguistics is considered to be a theoretical precursor to CDA and is concerned with how linguistic choices at the micro level reveal ideologies in texts in particular contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Social semiotics involves exploring the relationship between signs (or symbols), signifiers, and the signified, and their intended meaning (Riera, n.d.). It analyzes

¹¹ It is important to note that there is an Indigenous critical linguistics area that could and should have been considered to further support this research. However, I acknowledge that I was unaware of this area of literature at the time of this writing.

systems of meaning from the perspective of social processes and social structures rather than starting with language structure (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Sociocultural change and change in discourse theory was developed by Fairclough. It aims to address the links between discourse, ideology, and power, and involves the application of a three-dimensional framework that is used to analyse language texts, discourse practice, and discursive events as sociocultural practices (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Socio-cognitive studies refers to the work of van Dijk and places emphasis on “cognition as the mediator of discourse and social structures” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 207).

The discourse-historical method, attributed primarily to Wodak and informed by sociolinguists and interactional sociolinguistics (including Goffman’s sociology of everyday life), places a larger emphasis on the historical contexts in which discourses occur, and how those contexts affect language use (Reisigl, 2017). While Goffman does not have a specific theory of power, his work reveals an implicit conceptualization of power as “a potential or capacity comprised of resources, including infra-resources” (Rogers, 1977, p. 93). In other words, power is a capacity or ability to act and is a function of “situation based and individual-based” factors (Rogers, 1977, p. 90).

Reading analysis, developed by Maas, views discourses as hermeneutic, meaning that text and context cannot be understood separately (Zienkowski et al., 2011). Finally, the Duisburg School approach to CDA draws on Foucault’s notion of discourse and views the overall discourse of society (made up of conventional speech and power relations) as being understood within particular discourse domains (like politics, media, and science) (Zienkowski et al., 2011).

For the purposes of this study, Gee’s (2005, 2014) approach to discourse analysis is used. This approach builds upon a theoretical approach to CDA by Fairclough and Wodak (2001) who

were primarily informed by the theories of Foucault. This approach emphasizes the role of discourse as power and contends that social practices are shaped and enacted through language (Salkind, 2010). Fairclough extends this theory by concluding that discourses communicated through language project social values and ideas and in turn, contribute to the reproduction of social inequities (Fairclough, 1997). Fairclough and Wodak’s work have influenced CDA scholars in the area of education research, namely Collins (1986), Gee (1990), Heath (1983), and Street (1985) (Rogers et al., 2016). This study draws primarily on the work of Gee (2005, 2014), as he is considered to have brought discourse analysis to the field of education research. Though his approach departs from the work of Foucault, his theories of CDA along with his Toolkit for conducting CDA are ideal for a novice CDA researcher (Gee, 2011).

Defining Critical Discourse Analysis terms

The theoretical understandings of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) terms below vary within CDA literature. For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined based on the theories of Ruth Wodak (2001), Norman Fairclough (2001), and Jim Gee (2014).

Discourse: In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) there is some debate about what discourse actually is, and what it can include. Fairclough (2001) defines discourse as “a diverse representation of social life which [is] inherently positioned” (p. 123). The various representations of social life are influenced by the position of the person or entity contributing to the discourse, and their relationship to the subject of the discourse. For example, a group of people experiencing homelessness would be represented differently in politics, social sciences, education, medicine, etc. (2001). These representations consist of “words, deeds and interactions, thoughts and feelings, times and places that allow us to enact and identify socially situated identities” (Gee, 2005, p. 36).

Furthermore, discourses continue to “evolve and become independent as a result of historical processes” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 37). This means that in order to successfully analyze texts using CDA, special attention must be paid to the specific contexts surrounding the discourse. “Every discourse is historically produced and interpreted [...] it is situated in time and space” (p. 3).

For the purposes of this study, discourses of Truth and Reconciliation are being examined in relation to specific contexts of time, place, and space within a cross-section of the texts of Manitoba school divisions.

Communicator: This term refers to the person or entity that is contributing to discourse by communicating their message through language/text (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Communicators can also be called speakers or authors. In the case of this research, the communicators are school divisions across Manitoba.

Social Actors or Participants: These terms are often used interchangeably in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and refer to the individuals or groups of people being represented by communicators through discourse (Fairclough, 2001). The communicator has the ability to make particular language choices in order to reflect how they wish to represent social actors and characterize their relationship to social actors (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For example, school divisions make choices in their CIPs and CRs when representing social actors such as Indigenous students, teachers, guardians, etc.

Recipient: This term refers to the person or entity receiving the communicated message from a communicator (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Recipients can also be called listeners or readers. In this study, recipients of texts communicated by school divisions include members of the school communities, and the general public. It is also important to note that as a researcher, I am also a

recipient of the communicated message from the communicator, and that my perspectives and lived experiences shape how I understand the messages communicated in CIPs and CRs.

Language/Text: Text and language are the medium through which communication is delivered (Wood & Kroger, 2000). In CDA, texts can be written like policies and correspondence, and spoken like conversations and speeches. CDA is interested in examining texts as “sites of struggle” as they “show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 11). The texts being used in this research are CIPs and CRs.

Context: According to Gee (2014), context includes “the physical setting in which the communication takes place” as well as “what has previously been said and done by those involved in the communication” and “any shared knowledge those involved have, including shared cultural knowledge” (p. 12). What the communicator says, and the context in which they say it, determines the meaning of the text (p. 16). Wodak has a multi-layered conceptualization of context that reflect the importance of context through the lens of linguistics at the micro-level, and broadening to encompass larger historical contexts at the macro-level. Wodak conceptualizes context appearing at four levels: the immediate language (language and grammatical choices on the page), “intertextual relationships between texts, genres, and discourses,” the social level or “context of situation,” and “socio-political or historical” contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 29).

This study is concerned with the contexts within which CIPs and CRs are produced by school divisions. My analysis considers the micro-contexts of language-in-use within these texts but also on the contexts where these texts are situated in the historical and political discourses of Truth and Reconciliation more broadly. For example, I examine the use of terminology in CIPs

and CRs related to Indigenous peoples, and also how that terminology may be influenced by emerging political discourses of Truth and Reconciliation.

Critical Discourse Analysis in Practice

To illustrate with a concrete example of language use that provides insight into discourse, a document that uses the word “Indigenous” rather than “Aboriginal” links the text to historical and political ideologies related to what the author perceives as the “correct” terminology to use (by “correct” I mean accepted as the social norm by the intended audience of the text). To analyse this particular language-in-use choice I first consider the historical and political implications of both of these words; their denotative and possible connotative meanings, and when and where they are most commonly used. “Aboriginal” is a word of English origins and was commonly used in texts authored by Indigenous peoples and organizations and favoured by media in Canada until relatively recently. In 2014, The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Anishinabek of Ontario publicly denounced the use of the term “aboriginal” because of the English origins of the word, and the fact that “‘ab’ is a Latin prefix that means ‘away from’ or ‘not’” therefore, “Aboriginal can mean “not original”” (Marks, 2014). When the term “aboriginal” fell out of favour with Indigenous peoples, the term “Indigenous” became more prevalent. The term “Aboriginal” is still used in current discourses related to the Canadian legal system, where a distinction is made between “Indigenous law” and “Aboriginal law” related to language used in the Indian Act (1876) (JFK Law, 2016).

The term “Indigenous” became widely used in the 1970s in international contexts after the emergence of Indigenous rights movements around the world as a way to identify and unite [Indigenous] communities and represent them in political arenas such as the United Nations. *Indigenous* was chosen over other terms that leaders felt reflected

particular histories and power dynamics, or had been imposed by the colonizers.

(Indigenous Foundations, 2009)

The term “Indigenous”, in the context of Canada, is used to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples living in what is now called Canada. However, this is not to detract from the more encompassing definition of the term which refers to “Indigenous peoples throughout the world” (Vowel, 2016, p. 10).

There are clearly different connotations and understandings of these terms, which are further unpacked in Appendix A. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call’s to Action document uses both terms. A word search of “Indigenous” in this document produces 52 results (mostly related to the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), while the word “Aboriginal” produces 165 results (with the clarification that this term is used to refer to “First Nations, Inuit, and Métis”) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p.1). This demonstrates the fluidity of language use in different contexts and for different purposes.

Once I have understood the meanings and contexts of terms used, I can then make some observations about what that particular language choice means relative to the document and the organization that has used it. Based on the historical and contextual information in the previous paragraphs, using the term “Aboriginal” could perhaps indicate that the author of the text is unaware that the term is not typically favoured by Indigenous peoples, at least not among nations represented by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The use of this term could also mean that the author or organization has an outdated understanding of the current social/political preference for a different term; it could mean that they are considering the term in a legal context; it could also mean that they are reproducing language they have seen in similar or previous versions of the document, or that they simply prefer the term themselves.

When these implications of language are connected to Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous education, using CDA, I could conclude that the author or organization is making language choices that could be perceived by the public as outdated, and that that could give the impression that the organization still has some work to do, or at least some language to reconsider, when it comes to Reconciliation.

Jim Gee and Critical Discourse Analysis

Jim Gee is an American researcher in the field of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. His work, *Social Linguistics and Literacies* (1990) is considered to have brought discourse analysis into the field of education research (Rogers et al., 2016). Gee’s work predominantly follows the theories of French discourse analysis and the work of Norman Fairclough. In *How to Do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* (2014), Gee presents a series of twenty-seven tools used to attend to particular aspects of language, text, and context in order to conduct CDA (see Table 1). Gee defines his tools as a particular set of questions to ask of data that require the reader to “look quite closely at the details of language in oral and written communication” (Gee, 2014). Based on CDA theory and methods informed by Fairclough, these tools offer a practical starting point for fledgling CDA researchers.

While all the tools are useful to conduct CDA, in order to highlight aspects of text that are relevant to the type and purpose of the documents I analyze, three of the tools are used in this study. These tools include: The Context is Reflexive Tool, The Identities Building Tool, and the Relationship Building Tool. All three of these tools fall under the category of Building Things in the World because they have to do with interrogating the way texts not only exist within a particular set context (the physical setting in which the communication takes place), but also how those texts *shape* context. Gee explains that:

when we speak we build and design what we have to say to fit the context in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak – what we say and how we say it – helps create that very context (2014, p. 84).

These Building Things in the World tools were chosen because they fit well with the purpose of this study, which is interested primarily in the contexts created and shaped by the discourses of school divisions in regard to Truth and Reconciliation, and how those created contexts are primarily influenced by motivations for positive reputations understood through OIM theory.

Table 1

Gee’s tools for conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (2014)

Language and Context	Saying, Doing, and Designing	Building Things in the World	Theoretical Tools
The Dexis Tool	The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool	<i>The Context is Reflexive Tool*</i>	The Situated Meaning Tool
The Fill in Tool	The Vocabulary Tool	The Significance Building Tool	The Social Languages Tool
The Making Strange Tool	The Why This Way Not That Way Tool	The Activities Building Tool	The Intertextuality Tool
The Subject Tool	The Integration Tool	<i>The Identities Building Tool *</i>	The Figured Worlds Tool
The Intonation Tool	The Topics and Themes Tool	<i>The Relationship Building Tool*</i>	The Big “D” Discourse Tool
The Frame Problem Tool	The Stanza Tool	The Politics Building Tool	
		The Connections Building Tool	
		The Cohesion Tool	
		The Sign Systems and Knowledge Building Tool	
		The Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool	

**Denotes the specific tools being used in this study*

The Context is Reflexive Tool asks readers to consider the assumptions made by the communicator about the historical, cultural, and other contexts, and how they may be reproducing or transforming contexts with textual choices. The Identities Building Tool asks readers to consider the ways that different identities are enacted by the communicator in different contexts, and more specifically what textual choices they are making in an effort to be recognized as having a particular identity by the reader or recipient. Finally, the Relationship Building Tool is closely tied to the Identities tool. It asks readers to consider how relationships between different social actors are created, maintained, or transformed through textual choices.

Assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis and the Role of Researcher

Critical Discourse Analysis is based on a number of fundamental assumptions about communication that have been developed and articulated by semiotician Gunther Kress, 1990. The first key assumption is that “language is a social phenomenon,” meaning that the semiotics of language are used in order for us to relate to one another (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 6). Secondly, language is used to express the values and beliefs of institutions and social groupings, not just individuals (Kress, 1990). This is important to consider when conducting CDA on policy documents or other texts when the identity of the author is constructed through the text. Third, all users of language, whether the communicator/writer/speaker or recipient/reader/listener, bring different knowledge of language based on their socio-cultural positioning (Kress, 1990). This means that intended meanings can be communicated and interpreted differently, and that recipients of communication “are not passive” in their relationship to texts (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 6).

All of these assumptions lead to a larger assumption that CDA requires an analysis of language “that takes history into account,” including political and ideological contexts of a

particular time and place (Kress, 1990). Language does not exist in a vacuum, therefore meaning is influenced by and dependent upon the contexts from which it is constructed.

Since texts are not neutral in CDA, nor are consumers of texts, researchers conducting CDA must recognise that they are situated within the discourses they are analyzing (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). By engaging with texts, researchers become a part of the discourses they are analyzing.

Organizational Impression Management (OIM)

Organizational Impression Management (OIM) is a theory that stems from the work of Canadian-born sociologist and social psychologist Erving Goffman. In his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman develops a dramaturgical theory that uses theatre as a metaphor for the ways in which individuals/actors (or groups like organizations or institutions) adapt their behaviour in different social situations depending on the context, and the impression they wish to convey to their audience. Goffman coined the term *impression management* to refer to the actions taken by individual social actors in order to appear to behave “in accordance with community and social norms” (Persson, 2018, p. 4). In addition to behaving in a way that appears appropriate to the situation, impression management involves the social actor’s attempt to influence the audience in order to be viewed favourably. Goffman theorizes that conceptualizations of self are entirely dependent on the social situation the actor find themselves in.

This dramaturgical theory rests on two assumptions about the social actor which can be either an individual or an organization; first, that the social actor (in this case, a school division in Manitoba) has something to gain from demonstrating that it adheres to the norms of “politeness and decency” required of the social situation, and second, that this demonstration

does not reflect how the social actor acts outside of that social situation (Persson, 2018, p. 78). These sometimes disparate states of demonstrated behaviour are called regions. The front region represents the performative demonstration of behaviour for a particular social situation, and the back region represents the space where the behaviour may differ (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman’s theories have been adopted and expanded in a variety of disciplines including management studies. This field is concerned with the economic and reputational implications of organizations and corporations as social actors rather than individuals. People tend to personify organizations and view them as “coherent and purposive social entities (i.e. as conscious actors or ‘wholes’)” rather than a collection of individuals (Love & Kraatz, 2009, p. 316).

Organizations can become well known over time for particular ideologies and actions which are judged favourably or unfavorably by observers (Lang et al., 2011). For example, a school division might attempt to establish a favourable reputation showcasing the academic achievements of students by displaying the names of students who have received scholarships with large monetary value in local publications or on the walls of their offices. This could be seen as evidence of the academic excellence or rigour of the division to viewers and contribute to the reputation of the division as the catalyst for these achievements rather than the students themselves. In this example, the achievements of students are absorbed into the larger reputation of the division as a cohesive whole. OIM can be used as a theory to understand what organizations do to maintain a favourable impression or a positive reputation among the organization’s stakeholders.

The key to successful OIM is maintaining a positive reputation which is “rooted in the organization’s historical behaviour and associations” (Lang et al., 2011, p. 154). Reputation, and any changes to reputation, influence the relationship between an organization and its

stakeholders. If an organization maintains a favourable reputation, then stakeholders are more willing to give the organization the benefit of the doubt if negative information comes to light, or if the organization’s actions occasionally stray from their established behaviours or associations. Alternately, if an organization’s latest behaviours or associations are too jarring, it risks losing its favourable reputation and ultimately the trust of its stakeholders.

The attempts by educational organizations to maintain a positive reputation with key stakeholders and the broader community can be understood through OIM theory. At present, there is a moral and political imperative for school divisions to address the TRC’s Calls to Action. Since school divisions are larger organizations, the most transparent ideological standpoint of those organizations is presented in documents made available to their stakeholders. It is difficult to assess to what degree school divisions are conscious of managing their reputation as it pertains to Truth and Reconciliation, and whether the actions and behaviours of those school divisions differ in any significant way across front and back regions and out of the public discourse. However, Critical Discourse Analysis provides one means of examining the discursive choices of school divisions to determine what type of impressions they are making, and perhaps provide a peek behind the proverbial ‘curtain’. Organizational Impression Management provides a theory through which to explore the potential interpretations of these discursive choices and consider the rationale for these choices.

Illustrated Theoretical Framework

To recap, this chapter has offered a brief history of Indigenous education in Canada in order to contextualize the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It has also highlighted the ways in which discourses of Truth and Reconciliation have been ongoing in similar reports and position papers over the last fifty years. Since the TRC’s Final Report and

Calls to Action are the latest contributions in reconciliatory discourses, it is important to consider how the work of the TRC differs from its predecessors and how it has been critiqued. One key differential in the TRC is the emphasis on the role of non-Indigenous Canadians in confronting and acknowledging uncomfortable truths and actively working toward Reconciliation. Major criticisms of the framework of the TRC have also been discussed. The most prominent of these is the paradox of states of power (the Canadian government and settler-colonial institutions) that uphold existing and established colonial systems assuming a neutral position and creating their own mechanisms to provide an account of their progress toward Reconciliation.

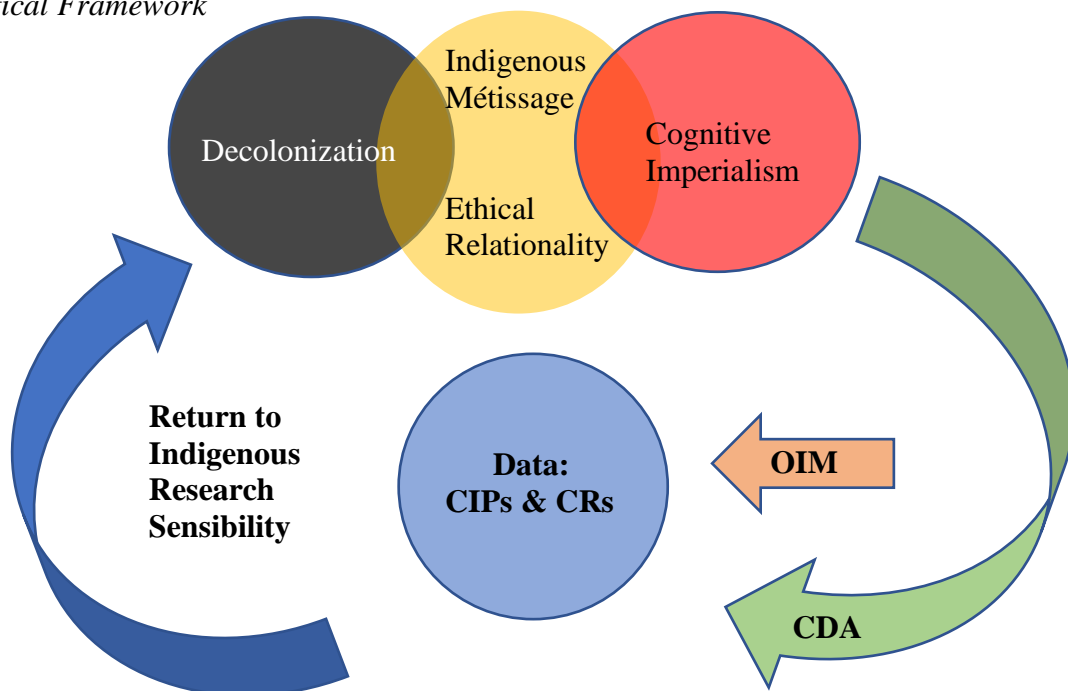
I have also reviewed and considered reports on the progress toward answering the Calls to Action, and how the perception of progress seems to depend on the perspective and ideologies of those who are passing judgement, and their metrics. At the provincial level, the former Premier, Brian Pallister, current Premier, Heather Stefanson, and current government ministers have done a poor job of presenting themselves favourably in public discourses of Truth and Reconciliation and are attempting to repair the damage to their reputations. This leads to questions about the ways in which organizations are attempting to attend to their reputation in political contexts, but also within education contexts at a time when repairing trust with stakeholders, particularly Indigenous peoples, is paramount to the process of Reconciliation. Finally, I have presented CDA as a methodology to unpack the language employed by school divisions and how they contribute to public discourses of Truth and Reconciliation. Figure 1 is provided below as a visual guide to how Indigenous research sensibilities, OIM and CDA are used together for this study.

The figure illustrates that the three main concepts that inform the Indigenous Research Sensibility used in this study (Decolonization, Cognitive Imperialism, and Indigenous Métissage)

are being used to inform the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) from select school divisions in Manitoba. In turn, the CIPs and CRs, project particular ideologies and values that are deliberately constructed by school divisions for the public, specifically the communities in which they operate. Organizational Impression Management (OIM) is used as a theory to inform the analysis in terms of how these divisions attempt to attend to their reputations, and what impressions they wish to convey. This study applies CDA to CIPs and CRs through careful consideration of the ways in which language is used and discourses constructed within these documents. This analysis provides insight into discourses within school divisions and allows for speculation on the underlying assumptions and beliefs about Indigenous Education and Truth and Reconciliation that the divisions have presented, and how that might be perceived by the public. Finally, the analysis turns back to Indigenous Research Sensibilities to provide further insights and possibilities to disrupt existing assumptions within the discourses.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins by providing more details about methodology as it pertains to this study. The study design is then described along with the data selection and collection process. Further important contextual information is provided for the data sources. Finally, this chapter discusses the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in education contexts, as well as the limitations of CDA as a methodology, ethical concerns, and other general limitations of the study.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Qualitative Research

This section further explains the relationship between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Indigenous Research Sensibilities within this study and how they pertain to my specific research questions. The research questions below are framed by the work of Jim Gee, 2014, specifically the identities building tool, the relationship building tool, and the conversation/context tool. These conceptual terms are underlined in each sub question.

To recap, the overarching research question for this study is:

1. What discourses of Truth and Reconciliation appear to be constructed by Manitoba school divisions?

As previously explained in Chapter 2, CDA is a research methodology that seeks to uncover the transparent and opaque ideologies expressed in texts by linguistic and grammatical choices (Machin & Mayr, 2001). By examining the choices contained within Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs), the construction of school division ideologies toward Reconciliation become apparent. These ideologies are then considered in relation to land-based and historical contexts. I use the verb “construct” from a linguistics perspective to refer to the organizational and linguistic choices made by the writers of CIPs and

CRs in constructing texts in relation to Truth and Reconciliation, and how those choices reveal the discursive sources, and its reproduction, of power and ideology in relation to TRC educational reform initiatives.

I am interested in the public face, or front region of Truth and Reconciliation as it is presented by select school divisions, and the ways they seek to maintain a positive impression with stakeholders and the broader community in these texts. How are they attempting to engage with the TRC’s Calls to Action, and how might their communications be perceived favourably or unfavourably by their stakeholders?

The three sub questions are:

- a) What do Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Reports of select Manitoba school divisions say about their organizational identity (or identities)?

This question gets at the CDA concept of *modalities*. Modality is a linguistic feature commonly examined in CDA that includes “any unit of language that expresses the speaker’s opinion of or commitment to what they say” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 186). Fairclough states that modality plays an important role in “the texturing of identities” because it reveals information about the identity of the communicator and how they relate to the information they are conveying (2003, p. 166). Gee (2014) suggests the use of his identities tool to aid in the discovery of identities within texts. School divisions employ a number of representational strategies to “build different identities for themselves in different contexts” (Gee, 2014, p. 116). An analysis of these identities allows us to get a sense of how school divisions define themselves in relation to discourses of Truth and Reconciliation.

In addition to creating a social identity for the school division (communicator), the linguistic and grammatical choices in CIPs and CRs also represent various participants and social

actors within their texts in particular ways. CDA can be used to identify the positive, negative, or neutral ways in which school divisions characterize Indigenous students, and other social actors present in the texts including teachers, clinicians, administrators, other stakeholders etc.

Since school divisions are concerned with making favourable impressions to the public it seems evident that they would like to claim the identity of ally for their institutions. However, the discourses contained in CIPs and CRs may reveal other less favourable and often unintended identities, like those of patriarchs, agents of colonization, or paternalistic figures.

- b) What kinds of contextual information about Truth and Reconciliation appear to be conveyed in the Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Reports of select Manitoba school divisions?

This question addresses the historical and contextual information necessary for understanding the ideologies of school divisions in relation to Truth and Reconciliation. More specifically, given that the TRC’s Calls to Action are widely known and understood in the context of public education, does the text perpetuate a particular view of Truth and Reconciliation discourses?

- c) How do relationships, specifically between select Manitoba school divisions and Indigenous communities, appear to be constructed by the textual features within Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Reports?

This question allows for CDA to link to Donald’s work on relationality and the previous question about identity. Gee (2014) states that one way we construct identity for ourselves is “by how we see and construe our relationships with other people, social groups, cultures, or institutions” (p. 120). He suggests we use his relationship building tool to consider the ways that identity and the perception of identity is enmeshed with the identity of others. Applying CDA to

the CIPs and CRs provides a method to confirm or deny the presence of language choices that “deny relationality” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous social actors (Donald, 2012, p. 9).

Do these texts perpetuate colonial logics of separation that emphasize the “othering” of Indigenous students, or is an alternative ideology espoused?

Study Design

This section outlines the data selection and collection process of the study, and presents important contextual information for the school divisions, treaty territories, and documents selected for this research. Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) are also explained in more detail.

Data selection and collection

At the outset of creating this research proposal, the website of each public school division in Manitoba was reviewed for any type of Indigenous content.¹² Keyword searches¹³ were conducted for any policy documents, community reports, continuous improvement plans, mission statements, land acknowledgements, and other supporting documents specific to either Indigenous achievement or the integration of Indigenous content in curriculum or more broadly in school contexts. Once found, a spreadsheet was created to categorize the types of documents found, and from which school division or district region they were found according to the geographical borders delineating the divisions as per Manitoba Education (n.d.-a). These regions include Central, Northern/Remote, Parkland/Westman, Southeast/Interlake, and Winnipeg (Manitoba Education, n.d.-a). Divisions were further categorized by urban, rural, and

¹² La Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine, Nelson House Education Authority, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, and any funded Independent schools were not included in this search.

¹³ Terms searched included: "Indigenous" "Aboriginal" "First Nations" "FNMI" (First Nations Métis and Inuit) "IAA" (Indigenous Academic Achievement) "AAA" (Aboriginal Academic Achievement) "TRC" and "Truth and Reconciliation"

Northern districts (Manitoba Education, n.d.-b). As a result of this process, Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and their publicly available Community Reports (CRs) were determined to be the best type of text for conducting CDA. A more detailed rationale for this choice of text follows in the next section.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for increased transparency and accountability from the Canadian government and all institutions that operate under its purview, including public school divisions. For this reason, only publicly available documents were selected for analysis in this study. Ry Moran, founding director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, asserts that action and accountability are needed for meaningful Reconciliation to occur. “Monitored and transparent tracking of recommendations and Calls to Action is what combats the empty promises Indigenous peoples have been fed for so long. It is what reduces the ability of governments and institutions to say one thing and then do the other” (Moran, 2018). The need for transparency between school divisions and the public is also echoed by Manitoba Education, which asserts that having CIPs and CRs publicly available, “increase transparency and ensure accountability for continuous improvement” (n.d.-c). According to the TRC Final Report, access to publicly available data on the action that institutions are taking to address Truth and Reconciliation is paramount to meaningful change. Members of the public should be able to freely access plans and reports that clearly state what schools and school divisions are doing to address Truth and Reconciliation; therefore, only publicly accessible CIPs and CRs have been selected for analysis.

It is important to note that the “accountability” language employed by Manitoba Education is characteristic of neo-liberalism education reforms which prioritize economic growth through capitalism, privatization, and deregulation (Hursh, 2005). Through this lens, economic

productivity and employability become the central aim of public education rather than “developing the well-rounded liberally educated person” (Hursh, 2005, p. 5). However, it is not my intention to support neo-liberal notions of accountability by analyzing publicly available reports, but rather to emphasize the importance of truth as emphasized by the TRC in the spirit of Reconciliation.

A review of the literature on Truth and Reconciliation, and further reflections on Indigenous sensibilities makes it clear that an analysis of documents situated in school divisions, as delineated by provincial education authorities, would perhaps obscure or obfuscate the importance of the land on which these divisions reside and operate. In this way, land and treaty acknowledgements ask us to consider the Indigenous presence and treaty rights in these territories and acknowledge the history and legacy of colonialism. Historical discourse strands are important to consider when conducting CDA in order to ground the analysis in a particular place and history (Jäger, 2001). Drawing from Gieyrn (2000), I use the term *place* to encompass geographic location, the material form of the location, and the meaning and values attributed to the location that are constructed through interpretation, narrative, and perception.

With this in mind, a treaty map of Manitoba was overlaid onto the Manitoba School Divisions and Districts map in order to identify school divisions within the five Numbered Treaties territories in Manitoba (See Appendix C and D) (Government of Canada, 2017). This layering of maps is meant to emphasize a “potential disruption” or “transformative act” to “force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands (Vowel, 2016). While treaty boundaries may not be the perfect way to acknowledge and encompass the generations of First Nations peoples who lived and continue to live within Manitoba, they have been used in this study to consider the varied historical and geographical contexts in the province.

It must also be acknowledged that using the Numbered treaty territories as a means of emphasizing the importance of place is an imperfect solution. Treaty is only one element addressing the history of the places where the school divisions examined in this study operate. Initially I meant for their inclusion in the study to recognize the geographic location of these places and the values attributed to them. However, I have learned through the course of this research, specifically through guidance from committee member Dr. Farrell, that the emphasis on treaties is not necessarily warranted as they are colonial systems that are not universally acknowledged by Indigenous peoples for a number of reasons. These include the intent of the treaties from the perspective of the colonizers, the way they have been translated in legal and political contexts, and the lack of respect for Indigenous peoples as co-signatories, or even the lack of presence of Indigenous communities that were unilaterally absorbed into the Numbered Treaties without their consultation or consent. I reflect more on my evolving understanding of treaty and the use of Numbered Treaties in this study in Chapter 4.

An analysis of all Indigenous education initiatives, beyond the public school system and from every treaty territory and school division region in Manitoba would be an intriguing area for further study. However, for the purposes of this research plan, a school division from each treaty territory and each overlapping school division region was selected (see Table 2).

Table 2

Manitoba School Divisions selected for analysis

Treaty	Manitoba Education Region	School Division	Text*
1	Winnipeg	Winnipeg School Division (WSD)	CR
1	Central	Portage La Prairie School Division (PLPSD)	CIP
1	Southeast/Interlake	Sunrise School Division (SSD)	CIP

2	Parkland/Westman	Fort La Bosse School Division (FLBSD)	CIP	
4	Parkland/Westman	Swan Valley School Division (SVSD)	CIP	
3	5	Northern/Remote	Frontier School Division (FSD)	CR

*CR=Community Report, CIP=Continuous Improvement Plan

Three school divisions were selected within Treaty 1 territory for a number of reasons: first, to include Winnipeg, Central, and Southeast/Interlake school division regions; second, to consider the population density within this region of Manitoba; and third, to include at least one urban Manitoba school division in the analysis. Similarly, Frontier School Division, which spans all treaty territories in Manitoba, was chosen primarily for its presence on Treaty 3 and Treaty 5 territory. The only public-school districts in Treaty 3 territory apart from Frontier School Division, and within the provincial boarder, are Pointe du Bois School District and Whiteshell School District. Due to the absence of readily available Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) or Community Reports (CRs) on their websites, these two districts were not deemed to be appropriate candidates for this analysis. Please see a brief summary of each Manitoba treaty territory and its corresponding school division later in this chapter.

The availability of CIPs and CRs on school division websites varies widely. Some include multiple documents from previous years, some include a CIP and not a CR and vice versa. Though school divisions are required to post their most recent CIPs and CRs on their websites by the end of October each year, some were a few years out of date or absent. For this reason, only the most recent and available CIPs or Community Reports are used for analysis. These range in date from the 2018-2019 school year (Portage La Prairie, Sunrise, and Fort La Bosse school divisions) to the 2019-2020 school year (Louis Riel, Swan Valley, and Frontier school divisions). While CIPs and CRs are slightly different documents, they contain virtually

the same information. It must be acknowledged that updating division websites with the most recent CIPs and CRs was likely not a priority for school divisions during the Covid-19 pandemic that shut down Manitoba schools for in-person learning in March of 2020.

Data Analysis

Jim Gee’s (2014) tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are used to code particular textual and linguistic features related to identity, relationships and contexts within Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs). NVivo was used to conduct the coding of each CIP and CR, allowing for a broader analysis of themes at the micro language-in-use level. Once themes emerged, the school divisions were further analysed using key concepts from the Indigenous research sensibilities and Organizational Impression Management (OIM), as described in Chapter 2.

Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Reports

Manitoba school division websites contain a plethora of publicly available information and documents, not to mention a presence on social media platforms. Given the numerous and varied data sources available, I believed that it was imperative to focus my analysis on one particular type of data. Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) are ideal texts for analysis for a few reasons. Firstly, unlike other sources of texts on division websites, CIPs, meant for planning purposes by administrators and educators, present a concise text that summarizes all key data on the progress and scope of approaches currently employed to address Indigenous education in K-12 schools. Types of CIP data include: a general overview of the division including statistics on staff and enrollment, student demographics, descriptions of professional development initiatives, organizational information about roles specific to Indigenous student success, inclusive cultural education initiatives for all students, disaggregated

data on Indigenous student academic achievement, information on partnerships with First Nations, and other related data specific to local contexts. CRs, written with school division community members as readers in mind, further condense the information found in CIPs, often removing the specific disaggregated data on Indigenous student achievement. Therefore, in the case of school divisions without publicly available CIPs, CRs are analysed instead.

It is important to note that individual schools create their own CIPs, which are then consolidated into division CIPs and CRs, making them an even more complete data source. CIPs are primarily comprised of brief sentences or paragraphs of written text with some graphs and charts and mostly reviewed internally by schools and divisions, whereas CRs are presented to the broader community with aesthetics in mind. This means that the CDA analysis of these two types of texts may differ slightly as the CR analysis may include visual textual features such as images, photographs, and layout.

Secondly, CIPs and CRs were created in part to address TRC Call to Action #7 which calls on the federal government and Aboriginal groups to develop “a joint strategy to eliminate education and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 2). CIPs and Community Reports are a part of Manitoba Education’s K-12 Framework for Continuous Improvement, introduced in the spring of 2016 (one year after the release of the TRC Final Report) and implemented in the fall of 2017. This framework was developed by Manitoba Education in partnership with “the Student Achievement Data Working Group and the Student Achievement Provincial Advisory Committee” to review the processes of school division planning and reporting, comparing processes to other jurisdictions, developing recommendations to increase student academic achievement, and finally to “foster collective responsibility for all students’ achievement” (Manitoba Education,

n.d.-c). The impetus for this review was partially in response to the TRC’s Calls to Action, as well as reports by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP). As Manitoba Education explains, “Reports released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [...] have called for a strong focus on student achievement data and education outcomes for the province, particularly involving Indigenous students and children in care” (n.d.-c).

Manitoba’s K-12 Framework requires school divisions to “examine and analyse disaggregated data [...] to better understand trends and patterns to inform instruction and develop appropriate supports for all students” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). While the focus seems to be on overall numeracy and literacy rates, Indigenous Academic Achievement is highlighted as an area of focus for one of three provincial grants.

School division plans (CIPs) must provide detailed specific plans for the Indigenous Academic Achievement (IAA) grant¹⁴. “A minimum of 50% must be used for addressing academic achievement in literacy and numeracy. The planning for the remaining portion of the grant, focused on cultural perspectives, must also be included” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). Every year the most recent CIPs must be available on school division websites by October, but do not need to be sent to the provincial government for review. However, a cursory exploration of Manitoba School Division websites demonstrate that CIPs are not always publicly available or up to date.

Annual school division CRs on CIPs must be submitted to the provincial government and required to be made publicly available. Unlike CIPs, the format of division reports does not have

¹⁴ Manitoba Education has updated the name of this area of focus. It was once called “Aboriginal Academic Achievement” or AAA. Some older Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Reports still use the former title.

a set template. They do, however, have required components including disaggregated data on the number of self-declared Indigenous students enrolled in the division, and a summary of the use of the IAA grant (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). Like the CIPs, CRs are not always available or up to date on school division websites.

Treaty lands and school divisions

This section provides contextual information about the Numbered Treaties in Manitoba. A brief overview of each of the five Numbered Treaties is followed with contextual information about the selected school division(s) that operate within these treaty territories. The contextual information includes the land acknowledgement commonly used by the division (if one is provided), as well as the territories on which the division operates as per Native Land, a digital platform which provides users with the ability to search a world map for Indigenous territories and languages, generated by Indigenous communities, “where Indigenous communities can represent themselves and their histories on their own terms” and “where non-Indigenous people can be invited and challenged to learn more about the lands they inhabit” (Native Land, 2022). Each section on a school division is followed by a rationale as to why they were included in the study. Generally speaking, divisions were selected based on three criteria: their location (within which treaty territory and educational region they operate), the public availability of a recent Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) or Community Report (CR), and the presence of Indigenous content or signifiers within their documents for the purposes of analysis. Some CIPs and CRs did not contain any language or signifiers related to Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenous Academic Achievement, or Indigenous peoples at all. The divisions that met the criteria for analysis are Winnipeg School Division (Treaty 1), Portage La Prairie School Division

(Treaty 1), Sunrise School Division (Treaty 1), Fort La Bosse School Division (Treaty 2), Swan Valley School Division (Treaty 4), and Frontier School Division (Treaty 3 and Treaty 5).

Treaties

According to Niigaan Sinclair, “treaties are the fabric of Creation, binding all living things together in a vast complete network of relationships. They are intricate ties that must be visited and re-visited, maintained and fortified” (2015). As Chelsea Vowel writes, “When I talk to people about Indigenous treaties, I liken them to another sort of relationship: you do not enter into a relationship and then simply ignore the other person afterwards” (2016). To be clear, Indigenous peoples, and more broadly all peoples, and beings of the earth have made treaties with one another long before the Numbered Treaties were signed (Sinclair, 2015a). In the pre-Confederation period of Canadian history, Indigenous peoples and colonial powers made treaties for strategic military advantage rather than establishing land rights as treaties are often thought of as congruous today (such as the Peace and Friendship Treaties in the Maritimes) (Vowel, 2016). While most Canadians think of written treaties signed across the country, it is important to note that treaties were also communicated orally, and often involve ceremonial protocols which “differ from culture to culture,” such as a pipe ceremony that would allow the Treaty to be seen “as a tripartite agreement between two parties and the Creator” (Treaty Relations, n.d.-a).

According to the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, treaties are broadly defined as “a negotiated agreement that clearly spells out the rights, responsibilities and relationships of First Nations and the federal and provincial governments” (n.d.-b). Starting in 1701, “the British Crown entered into treaties to encourage peaceful relations between First Nations and non-Aboriginal People; the numbered treaties in Ontario, across the prairies, and into the Northwest Territories were signed between 1871 and 1921 (Government of Canada, 2015). Though treaties

were signed with the understanding of mutual respect and reciprocity, agreed upon rights and terms were not upheld.

There was also a fundamental misunderstanding about the perception of equality between the negotiating parties; Crown representatives imposed an inequitable patriarchal relationship with First Nations, while First Nations wished to negotiate and entering into treaty as equals. From a First Nations perspective, “Protection and assistance were mistaken for dependence and submission” (Craft, 2013, p. 90). Scholars (Regan, 2010; Vowel, 2016; Battiste, 2013) also caution against revisionist or mythical peacemaker view of treaties that “characterize Indigenous people as victims of progress who must be saved from their own cultural and economic backwardness by superior, wise, and benevolent fathers” (Regan, 2010, p. 86). In fact, the First Nations who entered into treaties did so often under duress, and with the well-being of future generations of their peoples in mind. They understood the changes that settlers brought and how those changes would threaten their way of life and negotiated to assert their sovereignty and autonomy over their traditional lands. The rights of Indigenous Peoples are not, and were not, bestowed by Crown agents negotiating treaty; as elder Harry Bone (Giizis-Inini) teaches, “We were not given our rights by the Creator, to the governor/great leader who comes to talk about language and the Royal Proclamation. Our rights do not come from that. We were already given our rights from our Creator, the one who put us here on this land” (Cote et al., 2016, p. 26).

Contrasting views of the Numbered Treaties “have been the source of considerable disagreement and conflict over the past century and a quarter” (Miller, 2009, p. 33). In current contexts across Canada, treaties are a symbolic but also legally binding understandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada. All peoples “who live in this land, Native and, newcomer alike, are part of a treaty relationship” and are Treaty People by virtue of the fact

that the treaties signed on these lands were meant to last into perpetuity, “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and rivers flow” (Miller, 2009, p. 1; Treaty Commission of Manitoba, n.d.-b).

Treaty 1.

Treaty 1 was signed on August 3rd, 1871 by Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and Nehiyaw (Cree) First Nations peoples. Last year marks the 150th anniversary of the signing (Treaty One Nation, 2021). Treaty 1 is “composed of the seven First Nations who are signatories to the first of the numbered Treaties” (Treaty One Nation, n.d.). The seven First Nations of Treaty 1 are: Baaskaandibewi-ziibiing (Brokenhead Ojibway Nation)¹⁵, Gaa-ginooshkodeyaag (Long Plain First Nation), Oshki-ishkonigan (Peguis First Nation), Okwewanashko-ziibiing (Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation), Zaagiing (Sagkeeng First Nation), Gaa-wiikwedaawangaag (Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation), and Gaa-biskigamaag (Swan Lake First Nation) (Treaty One Nation, n.d.; Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2009). The communities of “Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage La Prairie, Selkirk, Steinbach, Lunda, Grand Beach, Winkler” and many others are all built upon Treaty 1 territory (Treaty Relations, n.d.-c).

Treaty 1 is unique in comparison to the other Numbered Treaties that came after it because the “tense” eight-day negotiation, held at Fort Garry, was transcribed and published daily through a Winnipeg publication, *The Manitoban* (Albers, 2015). In exchange for a substantial tract of land, the government agreed to provide the First Nations who signed with “160 acres for each family of five,” a monetary gratuity, and to maintain a school on each

¹⁵ To further acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous languages on Indigenous lands, each First Nations’ English name follows an approximation of its English verbal pronunciation in the traditional language of that First Nation. Since First Nations languages follow an oral tradition, there is no standardized spelling formats for Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibway, Dakota and Dene languages (Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2009).

reserve (Albers, 2015). Thanks to the transcripts of the negotiations, we know that some Indigenous people were wary of the relationship they were entering into:

“How are we to be treated? The land cannot speak for itself. We have to speak for it; and we want to know fully how you are going to treat our children” – Henry “Red Eagle” Prince, son of Chief Peguis (Albers, 2015).

Additionally, there were further promises made by the Crown representative, Adams G. Archibald, the new lieutenant-governor of Manitoba. These promises included provisions for hunting and fishing rights on the traditional lands of the First Nations (Albers, 2015). The ideological differences between the parties who negotiated, and the legal standing of the written documents along with the oral history of the negotiations are significant and still debated today. Archibald made it clear to the government appointed Indian commissioner, Wemyss Simpson, that the signing of the first of the Numbered Treaties would set a precedent, and that they should “secure the cession of the lands upon terms as favourable as possible to the government” (Albers, 2015).

Winnipeg: Winnipeg School Division

Winnipeg School Division (WSD) is located “on Treaty One land and the traditional homeland of the Métis Nation” (Winnipeg School Division, 2016).¹⁶ According to Native Land (n.d.-a), the division resides on the territories of the Anishinabewaki, the Očhéthi Šakówin (Sioux), Métis, Cree, and Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree). Manitoba Education places WSD in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the Winnipeg region of the school divisions in the province (Manitoba

¹⁶ Winnipeg School Division (WSD) does not have a land acknowledgement or territorial statement on their website. This acknowledgement came from a memo from Chief Superintendent P.E. Clarke to the Chair and Members of the Winnipeg Public School Board. Individual school websites for schools in the division link their land acknowledgements (if they have one) to a document produced by the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (2017) that includes land acknowledgements for every school division in Manitoba. There is also a CBC News article (2017) that highlights a territorial acknowledgement for WSD recognizing “that the school we attend resides on Treaty 1 land known as First Nations territory as well as the homeland of the Métis Nation” (para. 5).

Education, n.d.-a). More specifically, WSD serves the neighbourhoods of River Heights, Downtown, Point Douglas, and Inkster (City of Winnipeg, 2016). According to their most recent annual report, the division “provides a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student’s potential and provides equitable opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020). Their goal is for all people in their division to be “Engaged, Confident, Inspired, and Successful Learners” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020).

WSD is the oldest and largest school division in Manitoba, establishing the first school in Winnipeg in 1871 (Winnipeg School Division, 2021a). The school was opened the same year that Treaty 1 was signed, and recently celebrated their 150th year in 2021 (Winnipeg School Division, 2021a). There are currently 78 schools operating in WSD, with a student population of over 33,000 (Winnipeg School Division, 2022). Survey data from the 2017/2018 school year indicates that 25.7% of the student population self-identify as Indigenous (Winnipeg School Division, 2021b). An employment equity self-declaration survey in 2017 indicates that 12.2% of WSD employees self-identify as Indigenous, and the division has an employment equity target of 15.1% for Indigenous persons (Winnipeg School Division, 2021b).

WSD supports Indigenous education through a number of initiatives including through programming and curricular activities. All WSD schools implement the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba Education Initiative with the goal of increasing student knowledge of treaty relationships (Winnipeg School Division, 2021b). Notably, WSD established Children of the Earth High School and Niji Mahkwa School in the early 1990s. Both of these schools offer cultural programming and Indigenous language classes in Cree and Ojibway (Winnipeg School Division, 2021b). In addition to these schools and initiatives, WSD employs a wide variety of

staff and support teams for Indigenous students including an Indigenous education team consisting of 16 positions, and 33 community support workers for Indigenous students and families. WSD has also partnered with the University of Winnipeg and Seven Oaks School Division to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the division through the Community-Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP), which began in 2005/2006 (Winnipeg School Division, 2021b).

WSD was selected as a division for further analysis due to the integral presence of Indigenous frameworks and content within their most recent CIPs and CRs. It also has more Indigenous students than any other school division in Winnipeg, and has a history of scholarship and engagement with Truth and Reconciliation (CBC News, 2017).

Central: Portage La Prairie School Division

Portage La Prairie School Division (PLPSD) is also located on Treaty 1 territory, on the “traditional territory of the Ojibway, Dene, Cree and Anishinabe, and homeland of the Métis nation in the Central Plains region of Manitoba” (Portage La Prairie, 2019). According to Native Land (n.d.-b), the division resides on the territories of the Anishinabewaki, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), Métis, Cree, and Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree). PLPSD is one of six school divisions in the Central region of Manitoba school divisions and districts (Manitoba Education, n.d.-a).

PLPSD is located in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba¹⁷ (Portage La Prairie, n.d.).

PLPSD is comprised of 18 schools, “seven in the city of Portage La Prairie, one in the town of Oakville and ten Hutterite Colony Schools in the surrounding areas” (Portage La Prairie, 2019). Like WSD, PLPSD also offers programming in English and French Immersion from K-12. As of September 30, 2018, the division serves over 3000 students, and has a combined staff

¹⁷ The land and territorial acknowledgement for PLPSD is not present on the main website for the division but is present on the first page of the Continuous Improvement Report for the 2018-2019 school year.

of over 500 (Portage La Prairie, n.d.). At that time approximately 1,600 students, or 48% of the total students enrolled in PLPSD schools (3470) self-identified as Indigenous (Portage La Prairie, 2019).

PLPSD was selected as a division for further analysis due to the amount of Indigenous content within its most recent publicly available CIP, and also due to the large number of self-identified Indigenous students enrolled in its schools.

Southeast/Interlake: Sunrise School Division

Sunrise School Division (SSD), like WSD and PLPSD, is located on Treaty 1 territory, the “traditional lands of the Anishinaabe”¹⁸ (Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, 2017). According to Native Land (n.d.-c), the division resides on the territories of the Anishinabewaki, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), Métis, Cree, and Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree). SSD is one of nine school divisions within the Southeast/Interlake region of school divisions in Manitoba (Manitoba Education, n.d.-a). The division office operates from Beausejour, Manitoba, and includes schools in the communities of Anola, Beausejour, Dugald, Garson, Hazelridge, Lac du Bonnet, Oakbank, Powerview/Pine Falls, Tyndall and Whitemouth (Sunrise School Division, n.d.).

SSD is comprised of nineteen schools, in addition to four adult learning centres and six Hutterian schools, and offers programming in English, French Immersion, Ukrainian, and Hutterian (Sunrise School Division, n.d.). As of September 30th, 2019, the division employs just over 700 staff, and serves over 4,500 students, 20.7% of whom self-identify as Indigenous (Sunrise School Division, 2019, p. 2, p. 11).

¹⁸ A land or territorial acknowledgement is not currently present on the Sunrise School Division website. The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC), in conjunction with the Manitoba Teacher’s Society published a researched document with traditional land acknowledgements for every division in the province. However, this document may inadvertently omit peoples, or misidentify peoples from their traditional lands.

SSD was selected as a division for further analysis due to the amount of Indigenous content found within its most recent publicly available CIP and also due to the large number of self-identified Indigenous students enrolled in its schools.

Treaty 2.

In the same month of the negotiation of Treaty 1, August 1871, Treaty 2 was signed on the southwest side of lake Manitoba at Manitoba House (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-d). The First Nations who entered into Treaty 2 were Zaaskajiwaning (Dauphin River First Nation), Gaa-gwekwekojiwang (Ebb and Flow First Nation), Giizhigoowining (Keeseekoowenin First Nation), Obashkodeyaang (Lake St. Martin First Nation), Animo-ziibiing (Lake Manitoba First Nation), Gaa-wiikwedaawangaag (Little Saskatchewan First Nation), Ojijaako-ziibiing (O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation), Binemoodaang (Pinaymootang First Nation), and Ishkwaawinaaning (Skownan First Nation) (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-d; Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2009).

Treaty 2 had virtually the same terms and agreements as Treaty 1, namely the cession of large tracts of lands for Crown Land in exchange for protected land and access to education on reserve for First Nations. Some of the communities built on Treaty 2 territory include Brandon, Dauphin, Melita, Minnedosa, Roblin, and Virden (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-d).

Parkland/Westman: Fort La Bosse School Division

Fort La Bosse School Division (FLBSD) is located on Treaty 2 territory, the traditional lands of the Dakota peoples¹⁹ (Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, 2017). According to Native Land (n.d.-d), the division resides on the territories of the Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree), Anishinabewaki, Métis, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), and Cree. While the division website does not

¹⁹ Like Sunrise School Division, Fort La Bosse School Division does not currently have a land acknowledgement on their website. The MAPC document was used for this acknowledgement.

include a land acknowledgement, the 2018-2019 Continuous Planning Report mentions that the division “enjoys a close working relationship with the Community of Canupawakpa Dakota Nation” (Fort La Bosse, 2019). FLBSD is one of ten divisions in the Parkland/Westman region of Manitoba (Manitoba Education, n.d.- a).

The FLBSD About Us web page states that the division is “located in south-western, rural Manitoba. It serves a large geographical area with family-oriented communities, strong oil and agriculture industries and many energetic businesses” (Fort La Bosse, n.d.). Geographically, FLBSD “includes all or parts of seven rural municipalities” including Virden Manitoba where the divisional office is located (Fort La Bosse, n.d.). The division consists of ten schools, focused on English language instruction. As of 2019, there are just under 1,500 students enrolled in FLBSD, 10.7% of whom self-identify as Indigenous, and a combined staff of close to 200 (Fort La Bosse, 2019).

FLBSD was selected as a division for further analysis due to the detailed CIPs and CRs available.

Treaty 4.

Treaty 4 was negotiated in September of 1874 at fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-e). Though the largest geographical area of Treaty 4 spans across Saskatchewan, the territory extends into Western Manitoba (Filice, 2016). Treaty 4 was entered into by the Manitoba First Nations of Ataagewiniing (Gamblers), Mina'igo-ziibiing (Pine Creek), Ditibineya-ziibiing (Rolling River), Sapotaweyak (Pelican Rapids), Dootinaawi-ziibiing (Tootinawaziibeeng), Wewezhigaabawing (Waywaysecappo), and Wuskwi Sipihk (Birch River) (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-d; Manitoba First Nations Education Resource

Centre, 2009). Manitoba communities built on Treaty 4 territory include Birch River, Mafeking, Swan River, Westgate (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-e).

Since the Canadian government had secured passage into the west through Treaties 1, 2, and 3, there was little interest in continuing to negotiate treaties with the First Nations across the remaining western prairies. However, Archibald’s successor as lieutenant-governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Alexander Morris, believed treaties were important for stability. Indigenous peoples in Treaty 2 territory faced an uncertain future with food shortages due to the overhunting of buffalo, and surveyors from HBC encroaching on their lands (Filice, 2016a).

Parkland/Westman: Swan Valley School Division

Swan Valley School Division (SVSD) is located in Treaty 4 territory, the traditional lands of the Inineew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Anishinabe, and Assiniboine peoples (Swan Valley, 2021, p. 5). According to Native Land (n.d.-e), the division resides on the territories of the Anishinabewaki, Métis, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), and Cree. While the SVSD does not include a land acknowledgement, one is present in their most recent CIP update, which also mentions that the division is located close to “Sapotaweyak First Nations, Wuskwi Sipihk First Nations, and Pine Creek First Nations” (Swan Valley, 2021, p. 5).

The division operates from Swan River, Manitoba, and “has schools in the communities of: Benito, Bowsman, Minitonas, and Swan River” (Swan Valley, 2021, p. 4). Like FLBSD, SVSD is one of the nine school divisions in the Parkland/Westman region of Manitoba (Manitoba Education, n.d.-a). SVSD has a staff of over 170 and consists of seven schools with programming in English and French Immersion available to over 1400 students. One staff position is titled “Indigenous Education Coordinator” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 4). 40% of the students enrolled in SWSD schools self-identify as Indigenous (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 4).

SWSD was selected as a division for further analysis because of its location on Treaty 4 territory as well as its large number of self-identified Indigenous students, and its inclusion of Indigenous education goals throughout the most recent publicly available CIP.

Treaty 3. and Treaty 5.

Treaty 3 was entered into in October of 1873, and primarily covers a geographic area across Northwestern Ontario though it extends into Eastern Manitoba (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-f). The Manitoba First Nation of Neyaashing (Buffalo Point) entered into Treaty 3, along with many other First Nations in Ontario (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-f; Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2009). Manitoba communities on Treaty 3 territory include Falcon Lake, Middlebro, and Pointe du Bois (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-f).

Treaty 3 was key to expanding railway passage to the West. Similar to Treaty 1 & 2, there were additional promises made orally in regard to “provisions of agricultural equipment” (Filice, 2016b). It is unique in that it is the only Numbered treaty that Métis peoples (in the Rainy River area of Northwest Ontario) signed an adhesion, allowing them to enter into the terms of Treaty 3 even though they were not present during the negotiations. Treaty 3 set a precedent by increasing the yearly monetary compensation from the government, forcing the government to increase amounts given to the previously negotiated Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 First Nations and the subsequent Treaties that followed (Filice, 2016b).

The negotiation and signing of Treaty 5 occurred in Berens River, Manitoba, in 1875 (Treaty Relations, n.d.-g). While Treaty 5 mainly covers most of Northern Manitoba it also extends into Saskatchewan and Ontario. The Manitoba First Nations who entered into Treaty 5 include Chemawawin (Easterville), Mememwi-ziibiing (Berens River),

Makadewaagamijiwanoonsing (Black River), Misko-ziibiing (Bloodvein), Pimicikamak (Cross Lake), Ochekwi Sipi (Fisher River), Misipawistik (Grand Rapids), Waanibiigaaw (Hollow Water), Kinonjeoshtegon, Makadewaagamijiwanoonsing (Black River), Mosakahiken (Moose Lake), Kinosawi Sipi (Norway House), Opaskwayak, and Azaadiwi-ziibiin (Poplar River) (Treaty Relations Commission, n.d.-g; Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2009).

Additional First Nations that had been deliberately left out of Treaty 5 were eventually included in Treaty 5 by adhesion in 1905 (Filice, 2016c). Manitoba communities on Treaty 5 territory include The Pas, Wabowden, and Gypsumville (Treaty Relations, n.d.-g). Similar to the previously signed Numbered treaties, First Nations on Treaty 5 territory had problems with the government not fulfilling promises including the failure to provide agricultural resources, and issues with reserve schools (Filice, 2016c).

Northern/Remote: Frontier School Division

Geographically, Frontier School Division (FSD) is by far the largest school division in Manitoba spanning 75% of the province's land mass with schools and offices in the territories of Treaties 1 through 5 (Frontier School Division, n.d.-a). FSD operates on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Inineew (Cree), Anishinew, Dene and Dakota peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis nation (Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, 2017). According to Native Land (n.d.-f), the division's Area one office in Thompson operates on the territories of the Métis and Cree. The division's Area two office in Dauphin operates on the territories of the Anishinabewaki, Métis, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux) and Cree (Native Land, n.d.-g). The division's Area three office in Winnipeg operates on the territories of Anishinabewaki, the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), Métis, Cree, and Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree) (Native Land, n.d.-a). The

division’s Area four office in Cranberry Portage operates on the territories of the Métis and Cree (Native Land, n.d.-h). The division’s Area five office in Norway House operates on the territories of Métis and Cree (Native Land, n.d.-i). The FSD website states that “we are fortunate to be part of a large number of communities – some of which are only accessible by boat, air, rail, or winter ice road” (Frontier School Division, n.d.-a).

FSD consists of 41 K-12 schools divided into five major areas, each with their own area office and superintendent in Thompson, Dauphin, Winnipeg, Cranberry Portage, and Norway House (Frontier School Division, n.d.-b). The division employs a staff of just over 1500, and serves over 6300 students (Frontier School Division, n.d.-c). Disaggregated data on the number of self-identified Indigenous students in FSD is not available on the division website or on the publicly available community reports but given the division’s proximity to First Nations communities, it is likely that the Indigenous population is high. FSD does not have a publicly available Continuous Improvement Plan, but it does provide yearly community reports that summarize the division’s goals and initiatives.

FSD was selected as a division for further analysis because of its presence across all Treaty areas, but specifically for its presence on Treaty 3 (along the Southern border of Ontario) and Treaty 5 territories (extending North of Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba) (Frontier School Division, n.d.-d). FSD was also selected because of the strong Indigenous foundation within their organization and publicly available community reports.

Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis in education contexts

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used in a variety of disciplines for different purposes and therefore, does not have a universally agreed upon method. This can be seen as a criticism of CDA, but it is also a benefit to using this methodology as the researcher can tailor

the method to address specific research objectives. CDA typically involves the selection of texts that convey a particular ideology. The researcher then examines “linguistic and grammatical choices” employed by the communicator that may “not [be] normally obvious to the casual reader” which allow the ideology of the text to become clearer (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 207). Revealing concealed ideological positions within the text allow them to be challenged more easily and allows for those ideological positions to be understood in relation to historical and political contexts. When CDA is used to triangulate data, it often involves the selection and analysis of only one or two texts (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, when used in quantitative studies, CDA can be used to analyze a great number of texts, looking at the frequency of terms for example.

Moreover, there are a variety of approaches to collecting data from texts that vary depending on the type of research question and study design employed by the researcher (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). For instance, a study might be interested in collecting data that reveals language choices that classify participants in a text (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Other studies might examine other types of features like structural oppositions which involve the use of “opposing concepts like young-old, good-bad” which can positively or negatively colour the recipients view of the participants implicitly (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Van Dijk, 1998, calls this effect “ideological squaring.” Wodak & Meyer (2001) assert that data collection may not necessarily be completed prior to analysis, “but might be a permanently ongoing procedure” (p. 18). However, while an ongoing procedure of data collection *can* be used, this particular study limits data collection to six documents. See Chapter 3 for more details on data selection and collection.

This study relies heavily on the work of Gee (2014), Fairclough (1995, 2001), and van Dijk (1998) in its approach to conducting CDA in the context of education. These scholars

recognize that “the ideological nature of educational practices and the social, historical, and political contexts in which they emerge and are transformed” are ideal for critical analysis (Rogers et al., 2016, p. 1193). Fairclough (1995) makes a case for why educational institutions are interesting candidates for analysis as sites of “social change” and “changing discursive practices” as a result of evolving “forms of power and domination” (p. 220). First, he asserts that educational practices repeatedly use language and discursive practices that are embedded with “particular cultural meanings and values, social relationships and identities, and pedagogies” (p. 220). Second, educational institutions directly impact the use of language and the ideologies of other social domains (like the future workplaces and disciplines of students); “educational institutions are to a greater or lesser extent involved in educating people about the sociolinguistic order they live in” (p. 220).

CDA has also been used to study education policy, as it is capable of “illuminating the complexity of the policy process” (Rogers et al., 2016, p. 1206). It can also reveal sites of dissonance between the intention of a policy and its implementation. While CIPs and CRs are not strictly policy documents, they are representative of the intentions and ideologies of educational institutions, therefore making them ideal texts for analysis.

Ethical considerations

This study does not have ethical implications that are typical in qualitative research since all data subject to analysis is publicly available. However, the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in this study does raise ethical concerns in terms of reflexivity and researcher bias. Therefore, it must be recognized that certain aspects of my identity “influence the research process” and that my interpretation of data is mine alone (Gorup, 2019, p. 5). To mitigate the effects of my personal biases, I have collected contextual data surrounding the documents being

used for analysis and am concentrating my findings around demonstrable textual and linguistic features within the documents.

Limitations of the study

This section outlines the limitations and critiques of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research method. It also discusses other limitations of the study and their potential impacts.

One of the critiques of CDA is that the contexts in which texts reside can encompass a great many things including historical, political, and cultural settings. This means that there are always additional contextual factors present that could impact the way texts are interpreted (Gee, 2014). On the other hand, however, it can be difficult to determine where to stop one's consideration of context when using CDA. Furthermore, this increase in the number of contextual factors makes it challenging to deliver a definitive interpretation of texts, since considering further aspects of context may change the interpretation.

A second critique could be that, since this study is concerned with CIPs and CRs during a particular timeframe and situated within a particular historical context of discourses of Truth and Reconciliation, it neglects to consider the longitudinal and changing discourses presented by school divisions over time. Linguist Siegfried Jäger (2001) explains that “Discourse strands have a history present and future” meaning it would be necessary “to analyse longer timeframes of discursive processes in order to reveal their strength, the density of the entanglement of the respective discourse strands with others, changes, fracture, drying-up and re-emergence” (Jäger, 2001, p. 51). This means that a more complete study would consider a range of CIPs and CRs from the release of the TRC Final Report and Calls to Action to the present day and beyond.

A third critique of CDA is that it “privileges particular meanings of texts while largely ignoring alternative readings including how ordinary people read and understand texts” (Machin

& Mayr, 2012, p. 210). If the purpose of using CDA is to challenge discursive practices, then it must consider the impact of these practices on the general public. Similarly, though CIPs and CRs specifically refer to Indigenous peoples, they are not necessarily shared with Indigenous peoples.

This study is limited to texts that are currently publicly available and the most up to date. Though CIPs and CRs are supposed to be published yearly, some are not available or current. Furthermore, this study does not take into account the plethora of additional support documents, newsletters, policy documents, and social media posts available on school division websites that relate to Indigenous education initiatives and education for Reconciliation initiatives. CIPs and CRs were selected because they summarize these initiatives in one text, but it must be acknowledged that those texts are broad overviews of initiatives and as such, they may miss work being done in specific schools. It must also be acknowledged that the data in the CIPs and CRs may not necessarily accurately reflect the reality of the work being done at the school level. This study is also limited by the number of school divisions selected for analysis. Further studies could expand on this research by considering school plans juxtaposed with divisional CIPs and CRs within one school division or review all divisions within one education region in Manitoba or one treaty territory.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter includes an analysis of the seven selected Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) from across Manitoba. Each division has been given a title to reflect its organization's social identity as it appears to be constructed in the documents and includes an analysis of the textual and linguistic features that contribute to the construction of that social identity. These titles were created by me to reflect my impression of the divisions

as I examined each document and conducted my analysis. Each division also includes observations and analysis in the subcategories of context, and relationships and social actors followed by an analysis of the textual and linguistic features that contribute to the impression that the divisions give in relation to contexts of Truth and Reconciliation and how relationships and social actors are characterized. Though these subcategories are based on the sub research questions informed by Gee’s (2014) tools for Critical Discourse Analysis, the larger analysis of these questions is addressed more fully in Chapter 5. An additional subcategory for each school division in this section attends to the notable omissions in these documents. The initial analysis of individual school divisions is followed by an overview of the larger themes found in the documents related to Indigenous research sensibilities.

In an effort to address the secondary purpose of this study, my own process of understanding and enacting Truth and Reconciliation as a researcher, teacher, and settler, I have included personal reflections and stories interspersed with critical discourse analysis. These reflections were inspired by the work of Dwayne Donald, who considers stories as “a foundational way through which human beings express their understanding of the world and their place in it” (2021). While my reflections do not adhere to the principles of Indigenous Storywork, shared by Jo-Ann Archibald (2008), they are greatly influenced by her work and the work of Jeannie Kerr (2014; 2020) and Katya Adamov Ferguson (2017). All of these scholars weave personal reflections and story into their research.

In this study, my musings serve as a tool to engage with the discourses present in the CIPs and CRs analyzed, and also to share how my personal experiences influence and relate to my role as a CDA researcher. While I cannot speculate about the back region, or “behind the curtain” area of the school divisions’ documents I analyze, I can share my own reflections on the

contents of these documents from my own perspective and within my own context (Goffman, 1959).

Reflection on school planning day(s):

As a public-school teacher with over a decade of teaching experience, I have been part of the yearly school planning processes in many schools. I know that these plans are conveyed to the school division which then compiles the data into our divisional CIP. Our annual school planning day usually happens during a professional development day early in the new calendar year. At the high school level staff gather in department groups, and again in committee groups based on school priorities, to reflect on the goals of the previous plan (in the current school year) and generate new plans for the school year to come. We often begin by gathering the whole staff together before breaking out into smaller groups. During one of these meetings a few lead teachers, chosen by the school administrators, explained to us that we would be gathering in small mixed groups of six or seven people to come up with a vision of our ideal school. The goal of our collaborative planning was the creation of a single definitive goal for the school for next year. We were reminded that any plans we made should attend to our growing Indigenous student populations..

My initial group was a mix of staff from different programs and disciplines. Within minutes, the conversation shifted to our report cards that were due that morning, and how terrible the technology in our building had been at a time when we have been encouraged to rely on it more and more in our lessons. Some people stayed completely silent during our discussion, opting to check their phones. Those of us who did contribute some ideas to the chart paper with our vision for a “perfect” school spent most of the time complaining about what wasn’t currently working for us – often things out of our control - or idealizing the way our school ran prior to the

pandemic. Throughout that half-hour discussion and continuing throughout the day, I heard the same questions: Why are we doing this? Who looks at these plans anyway? Why does it matter what we include in these plans when the administration can change them without consulting with us? Our school priorities got lost in the fog as we focused on the more pressing concerns of our day-to-day teaching.

When we rejoined the rest of the staff, each group put their chart paper on the wall and staff were encouraged to do a gallery walk, viewing each vision for the school. Like ours, most emphasized technology concerns, school spirit, and the beautification of our spaces. Most ignored the request for a focus on supporting Indigenous students. Staff mingled and chatted in front of the papers, but not necessarily *about* the papers. We didn't present our ideas as groups or discuss them with each other. Despite the fact that most groups had clearly missed addressing supports for Indigenous students, the lead teachers pressed on with their agenda, asking everyone to come up with one word that encapsulated the main idea of all the posters combined. It appeared to me that very few people participated, opting to start their break time early. Shortly after the exercise, during our scheduled break, the lead teachers announced over the PA system that the word meant to guide our planning for the remainder of the day was something rather generic (like *togetherness*, or *inclusion*) that left me with more questions about how it would be incorporated in other plans. The teachers around me, sipping coffee with masks on chins, responded to the announcement in different ways – some with nodded solemnly, some rolled their eyes and wondered out loud whether or not we were already addressing this area of focus.

This sentiment was echoed in the next two meetings I attended, both for separate department and priority area committees. One of the lead teachers from the earlier chart paper exercise, urged us to be as specific as possible with our goals as they projected our previous

year’s plans on the board (most of which we had yet to accomplish and were created before the Covid-19 pandemic threw a wrench in our plans). They revealed inadvertently that they had been tasked with compiling all the school department and priority area committee plans into one school plan – without the initial input of administration. This highlights the trickiness of unravelling the authorship of school and divisional plans. How can one staff member in a school be responsible for representing all of our collective planning and reporting? Furthermore, how seriously is the planning and reporting process being taken if the task is continually delegated down the chain of divisional responsibility from a provincial mandate to ultimately additional labour on the part of school staff?

In the second committee meeting our committee chair did not hold back in expressing her frustration with the school planning process as it relates to IAA. They felt that whatever we wrote collectively would and could be easily overridden and redone by any administrator outside of our group once it was submitted. This sentiment was echoed around the room. Some expressed their frustration at feeling like we are perpetually failing Indigenous students.

The chart we were filling in during the meeting had been recycled each year. I know this because, as a former chair of the same priority committee, I was asked to copy and paste new goals into an existing document with the same headings years before this meeting. When I assumed that leadership role, I took the job of developing plans and articulating them clearly in my reports very seriously. The committee members and I spent hours tailoring the plan to something that we felt was reflective of the priorities of the division but grounded in our school context and community. When I opened the document a few months later in order to start planning for the new school year, I was dismayed to find that our plans had been significantly altered and the measures of student success replaced with quantitative metrics tied solely to

academic achievement. Instead of including any qualitative data, all the measures of student success were related to literacy and numeracy outcomes in specific courses, or on standardized provincial exams. One of my administrators at the time, who had changed the document and submitted it to the division without consulting the committee, explained that they had to change the plans we wrote to better align them with the directives of the division.

My administrators were keenly aware of what the divisional expectations for the priority plans are – what they should and shouldn't look like. Any teacher in my school could look at the former priority committee plans and know that they did not accurately reflect what was happening in our building, and that the measures of success we were using were arbitrary and the data sources not accurately reported or consistently tracked. Having never been in an administrative role myself, I wonder about the expectations that are placed on administrators when completed these reports. Is the messaging they receive explicit or unconsciously conveyed through the organizational culture created and perpetuated by divisions? How can the decision to alter or undo the work of school staff be made so unilaterally and what might that mean for Truth and Reconciliation? I believe these kinds of actions, unconscious or well-intentioned as they might be, are indicative of the invisible ways that systemic issues, like racism, are perpetuated.

These experiences with school planning led to an increased sense of skepticism when I began reading the CIPs and CRs in this study. I know that the divisions want to present the work of their schools in the best possible light in order to showcase the positive, but that can mean obscuring or even omitting the negative. If a stated goal is not achieved within the time frame from a previous year, the solution appears to be that the time frame is edited and the goal remains the same. It appears to me that there are no real consequences for plans that do not come to fruition and that plans can change at the whim of each successive person in the division's

managerial chain without consultation with the staff who are supposed to be putting these plans in action. That really concerns me.

Creating school plans can feel like a useless endeavour. At best, they give staff a brief moment in a meeting among colleagues to acknowledge some modicum of progress. If we feel we have achieved even a smaller goal in a lengthy plan the figurative box is checked, and we move on. At worst, the process can feel demoralizing and hopeless. The problem with school plans is that when you call something a continuous improvement plan, that means there is always an expectation to improve; however, the targets never seem within reach. While some might consider this aspirational, the flip side to this mantra of “continuing improvement” is that our plans that evolve from year to year are never fully achievable. This is an exhausting position to take and then revisit each year, particularly because it points out how we are making the same plans over and over with incremental traction, if any at all. In relation to the TRC’s Calls to Action, it can be particularly discouraging to see how little we have accomplished in the seven years since the final report was released.

The next section of this chapter delves into the reports of six school divisions, with two further reflections interspersed. See Appendix C for a map of Manitoba School Divisions and education regions in the province.

Fort La Bosse: The Makers of Literate and Numerate Individuals

Social identities

FLBSD’s 2019 CIP identifies “Literacy” and “Numeracy” as the two main priorities of the division (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 2). “Indigenous Education” is presented as additional planning item, second to the Early Childhood Development Initiative” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 2). In the fifteen-page document, the focus on Indigenous Education is found predominately on

page fourteen, though Indigenous students are mentioned in relation to specific Literacy and Numeracy goals throughout the document. FLBSD emphasizes the importance of data collection and divisional assessments. The goals under each priority area are tied to specific quantitative achievement data. FLB lists one primary goal in relation to Indigenous education: “Indigenous demographic to see a growth of 10% in numeracy data scores tracked” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p.11). This accumulation is used for a variety of purposes including identifying “hot spots” within the division “ie particular demographics, gender etc.” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 12).

This focus on literacy and numeracy data and measurable targets for Indigenous students is consistent with the directives of Manitoba Education and the requirements set out for CIPs and CRs (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c).

Context

A closer look at specific textual features and language-in-use within this document reveal some interesting patterns and implications. While the document starts with the “I” in “Indigenous” capitalized, this capitalization lapses by the middle of the document. Sometimes these lapses occur within the same sentence or phrase (Goal 2 p. 11). This could be a result of multiple writers contributing to the document, which is typical of CIPs and CRs. While there are no specific grammatical rules regarding the capitalization of “Indigenous,” this inconsistency could be perceived negatively as “the argument for capitalization is that the term [Indigenous], although encompassing a broad range of diverse cultures and nations, should still be treated as comparable to other words referring to nations and cultures such as Canadian and European” (McKay, 2015).

A similar issue can be seen with the use of the phrase “our indigenous students” in the section regarding assessment under the goal of Indigenous student achievement (Fort La Bosse,

2019, p. 11). This clause appears in a phrase highlighting the shared goal of student success between the schools within the division and Indigenous communities. However, the use of the word “our” in this instance can be read as possessive and paternalistic and is generally avoided when referring to Indigenous peoples (University of British Columbia, 2021).

These relatively simple language-in-use choices by the authors of Fort La Bosse’s CIP may suggest a lack of sensitivity to the signals they are unintentionally (or intentionally) presenting to the public.

Relationships and Social Actors

Between Indigenous students and the Division

Indigenous students are characterized in the division as belonging to the “other” category, along with “EAL and CFS students,” who are “notably below the provincial average across all sub-categories” (p. 6). There are a few instances in the document where Indigenous students are placed in lists with “other” categories of student demographics. The potential effect of this suggests that the needs or divisional concerns around these students are perhaps being conflated. Most of the mentions of Indigenous students or Indigenous education highlight the lower baseline “competencies” based on Fountas and Pinnell assessments in comparison to the baseline data ranges for the entire student population in grades 1, 3 and 8. “Self-declared Indigenous students will have 6-8 – week **intervention plans** (using LLI) on grade 1 entry as appropriate with programming adjusted and continued as needed” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 4).

The word “intervention” is used multiple times in the document in relation to Indigenous students and suggests that the division views Indigenous students, or at least the data they generate, as a problem or obstacle that needs to be solved in order to meet the success goals for the entire student population. This language, and the lack of text highlighting the successes and

strengths of Indigenous students, perpetuates deficit notions of the capabilities of students who have been “othered.” There is no indication in this document that Indigenous students are actively involved or consulted in the “interventions” implemented on their behalf.

Between the Division and (Indigenous) Communities:

The FLBSD CIP states that “interested Community members” are invited to “Community meetings held in each community” along with parents, school staff, trustees and the senior admin. team for the purpose of “Stake holder involvement” in the development of the divisional plan (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 15). The reference to the “community” is broad and could encompass a number of potential social actors. However, the CIP gets more specific in the section outlining the goals for Indigenous academic achievement and mentions “Canupawakpa Dakota Nation” or “CDN” six times on page 11. The fact that the document uses an acronym for Canupawakpa Dakota Nation is also interesting because this choice might be perceived as diminishing or disrespectful to the Nation.

The plan indicates that the divisional Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Coordinator will be responsible for initiating “the formation of the FLB Indigenous Education Committee working with professional and nonprofessional staff, as well as Canupawakpa Dakota Nation” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 11). It is interesting that a committee presumably with the goal of Indigenous student success would list the relationship and involvement of Canupawakpa Dakota Nation last – even after “nonprofessional staff.”

Other references to Canupawakpa Dakota Nation are placed in other columns titled “How will we know they are learning? (Assessment)” and “What will we do if they are not learning?” both indicating that the relationship between the school division and Canupawakpa Dakota Nation has yet to be formally established, yet the suggested plan requires “positive relationships

with Canupawakpa Dakota Nation” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 11). It seems like an oversight to develop a plan that requires the development of a positive and reciprocal working relationship with Canupawakpa Dakota Nation without consulting with them first. Perhaps a relationship has already been established, but that was not indicated in the document.

Next to assessment goals and indicators such as “increased success rate re: grade completion/graduation” the plan lists the ways in which the division hopes to work with Canupawakpa Dakota Nation including “Parent-teacher interviews held in Canupawakpa community, naming of schools/wings of local Dakota individuals/welcome signage in Dakota language/smudging provided in schools etc.” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 11). While language and signage-based initiatives can be considered inclusive and can represent steps toward addressing Truth and Reconciliation (Brosseau, 2019), they can also be seen as tokenistic without a concerted effort to revitalize Indigenous languages (Corbiere, 2019). The ways in which this list of envisioned initiatives list uses backslashes (/) suggests that the division conflates all of these potential Indigenous related initiatives, as the backslash used in this context would indicate a substitute for “and’ or ‘or” (White, 2022).

Furthermore, the initiatives that directly involve Canupawakpa Dakota Nation appear after assessment goals related to standardized test data, indicating once again that the division is primarily focused on the data perhaps to the detriment of the relationship with Canupawakpa Dakota Nation. Additionally, its concerning that these initiatives seem to be focused on visible displays of connections with Indigenous communities. This indicates that Fort La Bosse School Division wishes to demonstrate connections with Indigenous communities, but whether those connections go beyond the surface displays is unclear. It is similarly unclear if these displays of Indigenous initiatives in FLBSD schools can accomplish their stated goal of increased

Indigenous student academic success in literacy and numeracy or if they are meant more to address Education for Reconciliation for the school communities more broadly.

Specialized Social Actors: Indigenous Education Committee and Indigenous Education

Support Teachers

Fort La Bosse School Division’s Continuous Improvement Plan states that they plan to create an Indigenous Education Committee “to support indigenous ways through knowing, being and doing” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 14). The phrasing of this goal is interesting because of the lack of capitalization in “indigenous” and also by the phrase “indigenous ways.” It is unclear what is meant by “indigenous ways” as this phrase is not elaborated on in any other area of the document. The use of the preposition “through” in this sentence is odd, since the preposition typically used in this phrase in relation to Indigenous knowledge is “of” (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). This subtle difference in the choice of preposition reveals perhaps an inattentiveness to language or a lack of understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Winnipeg School Division utilizes similar language when referring to restoring relationships to “support Indigenous ways of knowing and living” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27).

It should also be noted that the Indigenous Education Committee is not mentioned anywhere else in the document, indicating that the division has perhaps not considered how this committee might inform the goals and strategies in the broader context of the divisional goals.

The CIP also mentions “Indigenous Education Support Teachers” on page 11. This is the only place in the document where this position is mentioned, and it is related to the plan for the Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Coordinator. However, “Literacy” and Numeracy” support teachers are listed elsewhere in the document. It is unclear if these are three separate positions (for literacy, numeracy, and Indigenous Education) or if they are the same. The only

thing the Indigenous Education Support Teachers appear to be responsible for is consulting the Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Coordinator with “best practice[s] in numeracy” (Fort La Bosse, 2019, p. 11).

Omissions

The Fort La Bosse School Division Continuous Improvement Plan does not mention the Indigenous Academic Achievement (IAA) grant, despite the fact that Manitoba Education requires divisional plans to include specific planning for IAA including “the planning for the remaining portion of the grant, focused on cultural perspectives” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). There is also an absence of a land acknowledgement in the document.

Portage La Prairie School Division: The Makers of Future Contributing Citizens

Social Identities

Portage La Prairie School Division’s 2019 CIP and CR are combined into one document, and reveal that the divisional priorities, listed in this order, are “Literacy,” (p. 3) “Numeracy,” (p. 5) “Indigenous Academic Achievement,” (p. 6) “Student Engagement/Wellness,” (p. 7) and “Instructional Leadership” (p. 12). In the twenty-page document, the focus on Indigenous education is found mostly on page six after listing the literacy and numeracy goals. When it comes to goals for Indigenous Academic Achievement, PLPSD lists two expected outcomes in their plan: “To ensure implementation of the Divisional Indigenous Education Policy and Smudging Procedures” and “To increase academic success for Indigenous students” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6).

The PLPSD mission statement states that “Schooling experiences will give consideration to the future demands that will be placed upon society by our rapidly changing world.” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 1). There is a sense that the division would like to be perceived as doing the

best it can to serve a diverse student demographic (with the emphasis on the academic successes of the division’s large Hutterite and French Immersion populations) despite “challenges” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 1). These challenges include things like “Poverty within our community” and “High numbers of students entering school without a foundation skill set for social and academic success” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 1).

Context

The PLPSD CIP and CR document begins with a land acknowledgement following their mission statement on the first page. It would appear that the division wishes to signal to readers that they are aware of this social norm. Like FLBSD, PLPSD’s document places most mentions of Indigenous students and education for Reconciliation items in the Indigenous Academic Achievement portion of the plan. Indigenous students and outcomes are not mentioned explicitly in the other priority areas. This may suggest that the division has not considered Indigenous education initiatives outside of these areas. The priorities are organized and siloed, leaving me to wonder how these priorities and initiatives inform each other.

PLPSD employs two phrases of particular interest when considering language-in-use. One of these phrases is “reach back” used in the section on Numeracy goals: “The math fact data draws specific attention to the need to continue to review student’s progress and promote instruction and ‘reach back’ in this area” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 5). The phrase perpetuates a rhetoric of linear student achievement outcomes where “reaching back” implies that students are lower or further away from the desired outcomes. The other phrase of note is “‘red-flag’ zone” used in relation to Indigenous student literacy and numeracy skills based on standardized testing: “38 out of 52 [Indigenous] students were in the ‘red-flag’ zone but by the end of grade 1, while most demonstrated improvement, only the 16/52 continued to be in the ‘red-flag’ zone (p.

7). While the specifics of the red-flag are not explained, one can assume that being in the red-flag zone is not desirable, and that it signals great need or concern.

Relationships and Social Actors

School division and Indigenous students

PLPSD does not characterize the relationship with Indigenous students as a separate demographic category outside of the section outlining goals for Indigenous Academic Achievement. In the areas reporting on numeracy and literacy, the document notes that “Students in Care and Indigenous populations continue to require additional programming supports divisionally” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p.7). While the use of lists including “other” categories of students runs the risk of conflating the perception of these populations as a homogenous whole, it does not occur often enough in this document to suggest that the division problematizes these groups to the same degree.

School division and Indigenous communities

PLPSD includes a number of listed items under the heading “Together we celebrate.” This list includes “Collaboration with First Nations communities” and “Providing employment opportunities and internships (coordinated by the IAA Facilitator and the Division Career Coordinator)” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 1). These two listed items appear together as the 8th and 9th items out of 11. The positioning of these celebrated initiatives is interesting considering that they appear after other items that seem less important or at least taken for granted, like the fact that “Schools are equipped with teams of students [sic] supports” including “Administration” and “Resource” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 1). What is also interesting about the choice of “First Nations communities” is that this identity is vague. This could be because the division operates in and around many First Nations communities. Only one specific First Nation

is mentioned in the document under the priority of Student Wellness/Wellbeing when reporting the use of the “Learning to Age 18 Coordinator Grant” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 11). The report notes that the Coordinator “met with Long Plains First Nations students at Long Plain to support academic achievement and transitioning process” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 11). This phrase is a bit vague in terms of what that support entailed. While there is mention of events involving the “Dakota Tipi” in areas of the document, the rest is similarly vague about relationships with specific First Nations (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6).

Another interesting implication of this phrase is due to the choice of the verb “met” and the positioning of the noun “division coordinator” before the noun “Long Plains First Nations students” within the sentence. The coordinator “met” with the students, could suggest that the nature of the event consisted of the division coordinator bestowing knowledge and information to the Long Plains First Nation students rather than that gathering being reciprocal. It is also unclear whether this meeting occurred once, or if there were multiple meetings between the Long Plains First Nation community.

Considering that the document begins with celebrating the success of “Collaboration with First Nations communities” on the first page, it would seem that the rest of the document would highlight some of these collaborations with specific Indigenous communities more explicitly. Neglecting to do so, or omitting evidence of the collaboration, gives the impression that perhaps these relationships are more performative than genuinely generative and collaborative.

Indigenous Academic Achievement Facilitator

The division places a great deal of responsibility on their designated Indigenous Academic Achievement (IAA) Facilitator. It is unclear if this role is the primary function of this person or if they are fulfilling the responsibilities in addition to other teaching or administrative

duties. The report and plan list eleven items under strategies for the IAA Facilitator including things like “Organize and facilitate presentations linked to curriculum and grade levels that promote knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture” and “Collaboration with community and divisional leaders to support opportunities for students” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 16-17). It appears that these duties and responsibilities fall under five categories: supporting Indigenous students directly, serving as a liaison for staff and community members, facilitating events such as “Indigenous Awareness Day” and “Orange Shirt Day”, building and sharing resources, and collecting and reporting on data for all of the above (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 16-17). While all of these facets of the role are important it seems like a tall order for one person to accomplish them all. This leads me to wonder whether the division has created this role in order to delegate all things Indigenous to one person in an effort to attend to the myriad of initiatives related to Truth and Reconciliation in the division. I also wonder whether this individual feels like the various responsibilities they have are within their capabilities to achieve, and if the number of these responsibilities may potentially lead to burn out.

Teachers

As mentioned above, teachers within PLPSD appear interested in embracing Indigenous education initiatives as long as they are facilitated and initiated by the IAA Facilitator. One notable choice in the document appears in the section on soliciting feedback from teachers about Indigenous Awareness Day: “Feedback from the teachers and students indicate a desire to continue with the Indigenous Awareness Day for all grade 6 students in the division” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 7). Similarly, when asked for feedback on classroom workshops related to Indigenous content, “the majority of responses were positive and feedback was given to continue with this project in the future” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 7). While on the surface, these

comments seem innocuous and supportive of Indigenous initiatives in the division, the wording used is interesting because it suggests that there is an alternative to continuing with these Indigenous focused initiatives. I would argue that engaging with Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous education initiatives in PD sessions and in classrooms has been established as part of teachers’ professional responsibilities. While it may be important to solicit feedback on the effectiveness or usefulness of these initiatives, it seems like teachers are being given a choice whether to engage or intentionally withdraw from participation in this work. These comments are particularly concerning in the context of the PLPSD, which has one of the largest self-identified Indigenous student populations of any school division in this study.

Students:

PLPSD states in a few places within their document that student voice is valued when reviewing courses and considering well-being. For example, students were solicited for their feedback on optional “Indigenous themed” courses at the high school level, and “highlighted positive impact from the course work and opportunity for knowledge building” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6). This indicates that there is some effort to create opportunities for discourse between students and the school division, rather than view the students as passive recipients of knowledge or the target for plans for which they have not been consulted.

Omissions

Most of the plan and report follow the provincial guidelines for the inclusion of specific and targeted plans for Indigenous students. However, like FLBSD, PLPSD does not include any data about their use of the provincial IAA grant. There is also no explicit language in the document about Truth and Reconciliation.

Reflection on researcher discomfort

At the data selection stage of this research project, I wanted to demonstrate my understanding of the importance of place and land relative to Truth and Reconciliation. I knew I wanted to look at a variety of school division documents, but I did not know the best way to determine which school divisions to examine more closely. I felt that overlapping a map of the Numbered Treaties over the Manitoba Education map of school regions in order to locate a division in each treaty territory was a clever way to achieve this goal, and also signal Indigenous allyship to my committee and academic peers. I conflated land acknowledgement with acknowledgement of Numbered treaties and went so far as to claim that my decision to use the Numbered treaties in this way was meant as an act of decolonization. I made sure to highlight this claim in my proposal and was rightly questioned about it.

During the thesis proposal defense, Dr. Farrell respectfully asked me to defend my claim, and I felt myself begin to fluster. My heart started racing and I could feel the heat on my cheeks. I felt like I had been caught out and stammered some response about land acknowledgement that I knew, even as I was saying it, did not adequately justify or articulate my choices. Dr. Farrell graciously elaborated on the impetus for her question by reminding me that the creation of the Numbered treaties is perceived by many people to be one of, if not *the*, act of colonization in Canada. Therefore, my claim that the use of Numbered treaties in this study was an act of decolonization required more consideration and thought. She encouraged me to further interrogate my thinking and understanding of treaty. This was a pivotal moment for me.

When my defense ended, I asked my partner Nathan how he thought I did. One of the first things he said to me was, “*You cut Dr. Farrell off a lot when she was speaking – especially when she was talking about treaties. You seemed really defensive.*” I felt myself get even more

flustered. Completing the proposal defense was emotionally draining and I was embarrassed that my actions came across poorly, especially to someone who knows me so well. In retrospect, I feel my defensiveness could have appeared disrespectful, particularly to Dr. Farrell who serves as the sole Indigenous scholar on my thesis committee. What follows in this section is my attempt at unpacking this experience of discomfort and how it has shaped my understanding of impression management and the analysis of the CIPs and CRs chosen for this study.

In the weeks and months that followed my proposal defense, I had a lot of time to think about the experience and ask myself some questions. Why did this particular line of questioning illicit such a strong physiological and emotional response from me? If these questions had come from any other committee member, would I have felt the same discomfort? Should I continue to use Numbered Treaties at all in this study? I had some ideas about the answers to these questions, but I turned to the work of Dwayne Donald and Jeannie Kerr to help me articulate the invisible current that runs beneath them all. Donald says that “What we want to learn cannot be separated from the processes we go through while learning. For teaching and learning to be meaningful, we need to see ourselves in ecological relation to that which we want to know” (2013a, p. 17). I take this to mean that the process of understanding my response to Dr. Farrell’s questions, and my reflections about that moment, are integral to my learning, not just as a graduate student but as a person.

Dr. Kerr and I share a similar settler-Canadian identity. She has also encountered moments of discomfort in her own research while engaging with Indigenous ontologies and methodologies that lead her to conclude that she is “neither innocent of the colonial dynamics [she discusses], nor neutral in the dynamics of power and history in which [she] is embedded” (2014, p. 90). Kerr draws from Biesta (2012) who argues that “resistance is a potentially

generative feeling that emerges from our encounters with the material discursive world” (2014, p. 100). Kerr suggests that “strong emotional reactions in these moments are generative to recognizing something meaningful is happening” (2014, p. 101). Turning my gaze inward, and reflecting on my emotions, I hope to better understand the source of these emotions and become “ready to *listen*” to Indigenous perspectives in a way that is authentically relational (2014, p. 98).

What I have concluded is that the source of my discomfort was largely tied up in my efforts to manage the impressions others had of me (see Goffman, 1959) as a non-Indigenous scholar hoping to engage appropriately with Indigenous research sensibilities. While using OIM as a theory to understand the impressions made by school divisions, I have also considered impression management as a means to understand my *own* actions. Framing this understanding using Goffman’s dramaturgical theory as a lens, I chose to “consciously express [myself] in a particular way” to “give the kind of impression to others that [would be] likely to evoke from [the committee members] a specific response” that I was “concerned to obtain” in the social context of the proposal defense (Goffman, 1959, p. 3). I chose to use the Numbered treaties as a way to intentionally signal my allyship. In doing so I must admit that I felt I had something to gain from demonstrating that I adhere to the norms of “politeness and decency” required of the social situation – that being the presentation of my graduate work to my committee (Persson, 2018, p. 78). In the moment when my claims about my use of Numbered treaties were questioned, my emotional response was a result of the realization that there was a disconnect between the impression I wished to give, and the impression my audience was receiving. The question provided me with external confirmation from my audience that my words were not “evoking” the impression I intended. I write more about where these internalized norms regarding the use of Numbered treaties come from in the last reflection in this chapter.

While my intention of highlighting the importance of land and the site-specific contexts of the school divisions chosen for this study was genuine, I have to admit that I fell into the trap of using the Numbered treaties in a perfunctory way that was not as authentic and meaningful as I had hoped in regard to my aspirations of engaging in research that supports decolonization. In fact, I feel as though I have not explored the connection between land and discourse effectively in this study. The question in the defense made this clear to me in an instant, and I had no recourse but to accept that my actions did not necessarily match my intentions.

It is important to note that this experience has shaped how I read and analyzed the Continuous Improvement Plans and Community Report documents in this study. While the intentions of these institutions regarding enacting Truth and Reconciliation and supporting Indigenous student success in schools is unknowable, the words used by these organizations can potentially reveal alternative realities behind the outward signals of “politeness and decency” that they project. I cannot know whether the intentions behind the words are genuine and authentic, but I know that their actions speak louder. This applies to school divisions, but also more broadly to Treaty relations and the ways in which Treaties are not being honoured.

Sunrise School Division: Nurturers of (French and Ukrainian) Culture and Languages

Social Identities

Sunrise School Division’s (SSD) 2019 combined CIP and CR document identifies “Literacy and Languages,” “Numeracy,” “Active Learning,” and “Socially Responsible Citizenship” as the four priority areas of focus (Sunrise, 2019, p. 3). The division emphasizes the importance of “citizenship, sustainability, inclusion, and well-being” to prepare students for their role “as global citizens who have respect for their own and other cultures” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 3). They echo the rhetoric of FLBSD in terms of considering students as future contributing

members of society, going as far as making Socially Responsible Citizenship one of their priorities.

References to cultural sensitivity or cultural or language instruction is very broad and seems to be related more to Ukrainian and French cultures than anything else, even though 20.7% of the student population, or close to 1000 students, self-identify as Indigenous (Sunrise, 2019, p. 11). The Ukrainian and French bilingual programs are highlighted on page 2 and 4.

In the eighteen-page document, Indigenous Academic Achievement plans are not directly addressed. However, one item related to education for Reconciliation is mentioned on page 13, and Indigenous initiatives are couched in a list of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Citizenship report on page 15.

Lastly, SSD emphasizes in more than one area that the division is poor in human resources when it comes to teacher attrition. They express frustration that their plans often take “a minimum of five years to implement as see impact” due to the frequent change over in teaching staff (Sunrise, 2019, p. 10).

Context

SSD does not directly address plans for Indigenous Academic Achievement, nor does it report on literacy or numeracy outcomes for any populations within the division. In the section reporting on a mix of Education for Sustainable Development and Indigenous initiatives and activities, one caveat is repeated and stands out. The list highlights items such as:

“Acknowledgement of treaty and Indigenous versions of O Canada utilized **in most schools** on a regular basis,” “MMIW&G²⁰ awareness activities and a mural installation **at one school**,” and “Ojibwe Word of the Day and other exploration of languages **in one school**” [emphasis added]

²⁰ Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

(Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). First, not all of these items seem to fit under the ESD category of the report. Second, it seems odd that the report specifies that these initiatives are only happening in one school, or most schools rather than all schools. This may be due to very truthful reporting on the part of the author, and other reports may exaggerate similar initiatives by neglecting to quantify the number of schools participating. That said, it seems odd that these very simple or surface level cultural education initiatives are not implemented across all schools in the division.

Note too that the word choice denotes that the division positions Indigenous languages rather homogenously when referring to “Indigenous versions of O Canada” instead of specifying which languages are used. One might assume that Ojibwe is used since that is the only specific Indigenous language mentioned for the “Word of the Day”, but that is followed with a vague caveat of “other exploration of languages” which could mean many things. The bullet point about “MMIW&G awareness activities” is similarly vague, and the addition of “a mural installation at one school” suggests that the creation of the mural may be one of the MMIW&G activities, but it could also be tangential or unrelated.

The list of items under the ESD and Citizenship heading on page 15 shows a similar lack of specificity when listing the division’s “Increasing participation in Orange Shirt Day, Pink Shirt Day etc.” (Sunrise, 2019). The way this list is structured implies that the similar thread between the items listed is the fact that they are both t-shirt based events. However, the purpose and aims of these t-shirt campaigns are very different. Orange shirt day is held annually on September 30th in schools across Canada to recognize the harms of the Indian Residential School system (Webstad, n.d.). Pink shirt day is held annually on February 27th in schools in Canada but also in countries around the world as an anti-bullying campaign (Pink Shirt Day Canada, n.d.). While it makes sense that these campaigns might be highlighted in the same list, it suggests

again a lack of care regarding the purpose of these campaigns by conflating t-shirt based campaigns in the same category. Furthermore, the choice to end this phrase with “etc.” conveys that there is no point in providing additional examples, and signals to readers that they should “get the idea” (Kittelstad, 2022). Does this mean that additional items in this list would be other t-shirt events?

While the report lists many education for Reconciliation related initiatives, these items lack a sense of deliberation and purposefulness. They are conflated with ESD and other social justice initiatives, and the language used within the phrases for each item lacks clarity. What was the intended effect of these initiatives? How does the division plan to assess their effectiveness? The lack of context around these items leads me to think that more than anything, they serve a performative function for the division rather than an effort to address Indigenous Academic Achievement or the aims of the TRC’s Calls to Action.

Relationships and Social Actors

Division and (Indigenous?) students

SSD does not make any distinction between student demographics in their 2019 CR when reporting on student achievement or initiatives. There is no mention of Indigenous students specifically beyond disaggregated data that reports that 20.7% of the student population self-identifies as Indigenous (Sunrise, 2019, p. 11). Therefore, there is little to infer about the unique relationship between the division and the self-identified students who attend SSD schools apart from the fact that the relationship does not appear to be acknowledged at all.

When writing about the general population of students in SSD schools, the division again highlights the plans for literacy, numeracy, and citizenship. It does not appear that students are involved collaboratively in these plans. However, a subset of students identified as the “Student

Leadership Cohort” is mentioned in the ESD and Citizenship reporting section as these students were responsible for leading the division’s “Sunrise Feast”, “supporting 350 students in learning and culture with breakout sessions in fiddling, drumming, land-based education, art, games, and dance” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). Similar to other itemized lists in the ESD and Citizenship report section, this list of activities and initiatives at the Sunrise Feast is vague when identifying what culture or cultures are being celebrated. The list includes some items that may be associated with Indigenous cultures in the area, but also settler-colonial cultures as well. Again, it is unclear what the event was intended to accomplish and if it was meant to address Reconciliation or Indigenous Academic Achievement in some capacity. This item also leads me to wonder what input, if any, students outside of the Leadership Cohort have in regard to these types of events.

School division and (Indigenous) communities

Similar to the vague mention of student demographics, there is very little in the SSD CR to suggest that the division is working with Indigenous communities apart from two items, again from the bulleted list of ESD and Citizenship report on page 15. The first highlights “Partnerships with lodges, Knowledge Keepers or Elders: learning for teachers, students, and community” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). There are a few elements of this item to examine. The use of the preposition “or” between “Knowledge Keepers” and “Elders” suggests a few things. Perhaps the writer of the report was not present for these specific meetings or partnership activities and is therefore unsure of the titles used for the individuals involved. It could also suggest that the author conflates the role of Knowledge Keeper and Elder. These terms are often used synonymously; however, there are subtle differences depending on the individuals involved and the traditional protocols to which they adhere (Wicihitowin Conference Committee, 2017). The lack of clarification around these terms in the document reveals a lack of specificity or perhaps

care in their use and perpetuates notions of homogeneity among Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The document could have even named these individuals as a sign of respect. Similarly, the use of the word “lodges” is vague and could be referring to specific Indigenous organizations or other community groups. Are they healing lodges or hunting lodges? One is left to wonder.

The sentence construction and order of clauses within this bulleted point are also telling when considering the relationship between the division and Indigenous communities. The sentence begins with a list of (presumed) Indigenous cultural authorities followed by a colon and then a list of groups of individuals who will presumably receive the knowledge from these authorities. To me, the colon, typically used to separate independent clauses or introduce lists, indicates a visual divide and perhaps a lack of reciprocity and relationality between the groups on either side (Betts, n.d.).

Another item on the bulleted list under ESD and Citizenship is accompanied by a photo of a group of young women who appear to be Hutterite, based on their Tiehl head coverings, wearing ribbon skirts (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). The bullet reads “Ribbon Skirt Making Workshops at two schools with staff, students, and community. Whiteshell Colony donated seven skirts to the lending basket” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). While the sentence construction suggests that perhaps (Indigenous) community members were involved in the making of traditional ribbon skirts, I question the purpose of this initiative and how it is perceived by the Indigenous communities in partnership with the division. Ribbon skirts do not belong to any specific First Nation but are typically associated with Plains Tribes of Turtle Island and are seen as a sacred symbol of resilience and survival: they embody teachings related to Indigenous women and earth medicine (Laramee, n.d.). While non-Indigenous women wear ribbon skirts, I wonder how the teachings

and cultural contexts related to the making and wearing of these items, and their use in ceremony, were addressed in this workshop. This leads me to question again the nature of the relationship between the division and Indigenous communities. The CR states that “Ribbon Skirt teachings are a part of school planning” but there is no elaboration on how these teachings are presented and for what purpose (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). The relationship between Hutterite and Indigenous peoples within the SSD community appears to be characterized by a benevolent charity-based relationship whereby items, like ribbon skirts, are “donated” to Indigenous peoples (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15).

Teachers and School Leaders

The SSD report mentions that the “Divisional Treaty Education workshop included school leaders” and that “ESD, Treaty Training, Blanket Exercises, the medicine wheel, the seven Sacred Teachings” are “part of school planning” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 15). Again, the list of these separate items may be present to address education for Reconciliation and Indigenous student success, but they appear conflated. It is unclear how they are present in school planning in the rest of the document, or what role teaching staff play in implementing and evaluating these plans.

Omissions

SSD’s CIP and CR document presents an interesting case in this study due to what appears to be absent, vague, or omitted. Even the structure of the report is confusing as it contains some required elements for CIPs and CRs, but neither form contains all of the necessary requirements. The plan has no land acknowledgement, no specific plan for Indigenous Academic Achievement, or any reporting on the IAA grant.

Swan Valley School Division: Little but Mighty: “We’re doing our best”

Social Identities

Swan Valley School Division’s combined 2019/2020 CIP and CR document identifies five divisional priorities: “Sustainability of Human Resources,” “Programming for Success,” “Cultural Inclusiveness,” “Maximize Resources,” and “Health and Well-Being” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 5). The division, in keeping with the outline for Community Reports provided by Manitoba Education, starts the document by outlining a number of challenges including a decrease in provincial funding, teacher recruitment, and declining enrollment (Swan Valley, 2020 p. 2). Many of these challenges appear to be due to the rural location of the schools in the division and the geographic distance between students and schools. Their mission is “to create an inspiring, learning community where all belong, contribute and succeed” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 13).

The thirteen-page document includes a report from the “Indigenous Facilitator” on page seven. This section of the report details plans for Indigenous student success and education for Reconciliation initiatives. The beginning of the document highlights the growing population of self-identified Indigenous students in the division, and that Indigenous student literacy and numeracy results “continue to not be at provincial average” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7).

While the division does not include a specific territorial acknowledgement, it does mention that “The Division also provides high school programming to Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation and Sapotaweyak First Nation” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 2). This sentence is the last in a short paragraph on the geographic information. Compared to CIPs and CRs in other divisions, it seems meaningful that Swan Valley has acknowledged specific First Nations rather than allude more generally to Indigenous communities. The document also includes a two-page report from the division’s Indigenous Facilitator including a plan for increased Indigenous parent and

community involvement “To enhance, improve, and promote existing Indigenous programming and/or activities in the division that supports Truth and Reconciliation” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 8). This is notable because compared to the previous divisional CIPs and CRs discussed, SVSD is the first to explicitly mention Truth and Reconciliation.

Context

The SVSD CIP and CR document is a clear example of multiple authors contributing to a single report. It also reveals the ways in which divisions recycle the language and framework of their reports from year to year. At various places in the document the terms “**A**boriginal,” “**a**boriginal,” “**I**ndigenous” and “**i**ndigenous” are used (emphasis added). The term “Aboriginal” and the lower case “aboriginal,” are used in the data reporting portion of the document and is based on outdated language used by Manitoba Education before they began to use the more currently preferred term “Indigenous” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 4). Manitoba Education’s guidelines for CRs on their website has updated the language and asks for desegregated data on “self-declared Indigenous” students (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). It is likely that the author of this section of the report was reusing a previous document that used the previously employed term. For more about the use of these terms, please see Appendix A.

Interestingly, the capitalized version of “Indigenous” is used consistently in the middle of the document by the Indigenous Facilitator, as it frequently appears under the “Report from Indigenous Facilitator”: “[The] Number of Indigenous students who have shown an overall improvement when receiving additional supports for 2018-2019 has increased...” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). It is also interesting to note that, when the capitalized version is used by the Indigenous Facilitator, the characterization of the Indigenous students, and their families, is framed and presented positively. In fact, this section of the report uses a number of verbs with

positive connotations including “appreciate[s],” “encourage,” “enhance” and “build” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 8).

However, by the end of the document, the uncapitalized version, “indigenous,” appears when perhaps another author reporting on provincial standardized tests writes “we notice that *our indigenous provincial marks* are lower consistently across the board similar to provincial averages for *indigenous* and *non indigenous* students. This is something that we need to have as a focus for *our indigenous students* to reduce this gap” (emphasis added) (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 10). The juxtaposition of the use of the capitalized and uncapitalized word “Indigenous” in these two sections signals the likelihood that they were written by separate authors. Clearly this section does not frame the efforts of Indigenous students as positively as the Indigenous Facilitator report. What stands out to me is the way the author has used the adjective “our” to characterize the provincial data itself in one sentence, and then in a more possessive form when referring to self-identified Indigenous students in the division. The possessive implication of “our indigenous students” is previously explained in the analysis of the report from Fort La Bosse School Division, but the connotations of ownership and paternalism associated with “our” is generally something to be avoided (University of British Columbia, 2021).

The use of the various capitalized and uncapitalized versions of “Indigenous” and “Aboriginal” in the document could suggest that the various individuals who contributed to the final report are aware of current and past preferred terms on a spectrum. More care should be taken to ensure that the language choices used are consistent in future documents from the division. Moreover, the inconsistency in the language choice in this document indicates that the division needs to reflect on its role in Truth and Reconciliation and engage more fully in the process.

Relationships and Social Actors

Division and Indigenous Students

As mentioned in the previous section on context, SVSD’s CIP and CR characterizes the relationship between the division and Indigenous students slightly differently when comparing the Indigenous Facilitator’s report section of the document and the other sections of the document outlining provincial exam outcomes. The document mentions the “gap” between the divisional exam scores and the provincial averages, and between Indigenous students in the division and Indigenous students provincially in three sections of the document (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7, 10, 12). Under a section titled “Literacy and Numeracy plan” in item 7, describing the plan for the “Student Services Achievement Coordinator Position,” the report states that the creation of this role in the division is “a huge step for our division to focus on our numeracy and literacy results for all learners but particularly for our Indigenous students *whose levels continue to not be at provincial average*” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). On page 10, under ‘reporting for grade 12 provincial exams’, the report states: “This is something that we need to continue to have as a focus for our indigenous students *to reduce this gap*.” On page 12 under reporting for grades 3, 4, 7 and 8 assessments, the report states: “We have also noticed trends in gender for literacy and a general trend for our indigenous students *not doing as strong* as our non indigenous students again similar to the provincial trends.” The association between language about Indigenous students and standardized testing, along with rhetoric of “gap talk” is prevalent in many CIPs and CRs across the division and is elaborated on later in this chapter. A closer look at the provincial exam data does show a slight difference between provincial scores and the scores of the Indigenous students in the division, but these differences seem slight (5% on average) (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 10).

The language used in the Indigenous Facilitator section of the report when referring to Indigenous students and their families is overall quite positive. The plan explains that the division “advocate[s] strong connections between the home, school, and community as one means of reducing barriers to [Indigenous] student achievement” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). The report also mentions that the number of Indigenous students accessing support, increasing regular attendance, and attaining credits has also increased. The information in this section tempers the less positive reporting on Indigenous student achievement in the report overall.

Division and Indigenous Communities

SVSD mentions “community” ten times in the CIP/CR, and five of those mentions appear in the Indigenous Facilitator report section of the document and refer specifically to Indigenous communities. For example, in the geographic information section at the beginning of the document, “Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation and Sapotaweyak First Nation” are mentioned (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, the report states that “The division has engaged in several partnerships/projects with UCN²¹ including this year a construction partnership that involves private business and Sapotaweyak First Nation” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 3). While the document does not specify what these projects entail, it is clear that the division is working on at least one specific construction project with Sapotaweyak First Nation.

In the Indigenous Facilitator’s report, the document outlines the importance of a BSSIP²² grant which “has helped to build meaningful partnerships between students, parents, guardians, teachers, and administration in our schools” (Swan Valley, 2020, p.7). SVSD is the first division in this study to mention the BSSIP grant, which was first introduced by Manitoba Education in September of 2004 with the goal to “increase the involvement of Indigenous parents in

²¹ University College of the North

²² Building Student Success with Indigenous Parents

education” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-d). While the BSSIP grant existed prior to the TRC, it is clear that its creation and implementation align with the aims of Indigenous Academic Achievement and education for Reconciliation.

Indigenous Facilitator, Indigenous Education Coordinator, IAA Coordinator

SVSD’s CIP/CR mentions a number of job titles related specifically to Indigenous student achievement. The Indigenous Facilitator position information was provided last (#8) of a list of initiatives under “Literacy and Numeracy Plan” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). The position of this initiative on the list could be unintentional, but it could signal to readers the value placed on the work of the Indigenous Facilitator position relative to other priority areas and initiatives. The document describes the responsibilities associated with this role, namely “working with students and teachers to infuse First Nation’s culture and curriculum in our schools” as well as teaching Cree (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). Earlier in the document this role is referred to as “Indigenous Education Coordinator” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 4). The report also mentions their intention to create an “Indigenous Liaison” at the division’s high school “to work with our First Nations students specifically” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 7). Other titles mentioned are “IAA Coordinator” and “BSSIP Learning Support Worker” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 8). It is unclear whether these positions are in addition to the ones mentioned previously, or if there is simply inconsistent language used when referring to the role of Indigenous Facilitator/Indigenous Education Coordinator/IAA Coordinator. In any case, it is clear that there is more than one position in the division dedicated to supporting Indigenous students. Similar to the IAA Facilitator position reported in Portage La Prairie School Division’s document, I wonder about the workload associated with this type of position in rural school divisions with large self-identified

Indigenous student populations. I expand on this idea of workload and individuals assigned to these roles at the end of this chapter in the section on larger themes.

Omissions

Curiously, the CIP/CR document from SVSD contains no territorial acknowledgement.

Reflection on the use of Numbered Treaties and my understanding of “treaty” in this study

One of the most important questions I have had to reflect on since my proposal defense was where my ideas and understandings about the Numbered treaties came from and what they have come to signify in education and academic contexts. Where did my belief that inserting a Numbered treaty map would be the best way to acknowledge land and place come from? Where and when did I receive and internalize the idea that acknowledging and using the Numbered treaties map could be used as an act of decolonization in my research?

To answer these questions, I have had to reflect on what provincial and educational discourses say about the Numbered treaties. As Dr. Farrell pointed out to me, the Numbered treaties were a means of colonizing Indigenous peoples, and the treaty making process was not necessarily successful or an abject failure depending on who you ask (Coupal, 2020). While the TRC’s Calls to Action mention Treaties and land, the document does not suggest that land acknowledgements be used – yet the growing social trend has been to use Numbered treaty acknowledgements, often preceding acknowledgement of peoples, in land acknowledgements to honour the importance of land in a variety of contexts. They have become ubiquitous and synonymous with the aims of the TRC, but increasingly, they have been criticized for being tokenistic rather than meaningful forms of Reconciliation (Gehl, 2022).

I’ve seen land acknowledgements highlighting Numbered treaties in Starbuck’s Coffeehouse locations in Winnipeg, at sporting events, at academic conferences, and more

recently included in the daily announcements at the school where I teach. They have become so commonplace that most non-Indigenous people have forgotten why they started, and how they were meant to “force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands (Vowel, 2016). They were meant to cause discomfort and incite reflection. Often these acknowledgements start with stating the applicable Numbered treaty of the area and are then followed up with more nuanced acknowledgement about specific peoples that traditionally and currently inhabit the land. Seven years after the TRC published the Calls to Action, it seems like we are collectively stalled at the acknowledgement stage and are beginning to ask ourselves, *what now?* As Starblanket and Kiiwetinepinesiik write, “many people recognize that they inhabit treaty relationships but continue to tacitly or explicitly contribute to the violation of the commitments that they entail” (2019, p. 200). The question for all of us is: How do we go beyond recognition to actually *honouring* our commitments?

In educational contexts in Manitoba, the importance of acknowledging the Numbered treaties has been conveyed through Manitoba Education and the provincial Treaty Education Initiative – planned and conceived as a result of Call 62.i. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a). Many of the division documents I reviewed across the province highlight Treaty training for staff and students, often through the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM), which has become the provincial response to a lack of education about the Numbered treaties. Despite the fact that the excellent speakers from TRCM discuss the concept of treaties before and beyond the Numbered treaties²³, I often wonder whether the focus on

²³ In the years since I began my graduate work, I have had the pleasure of listening to a number of speakers from TRCM at conferences, Indigenous student leadership events, and as guests in my classroom. These include Niigaanewidom James Sinclair, Kevin Lamoureux, Renee McGurry, Dennis White Bird, and Elder Harry Bone.

Numbered treaties further situates relations in the past rather than asking people to acknowledge their *present* responsibilities as treaty partners and treaty people.

I also wonder whether Numbered treaties become the focus because understanding a signed contract is more easily understood by non-Indigenous and settler Canadians. How can the nuanced and spiritual nature of treaty and relationality be distilled and conveyed succinctly to the uninformed without losing something along the way? I also acknowledge that “selective denial of those aspects of our relationship” allow settlers to view the Numbered treaties as a “strategy to extinguish Indigenous peoples’ claims to land” (Regan, 2010, p. 35; Lowman & Barker, 2015 p. 64). I turn once again to the work of Starblanket and Kiiwetinepinesiik who point out that one of the primary challenges around the resurgence of “Indigenous philosophies of relationality emerges from the ever-evolving problematic of how to revitalize Indigenous ways of knowing and being without having them further marginalized, appropriated, or distorted by the Western world” (2019, p. 195). I certainly don’t have an answer to this quandary at this time.

What is clear to me at this present moment, however, is that perhaps more focus must be placed on the larger relational aims and responsibilities of ‘treaty’. As Lowman and Barker (2015) state, “A respectful treaty person has to throw out what they think they know about any given treaty and engage with the many potential other meanings” (p. 42).

While my decision to include Numbered treaties in my research to address specific land based contexts was meant as an act of decolonization, the reality is that using the Numbered treaty map allowed me to conveniently narrow the scope of my research. I understand now that decolonization “has to be about changing relationships and making them healthy, supportive, and safe, not just in spite of colonial power, but actively against it” (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 117). Furthermore,

Decolonization is a transformative process, one that cannot be fully revealed or understood until it is practiced, and even then, it will comprise a shifting and moving set of goals, always responding to the needs of Indigenous communities and ruthless re-applications of colonial power and domination. (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 112)

My choice to continue using Numbered treaties in this study may be questioned by some but I hope that sharing more of what I have learned about treaty here offers some insight into how my understandings have changed in the course of my research.

Winnipeg School Division: The Self-Proclaimed Provincial Leaders of Indigenous Education

Social Identities

Winnipeg School Division's (WSD) document is both a CR for 2018/2019 and a CIP for 2019/2020. It is important to note that WSD is the largest division in this study, and that the number of divisional staff is close to six times the size of the entire staff and student population of some of the rural school divisions like Swan Valley SD (Winnipeg, 2020, p. 4). The report mentions that WSD has seven strategic priorities, but the plan for 2019/2020 focuses on three of these priorities: “Students,” “Learning Outcomes,” and “Addressing barriers to learning” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 21). While Indigenous Academic Achievement is not mentioned in the priorities explicitly, Indigenous students and initiatives supporting the work of the TRC are embedded throughout the document in a description of the division and its strengths, divisional principles for ESD, IAA grant reporting, and standardized testing data. The majority of the content related to Indigenous education appears on page 7 in a report on IAA funding, and in a supplementary document in Appendix A, “Winnipeg School Division Indigenous Education,” on pages 26 and 27 of the 41-page document.

WSD describes itself as “a leader in LGBTTQ+ and human rights” and “leaders in provincial education” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 3). It also emphasizes their ongoing efforts to increase leadership capacity among staff and students, particularly Indigenous students. The aims of Indigenous education in the division have been established long before the work of the TRC as the document states:

Over the last forty years, Indigenous Education has evolved in Winnipeg School Division from the hiring of a ‘Native Education Consulting Teacher’ in 1979, who supported ‘Native Awareness’ programs in classrooms, and provided training in ‘Native Culture,’ through a Task Force on Race Relations that produced many enduring recommendations and initiatives, to present day where staff, students and the community are supported by a team of professionals dedicated to providing an education program integrated with Indigenous knowledge and practice across curricula. (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26)

The fact that the document uses quotations around previous divisional roles that use dated terms, and the fact that the capitalized version of “Indigenous” is used consistently throughout the document signals that the division is aware of the importance of using the most current and preferred terminology.

Context

WSD explicitly refers to Truth and Reconciliation in the CIP and CR document and emphasizes the importance of restoring relationships “to support Indigenous ways of knowing and living” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27). The word choices in Appendix A include many adjectives associated with Indigenous initiatives with positive connotations including “traditional” “rich” “positive” and “healthy” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26). One

phrase related to the division’s definition of Indigenous education, in particular, encapsulates the impression WSD wishes to present to the public through language choices. “Indigenous education is defined as the incorporation of Indigenous *perspectives* and *philosophies* in *all* curricular areas to inform *all* students of the past *and contemporary* lifestyles and histories of Indigenous peoples of Canada” (emphasis added) (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26). The word choice in this sentence demonstrates the difference between the WSD document and the other rural divisions in this study. First, the use of the words “perspectives” *and* “philosophies” indicates that the division aims to go beyond teaching particular ways of understanding the world from Indigenous points of view to also learning about the fundamental and foundational nature of Indigenous knowledges. Secondly, the phrase repeats the determiner word “all” twice, emphasizing that their efforts to facilitate Indigenous education are widespread and not limited to specific Indigenous education-based courses or delivered to particular groups of students. This is unique to WSD because other divisions in this study tend to silo Indigenous education initiatives or contain them in one course, awareness day, or cohort of students. Lastly, the sentence utilizes the adjective “contemporary” to describe the histories of Indigenous peoples taught in the division. This word choice indicates that the division is actively seeking to situate Indigenous education in the present rather than relegating Indigenous knowledge or history in the past. This is a key distinction to make when other divisions, and even political leaders like Pallister and Stefanson, continue to relegate the “truth” of Truth and Reconciliation to events in the past or teach about treaties from a purely historical perspective without considering the present-day responsibilities of occupying treaty territories.

Furthermore, WSD’s CIP and CR includes plans that directly relate to the TRC’s Calls to Action. For example, in relation to the Language and Culture Calls 14-17, the division’s “Policy

IGAB Diversity and Equity Education” highlights the importance of “ancestry or place of birth, first language or mother tongue” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 5). The division also offers language courses in Cree and Ojibwe and includes disaggregated data on the number of Cree and Ojibwe speaking students (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 5). In relation to Education Calls 6-12, the division is actively engaging in programming to support Indigenous families and create pathways for Indigenous staff to attain an Education degree while employed in the division (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26). The initiatives, policies, equity statements, and plans contained in the CIP/CR signal that WSD is familiar with the aims of the TRC and are actively engaged in responding to the Calls to Action within their context.

It is important to note that WSD clearly has a plethora of financial and human resources to draw from when engaging with and facilitating Indigenous Education initiatives in comparison to smaller rural divisions in Manitoba. This may account for why small divisions appear to be further behind in their journey to meaningfully engage with Truth and Reconciliation.

Relationships and Social Actors

Division and Indigenous students

The WSD characterizes the relationship between the division and the students positively, highlighting “positive increases in graduation, attendance and credit attainment” due to the support of Grad coaches (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 7). In a section on the “Build from Within” teacher education emphasizes that Indigenous students have “unique strengths and experiences” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26). Elsewhere in the document, most references to Indigenous students are presented in large arrow graphics beneath charts outlining the upward trajectory of Indigenous student achievement in literacy and numeracy outcomes at

different grade levels, even if that achievement has yet to meet provincial averages (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 10-15).

Furthermore, the division characterizes Indigenous students as having ownership and agency in relation to initiatives created for their benefit. This is seen in the section outlining the “Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)” which explains that the program “began as an idea to create a safe a nurturing program specifically for Indigenous students to call their own” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 28). Not only do Indigenous students have ownership over this program, they are also encouraged to “speak openly among peers and Indigenous staff about their wants and needs” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 28). This language characterizing channels of communication is important because it emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the division and Indigenous students. The division has created a platform for Indigenous students to have agency and control over programming meant to support them.

These references in the document indicate that the division is working intensively with Indigenous students and uses strength-based positive language to characterize their efforts in the classroom and beyond grade 12 graduation.

Division and (Indigenous) Communities

WSD identifies community partnerships as a “key foundation” and strength of the division, and expresses gratitude for “the many community, provincial and federal organizations who work with us” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 3). As previously mentioned, the division highlights their “Community Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP)” and “Community Language programs in Cree and Ojibwe” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27). The language makes it clear that not only are Indigenous communities involved in the creation of these programs, but they are also the beneficiaries, assuming the role of facilitators

and learners at the same time. WSD elaborates on the importance of the reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities.

While it does not name any specific First Nation or agency partnerships, it is clear that the division has consulted with Indigenous communities when creating this report due to their recognition of “the importance of the **Laws of Relationship** as foundational to the beliefs of Indigenous people. Our relationship with the natural world, one another and ourselves is governed by these sacred laws.” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27). This sentiment echoes the works of Dwayne Donald (2012) and Starblanket & Kiiwetinepinesiik (2019) in regard to ethical relationality.

Furthermore, WSD has the capacity and resources to fund and staff “33 Community Support Workers” who “act as liaisons, strengthening each school’s connection with both the home and community” by providing spaces and programs that “encourage and support” the relationship between the division and the community (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27).

Specific Roles to Support Indigenous Students and Communities

Where other divisions might have one Indigenous Facilitator or IAA assigned staff member, WSD proudly presents “a team of professionals” in a lengthy list of roles they have created to support Indigenous students and communities (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 26). These include “Indigenous Graduation Coaches” (p. 3), “Indigenous Programming Support Teachers” (p. 7), an “Indigenous Language Committee,” (p. 27), and “Literacy intervention support teachers” (p. 28) in addition to “Knowledge keepers” (p. 28). It is important to note that the document implies that Knowledge keepers are employed by the division as they are characterized as being “responsible for providing support and guidance on culturally appropriate services and programming within schools” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 28). This is

notable because other divisions appear to consult with Knowledge keepers as outsiders to the division rather than members of the divisional community or employees.

Omission

WSD’s CIP and CR document does not include a land or territorial acknowledgement. Furthermore, the division website does not include a land or territorial acknowledgement, though specific school sites do. This may be an oversight or could signal a difference in perspective on the importance of an overarching territorial acknowledgement through consultation with Indigenous staff and community.

Frontier School Division: The Champions of Indigenous Resilience and the TRC’s Calls to Action

Social Identities

Frontier School Division²⁴ (FSD) is a unique division in this study as the focus on Indigenous education, Indigenous Academic Achievement, and education for Reconciliation are positioned as foundational. FSD identifies three areas of focus in their 2020/2021 CR, including “Academic focus” (Literacy/Numeracy), “Indigenous Way of Life focus” and a “Wellness focus” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 17). The division does not make distinctions in the CR regarding literacy and numeracy outcomes like other divisions in this study. It is notable that the division balances the focus on rigorous academics with student well-being and Indigenous Way of Life. This balance is in keeping with Indigenous views of learning as lifelong and holistic “engag[ing] and develop[ing] all aspects of the individual – emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual – and the collective” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 5).

²⁴ Frontier School Division published one Community Report in 2020 along with additional stand-alone CIP documents for each of the outlined areas of focus in the division. For the purposes of this study, the CR (2020a) and a two-page CIP document titled “Indigenous Way of Life Focus” (2020b) have been analysed.

FSD explains that the inclusion of Indigenous Way of Life as a divisional area of focus is due to their belief that “Indigenous perspectives, language and way of life in our schools and in our curriculum will advance our path towards reconciliation” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 17). It is interesting that the document is so explicit about the division’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation in their focus area statements. The CR and CIP both use the language of Truth and Reconciliation explicitly, unlike other divisions where the purpose of Indigenous education initiatives may be alluded to but not stated directly. This is evident throughout the CR document: “advancing reconciliation” (p. 4), “culture, history, pride and truth and reconciliation” (p. 5), “relationship and connection” (p. 6) and the CIP document: “Students are knowledgeable and readily able to explain and discuss the Calls to Action and Reconciliation” (p. 2) (Frontier School Division, 2020a & 2020b).

Although Indigenous Way of Life is one division area of focus, the entire CR makes reference to this priority, and the section of the document that focuses on this priority explicitly appears on page 4 of the 20-page document right after the message from the director (Frontier School Division, 2020a). In other words, it is not a footnote or addendum to the more valued or important priorities related to literacy and numeracy outcomes as we see in other divisional CRs and CIPs in this study. Furthermore, the FSD CIP repeatedly stresses the importance of relationships. While the division places students at the “centre,” they emphasize relationships of every type: peer to peer, staff to student, student to staff, division to community, community to division, etc. (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 17).

Context

FSD includes a land acknowledgement in their CR that utilizes particular language that exemplifies the division’s views on the relationship between education and Reconciliation, and it is presented here in its entirety:

As a school division we acknowledge that our schools are located on the ancestral lands of the Anishinabe, Cree, Dakota, Dene, and Oji-Cree and Métis Nations. Given the size of our school division, we are cognizant that our work is carried out every day in a territory that is part of Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10.

Regardless of our ancestry, we walk together building relationships that care for each other and the earth. We are committed to lead by example as we continue to develop and foster healthy and longlasting [sic] relationships that centre on our young people and the next seven generations. The work we do together prepares our children to make choices that will leave a lasting legacy and benefit society.

In order to do so, we acknowledge our history so that we may learn from it. We continue to strive to move forward in a better way, guided by the seven sacred teachings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 17).

Apart from the fact that FSD is the only division in this study to include a land acknowledgement in their CR, this land acknowledgement is notable because it includes the names of Indigenous Nations before naming the Numbered territories on which the division’s schools are located. As discussed in my reflection on the use of Numbered treaties, I think this choice signals that the division wishes to acknowledge the Indigenous nations and peoples before the Numbered treaties to show respect to the peoples over the political tool used by the crown.

The caveat “Regardless of our ancestry” is highlighted as a dependant clause at the beginning of the sentence in the second paragraph, emphasizing that “building relationships that care for each other” is the goal of all people in the division, not just Indigenous Peoples. The second and last sentence in this paragraph uses adjectives “longlasting [sic],” and “lasting,” and the term “seven generations,” to further signal that the division aligns with Indigenous philosophies of education that view learning as a lifelong endeavor that is mutually beneficial for all members of society, not just individuals (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

The last paragraph of the land acknowledgement also makes it very clear that FSD sees the recommendations of the TRC as formative to the future of the division. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of “history” and the aim to “move forward in a better way” frames the harms of the past as a catalyst for improvement and learning.

Another important language choice distinction in the FSD documents is the term “areas of focus” rather than “priorities” or “planning items” as we have seen in the other divisional documents in this study (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 17). The framework for CIPs and CRs provided by Manitoba Education mentions “priorities” when presenting feedback from school division leaders, but the specific instructions for the creation of these documents does not use the word “priorities” (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). It is notable that FSD does not use this word, but instead characterizes these categories as “areas of focus.” These terms carry different connotations. Embedded in the definition of the noun “priority” is the implication that something is valued more highly, or seen as more important than something else, and in this context has connections to language used in neoliberal discourses emphasizing ranking and economic value (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b; Angelo, 2020). Conversely, the noun “focus” is related to areas of “directed attention” or concentration and emphasis (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c). In other words,

the language used by FSD does not view these categories as being of higher or lower importance, but instead considers them all as equally worthy of time and attention.

Relationships and Social Actors

Division and (Indigenous) Students

FSD’s CIP lists three outcomes under the heading “Indigenous Way of Life” including “Students demonstrate competence in language, culture and history,” “Students and community have a reciprocal relationship (All My Relations²⁵),” and “Students are proud of their cultural identity and way of life (wellness)” (Frontier School Division, 2020b). What is notable about these outcomes in terms of word choice is that the word “students” starts each of the sentences for the outcomes, further emphasizing FSD’s aim to “centre” students in their divisional goals.

Interestingly, the division does not differentiate between sub-categories of student demographics in either the CR or the CIP unlike the other divisions in this study. There are no lists of categories of students by gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. This appears contrary to the specific data requested in the reporting per Manitoba Education (n.d.-c). While there is a strong implication that Indigenous students make up a large part of the student body, the outcomes under “Indigenous Way of Life” are inclusive of all students.

FSD characterizes students as active participants in learning both as recipients of teachings but also as leaders and teachers themselves. This is made clear in the CIP through the emphasis on “peer-to-peer mentoring,” and “student leadership roles in school and community” (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2). More specifically, the CR provides a report on a

²⁵ “All my relations” is the English equivalent of a phrase familiar to most Native peoples of North America. It may begin or end a prayer or speech or a story, and, while each tribe has its own way of expressing this sentiment in its own language, the meaning is the same. ‘All my relations’ is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and relatives [...] More than that, ‘all my relations’ is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within the universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner” (King, 2004).

“Cultural Exploration Student Initiated Project” that was offered as a half-credit course that focused on “learning about culture, history, pride and truth and reconciliation” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 5). Again, the word choices in the document are used to frame Indigenous culture and Truth and Reconciliation positively, particularly with the use of the word “pride.”

Division and Indigenous Communities

As seen in the previous section outlining the relationship between FSD and students, there is a great deal of overlap in the characterization of the relationships between students, community, and the division. While no specific Indigenous communities are mentioned by name (which is perhaps more understandable than other divisions in this study given the vast geographic area where the division operates), it is clear that the division prioritizes reciprocal relationships that advance “reconciliation” “between Frontier School Division staff, students and the communities we serve” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 4).

Furthermore, the division situates the reciprocal relationship between schools and communities in site specific contexts with the goal of incorporating “local history and way of life into the *majority* of lesson plans” as well as working “in partnership with local communities to develop land-based learning opportunities” (emphasis added) (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2).

Division and Elders and Knowledge Keepers and “gift givers”

FSD places a great deal of value on the importance of engaging with and learning from “Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors” who offer teachings about “the drum, the Thunderbird, land acknowledgements, traditional medicines, tipis, healing, reciprocity, Indigenous worldview and the seven teachings” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 5). In the CIP strategies for reciprocal relationships, the plan states the division’s intention of

implementing “Elder councils” at every school (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2). The relationships fostered between schools and Elders and “gift givers” through a “Circle of Relatives” is also a catalyst for “celebration” of land, culture, and language (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 7).

Parents

Like other community members related to FSD, parents are similarly included in student outcomes related to relationship building and cultural identity. What is notable about the language choices regarding this category of social actors is the use of the term “parent/caregiver” (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2). Other divisions in this study (like Fort La Bosse School Division) typically use the term “parent/guardian” to characterize a position of primary responsibility for a student. The difference is subtle but interesting as the word “guardian” has connotations of ownership and legal implications with synonyms like “guard” and “warden” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-d). The word “caregiver” is a bit gentler with connections to the verb “care” and connotations of responsibility for well-being, not just legal responsibility (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-e). I believe this subtle word choice further emphasizes the value FSD appears to place in parents and parent figures as participants in their children’s learning.

Teachers and students

FSD characterizes teachers and staff members as being equally important in the outcomes for students as relationships with parents, community, and each other. In relation to the challenges the division faced due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the CR states that “This year more than any before, we have seen students and staff members creating space and initiating conversations related to Indigenous Way of Life and how to ensure we are working together to make change. It is an important time in history for Indigenous people!” (Frontier School

Division, 2020a, p. 5). What is notable about this highlight is, again, the implication that staff and students are equally engaged in the outcomes of Indigenous Way of Life and are given agency to make change. Furthermore, the declarative statement used emphasizes the continued resilience of Indigenous people and implies that staff and students are participants in changing history as Indigenous people.

One other key addition to FSD’s CIP is their explicit intention to increase the number of Indigenous teachers and administrators (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2). This is notable because, apart from the CATEP program at WSD, most of the divisions in this study do not have goals related to representative hiring practices in their plans.

Indigenous Way of Life Cultural Advisor

Like WSD, FSD appears to have a number of professional roles involved in creating and facilitating learning opportunities for Indigenous education and Reconciliation. While some specific roles may be missing from the CR and CIP, the CR mentions Rob Apetagon, the division’s “Indigenous Way of Life Cultural Advisor” (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 11). However, the report also mentions “Cultural Advisors” on page 5, indicating that there are perhaps multiple individuals with this title. Other roles and committees appear to be combinations of FSD staff and Knowledge Keepers, including “A Circle of Relatives” in each school (Frontier School Division, 2020b, p. 2).

Omissions

FSD identifies “Indigenous Way of Life” as an area of focus and also a budget “theme” in the community report, but there is nothing in the report that breaks down the use of funding tied to this theme (Frontier School Division, 2020a, p. 15). It appears that FSD, along with the

other divisions in this study, does not provide a breakdown of IAA grant funding with any specificity in regard to how this grant is allocated to schools in the division.

Larger themes: Discourses of Truth and Reconciliation

Critical discourse analysis applied to the documents of the six divisions in this study reveal a number of common themes that exemplify the apparent discourses of Indigenous education and Truth and Reconciliation in Manitoba. These themes include:

- the prevalence of “gap” language related to Indigenous students,
- individual vs. collective responsibility for facilitating education for Reconciliation,
- presenting Reconciliation as additional vs. foundational
- performative displays to signal a commitment to Reconciliation

What follows is a brief summation of these overarching themes and their connection to Organizational Impression Management (OIM) and the foundational Indigenous research sensibilities that guide this research. To review, OIM stems from the dramaturgical theory of Goffman (1959) and contends that organizations have a vested interest in making a good impression and establishing trust with stakeholders, thus maintaining a positive reputation which is “rooted in the organization’s historical behaviour and associations” (Lang et al., 2011, p. 154).

Three Indigenous concepts which ground this study are decolonization (Cote-Meek, 2014), ethical relationality (Donald 2012), and the notion of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1986).

“Gap” Language

Many of the divisions in this study highlight the “gap” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student achievement, usually determined by standardized testing and provincial exams. The rhetoric of “achievement gap” is pervasive in educational contexts and the term has “made its way into common parlance and everyday usage” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). The

emphasis on achievement gaps is present in the TRC’s Calls to Action (Education calls 7 and 10.i.), and in the outline for the requirements for divisional CIPs and CRs from Manitoba Education which states that one goal of the CIP Framework is to “close the achievement gap” for all students (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a; Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). It is, therefore, understandable that most of the divisions in this study mention “the gap.” Perhaps the reason for the language around gaps in the TRC’s Calls to Action is an example of “cognitive imperialism” in practice, where the TRC appears to have placed value in standardized measure that “define success as assimilation to dominant Eurocentric values” (Battiste, 2016).

Sometimes the language used in the divisional documents analyzed to address this space between achievement data is stated neutrally: “Data is disaggregated to find gaps and set targets for achievement” (Sunrise, 2019, p. 7) or describes “narrowing” or “eliminating the gap” (Winnipeg School Division, 2019, p. 14). Other language choices frame the gap negatively: “[Indigenous] students are notably below the provincial average across all sub competencies” (Fort La Bosse, 2020, p.6), or Indigenous students are “below the expected criteria” (Portage La Prairie, 2020, p. 7), and “our indigenous provincial marks are lower consistently across the board” (Swan Valley, 2020, p. 10). The only division in this study that does not mention a gap between learning outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is Frontier School Division.

I believe that the language used related to achievement gaps is harmful in the Reconciliation process. While the need for disaggregated data is considered valuable for the sake of neoliberal notions of accountability, it can also be framed to marginalize Indigenous students who appear to be perpetually underperforming by the standards set by divisions and the province. Contrary to Indigenous philosophies of education, current Western based

conceptualizations of student success are “oriented toward measuring learning deficits” and “do not reflect the holistic nature of First Nations, Inuit and Métis learning” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 8). In other words, how can we shift our success measures to focus on the strengths of Indigenous students rather than focus on perceived weaknesses? As Ladson-Billings states, “this all-out focus on the ‘Achievement Gap’ moves us toward short-term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem” (2006, p. 4). An alternative to “gap” talk is provided in Chapter 5.

Individual vs. collective responsibility for facilitating education for Reconciliation

Another common theme that emerged from the CIPs and CRs is the perspective each division has regarding who is responsible for education for Reconciliation initiatives. As mentioned in the analysis of Portage La Prairie School Division’s CIP and Swan Valley School Division’s CIP, some divisions appear to have delegated all things Indigenous to a singular Indigenous Facilitator or IAA role. The plethora of goals associated with these roles cover everything from: staff training, to cultural celebrations, to divisional event coordinating, to liaising with outside agencies and specialty programs, to monitoring and mentoring Indigenous students. For example, in Portage La Prairie School Division, the IAA Facilitator reports having given “A total of 160 presentations” to K-12 classrooms on “Orange Shirt Day, Blanket exercise, 7 Teachings, Identity, Communities and Treaties” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6). The report also states that “Teachers are requesting the Indigenous Academic Achievement Facilitator to conduct classroom workshops for students” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6). This would indicate that classroom teachers are not currently taking on the responsibility of teaching about these topics on their own, and instead deferring to the IAA Facilitator, further perpetuating the notion that the work of Reconciliation is not their direct responsibility, or that they do not possess the

knowledge to engage in this teaching themselves. As I stated previously, I wonder about the workload that one or two individuals in a large rural division would have and whether this type of role is sustainable over time.

Juxtaposed with the divisions that have one or possibly two positions dedicated to Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation initiatives are much larger divisions like Winnipeg School Division and Frontier School Division that have teams of professionals and multiple committees attending to similar but disparate initiatives. It only makes sense that the more people involved in Reconciliation efforts, the more pervasive, accepted, and successful they will be. Again, it is important to note that WSD and FSD have access to greater financial and human resources compared to the smaller rural divisions in this study. However, it is still vitally important that these smaller divisions recognize that working towards Truth and Reconciliation is a *collective* responsibility for all staff, and not just within the portfolio of a person or persons.

Turning to the work of Dwayne Donald, I believe that the way some divisions silo Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation initiatives is an example of “colonial logics” at play “that portray Indigenous and settler peoples as occupying separate realities, and their different perspectives, experiences, and knowledges as incommensurable” (Donald, 2012, p. 708). As long as divisions emphasize the different realities for Indigenous students in their schools, the less likely it is that we can relate ethically to one another. In other words, these invisible barriers separating the realities of Reconciliation must be actively removed by everyone.

Presenting Reconciliation as additional vs. foundational

An additional theme that emerged from the documents was the impression that some divisions view education for Reconciliation as an additional consideration or planning category, alongside other such categories such as: EAL students, career development, or early childhood education (Manitoba Education, n.d.-c). This is evident through the stated divisional priorities, their order, and where Indigenous education or education for Reconciliation initiatives can be found in the documents (see Table 2).

Table 2

Stated priorities by school division and location of Indigenous education or education for Reconciliation in their CIPs/CRs.

School Division	Priorities	Size of Doc	Where does Indigenous Education appear?
Fort La Bosse CIP 2019/2020	Literacy Numeracy	15 pages	Page 14 under “other planning items”
Frontier CR The Northerner Annual Report 2020/2021	Academic focus (literacy/ numeracy)	20 pages	Page 4
CIP: Indigenous way of life	Indigenous way of Life Wellness	2 page addition	Throughout the 2 pages
Portage La Prairie CIP and CR	Literacy Numeracy IAA Student Engagement/ Wellness Instructional Leadership	20 pages	Page 6 After Literacy and Numeracy but before Wellness and Instructional Leadership
Sunrise CIP/CR	Literacy and Languages Numeracy Active Learning Socially Responsible Citizenship	18 pages	Page 13 (briefly) Page 15
Swan Valley CIP	Sustainability of Human Resources Programming for Success	13 pages	Page 7

	Cultural Inclusiveness Maximize Resources Health and Well Being		
Winnipeg	Students Learning Outcomes Addressing Barriers to Learning	42 pages	Page 7 – IAA grant Page 26-29 Statement on Indigenous Education

Notably, Frontier School Division and Portage La Prairie School Division are the only divisions in this study that explicitly include an Indigenous-focused priority area. Others, like Swan Valley and Winnipeg School Division use more general categories like “Cultural Inclusiveness” and “Students,” where there is an implication that these areas include Indigenous education, but this is not made explicit. Sunrise School Division and Fort La Bosse do not include Indigenous education related categories at all.

My purpose in pointing out these differences is not to admonish the work of these school divisions toward Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation, but rather to highlight that there is a difference in how priorities are presented by various divisions where a commitment to Reconciliation and Indigenous education is foundational rather than additional. For example, Frontier School Division explicitly commits to working toward the goals of Truth and Reconciliation in a number of areas in their CIP and CR, and one of their three areas of focus is “Indigenous Way of Life” (Frontier School Division, 2020a). This foundational commitment to Truth and Reconciliation is evident in the inclusion of language and the rhetoric which is supportive of Indigenous education throughout the documents.

Similar to the theme of individual vs collective responsibility for facilitating education for Reconciliation, this theme also serves as another example of colonial logics at play (Donald, 2012). Many divisions are relegating initiatives for Reconciliation and Indigenous education to

specific events (see more in the next section), courses, or clubs, rather than viewing Reconciliation and Indigenous education philosophies of reciprocity and ethical relations as foundational to the division.

Multicultural education scholar James Banks (1989) describes four approaches to multicultural curriculum reform, these are the “contributions” approach, the “ethnic additive” approach, the “transformation” approach and the “social-action approach” (p. 17-18). These approaches are presented as a continuum describing levels of integration of “ethnic content” in educational contexts. The first two levels of integration, the “contributions” and “additive” approaches, are exemplified by the “addition of content, concepts and themes” or the choice to limit ethnic content “primarily to special days weeks [...] events and celebrations” (Banks, 1989, p. 17). The criticism of these approaches is that they allow for the addition of content “without restructuring it, which takes substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals” (Banks, 1989, p. 17). Arguably, many of the rural divisions in this study are in the contributions or additive stage of addressing Indigenous education reforms, and education for Reconciliation. Understandably, the work of restructuring curriculum to adequately address Truth and Reconciliation and examining long-standing assumptions about the purposes, nature, and goals of education is difficult and requires a great deal of commitment.

The last two approaches Banks (1989) presents offer a roadmap for divisions wishing to move beyond the contributions and additive approaches; these are the “transformation” and “social-action” approaches. These approaches are more successful at true integration of ethnic content because they “change the basic assumptions about the curriculum and enable students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems” from diverse perspectives and points of view (Banks, 1989, p. 18). This fundamental difference in approach attends to the complex synthesis

of cultural elements, identities, and relationships that make up our present society. In other words, they enact ethical relationality, by creating opportunities for divisions to consider how Indigenous perspectives and philosophies of education are present in all facets of education and not separate realities (Donald in Kerr & Adamov Ferguson, 2020). Larger divisions, and urban divisions, like Frontier School Division and Winnipeg School Division, appear to be aligned with the mandate of the TRC more explicitly as their commitments to Reconciliation, and the focus on Reconciliation efforts, are articulated more deliberately and more frequently. Currently I do not think there is a division within the province that has reached the “social-action” stage of addressing education for Reconciliation. This could be because this stage calls for a deliberate upheaval of existing education systems and paradigms, and at present this does not appear to be a priority for leaders within these existing systems, likely due to the need for self-preservation. Large scale and radical systemic transformation threaten existing systems and the social actors who make up these organizations, therefore it seems unlikely that any division in the province will attempt to approach this stage of education reform.

Performative displays to signal commitment to Reconciliation

Another common theme in the discourse of Reconciliation in the divisional documents in this study is the highlighting of visual and public displays that signal the division’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous education. In some cases, these displays are photographed and featured alongside the text in CIPs and CRs, even if the text is not related to the photo. For example, the message from the board chairperson in FSD’s CR, which focuses on the resilience of the division through the pandemic, is accompanied by a photo of an Orange shirt day display (Frontier School Division, 2020, p. 3).

I am not suggesting that the use of these photographs or the inclusion of the description of performative displays of indigeneity is purely for the sake of the organizational reputation of the division – but I suspect that the divisions have something to gain by including these kinds of visuals with respect to their organizational reputations. Including these displays demonstrates to the public that the division adheres to the norms of “politeness and decency” required to signal their alignment with Truth and Reconciliation (Persson, 2018, p. 78). After all, divisions have a vested interest in presenting their organization in the best light to stakeholders. However, I would argue that the framing of these displays within the documents, and the presence or absence of engagement with Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation beyond the displays or one-off events provides some insight into whether the division’s efforts are seen as genuine and in keeping with their “historical behaviours and associations” (Lang et al., 2011, p. 154).

For example, divisions like Fort La Bosse School Division and Sunrise School Division, highlight displays like “Ojibwe Word of the Day,” a “mural installation,” participation in “Orange Shirt Day” (Sunrise, 2019, p.15), and “naming of schools/wings of local Dakota individuals/welcome signage in Dakota language/smudging provided in schools” (Fort La Bosse, 2020, p. 11). While there is nothing inherently wrong with these divisions highlighting these events and displays, it is challenging to see how these efforts are contributing to the larger goals of Reconciliation and Indigenous student success when the rest of the document appears devoid of engagement with Truth and Reconciliation or initiatives designed explicitly for Indigenous Academic Achievement. Furthermore, the purpose of these displays seems limited to cultural awareness, which, while important, perhaps requires more careful thought and reflection. Goffman (1959) might call these displays “sign-vehicles,” which are social settings, particular items, and outward appearances that are used by organizations like divisions to create a

particular impression for the public (p. 15). I think divisions need to ask themselves, what purpose do these displays, or sign-vehicles, have beyond signaling to stakeholders that they adhere to the values of the TRC? And more importantly, is the funding used to facilitate the creation and documentation of these displays effectively addressing the needs of the self-identified Indigenous students in the division?

Another example from Portage La Prairie School Division demonstrates how the language used to describe these public displays can be problematic. The divisional CIP states that a “Divisional Indigenous Awareness day” included “a powwow demonstration” “BBQ lunch” as “an authentic way to build community” (Portage La Prairie, 2019, p. 6). Again, the display itself is not the issue, but the word choice is curious. The inclusion of the word “demonstration” seems unnecessary since the word implies that the powwow was purely a display. Similarly, the BBQ lunch being characterized as an “authentic” way to build community seems strange because authenticity is related to whether something is worthy of acceptance or belief. Perhaps this statement is true, as written, but from my perspective, a single BBQ lunch with community (which may or may not include Indigenous communities) seems unlikely to “build community.”

Winnipeg School Division and Frontier School Division are notable with respect to this theme because, while they too highlight performative displays of their commitment to Indigenous education and education for Reconciliation, they do so by couching these highlights in evidence of a larger commitment to Reconciliation. In other words, they have used their reputation, established through their organizational history with Indigenous education initiatives, to present these displays as genuine and authentic. The documents provide proof of efforts toward Reconciliation and Indigenous student success in a broader context. For example,

Frontier School Division highlights a photo from the “Frontier Collegiate honour dance” (2020a, p.4), and Winnipeg School Division highlights its “Division Celebration Pow Wow” which “features hoop dancers, jingle dancers, friendship dancers, drummers, chanters, and more” (Winnipeg School Division, 2020, p. 27). Both divisions use their CIPs and CRs to display their longstanding commitment to Indigenous education, even before the inception of the TRC, so the choice to include highlights of cultural displays is more likely to be received by readers as genuine.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

The final chapter of this study begins with an overview of the study before addressing the research questions explicitly. It then transitions into a discussion of two major implications of the study that cycle back to the Indigenous research sensibilities introduced in Chapter 1. The chapter then turns to recommendations for school divisions, Manitoba Education, and educators. Following the recommendations are suggestions for areas of future research, and a final reflection.

Overview of the Study

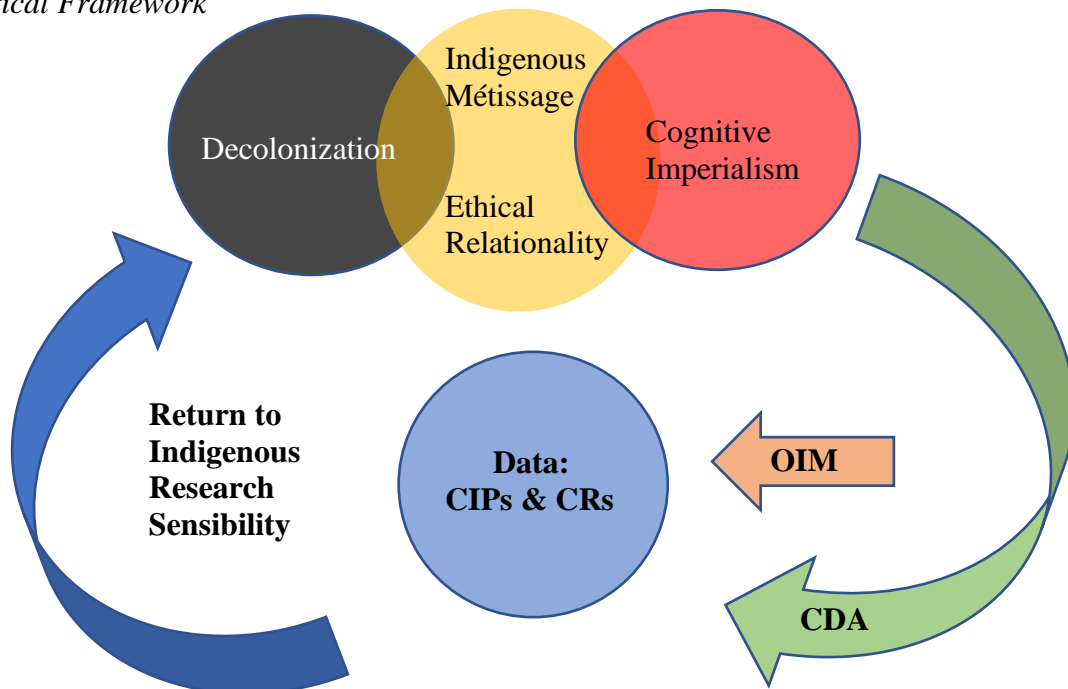
Since the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action in 2015, Manitoba Education require Manitoba school divisions to publish yearly Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) and Community Reports (CRs) as an accountability measure to report on progress toward Reconciliation. These CIPs and CRs must be made available to the public through division websites and updated every fall. Drawing from the dramaturgical theories of Goffman (1959), divisions, as organizational entities, employ Organizational Impression Management (OIM) to ensure that language choices in their documents align with the goals of Truth and Reconciliation in order to maintain their reputation and relationships with education

stakeholders. They do this to signal to their stakeholders and the public that they adhere to the norms of “politeness and decency” (Persson, 2018, p. 78). In other words, they wish for the public to see that the division is meeting the expectations of Manitoba Education, but also adhering to the moral and ethical norms of engaging with Truth and Reconciliation that have become prevalent in our current social, geographical, and historical contexts.

This study has one major research question: What discourses of Truth and Reconciliation appear to be constructed by Manitoba school divisions? Concepts and teachings from Indigenous scholarship were woven together to create a research sensibility, including ethical relationality and Indigenous Métissage (Donald, 2012), decolonization (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020), and cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013). This research sensibility then became a lens through which to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using the framework and toolkit for CDA from Gee (2014) of CIPs and CRs from school divisions from each of the five Treaty territories in Manitoba.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Each CIP and CR was coded for themes based on the tools provided by Gee (2014). These themes included contextual information (related to how the documents contribute to discourses of Truth and Reconciliation and education for Reconciliation), identities (how the documents construct identities of social actors including Indigenous students, staff, etc.), and relationships (between Indigenous students and staff, the division and Indigenous communities, etc.). The coded data was then further refined and grouped using the Indigenous research sensibilities as a lens. The themes emerging from the data include the prevalence of “achievement gap” discourse, individual vs. collective responsibility for facilitating education for Reconciliation, and presenting Reconciliation as foundational vs. additive in divisional priorities, and the prevalence of performative displays to signal a commitment to Reconciliation. These themes are further explored and presented in relation to the research questions in the next section.

Addressing the Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study was, **what discourses of Truth and Reconciliation appear to be constructed by Manitoba school divisions?** As stated in Chapter 4, a Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to the documents of the six divisions in this study and it revealed a number of common themes that exemplify the apparent discourses of Indigenous education and Truth and Reconciliation in Manitoba. These themes include:

- the prevalence of “gap” language related to Indigenous students,
- individual vs. collective responsibility for facilitating education for Reconciliation,
- presenting Reconciliation as additional vs. foundational
- performative displays to signal a commitment to Reconciliation

These themes were uncovered through a careful consideration of linguistic choices made by the author, or authors, of select CIPs and CRs. It is my hope that highlighting these common themes can accomplish two purposes. First, at the surface level of language-in-use, revealing these themes can enable decision-makers in education to critically reflect on the discourses they use and then consider whether the impression their choices evoke is the one they actually intended. Secondly, highlighting these themes can reveal previously unacknowledged assumptions, biases, or contrary ideological positions presented by school divisions that are potentially preventing meaningful action toward Reconciliation.

All of the themes that emerged from the analysis point to two larger issues when it comes to addressing Reconciliation in public education. What draws them together is the performative nature of the response to Reconciliation. This is perhaps unsurprising when considering that the data sources are themselves presented as evidence of progress and neoliberal accountability by Manitoba Education and can be perceived as purely performative as well. Secondly, all of these themes indicate that the locus of change when it comes to Reconciliation is often situated outside of the system of education itself.

Given that this study uses CDA, it is worth reiterating that the impression I have of the divisions in this study is a result of closely examining the textual and linguistic choices of the divisions but is also influenced by my own identity and my lived experiences. Since texts are not neutral in CDA, nor are consumers of texts, I recognise that I am “not situated outside of the discourse” that I have analyzed (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 34). Divisions should consider how other social actors, particularly Indigenous peoples, could perceive the choices they make when conveying their approaches to and engagement with Truth and Reconciliation.

The first of three sub research questions was: **What do CIPs and CRs of select Manitoba school divisions say about their organizational identity (or identities)?** The organizational identity of each division in this study varied slightly and was characterized by a number of representational strategies (Gee, 2014). These strategies included: highlighting the work of a specific role or role associated with Indigenous student success, providing examples of visual displays or events celebrating or commemorating aspects of facets of Indigenous cultures, and creating achievement goals specific to Indigenous students. It is clear, at least to me, that all of the divisions in this study wish to be perceived as addressing Indigenous Academic Achievement and education for Reconciliation. However, a number of factors including the presence (or absence) of language related to Truth and Reconciliation, and the prevalence (or infrequency) of Indigenous related goals in all priority areas of the division, and the ways in which social actors and relationships are characterized can create different impressions for different readers and these impressions may not necessarily align with their intended impressions.

Both Winnipeg School Division and Frontier School Division had a clearly established history of addressing education for Reconciliation and IAA prior to the release of the TRC final report and prior to the IAA reporting requirements in CIPs that Manitoba Education created for accountability. By all accounts, they appear to be more successful at creating a positive impression to the public. The documents create an impression that both divisions are working alongside Indigenous communities in a way that celebrates and builds relationships. However, these divisions have been engaged in this work for much longer, with many more people, and much more money to dedicate to their endeavours than most small, rural divisions. Some of the smaller rural divisions in this study are clearly at a different stage in their journey when it comes

to considering how to meaningfully engage with Truth and Reconciliation beyond the “additive” approach, and therefore, the language they employ gives the impression that existing educational structures and purposes are not being questioned (Banks, 1989, p. 17). Unfortunately, this does not reflect positively on the divisions and gives the impression that these organizations are adopting a paternalistic and Western identity in relation to Indigenous education initiatives and Truth and Reconciliation.

The second sub research question was: **What kinds of contextual information about Truth and Reconciliation appear to be conveyed in the CIPs and CRs of select Manitoba school divisions?** There was some overlap between this question and the previous question about organizational identities. Clearly, some divisions, like WSD and FSD provided more evidence of engagement with Truth and Reconciliation through their language choices in the documents. Others appear to understand the importance of reporting IAA and education for Reconciliation efforts as requested by Manitoba Education in the CIP and CR report guidelines. Surprisingly (or not), language specific to Truth and Reconciliation and/or contextual information related to Truth and Reconciliation was not present in most of the documents with the exception of WSD, and more obviously, FSD.

Considering more specific language-in-use choices, terminology and capitalization reveals the degree to which divisions (or at least authors of these reports) understand current norms of “politeness and decency” (Persson, 2018, p. 78). This was evident through the consistent (or inconsistent) choice to characterize Indigenous peoples/student in the documents as “Indigenous,” “indigenous,” “Aboriginal” or “aboriginal.”

One notable finding related to this question is the omission of land acknowledgements in all but one of the CIPs or CRs analyzed. FSD was the only division in this study to include a

substantial and lengthy land acknowledgement that highlighted the importance of land, relationships, and responsibilities situated in the past, present, and future. Given that FSD includes “Indigenous Way of Life” as an area of focus, it is clear that the division is familiar and comfortable with language articulating the degree to which they value Indigenous perspectives and philosophies alongside Truth and Reconciliation.

The omission of land acknowledgements or explicit language around Truth and Reconciliation or Treaty in some documents leads me to speculate that the historical and cultural contexts of the places where these divisions operate are not necessarily reflected. Using the Context is Reflexive Tool (Gee, 2014), it would appear that some divisions are reproducing their respective educational contexts that are divorced from physical, cultural, and historical contexts unique to their locations. This is apparent from the absence of Indigenous content in divisional documents. While this reproduction of context may be unintentional, it does raise the question of whether these contexts *should* be reproduced if divisions were more aware of the ways discourse shapes context (Gee, 2014, p. 91).

The last sub research question was: **How do relationships, specifically between select Manitoba school divisions and Indigenous communities, appear to be constructed by the textual features within CIPs and CRs?** Relationships between school divisions and Indigenous communities were constructed and characterized in many ways in the CIPs and CRs. Some of these relationships were not present within the document or were mentioned briefly or very generally. For example, Sunrise School Division (2019) mentions “Partnerships with lodges, Knowledge Keepers or Elders” (p.15). Other divisions, like Fort La Bosse, choose to name “Canupawakpa Dakota Nation” explicitly (2019, p. 11). I believe the specificity used by some

divisions signals a greater respect for the Indigenous communities involved and also greater evidence that the claims in the documents can be verified.

As stated in Chapter 4, the lack of language around relationships in many of the documents suggests that some divisions are (likely unintentionally) “denying relationality” between divisions and Indigenous communities (Donald, 2012, p. 9). Some of the documents in this study perpetuate colonial pedagogies that emphasize the othering of Indigenous students and communities (by including them in lists of “other” categories of students like EAL and students in care for example). However, others, like FSD, provide an example of how relationships and relationality can be central and foundational to the goals of school divisions. The division makes the emphasis on relationships clear in goals such as: “Students and community have a reciprocal relationship (All My Relations)” (Frontier School Division, 2020b).

Omissions

While this study uncovered four major themes, it also made me think about common omissions in divisional CIPs and CRs. There were two notable omissions that I would like to highlight here. They are the absence of text and language characterizing Indigenous students, or students in general, as social actors, and the lack of explicit reporting on the use of IAA funding.

At the start of the coding process, I pre-emptively created a code for Indigenous students as social actors, but as the coding process unfolded, I quickly realized that very few of the documents use language related to Indigenous students beyond using that identity in relation to achievement data. Only Portage La Prairie School Division mentioned valuing student voice when reviewing courses taught in the division. However, none of the other documents indicated that the divisions, or schools within the divisions, were consulting with students (Indigenous or otherwise) regarding the current state of priority areas or plans for the future. This strikes me as a

great oversight, particularly when it comes to Indigenous students, because it perpetuates the notion that schooling is something that is being done *to* students rather than *with* them. If we consider Indigenous philosophies of education, learning is a communal activity, meaning students must be seen as partners in their own learning.

Perhaps one reason for this omission is that divisions are not interested in consulting Indigenous students and communities, preferring a top-down approach. This could be because inviting Indigenous students and communities to share their perspectives and voices requires a great deal of investment. It would require divisions to foster relationships and invest in those relationships over time. The results of these consultations could call into question the organizational reputation of the divisions and point out ways in which these divisions have failed to meet the needs of Indigenous students. Instead, it is far more predictable, and cost and resource effective, to leave them out. This points to a need for leadership in education that invites critiques and allows us to critically examine the gap between intentions and the actual impact on Indigenous students in the classroom.

To extend the idea of a gap between an intention and impact, I want to also highlight the lack of transparency around the use of IAA grants in the CIPs and CRs examined in this study. Most of the documents mention the IAA grant but lacked specificity when reporting on how this grant was used. According to the Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) Grant Support Document (later renamed IAA), “AAA grant funds should be used to support culturally relevant strategies that result in improved academic achievement” (Manitoba Education, 2015, p. 15). The document goes on to state that “at least 50% of grant funding is to be spent on activities that improve literacy and numeracy” (Manitoba Education, 2015, p. 16). The CIPs and CRs in this study did not make clear how activities or initiatives reported related to improved academic

achievement. While the AAA grant support document does mention that activities supported by the grant should be focused on “practices that affirm Aboriginal culture(s) by incorporating, where appropriate, Aboriginal perspectives” the majority of the recommendations for funding are specific to academic achievement initiatives (p. 16).

Do education for Reconciliation initiatives achieve the same purpose as academic achievement initiatives? This is a question I have often asked myself while sifting through documents that continue to highlight performative displays of cultural understanding. Does participating in a sharing circle, or painting a mural of a medicine wheel result in improved literacy outcomes on standardized tests? While these activities have educational value, I wonder at whether these types of activities meet the stated objectives of the IAA grant. Perhaps there should be a more explicit delineation between funds for education for Reconciliation or cultural understanding initiatives and Indigenous academic achievement initiatives.

Implications: Reconceptualizing Education and Addressing Barriers to Reconciliation

Moving from Achievement Gaps to Educational Debts

This section focuses on two implications of this study. One is related to the effects of language in education documents like CIPs and CRs. The other is related to the need to shift our collective conceptualization of education. Turning first to language, in Chapter 2, I wrote that CDA views language as a means of social construction, “therefore, discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of those processes and structures” (Blackledge, 2012, p. 24). In other words, while seemingly innocuous or perhaps unnoticed by casual readers, language choices in divisional documents construct and reproduce structures of education. With this in mind, I would like to return to one of the larger themes that emerged from this research – the prevalence of “gap”

language in CIPs and CRs related to Indigenous Academic Achievement. As I stated in Chapter 4, I believe the language of achievement gaps is detrimental to Reconciliation efforts and therefore, raises the question of how can we shift our focus to the strengths of Indigenous students rather than focus on perceived weaknesses?

There are a few issues related to focusing on the “achievement gap.” First, the data fluctuates yearly depending on the cohort of students whose standardized scores or achievement data is being reported. Second, despite fluctuations that either narrow or expand the gap, researchers and data analysts cannot definitively determine what causes these changes (Ladson-Billings, 2006). What use is achievement data that cannot be linked to the interventions and plans reported by school divisions? In other words, the “all-out focus on the ‘Achievement Gap’ moves us toward short-term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem” (2006, p. 4).

Although Ladson-Billings (2006) writes about education debt in an American context specific to “African American and Latino” students, the salient points of her argument are applicable to Canadian education contexts and the perceived “gap” related to Indigenous student achievement. Ladson-Billings (2006) posits that when we turn our attention to determining the causes of these fluctuations by focusing on what she terms the “education debt” we can begin the work of dismantling and rebuilding our education systems (p. 5). Unlike the “achievement gap,” the “education debt” is longstanding, grows from year to year, and can be broken down into “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral” debts (p. 5). These debts have been incurred over generations, and in a Canadian context, include our deplorable history of Residential Schools, past (and present) funding disparities for Indigenous students (Porter, 2016), and ongoing anti-Indigenous racism perpetuated by school systems (Fowler, 2020).

While not as easily quantifiable as standardized test scores, data related to education debts is vital to removing the barriers to Reconciliation and constructing a new and genuinely equitable system of education. Ladson-Billings (2006) concludes that it is a moral imperative to address education debts for three important reasons. First, education debt has an impact on our educational progress; the mounting debts that disproportionately impact Indigenous students continue to erode the “relational trust” between divisions (and school staff) and Indigenous communities (families). Keeping the work of Dwayne Donald (2012) in mind, it makes sense that if divisions are not prioritizing ethical relationality with Indigenous communities that the relationships between divisions and Indigenous communities will suffer, trust will be eroded, and the debt will mount. This will continue to manifest in “achievement gaps” that never seem to close completely. Second, if we can better understand education debt relative to past educational research, we may be able to better contextualize the historic, economic, and sociopolitical barriers to educational equity (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 9).

Third, Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests that failing to address the education debt would perhaps create a crisis in education (which we may be heading toward already) that would bring about a radical shift in our assumptions about the structure and purpose of education (p. 10). This hypothetical situation could allow us to “begin from the ground up to build the kind of education system that would aggressively address the debt” (p. 10). While Ladson-Billings does not use the term “decolonize”, she is imagining an approach to educational reform that Battiste (2016) also describes; First, there must be a deconstruction of education systems that exposes the political, moral, and theoretical inadequacies of colonialism in education; and second, there must be a reconstruction with the full participation and representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that is transformative and engages with diversity as the norm rather than the exception.

Returning to Manitoba school divisions’ CIPs and CRs, what I am trying to articulate is that divisional language choices need to change to reflect and construct a new understanding of “gaps” in learning. Shifting the language to “education debt” implies that the parties responsible for tallying and rectifying the debt are the education systems themselves rather than Indigenous students who are currently being expected to do the work to “close the gap”. While perhaps not as easily transferable to points on a graph, reporting on how divisions are addressing the education debt by working alongside with Indigenous communities, soliciting feedback from and providing leadership opportunities for Indigenous students, addressing school climate by interrogating the assumptions we hold about the impression our schools give our students and communities, and making a concerted effort to increase the number of Indigenous teachers and administrators, would perhaps be more effective at reflecting the efforts of school divisions and bring about meaningful change. I believe we need to take “gap talk” out of the reports altogether and find other ways to substantiate and report on Indigenous student success and well-being in a way that is holistic and aligned with Indigenous philosophies and perspectives of education.

It could be argued that eliminating language around achievement gaps is another example of political correctness in language run amok. Gaps exist, whether we use the word “gap” or not. To that, I turn to the foundations of CDA which views language as a means of social construction, “therefore, discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of those processes and structures” (Blackledge, 2012, p. 24). In other words, shifting language is integral to changing the thinking around that language, and contributes to changing the context and discourse over time. Furthermore, it is a common tactic of critics of “politically correct” language to focus on the futility of changing a word in order to change ideologies and social contexts. Fairclough (2003)

points out that this argument is flawed because “Cultural interventions directed at changing representations, values and identities” by “changing language (discourse), are actually pervasive in contemporary social life” (p. 20). The adoption of specific language to shift how audiences think about issues and consider the identity and reputation of the speaker is used in political, social, and economic arenas all the time. It is used by those same critics of politically correct language to critique that language. Consider the use of the words “woke” and “snowflake” in our current social and political context for example (McWhorter, 2021). I would like to clarify that I am not suggesting that simply adopting new and improved language will result in systemic change, not unless there is a profound shift in the ideologies that inform the language choices.

If we continue to place emphasis on achievement gaps in relation to Indigenous students, we are perpetuating the idea that Indigenous students are inherently at a disadvantage and in need of intervention to better meet achievement goals that a) are constructed from a Euro/Western conceptualization of what constitutes success, and b) are constructed without the consultation of those same Indigenous students and Indigenous communities. The focus on achievement gaps is also dangerous as it gives educators and administrators within divisions, who may already have existing biases or racist beliefs, further ammunition to continue to “other” Indigenous students. If they believe that Indigenous students are already further “behind” their non-Indigenous peers, then that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Considering Conceptualizations of Education

Many Indigenous scholars have written extensively about decolonizing education and present pathways for educators who wish to engage in this work (Battiste, 2013; Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Mullen 2020; Smith, Tuck & Yang 2018). The previous section on addressing the education gap ends with some rather radical scenarios that may not seem practical

or pragmatic given our existing educational systems. While I fully support a decolonizing education revolution, I am also cognisant that, at the time of this writing, I return to classroom teaching in a school and in a system in which I have some influence but no real power to create radical change without profound personal costs. Perhaps I am part of the problem by being complicit and unable or unwilling to pay the professional and personal sacrifices required to participate in decolonization efforts. Rather than feel defeated by this reality, I want to consider ways in which I can support the work of decolonizing education by sharing more of what I have learned about Indigenous perspectives of education. I want to move beyond the binary of two systems of knowledge, or two conceptualizations of education, in order to create a culture in my classroom and in my school that enacts Indigenous Métissage – a space where I can hold seemingly disparate philosophies in tension “without the need to deny, assimilate, hybridize, or conclude” (Donald, 2012, p. 536). What I would like to highlight here are the aspects of Indigenous education philosophies and understandings that can and should be reflected in our school systems. I am also including recommendations for myself in the next section of this chapter to support the work of decolonizing education.

What I have come to learn about different conceptualizations of education from Indigenous perspectives comes primarily from the work of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learning professionals and researchers who published a compilation of Holistic Lifelong Learning models in a report from the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2007). Unfortunately, the CCL was defunded and shut down in 2010; otherwise, Canadian school systems might have more research related to Indigenous education to guide their efforts to support Indigenous students (Jerema, 2010). The document published by CCL, titled *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning* presents three separate

frameworks but summarizes seven key attributes of Indigenous learning that are common among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis philosophies of education. These seven attributes are presented here:

- Learning is holistic.
- Learning is a lifelong process.
- Learning is experiential in nature.
- Learning is rooted in [Indigenous] languages and cultures.
- Learning is spiritually oriented.
- Learning is a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders.
- Learning is an integration of [Indigenous] and Western knowledge.

(Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 5).

These attributes combined call into question the assumptions of our current K-12 education systems, where educational growth is conceptualized on a linear trajectory with great emphasis on individual achievement.

Some of the attributes of Indigenous learning are more easily accepted alongside Western or European attributes of learning. It only makes sense that learning should be holistic and engage all aspects of individuals, and that learning is lifelong. Other aspects, like the spiritual orientation of learning, is somewhat contentious (at least in the context of Indigenous spirituality), with some critics arguing that smudging in schools constitutes a religious act (Troian, 2016). However, school divisions should consider how their plans incorporate these common attributes in meaningful ways. Some suggestions for divisions based on these attributes and the findings from this study are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Recommendations for Practice

The recommendations in this section are presented in the spirit of reconciliation. All Canadians have a role to play in enacting Truth and Reconciliation, so the recommendations are not limited to school divisions but also include other education stakeholders. It is important to acknowledge that many of these recommendations are not unique to this study, and some are already underway in school divisions across Manitoba.

For school divisions

Language in CIPs and CRs:

- Use consistent language. School divisions should ensure that any publicly available documents reflect the current preferences of Indigenous communities in their respective contexts and use preferred terms and capitalization consistently (i.e., “Indigenous”) throughout the documents.
- Refer to specific Indigenous nations and languages when appropriate. Avoid generalizations that refer to Indigenous peoples as homogenous. Use precise language and descriptors that help to construct a greater understanding of the nuanced and varied Indigenous communities (i.e., “Ojibwe and Cree” not “Indigenous languages”).
- Use constructive and positive language when characterizing Indigenous students. Avoid word choices and sentence construction that position Indigenous students as “othered” in favour of highlighting strengths and resilience.
- Include a territorial acknowledgement that positions Indigenous peoples first, and that is inclusive of past, present, and future treaty responsibilities.
- Remove all references to “achievement gaps” for Indigenous students and report instead on efforts to address “education debts”.

Planning for the writing of CIPs and CRs:

- Engage with Indigenous communities reciprocally. Solicit feedback and work alongside Indigenous community leaders and members when creating school and division plans.
- Engage with Indigenous students reciprocally. Solicit feedback and work alongside Indigenous students when creating school plans.
- Consider the positioning of Indigenous content: authors of CIPs and CRs should consider where and with what frequency references to Indigenous students, Indigenous communities, and education for Reconciliation initiatives are presented.
- Revisit plans on a more frequent basis than once a year.
- Create opportunities for meaningful relationship building with Indigenous communities that goes beyond food and cultural displays. Report on the state of these relationships.
- Differentiate education for Reconciliation plans from IAA plans. Carefully consider the purpose of planned initiatives in terms of which of these areas is being addressed.
- Report on “education debt” and develop plans that position school divisions as the systems that are responsible for addressing this debt.
- Provide staff with adequate release time and PD related to education for Reconciliation.
- Create recruitment and hiring diversity targets to ensure that the workforce of Manitoba educators reflects the diverse population of the province.

For Manitoba Education

- Eliminate the language of “achievement gaps” on CIPs and CRs and on the provincial website.
- Require school divisions to centre the work of the TRC and make the TRC’s Calls to Action a foundational part of planning rather than appear as an addition to existing priorities.

- Provide incentives and sufficient funding for school divisions to foster sustainable Indigenous language programming.
- Differentiate funding and reporting for the IAA grant between IAA initiatives explicitly for Indigenous students and education for Reconciliation initiatives for broader school populations.
- Provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to report on school division CIPs and CRs.

For faculties of education

- Increase the number of Indigenous teachers and administrators entering the workforce.
- Empower preservice teachers to engage in the work of Truth and Reconciliation regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.
- Demonstrate to pre-service teachers of all backgrounds how Indigenous philosophies of education, and attributes of Indigenous education are present in all curricular areas.

For educators

- Educate yourself on the history of Indigenous education in Canada (pre and post colonization), the TRC Calls to Action, and (Numbered) treaties. This does not require an Indigenous person to bestow expert knowledge as much of this history is readily available.
- Consider the same language-in-use recommendations for reporting and communicating with families and communities as is recommended to school divisions.
- Create opportunities for families and community members to play a collaborative role in creating and facilitating lessons.

For myself

- Find more opportunities to connect with Indigenous communities in my role as an educator.
- Work on building relationships with Indigenous students that encourage and support them beyond high school graduation.
- Share this work with other educators, particularly settler Canadians, in the hopes that it will encourage them to take responsibility for their role in Reconciliation.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a number of ways in which the work of this study could be expanded and further explored. First, this study was limited to six documents from six select Manitoba school divisions during a particular time period. Since discourse strands “have a history present and future” a longitudinal study that examines divisional CIPs or CRs over a number of years, from the release of the TRC’s Calls to Action in 2015 to the present may reveal the ways in which the discourses of Truth and Reconciliation have changed over time (Jäger, 2001, p. 51). Future CDA applied to school division documents could also delve further into discourse strands from rural/urban, or provincial/provincial contexts. It would be interesting to focus on one division and examine the discourses present in the CIPs and CRs over an extended period of time. This examination could also include additional supplementary documents and data including administration and department reports, correspondence between the division and the community, and social media posts. The examination of multiple sources of data may present a more complete picture of the discourses and ideologies of a division.

Second, as I alluded to in the reflection on school planning days in Chapter 4, I suspect that divisional CIPs and CRs present an idealized version of the realities in schools. Therefore, a

larger qualitative study examining the validity of the claims made in school and divisional CIPs and CRs would perhaps shed some light on the “behind the curtain” area that was glimpsed in this study. This type of study could include qualitative interviews with individuals in different positions within the school division such as senior administration, school administration, staff in IAA related roles (such as the IAA coordinator), committee chairs, teachers, and students.

Third, a critique of CDA is that it “privileges particular meanings of texts while largely ignoring alternative readings including how ordinary people read and understand texts” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 210). For this reason, it is imperative to hear from the Indigenous communities that these divisions serve to get their perspective on the ways in which they receive and consider the discourses espoused by the divisions. Similarly, a comparative study using qualitative interview data from individuals in IAA coordinator/facilitator roles in a cross-section of Manitoba school divisions would also help to identify discourse threads and possibly identify barriers to Truth and Reconciliation.

Fourth, this study has raised questions about the nature and purpose of CIPs and CRs. Research that follows the creation of these documents, from early planning like the planning days I have experienced, to the publication of the document, would provide further insight into who controls the discourse as it is presented to the public. This might involve qualitative research in the form of interviews with key individuals in schools and divisions, as well as representatives from Manitoba Education.

Finally, Wotherspoon and Milne (2020) conducted an analysis of provincial education for Reconciliation policy documents across Canada. Further analysis of documents at the provincial, divisional, and school levels in each province would provide a more nuanced understanding of how Reconciliation is being addressed in site specific contexts. This could also offer insights into

the myriad of approaches to Truth and Reconciliation, possibly highlighting the positive work being done in every corner of the country and allow for more collaborative and effective policy creation.

Final thoughts

Despite all I have learned from the process of conducting this research and reflecting on my own knowledge and assumptions, I am humbled at what I have yet to learn about Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenous pedagogies, and my treaty responsibilities. As Senator Murray Sinclair has said:

Achieving reconciliation is like climbing a mountain — we must proceed a step at a time. It will not always be easy. There will be storms, there will be obstacles, but we cannot allow ourselves to be daunted by the task because our goal is just and it is also necessary. (2015b).

This research constitutes my journey up the mountain. It is my hope that I have illuminated some of the obstacles for those who are embarking on their own journey on this path.

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Appendix A: Terminology

Language and terminology referring to Indigenous peoples can be perceived as outdated, politically incorrect, offensive, or even racist. It is not my intention to employ incorrect or offensive terms, but rather to be as precise as possible in my language and word choice. The connotation of terms continues to change over time and across contexts. The terms below have been shaped and defined by the work of Chelsea Vowel (2016), Marie Battiste (2013), and Paulette Regan (2010).

Indigenous:

In the context of this research the term “Indigenous” is used to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples living in what is now called Canada. However, this is not to detract from the more encompassing definition of the term which refers to “Indigenous peoples throughout the world” (Vowel, 2016, p. 10). I also acknowledge that the word “peoples” is intentionally made plural to recognize the diversity of “hundreds of culturally and linguistically distinct groups, rather than a homogenous whole” (Vowel, 2016, p. 10).

First Nations:

“First Nations” refers to “that group of people officially known as Indians under the *Indian Act* and does not include Inuit or Métis peoples” (Vowel, 2016, p. 11). However, as the “s” at the end of “First Nations” implies, there are clearly diverse groups within this category.

Aboriginal:

The term “Aboriginal” is preferred by some researchers including Marie Battiste (2013) as it is more context specific to Canada than the global term “Indigenous.” However, the term “Aboriginal” can often mistakenly be used as a proper noun by some, causing awkward

possessive connotations such as “Canada’s Aboriginals” (Vowel, 2016, p. 10). This is less likely to occur when using the term “Indigenous.” In recent years the term “Aboriginal” has fallen out of favour with some politicians and academics, and for this reason I choose to use the term “Indigenous” as its common replacement.

Indian or Native:

The terms “Indian” or “Native” are used “only where the context warrants it, to reflect the vernacular commonly used in historical and public policy documents, published literature, and popular media coverage” (Regan, 2010, p. 240). For example, there are references to historic policies such as the *Indian Act*. It is understood that some Indigenous people prefer to use the term “Native,” but that it has also been used with some historical pejorative connotations that I would like to avoid (e.g., *native to Manitoba*) (Vowel, 2016, p. 11). On a more personal note, the use of the term “Native” by white settler-Canadians from my hometown have added to my perception of its negative connotations.

Non-Indigenous:

The term “Non-Indigenous” in the context of this research is meant to refer to any persons who live in Canada who do not self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. This is admittedly a clunky and imperfect catch-all term since it erases the intersecting ethnicities and cultures of people living in Canada, and it creates a false binary of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples. For the purpose of this research “Non-Indigenous” is employed to serve as a distinction between newcomers to Canada and Settler-Canadians.

Settler Canadian:

The terms “Settler-Canadian” or “Settler” are sometimes used interchangeably but mean the same thing in the context of the research. “Settler”, as it is defined by Paulette Regan (2010)

denotes a “Euro-Canadian whose ancestors came to Canada during the colonial period” (Regan, 2010, p. 210). The “s” is capitalized only to denote “a group of people sharing an identity” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 3). It should also be noted that while newcomers to Canada may not be Settlers, they are entering into a society that operates based on Eurocentric systems that “hide its power and privilege in whiteness, and ignores complicities with dominance, difference, and disadvantage” (Battiste, 2013, p. 32). “Settler” is also preferred because it is a relational term as opposed to a racial one.

Appendix B: List of Acronyms

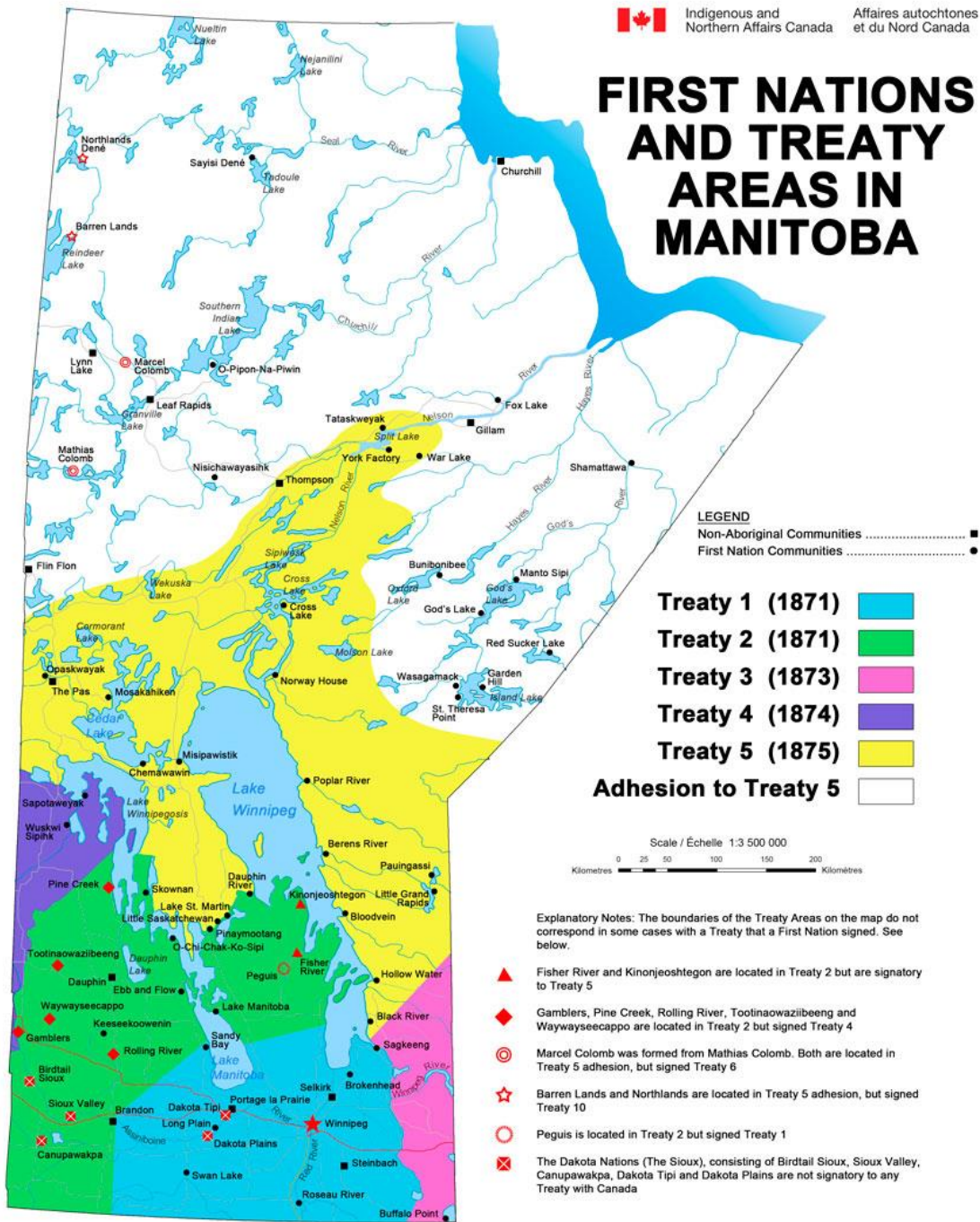
AFN	The Assembly of First Nations
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CIP	Continuous Improvement Plan
CR	Community Report
FLBSD	Fort La Bosse School Division
FSD	Frontier School Division
IRS	Indian Residential Schools
NCTR	National Center for Truth and Reconciliation
OIM	Organizational Impression Management
PLPSD	Portage La Prairie School Division
SSD	Sunrise School Division
SVSD	Swan Valley School Division
TRC(C)	Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of Canada)
TRCM	Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba
WSD	Winnipeg School Division

Appendix C: Map of Manitoba School Divisions and Districts



Manitoba Education (n.d.-a)

Appendix D: Map of First Nations and Treaty Areas in Manitoba



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