Culturally Responsive Decision Making:

Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom

by

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Abstract

In the last 20 years there has been a significant amount of research done on the topic of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lipman, 1995; Maina, 1997). The purpose of my research was to learn what factors influence and inform teachers' decisions to choose or not choose Aboriginal children's literature for their classroom libraries and/or instructional purposes. In this study I conducted semi-structured interviews with six teachers in six different northern Manitoba schools, performed a classroom library audit in each of the six classrooms, and distributed a division-wide questionnaire. Findings suggest that even though teachers believe using Aboriginal children's literature is important, it is not manifesting itself in the purchase and use of Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. This study concludes by confirming the work of McPherson (2009) which suggests that teachers' decision making processes are a reflection of their level of cultural responsiveness.

Acknowledgements

When I decided to return to university to take my Post Baccalaureate and Masters Degrees, little did I know that I was embarking on a decade long journey of enlightenment that would transform me as a Métis woman and educator. Sustaining this for ten years would not have been possible without the love, support, and encouragement of some very important people in my life. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks and acknowledge the roles these people have played in my journey.

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Dedicated to Granny Millar (Nee Fidler)

I cherish the precious childhood memories of you telling me stories.

Your stories are your legacy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As an instructional coach working in northern Manitoba schools, it is my responsibility to support teachers in the implementation of the Manitoba English Language Arts curriculum. This responsibility requires me to visit schools in First Nation, Métis, and non-Aboriginal communities spanning a distance of approximately 1000 km from the southernmost to the northernmost school. Given the large Aboriginal student population, I believe as an instructional coach, I have an obligation to support teachers in providing culturally sensitive, authentic, and relevant reading material which supports critical literacy as well as equity and social justice pedagogy. In order to do this effectively I feel that it is necessary for me to understand how Aboriginal children's literature is currently being selected and used by the teachers in the schools I service. As such, this thesis study was implemented to provide me with the information and insights I sought.

This chapter presents the background to the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions that guided the study, and a section positioning myself as the researcher. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework for this study.

Background to the Problem

After 26 years in the classroom I believe that most children will engage with a book if they have: a purpose for reading; a connection to the text; a choice in what they read; and an opportunity to share their thoughts about what they read. As I studied and gained experience in the classroom it became clear to me how influential a role children's literature, or the lack thereof, played in the lives of children and adolescents. My own informal observations of the children I taught showed me that while many "good" books could entertain or teach a concept, there were always some students who were not connecting or identifying with the characters or themes in the books. It was not until I became an English Language Arts consultant, and later an instructional coach, for a large northern Manitoba school division and began my graduate studies that one possible reason for this came into focus for me. That is, many of the books lacked cultural relevance for the Aboriginal students who were reading them. They were not able to see themselves in the texts they were reading, they could not connect or identify in any way, and thus were not engaged.

My role as an English Language Arts instructional coach requires me to work closely with teachers to develop and implement their English Language Arts programs. The student population consists of predominantly Aboriginal students while the majority of the teachers are non-Aboriginal. In some cases it means providing resources, modeling teaching strategies, and providing professional development in schools where Aboriginal language and culture programs are being implemented in an effort to help communities regain their native languages. It has made me keenly aware that I am providing support and guidance in teaching the very language they have been forced to speak; the language which has replaced many of their native languages. The shift from my former division in a rural community where the majority of students were of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture to a division which encompasses vast areas of the north where the students are mainly First Nation, Métis, or Inuit has highlighted the "whiteness" (Gangi, 2008, p. 30) of the texts the children are reading. I work in classrooms where the student population is often one hundred percent Aboriginal yet it seems to me that only a small fraction of the children's literature in the classroom libraries was written by Aboriginal authors or had Aboriginal characters depicting Aboriginal culture and perspectives.

Besides seeing themselves, all children should also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way in order to build positive self-images and an understanding of cultures different than their own. Thus, the authors, illustrators, and publishers of children's literature in particular, have a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic, and socially just works (Grant, 2007). If as studies suggest (Au, 2009; Chartrand, 2010), both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula which is presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content, then teachers should be making more conscious decisions to select Aboriginal children's literature for use in their classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

In the last 20 years there has been a significant amount of research done on the topic of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lipman, 1995; Maina, 1997) which has revealed the importance of teachers linking students' classroom learning to their home and community experiences and knowledge. By this I mean a shift in teachers' attitudes about diversity that recognizes students' strengths and successes and builds on them in the instructional process. In doing so, teachers provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of pride in themselves, their culture and community allowing students to be proud of their academic success (Gay, 2000). This connection is far less likely to take place without conscious effort and deliberate decision making on the part of the teacher. In the professional and research literature however, there are few studies that focus on teacher decision making processes and the choices they make when using children's literature. One study by MacPherson (2009) highlights the influential role of the teacher in consciously addressing the needs of all learners and the notion of critical pedagogy based on reflection and action or praxis (Freire, 1970/2010). In her study MacPherson found that when teaching students from cultures different from their own, teachers had to be mindful of the decisions they made when selecting materials and curricula, supporting language and culture, empowering students, and responding to the feelings and actions of their students. MacPherson's (2009) research suggests that the decisions teachers make about "materials, curriculum, [and] interactions" (p. 276) in early and middle years classrooms may be seen as a reflection of their level of cultural proficiency. Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, and Terrell (2012) describe cultural proficiency as,

> A way of being, a mind-set, a mental model, a worldview, a lens through which we view ourselves and others, a lens through which we view our organizations and the communities they serve. Whichever metaphor resonates with you, Cultural Proficiency allows individuals and organizations to interact effectively with people who differ from them. …Cultural Proficiency is an approach for responding to the environment shaped by its diversity. (p. 3)

Simply put, Diller and Moule (2005) suggest it is a teacher's ability to effectively teach students from cultures unlike his/her own. Extending this thinking, I believe the decision to use Aboriginal children's literature in the classroom, the criteria by which it is chosen, and how it is used; all reflect culturally responsive decision making and the position of a teacher along the cultural proficiency continuum (Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2012). Although this will be further explained in Chapter 2, by *Aboriginal children's literature* I mean texts written for a child audience from birth to adolescence. The author may be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal provided they include Aboriginal peoples, topics, and issues of relevance for children in this age range. After reading MacPherson's work and considering my own interest in children's literature I decided to design my research around the notion of culturally responsive decision making in the context of cross-cultural teaching to attempt to uncover the factors and rationale behind how teachers choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

With this in mind the purpose of my research was to investigate the decisions made by teachers when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in a cross-cultural teaching context. I set out to learn what factors influence and inform teachers' decisions to choose or not choose Aboriginal children's literature for their classroom libraries and/or instructional purposes and what those instructional purposes might be. I wanted also to learn just how much Aboriginal children's literature was in the classrooms of the teachers I serve in my professional capacity as an instructional coach.

Research Questions

My central question was what do teachers in cross-cultural teaching situations in northern Manitoba schools say about choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms? My specific focus was to find out the types of things teachers said about the following: the level of importance they attach to children's exposure to Aboriginal children's literature; their own definitions of Aboriginal children's literature; their decision making processes with regard to choosing Aboriginal children's literature for their classrooms; the criteria they use to judge the quality of children's literature; the places from which they purchase or obtain Aboriginal children's literature for use in their classrooms; and what types of professional development or supports would be helpful to them in choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms.

My methods will be explained in detail in Chapter 3. In short, I chose six participants from six schools in a Northern Manitoba school division which met the criteria of my study. I selected three large schools and three small schools which provided the cross-cultural teaching context I required for my research.

The six participants in my study were non-Aboriginal teachers. All of the participants taught Aboriginal students in single and multi-grade classrooms ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

In order to collect the data necessary for my study I employed three data sources; a one-on-one semi-structured interview, a classroom library audit, and a division-wide questionnaire. Each of these data sources was analyzed with a focus on the information it provided in relation to my research questions.

The Researcher

To gain the best understanding of any study it is necessary to understand the background of the researcher. It is quite likely that another researcher will get different results and even if they get the same results they will almost certainly interpret them differently because of their different background (Bryan, 2009). Identity is developed over time and is constantly evolving, thus my research interest is strongly influenced by my personal growth as a Métis woman and educator. Being at this particular stage of life and experiencing changes in my career has caused me to reflect on my own culture and how it fits into the context within which I am currently working and living. Shining the spotlight on my own life has magnified the importance of identifying and connecting to one's own culture in developing Cultural Proficiency.

Growing up in the country along the shore of Lake Manitoba in the heart of Manitoba's Interlake allowed me the opportunity to enjoy a rural lifestyle strongly influenced by farming, hunting, and fishing. Though our immediate family was small, I had numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins living nearby to whom I felt very connected. Perhaps the most influential of these was my maternal grandmother. Though small in stature she was larger than life in my eyes. Much of my early life was spent at her house before and after school and on weekends, listening to stories, learning how to sew, weeding the garden, baking, and playing with my cousins. I had a strong sense of belonging; like I was a part of something larger than just my father, mother, and brother. I was part of what I affectionately call my “big” family who are descendants of Peter Fidler, a surveyor for the Hudson Bay Company and Mary Maskegon a Swampy Cree woman from York Factory. Uncovering and embracing my Métis identity has been a strong impetus for my research. My Métis (maternal) and Icelandic (paternal) heritage proved to be a double edged sword living in a community where both cultures harbored animosity toward one another. Having the Scandinavian features of my father’s Icelandic roots positioned me as part of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture; however, my lived experiences and my familial ties were strongly rooted in my mother’s Métis culture. I grew up hearing racist slurs and stereotypes directed at both sides; one side sparked by inferiority and oppression the other sparked by ignorance and domination.

My path in life as a teacher and my role as an English Language Arts instructional coach, might suggest that I grew up surrounded by books and strong early reading experiences. On the contrary, I was not read to regularly nor were my parents reading role models. I had few books other than a set of bible stories and the odd Little Golden Book. With such limited early reading experiences one might expect that I would experience reading difficulties or become a reluctant reader but neither was the case. What I did have was a family of story tellers; grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles who passed on our family history and values through the rich stories they told. As a result I developed a strong sense of story structure which carried me through my school years and on to my teaching career. It was in my early years of teaching that my passion for children’s literature was ignited and I strongly believe it was born of my lack of picture books as a child. I continue to be captivated by their beautiful images and their ability to deliver the simplest or the most complex story through the careful balance of pictures and words.

My school experience did nothing to build my Métis identity or a positive self-concept as the textbooks and picture books were either completely void of Aboriginal content or supported racist stereotypes. I never had a teacher bless a book (Gambrell, 1996) or read aloud with such enthusiasm that it ignited a passion for reading in me. Perhaps this is why I became fascinated with children’s literature as a new teacher when I finally became aware of what was available for children to read. Ironically it was not until recently that I came across two children’s picture books, *Jenneli’s Dance* by Elizabeth Denny (2008) and *Sarah and the People of Sand River* by W. D. Valgardson (1996), that I felt I could have identified with as a child. It was the depth of my emotional response to these books that sealed my conviction to pursue my thesis topic and convinced me of the power children’s books can have on the right reader at the right time. I was moved by the details in the books which seemed to speak to me personally as a reader—as if they wrote the books with me in mind. This deep connection also helped me understand why it is that some argue only Aboriginal writers should write about Aboriginal peoples and issues. I feel an argument can be made for both sides, so it is not my intention in this study to take a position regarding the matter one way or the other. I do believe that in one of these books in particular there are details that only someone who has lived the experiences could know to include because they would be invisible or irrelevant to an outsider.

In my 28 years as an educator in the classroom and as an English Language Arts instructional coach, I have made a conscious effort to pass my passion for children’s books on to the students and teachers with whom I work. I can find a book to introduce or support almost any curricular concept, theme, or big idea (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) in an engaging and non-threatening way. Children's literature was an indispensable tool and catalyst in my classroom and features prominently in much of what I do with the students and teachers I work with now. Over the years I have amassed a large personal collection of children's picture books and novels which are on display in our home library. It is still a favorite pastime of mine to cozy up and read a beautiful children's picture book either from my own collection or from one of the local children's book stores. It is not uncommon for my young adult children to pick up a childhood favorite and reminisce about reading it; memories which are different from my own experience as a child. As void of children's literature as my home was, theirs was the exact opposite. They have been surrounded by beautiful children's books from the time they were born. I still buy them books on special occasions such as graduations and other important life events; books that have a special message of love and encouragement or something that reflects them at a particular time in their lives. They often say, "Wow Mom, where do you find these books? They say exactly the right thing!" I also have young nieces who love to spend time with books strewn across our little home office floor looking at pictures and trying to read the words they know. At family gatherings adults are often pulled from conversations to read a book or two; that is just what you do when you come to Auntie's house.

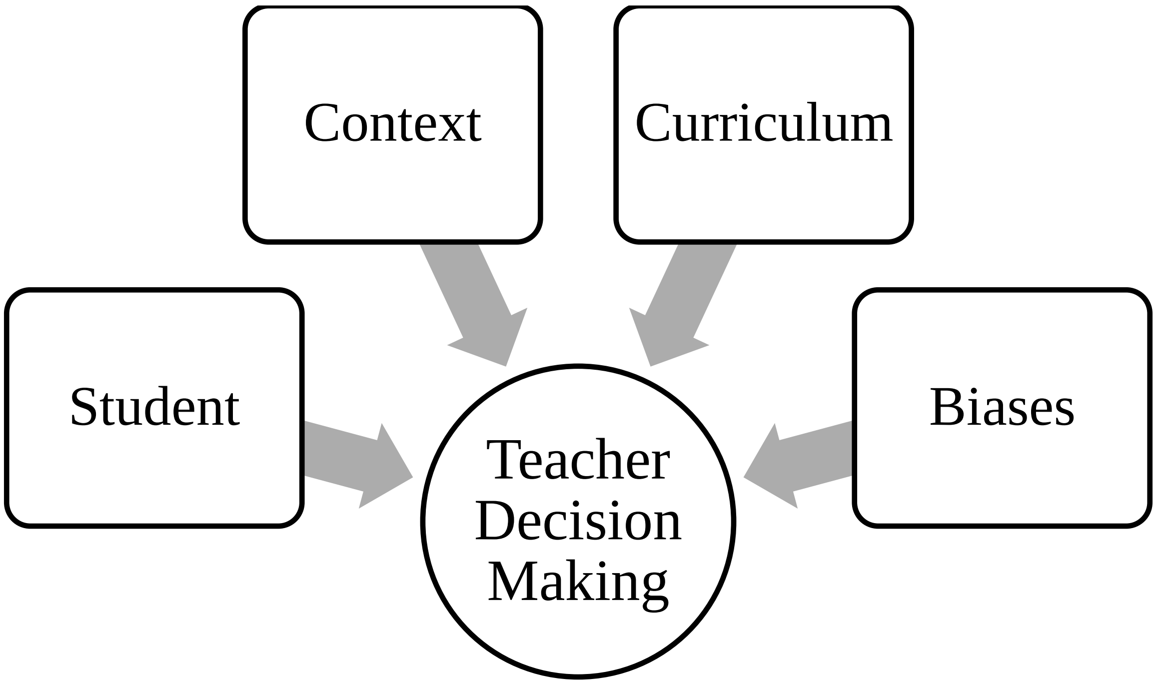
While taking my undergraduate degree I do not recall any courses that dealt specifically with children's literature or how to use it in the classroom. Nor do I recall any of my cooperating teachers using it for any purpose other than a story time read aloud. The practice of using it across content areas to reinforce concepts may have been happening in some classrooms but it was not apparent in the classrooms where I did my student teaching.

However, as a classroom teacher I used extensive cross curricular integration which included the use of children's literature to present ideas and information and spark discussion. My unit planning always began with some form of children's literature that connected to the outcomes I wanted to achieve and the needs of my students. I was mindful of the context I was teaching in and the needs of the children in my classroom. Embarking on my Post Baccalaureate degree allowed me to reflect on the theory behind my practice and it highlighted for me the vital role children's literature plays in the classroom. My cultural background, life experiences, and the academic knowledge gained in my course work have combined to create my identity and personal perspective through which I designed and interpreted my study.

Theoretical Framework

Children's literature is a fundamental component of an effective literacy program and, among other things, it plays a crucial role in reading, writing, response to literature, content area literacy, and art appreciation (Calkins, 2001; Cullinan & Galda, 1998; Donoghue, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Olness, 2005; Reutzel & Cooter, Jr., 2007; Russell, 2009; Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson, 2014; Tunnell, Jacobs, Young, & Bryan, 2016; Vacca, Vacca, & Begoray, 2005). Children's picture books in particular are considered rich visual and textual resources for teachers to use to present concepts, spark ideas, initiate discussion, and reinforce identity and self-concept in children. Social constructivists argue that reading and literacy activities are situated within a particular context and culture which, along with instructional practices, greatly affect the learning experience of each child (Rueda, 2011). Figure 1 provides a visual description of the important components within my theoretical framework.

Figure 1. Visual Description of Components of Theoretical Framework



Today in literacy education and research, literacy is viewed as a social practice. That is to say, the ways in which we use literacy are heavily influenced by the social setting (Context in Figure 1) in which that use occurs. Conversely the ways that we use literacy (Biases in Figure 1) influence the social setting in which that use occurs (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Street, 1993, 1995). Furthermore, the meaning of the text for any reader is not only dependent on the immediate social context, "but also the cultural and social discourses constituting these contexts" (Beach, et al., 2008, p. 1). Inherent in these cultural and social discourses is the need for teachers to develop Cultural proficiency (Chisholm, 1994; Kramsch, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nuri-Robins et al. 2012) by recognizing and responding to cultural diversity within their classrooms (Teacher decision making in Figure 1), the community, and the world.

If as these statements suggest, children's picture books and the context in which they are used, play a significant role in student engagement, building self-concept, and understanding of text, then culturally relevant and responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and decision making (MacPherson, 2009) are essential in delivering the English Language Arts curriculum in Manitoba schools (Curriculum in Figure 1). The decision to use quality Aboriginal children's literature suggests that teachers understand the curriculum they are responsible for implementing and are responsive to the diverse cultural and social contexts of the students they teach. Furthermore, it can be argued that such culturally relevant pedagogy reflects teachers' understandings of the powerful role children's literature can play in building self-concept (McCarthey & Moje, 2002) and allowing children to experience people and places they may otherwise never see or come to understand.

Summary of the Introduction

In Chapter 1 I provided an introduction to my study and gave some background to the problem I investigated. I then stated the problem I studied and explained the purpose for conducting the study and the research questions I asked. This was followed by a section describing and positioning myself as the researcher in the context of this study. I concluded Chapter 1 with an explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning my study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to provide information regarding the foundational concepts upon which this study is built. Four groups of literature will be reviewed in this chapter. The first group of literature relates to teacher decision making and the notion of culturally responsive teaching. The second group relates to children's literature: clarifying what it is; identifying where within this broad category the sub-category of Aboriginal children's literature has its place; acknowledging the important role children's literature plays in early and middle year's education; and explaining the concept of children's literature as a mirror in which children can identify themselves and a window through which they vicariously experience the world. The third part of the literature review relates to the social context and will examine the importance of children's literature in society: more specifically, the perspective of Aboriginal writers and the use of children's literature as a vehicle for social change. The fourth and final group of literature relates to the relevant Manitoba Education curricula which supports the use of children's literature and promotes the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Terms such as, "culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive" (Gay, 2000, p. 29) have been used in discussions of diversity and multicultural education for over 25 years. The two most frequently used terms are culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as "a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests a subtle distinction exists between the two terms in that culturally relevant pedagogy implies the notions of cultural appropriateness, congruency, and compatibility between marginalized students' home-culture and the classroom due to accommodations made by the teacher. On the other hand, culturally responsive pedagogy implies a more active dynamic relationship between the teacher and the home and community. While I recognize that elements of culturally relevant teaching do apply, I believe the term culturally responsive teaching and all that it encompasses best fits the purposes of this study. It goes beyond the "mere inclusion of ethnic content" (Gay, 2000, p. 28) and includes the instructional strategies used by teachers to filter "curriculum content …through their [students'] cultural frames of reference to make the content more personally meaningful and easier to master" (Gay, 2000, p. 24).

Gay (2000) identifies the need for a paradigm shift resulting in pedagogical changes in curriculum development and implementation in order to meet the needs of all students in an increasingly diverse society. This is supported by Kanu (2011) who maintains that when integrating Aboriginal perspectives it is crucial for teachers to continually "question how their curricular content, resources, and pedagogies [relate] to and [include] Aboriginal peoples in positive and empowering ways" (p. 102). Through the use of thoughtfully selected multicultural resources and materials in all subject areas, students learn to appreciate their own and others' cultural heritages.

The notion of culturally responsive teaching can also be interpreted to include cultural sensitivity which Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) argue is necessary in order to have a positive effect on Aboriginal students. They also report that "good teachers dramatically enhance the enthusiasm of students for learning and poor teachers dramatically damage that enthusiasm" (p. 146). It is essential that teachers be non-judgmental and inclusive of their students' cultural backgrounds in order to be effective facilitators of learning in diverse classrooms (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). It is important then for teachers to be aware of the cultural funds of knowledge and schema that their students bring to the classroom as well as the ways in which unfamiliar or incongruent "reading material, instructional activities, and other aspects of comprehension instruction can serve to unduly increase cognitive load, leading to impaired learning" (Rueda, 2011, p. 95). Culturally responsive teachers can help students recognize that they have valuable funds of knowledge and cultural identities which can help them make connections and engage with texts in meaningful ways for culturally relevant purposes thereby setting a profound and meaningful purpose for reading (Hamme, 1995; Hammerberg, 2004). Souto-Manning (2009) suggests that using multicultural children's literature as the spring board for intense and meaningful discussions of relevant critical issues is another area of culturally relevant decision making which reflects critical pedagogy by allowing students to use the information in "socially empowering ways" (Hammerberg, 2004, p. 655).

In light of all the research mentioned above one would hope that great strides have been made in the area of culturally responsive teaching, however this is not the case. Sadly, when it comes to the education of indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States, "disparities are found on almost every measure of academic success (i.e., from standardized test scores to graduation rates to discipline referrals to postsecondary completion to presence in special education and gifted and talented programs)" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 942).

Children's Literature

Children's literature has evolved over hundreds of years from oral storytelling of life lessons, to religious texts, to didactic stories intended to indoctrinate children into society, to the familiar trade books of today. This evolution occurred simultaneously with the advancement of what it meant to be a child at a particular time in history (Tunnell, Jacobs, Young, & Bryan, 2016). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully explain and explore the complex history of children's literature; however, it does serve to emphasize the dynamic and ever-changing nature of children's literature. As society came to understand that children were indeed developmentally different and not simply miniature adults (Cullinan & Galda, 1998), they also became aware that children had unique interests and needs as young readers. As authors began creating picture books and stories designed to engage and enlighten young readers, a separate category of literature was created which was distinctly different from adult and adolescent literature.

The differences that distinguish children's literature from other forms of literature may be apparent to those familiar with children's literature. Teachers, parents, children, publishers, and researchers may have an intuitive awareness of just what constitutes literature for children; however, it seems to be a difficult thing to precisely define the term. Many books have been written on the topic of children's literature but few have a clear, concise definition of what it is. Short et al. (2014) define children's literature as:

> Good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction. They are books that children see as reflecting their life experiences, understandings, and emotions. (p. 4)

Similarly, Bryan (personal communication, June 17, 2013) defines children's literature as trade texts published for an intended child audience. Cullinan and Galda (1998) believe children's literature encompasses a much wider range across every medium including computer software, film, videos, and interactive games. For the purposes of my research I will be using a somewhat more traditional definition which is; trade books and levelled texts written for an intended child audience from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, including prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

Aboriginal Children's Literature

One thing literary specialists generally agree on is a common organizational system which groups all oral, literary, and media text into a particular genre. Figure 2 illustrates this system which identifies books by content and encompasses most text; however, there are certain types of books regardless of genre which form an umbrella category called multicultural (Tunnell et al. 2016) or culturally diverse (Cullinan & Galda, 1998) children's literature. This category includes trade books, regardless of genre, that have a main character who is a member of a racial, religious, or language group other than the dominant Euro-American or Euro-Canadian group (Russell, 2009; Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson, 2014). It has also been described as books which contributed in a positive way to the understanding of people from different cultures and presents a positive image of a diverse society and a multicultural world (Sims Bishop & The Multicultural Booklits Committee, 1994) which invites readers to transform their beliefs and explore alternative ways of thinking and living. It has also been argued that all children's literature could in fact be considered multicultural as no group is void of culture (Cullinan & Galda, 1998).

Figure 2. Genres of Children's Literature

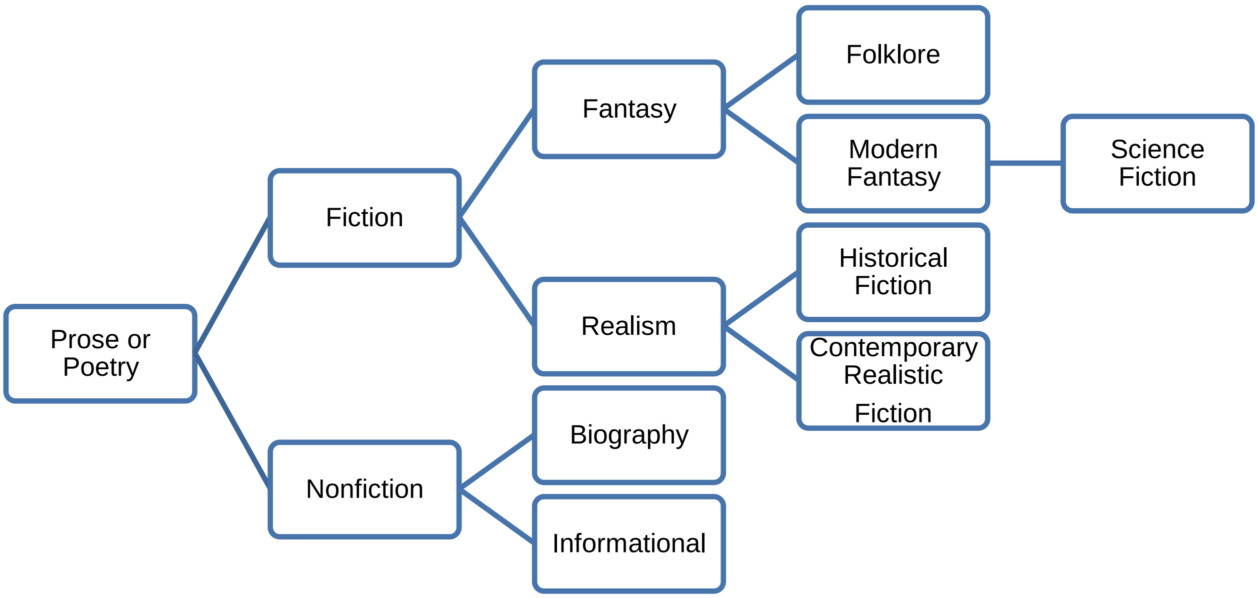


Figure 2. Reprinted with Permission From *Children's Literature Briefly (6th ed.)* by M. O. Tunnel, J.S. Jacobs, T. A Young, & G. Bryan, 2016, p. 64. Copyright 2016 by Pearson.

Everyone has a cultural heritage which could be considered diverse in relation to each other. Sims (1982) argues that it is important to avoid the "'holidays and celebrations' syndrome" (p. xxii) where diversity in culture is recognized only on special occasions. Further, she believes "there is no need to make these books appear alien or exotic…. When the literature program has a multicultural focus, all literature is treated as one small part of the human story" (pp. xx-xxi). It is within this multicultural category that Aboriginal children's literature resides as literature written from an Aboriginal perspective, by and about Aboriginal peoples (Cullinan & Galda, 1998).

In Canada the word *Aboriginal* refers to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. For good reason, there are differences of opinion regarding who should be writing about Aboriginal peoples or telling Aboriginal stories. "Native people have been stereotyped in many different ways and literature has reflected these stereotypes" (Grant, 1990, p. 208). Native American author, Tim Tingle expresses this concern openly in his writing and clearly feels this is an issue that must be addressed.

> Consider the following stereotypes: While some Indians were savages, most Indians were gentle lovers of Nature. Indians dressed in beautiful beaded animal skins and eagle feathers. Most Indians followed the buffalo, ate the buffalo, and lived in teepees made from buffalo. Indians were brave but unable to survive in the modern world. We saved the Indian. We educated the Indian. Most children's literature available in libraries today promotes these stereotypes. Make no mistake; these are stereotypes….Can we tell them that the vast majority of children's books written about Indians in America were not written by Indians? Can we somehow convince them that this matters? …Might we now begin—one parent, one child, one teacher, one classroom at a time—a real and more truthful education about American Indians. (Tingle, 2010, p. 40)

Joseph Bruchac, an Abenaki storyteller from the Adirondack region of New York state, has a different opinion on the matter. He acknowledges that there are hazards to non-Aboriginal people telling Aboriginal stories but if non-Aboriginal storytellers understand and respect the lessons they teach, there is no reason they should not tell Native American tales.

> Before I go further, let me make it clear that my aim is not to discourage non-Indians from telling American Indian stories….These are powerful stories, powerful as medicine or tobacco. But, like medicine or tobacco whose smoke is used to carry prayers up to Creator, stories must be used wisely and well or they

> may be harmful to both tellers and hearers alike. Every Native American storyteller I have spoke with about this—Vi Hilbert in Washington, Ed Edmo in Oregon, Kevin Locke in North Dakota, Simon Ortiz and Harold Littlebird in New Mexico, Keewaydinoquay in Michigan, Tehanetorens in New York, and many others—agrees that there is no reason why non-Indian storytellers who understand and respect should not tell American Indian tales. (Bruchac in Slapin & Seale, 1992, p. 92)

It can be argued that these same issues exist in books written about Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Many Australian Aboriginal writers feel that a work must at least be written or co-authored by an Indigenous person for it to be an Aboriginal work (Heiss, 2003). I understand and respect these positions and agree that Aboriginal Children's literature depicting inaccuracies and stereotypes has the power to do much harm, however, my purpose is not to judge who has the right to write about Aboriginal peoples, but rather to try and understand which books teachers are choosing, why they are choosing them, and how they are using them. To this end it will be necessary for me to include all books that teachers may use, including books written by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors representing Aboriginal peoples. The issue of who has the right to write about Aboriginal peoples and issues is beyond the scope of this study.

The Role of Children's Literature in the Classroom

Both Quintero (2004) and Rogers (1999) discuss the essential role children's literature plays in the lives of children and adolescents as vehicles for problem posing and identity building:

> What in Literature engages the imaginations of young readers? How do characters come to life and speak to them? How do young readers see themselves and the

> world in books, or not, and what do they resist or talk back to in those pages? How do they express these responses in communities of readers? What is the relationship of their reading practices to those of their peers, their families, and the larger world they inhabit? (Rogers, 1999, p. 138)

Children’s literature has replaced basal readers as the core reading material and foundation of effective literacy programs in many classrooms across Canada. It is also being used as a supplementary text alongside traditional textbooks in more and more content area classrooms to give children the chance to look at the world outside their personal experiences and the limitations imposed by textbooks (Morrison & Rude, 2002). Freire’s (1970/2010) work stressed the importance of critical thinking and dialogue; the importance of reading and speaking “*the word*….to transform the world” (p. 87). As educators become more aware of critical literacy, children’s literature (realistic fiction in particular) is being used with increasing frequency as a stimulus for critical dialogue over relevant social issues affecting students such as disabilities, race, gender, and class. Galda and Beach (2001) found that reading, writing, and responding to literature had the potential to make a difference in the lives of children by helping them to critique and make sense of their life experience. Similarly, Tyson (1999), suggests that literature allows children “to locate themselves in their socio-political places and spaces and to engage in social action” (p. 158). Sims Bishop (1999) agreed that children’s literature allowed children an avenue for developing understandings about people and places outside their world and provided a means of influencing the “thought and action of readers in general and children in particular” (p. 118).

Children's Literature as a Window and a Mirror

Studies confirm the belief that children's books do have the power to affect self-concept and world views (Chall, Radwin, French, & Hall, 1979; Jalongo, 1988). Sims (1982) maintains that authors, through their use of artistic language, have the power to transform a reader's reality by evoking an emotional response such as empathy within the reader. By promoting empathy and presenting new perspectives children learn to recognize their similarities and value diversity as part of being human. This ability to change the way they see themselves and the way they are seen by others has the potential to transform their world. "In an important sense then, children need literature that serves as a window into lives and experiences different from their own, and literature that serves as a mirror reflecting themselves and their cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors" (Sims-Bishop & The Multicultural Booklist Committee, 1994, p. xiv). This sentiment is echoed by McCarthey and Moje (2002) who argue that identity and literacy are linked and that educators can aid in identity development by providing literature that represents authentic issues facing children struggling to discover who they are.

The written word has long been used as a means of transmitting the morals, attitudes, customs, world views, and values from one generation to another. When children do not see anyone in a book that resembles themselves or those like themselves are portrayed in ridiculous, stereotypical ways, the message is that they do not count and are not valued by the society at large. Conversely, when mainly white middle class children see themselves almost exclusively in the books they read, the message is that their way of life is the norm and that people and cultures other than their own are mysterious or inferior (Sims Bishop et al., 1994). This dichotomy is detrimental to both extremes and does nothing to support positive self-concepts in children who are considered "other" or cultural acceptance and harmony in society as a whole.

Style (1988/1996) suggests the notion of children's literature as mirror and window "frames" (p. 35) through which children can see themselves and the world which is critical to a liberal arts education. Further she suggests that when children are experiencing a book that is a window into a world unlike their own and what they see or hear resonates with them, the window also becomes a mirror in which they see themselves reflected. As Vasquez (2010) explains,

> Books present different kinds of realities: providing spaces for readers to connect their own experiences and understanding for purposes of reaffirming those experiences and understandings, or for taking issue with the realities that are presented for them. Further, they recognize that particular students' experiences and understandings are marginalized when they do not find themselves in books or when the realities presented do not represent their experiences." (p. 12)

Teachers who balance the use of children's literature that mirrors the diversity in their classrooms and provides windows into worlds different than their students' lived experiences, provide "knowledge of both self and others and clarification of the known and illumination of the unknown" (Style, 1988/1996, p. 38). As Richard Wagamese ("Meet our Aboriginal", 2016) so eloquently states, "Every book is a doorway to a hundred other doorways that allow you to see the world." (para. 5)

Social Context

"Literature is not immune to the intellectual currents of the day" (Harris, 1999, p. 153) hence "children's literature, like adult literature, often reflects the social concerns current at the time of its creation" (Sims, 1982, p. 17). An example of this can be seen in the many children's books written in the last two decades by Aboriginal writers (e.g. Campbell, 2005; 2008; Charleyboy & Leatherdale, 2014; Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010; 2013; 2014; Loyie &

Brissenden, 2002; Loyie, Brissenden, & Spear, 2014; Robertson, 2011; Sterling, 1992/2010; Vermette, 2015) depicting residential school experiences. Aboriginal writers are growing in number and creating a well-known and respected literary community whose writing represents the Aboriginal experience (Mosionier, 2011), world view, culture, and issues faced by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples historically and in contemporary times. Moses and Goldie (2005) suggest that today's Aboriginal writers:

> are finding the ways [their] individual human voices can tell the old stories again as [they] see and hear and re-imagine and know them, the ways that include a braiding together of what forms and content [they have] retained of [their] traditions and of what [they] find of use…in the culture of the globalizers. (p. xi)

The last 20 years have seen significant events take place in the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In 1999 Nunavut and the Canadian government finalized the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act officially separating it from the Northwest Territories and distinguishing it as a new territory. In 2008, Prime Minster Harper delivered a public apology to Aboriginal Residential School survivors acknowledging that the assimilation policies enacted by the government and church were indeed wrong, caused great harm, and have no place in our country. In March of 2013 the Canadian government acknowledged that it had reneged on its promise of Métis land grants. Most recently, on June 2, 2015, Chief Justice Murray Sinclair delivered the Executive Summary report of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in which, among other things, they called for all Canadians to continue to learn the truth about our past and take steps to reconcile the fractured relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. These are signs of the times and events which will be recorded in the literature of our time for children, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to engage in critical dialogue around important social issues facing our country. The struggle of Aboriginal peoples to regain their lost languages and cultures has been going on for more than a century and is coming to a point in history where Canadians can no longer deny or ignore the serious social and cultural issues facing the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada. Now more than ever we need all children in Canada to know our true history; one that can be viewed through multiple "frames" (Style, 1988/1996) or perspectives and engage in critical dialogue around the challenges we face as a country. This is essential so that Canadians can achieve a level of cross-cultural awareness (Spielmann, 2009) and acceptance that will allow all citizens, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to thrive and live happy, healthy, successful lives.

The social context in which I conducted my study consisted of cultural and social discourses, which social constructivists argue play a significant role in the reading experiences of students and is particularly pertinent to my study. This context is described by some Aboriginal authors as an oppressive, racist, and sexist reality; all by-products of colonialism (Currie, 1990). Others refer to it as "the fourth world" where indigenous peoples' cultures are controlled by the non-indigenous (Moses & Goldie, 2005). Some schools in Manitoba may be seen as inhabiting this "fourth world" as non-Aboriginal education systems control the curriculum development, implementation, and daily operations of educating Aboriginal children. Freire (1970/2010) summed it up succinctly when he wrote, "One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding" (p. 95). It is within this cross-cultural teaching context that culturally responsive teaching is crucial.

Relevant Curricula

The word "curriculum" comes from the Latin word *curr(ere)* which means to run a race. Today people generally think of curriculum as a course of study or subjects to be taught in a particular educational institution or what becomes known to students in the teaching and learning context. This suggests that it is not the actual running or the plan for the race but what transpires as a result of the two (Quintero, 2004). Teachers in Manitoba schools are required to implement common curricula developed by Manitoba Education in all subject areas. While the various curricula offer suggested teaching strategies to reach the designated outcomes, it is left to teachers to decide how and what they will use to do so. It is this professional latitude and autonomy that allows teachers to use culturally responsive teaching to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Provincial governments and school boards have also put many initiatives in place to create positive learning environments for Aboriginal students. For instance, schools have hired Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal support staff, and curricula have been reviewed to eliminate obvious racism (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003)

In 1995, Manitoba Education requested that all schools in the province integrate Aboriginal perspectives into all curricula in response to the rapidly expanding Aboriginal population in Manitoba (Manitoba Education, 2013). The term, "Aboriginal perspective" encompasses multiple aspects and is not easily defined. According to *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula: A Resource for Curriculum Developers, Teachers, and Administrators* (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003),

> Aboriginal perspectives are based on the distinct world view of the Aboriginal cultures. This world view has humans living in a universe made by the Creator, and needing to live

> in harmony with nature, with one another, and with oneself. Each Aboriginal culture expresses this same world view in a different way with different practices, stories, and cultural products. (p. 1)

How can we know someone else's perspective especially if we are of a different culture and world view? What does this mean in the context of Aboriginal children's literature? Aboriginal perspectives can be presented through a variety of oral, literary, and media texts including traditional oral storytelling, artwork, and artifacts. However, when it comes to the authorship of Aboriginal children's literature, I feel it is important to draw a distinction between 'including Aboriginal perspectives' and 'writing from an Aboriginal perspective'. In the first case, the author may or may not be Aboriginal and is presenting information originating from, or pertaining to, an Aboriginal background and/or worldview. In the second case, the key word is "from". The writer must be Aboriginal, in which case having the heredity, legal distinction or lived experience and world view of a particular Aboriginal group would give them the authority to claim the "from" position. Otherwise, an author may risk being accused of cultural appropriation.

Incorporating Aboriginal perspectives through culturally responsive instruction will help to develop positive self-identity, knowledge and skills for Aboriginal students. At the same time, it will help non-Aboriginal students develop informed opinions, understandings, and respect for Aboriginal histories, cultures, and contemporary lifestyles. Manitoba Education has developed several documents to guide teachers in incorporating Aboriginal perspectives. Included in these documents are curriculum frameworks, resource materials, instructional methods/styles, and interaction patterns that Aboriginal peoples see as accurately reflecting their experiences, histories, cultures, traditional knowledges, standpoints, and values (Manitoba Education &

Youth, 2003). In *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula: A Resource for Curriculum Developers, Teachers, and Administrators*, Integration of Aboriginal perspectives does not mean the creation of a separate program or curriculum, rather it is the layering of Aboriginal cultures and ways of knowing onto what teachers are currently doing in their classrooms. It becomes a third space or hybridity (Rutherford, 1990) “where planning and instruction come to include Aboriginal peoples in positive and empowering ways” (Kanu, 2011, p. 115). The following documents can be found under the category of Aboriginal Education and were developed specifically to aide in the integration of Aboriginal perspectives, as well as examples from the English Language Arts and other curricula which support the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives.

Aboriginal Education

Native studies teacher resource books and framework documents for levels K-4, 5-8, and S1-S4 were developed as far back as 1995 to supplement the social studies curriculum. In these documents, books are clearly identified as resources to be used to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives. For example, they suggest that one way to teach about respect is through the use of legends, biographies, and stories depicting this theme (Manitoba Education Training & Youth, 1995).

Aboriginal People in Manitoba 2000 (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000) a support document intended to provide information on the demographic, economic, and social conditions affecting Aboriginal people, could be helpful in providing information to teachers in cross-cultural teaching situations who feel they do not have the knowledge or the right to teach about Aboriginal cultures and issues. Kanu (2011) maintains that teachers have a moral obligation to provide excellent instruction by being adequately informed and providing learning environments that promote and celebrate how students come to know and comprehend new information. This is central to culturally appropriate, anti-oppressive education and should outweigh any hesitation they may have about not having the right to teach Aboriginal cultural knowledge. In her opinion, “teachers can always do what it takes to earn that right” (p. 181).

Another document available to teachers is a report; *Ahwewaywin Kiskayntumwim (sharing/lending information/knowledge): A Learning Resource Meeting* (Manitoba Education Training & Youth, 2002) which documents the ideas shared at a meeting held at Thunderbird House in Winnipeg, to share resources and showcase innovative ideas happening in the province of Manitoba. In this report the use of Aboriginal books was given as a learning resource that is working in the integration of Aboriginal perspectives.

Curricula developed specifically for Aboriginal education include the *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes* (Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2007). In Appendix B of this curriculum it identifies correlations with other subject areas and clearly identifies General Outcome 2 of the English Language Arts curriculum, “Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, literary, and media texts” (p. 113), as an avenue where Aboriginal perspectives can be incorporated. Kindergarten, Grade 3, Grade 6, and Senior 1 are given as examples because they correspond with the benchmark grade levels in the English Language Arts curriculum but the connections would apply to all grade levels. The following section highlights several examples from General Outcome 2 and one example from General Outcome 5 of the English Language Arts Curriculum.

English Language Arts

In the overview of *Kindergarten to Grade 4 English Language Arts: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998) it clearly states that "learning is more effective when the curriculum is relevant and responsive to the students' interests, and relates to their personal lives." Culturally responsive instruction and the use of Aboriginal children's literature, as it is understood as a subset of multicultural literature, "support students in developing self-identity and help[s] them to accept and appreciate the ways in which others may differ from themselves (p. 6).

Examples can be found throughout the various grade levels of English Language Arts curricula signifying the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives and the use of Aboriginal children's literature. Due to the significant volume of material comprised by all grade levels of the English Language Arts curricula, I will use the Grade 1 English Language Arts curriculum as an example from which we can extrapolate the extent to which Aboriginal perspectives have been included across all grade levels.

Under the suggestions for instruction in Specific Outcome 2.2.1 *(Experience Various Texts)* it states that teachers should:

> Maintain a sensitivity to cultural diversity in [their] classroom and provide texts that depict cultures from the perspective of an insider. Provide traditional tales from a variety of cultures and traditions. Introduce students to many culturally diverse contemporary texts in which they explore different people's situations and cultures. (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998, p. 98)

Specific Outcome 2.2.2 (*Connects Self, Texts, and Culture)*, suggests that when students listen, read, and view a variety of texts, they "become aware of similarities and differences between their culture and other cultures portrayed in texts” (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998, p. 106). This outcome also suggests that the focus for assessment should be whether students can “relate ideas in texts to personal experiences…[and] family traditions,…recognize differences in cultural traditions,…accept and respect the ideas of others,…[and] choose texts about Canada or by Canadian authors” (p. 107).

Specific Outcome 2.3.1 *(Forms and Genre),* acknowledges the significance of oral storytelling among Aboriginal peoples and people from other cultures by suggesting that students invite Traditional Knowledge Keepers into the classroom to share stories with them and to hear their stories. This exemplifies the bridging between the home and community to the classroom which is inherent in culturally responsive teaching.

Finally, a very strong endorsement for using high quality Aboriginal children’s literature comes under Specific Outcome 5.1 *(Develop and Celebrate Community)*, which acknowledges that:

> Good literature is powerful because it evokes emotions and thoughts and allows students to empathize with characters from various communities in different times and places. Students need to listen to, read, and view stories from a variety of cultures so that they have opportunities to experience vicariously the lives of other people and their times. When students talk about the lives of characters, they clarify and extend personal understanding. Students require easy access to an abundance of texts in different forms and from different communities. (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998, p. 302)

General Outcome 5 also supports the notion of “layering” (Kanu, 2011, p. 23) Aboriginal perspectives onto other curricula by suggesting strategies such as read-alouds of “various texts that reflect the cultures within the classroom community as well as other communities" and by inviting artists into schools "whose art reflects specific cultures" (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998, p. 302). It is important to note that under this outcome there is also a caution for teachers to be "alert for cultural inaccuracies and stereotypes" (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998, p. 302) which reinforces authenticity, sensitivity, and anti-racist teaching.

Other Curricula

My role as an English Language Arts consultant focuses on supporting the implementation of the English Language Arts curriculum and literacy in content areas such as social studies and science. Again using Grade 1 curricula overviews as examples, both social studies and science clearly provide support for the inclusion of culturally responsive teaching, and the use of Aboriginal children's literature.

In *Grade 1 Social Studies, Connecting and Belonging: A Foundation for Implementation* it explains that social studies as a discipline has as its foundation the concepts of citizenship and identity and supports the "development of a multicultural, multiracial, and pluralist democracy" (Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2005, p. 17). It broaches the need to "honestly face the truth about our past and present [, and suggests that] the often exclusionary, traditional stories of history need to be revised to include the experiences and voice of Aboriginal people" (p. 17). The social studies curriculum supports the idea that culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to have a well-developed understanding of multicultural/anti-racist pedagogy. It should not be assumed that just because multicultural material is used, this it is sufficient to create an inclusive social studies classroom. "It is critical that educators be clear how a specific learning resource and related activities fit into their plan for the year" (p. 19) and the learning targets that have been set based on the needs of the students. In considering identity, culture, and race, the document speaks directly to the notion of cultural responsiveness when it suggests that teachers must be aware of their own biases and racial "identity development" (p. 22) in order to situate themselves within the diversity of the classroom and remain conscious of this racial identity as they plan learning experiences for their students. Teachers are not expected to know everything and each "new class presents opportunities for teachers to learn from students" (p. 18) echoing the Freirean notion of the "teacher-student" (Freire, 1970/2010, p. 80). When working in classrooms with children of diverse cultures teachers may need to call on parents and other members of the community for insights into the needs of their students and "draw on the diversity of their colleagues and community resources for insights into the community they seek to serve" (Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2005, p. 18)

The Kindergarten to Grade 4 overview includes "points to consider when using multicultural resources in the classroom" (Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2005, p. 24). Here they stress the importance of context when using literature that deals with issues of diversity. Specifically, how the resources must fit with the curriculum, a positive school environment, and most importantly, whether or not the cultural backgrounds featured in the resources represent the diversity in the classroom. They also suggest that teachers consider whether or not "multicultural literature [is] frequently used in the school and throughout various subject areas" (p. 24). Another key point they raise is the rationale used for choosing multicultural resources and the criteria teachers are using when they choose Aboriginal children's literature. Here they suggest teachers consider: parent or community involvement in selection; the impact on the readers; the question of voice and authenticity; and the use of supplementary or complementary material (p. 25). A final point to note relates to the notion of children's literature as a mirror and a window (Style, 1988/1996). This provides opportunities for children to interact and connect with literature thereby validating their experiences and feelings and giving them a voice within the classroom as well as providing opportunities to connect with other cultural groups "in a way that encourages students to understand similarities and differences" (Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2005, p. 25). It is important to acknowledge that the various grade levels of the social studies curriculum strive to include Aboriginal perspectives such as Appendix H, Learning Resources: Aboriginal Communities in Canada.

In *Kindergarten to Grade 4 Science: A Foundation for Implementation,* the overview makes direct reference to the use of stories in helping students understand science concepts. They acknowledge that children at this developmental level "find stories that follow linear sequences easy to understand and remember (e.g., stories about seasons, human growth, and activities of an insect/animal over the course of a day)" (Manitoba Education & Training, 1999, p. 3). They include an appendix which explains the role of science-based learning resources and helps with the selection of science-based literature. The K-4 science overview also addresses diversity by stating "The careful selection of learning resources that acknowledge cultural, racial and gender differences will allow students to affirm and strengthen their unique social, cultural, and individual identities" (p. 4).

Within *Kindergarten to Grade 4 Science: A Foundation for Implementation* is *Grade 1, Cluster 1: Characteristics and Needs of Living Things*, which supports culturally responsive teaching and includes Aboriginal perspectives. Under prescribed learning outcome, 1-1-02 they suggest that "teachers can use this opportunity to include and use words and phrases for body parts from a variety of languages such as Native languages" (Manitoba Education & Training, 1999, p. 1.2). They also include a teacher note which cautions teachers not to “undertake an extensive classifying of things as living and/or non-living. This could result in confusing complications around things that were ‘once living’; or may be considered as ‘living’ by different cultures” (p. 1.3). Suggestions for assessment include *The Trip* which is a variation of *The Trapline* activity which can be found in the *Native Studies: Early Years (K-4)* support document. Finally, prescribed learning outcome 1-1-10 requires students to describe how humans and other living things depend on their environment to meet their needs and suggests that students “research and share traditional stories that illustrate the interdependence between Native cultures and the environment” (p. 1.12).

The reason for this lengthy section devoted to relevant curricula is that in my work with early and middle years teachers the topic of Aboriginal perspectives seldom if ever comes up and is rarely identified or taken into consideration when developing unit and lesson plans. In light of the many references to Aboriginal perspectives and/or the use of Aboriginal children’s literature presented here, one has to wonder, are teachers unaware of the numerous references made to Aboriginal perspectives in the curricula? Do they not “see the relevance …of the issues affecting the lives of Aboriginal peoples” (Kanu, 2011, p. 185) which necessitate the integration of Aboriginal perspectives? If this study finds that either case is true, it presents a strong argument for understanding the factors behind the decisions teachers make and the need for culturally responsive teaching practices.

Summary of this Literature Review

Chapter 2 was a review of relevant literature that informed my study. It was divided into four sections, culturally responsive teaching, children’s literature, social context, and relevant curricula. The first section explained culturally responsive teaching and discussed the decision making process of teachers in cross-cultural teaching contexts. The second section focused on three aspects of children's literature: Aboriginal children's literature as a branch of multicultural literature; the role of children's literature in the classroom; and children's literature as a window and a mirror. The third section dealt with the social context within which this study was conducted. The fourth and final section highlighted relevant curricula including Aboriginal education curricula, the English Language Arts curriculum, and other curricula including social studies and science which support the infusion or layering of Aboriginal perspectives into all curricular areas.

Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of my study was to investigate the decisions made by teachers when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in cross-cultural teaching contexts. I wished to learn what factors influence and inform teachers' decisions to choose or not choose Aboriginal children's literature for their classroom libraries and/or instructional purposes and how they are used for instructional purposes.

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "The values reinforced by the teacher's inclusion or exclusion of Aboriginal materials and perspectives in the course, the type of interaction in the classroom, and the relationship between teachers and parents will all affect the comfort of the Aboriginal student" (Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, 1996, Section 5.6). In light of the current social and political currents which are moving toward a more equitable future for Aboriginal people in Canada, I believe it is incumbent upon us as educators; many of whom are in cross-cultural teaching situations, to reflect on the curricula we are required to teach and the decisions we make in choosing material for the implementation of these curricula. In order to support teachers in providing culturally sensitive, authentic, and relevant materials, it is necessary for me to understand how Aboriginal children's literature is currently being selected and used by teachers in the schools I service.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methods and procedure used in my study and is divided into three sections: In the first section I discuss the research sites; In the second section I discuss the study participants; In the third section, I discuss the study procedures, with special focus on my data collection methods and my procedure for data analysis.

Research Sites

My study was conducted in six schools in a northern Manitoba school division. Four schools were accessible by public roads from the school division office and two could only be reached by airplane during the spring and summer or by winter roads after freeze-up in the fall. Three schools were referred to as large schools by division standards and were comprised of 200-300 students from Nursery to Grades 9 or 12. In these schools both single graded and combined classrooms of 15-20 students was the norm. Most teachers had one Educational Assistant assigned to their classroom for some period of the day. All three large schools were located on First Nations reserves.

Three of the schools were small schools comprised of 25 students or less in two classrooms. All three small schools had two multi-level classrooms containing children from ages four to eight in one classroom and ages nine to thirteen in another. One of the schools had an Educational Assistant at the time of my study. All three small schools were located off reserve; one in a mining town; another in a Métis fishing community; and one on an isolated island neighboring a large northern First Nation reserve. All locations provided the cross-cultural teaching context required for my study.

Participants

Six participants were selected using purposeful sampling in the context of an ethnographic study (Creswell, 2007). The participants were chosen based on the following criteria for my study. They taught:

- Early and/or middle years classes.
- Aboriginal students.
- In cross-cultural teaching contexts.

I based these criteria on the following assumptions. First, that early and middle years educators would be more likely to use children's literature as it is developmentally appropriate for their grade and age levels. Second, teachers of Aboriginal students would be more likely to use Aboriginal children's literature than those teaching non-Aboriginal students. And finally, teaching students from cultures different from their own may affect the decisions teachers make regarding the use of Aboriginal children's literature.

Procedures

After gaining permission from the Chief Superintendent (see Appendix A), Area Superintendent (see Appendix B), and individual school principals (see Appendix C), I recruited the participants by asking their principals to give them a Letter of Invitation. If they were interested in participating in the study they contacted me. I then read them a script of oral recruitment (see Appendix D) by phone or in person. If the teachers agreed to participate I had them read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix E). Parental consent forms were not necessary as I was not studying the students and did not make observations of students or include them in any way in my research data. Furthermore, my presence in classrooms is an expectation in my role as an English Language Arts Instructional coach whose job it is to support, observe, and coach teachers. As such my presence was not an interruption to the regular teaching and learning routines of the classrooms.

Data Collection

Data was collected from three sources regarding the selection and use of Aboriginal children's literature: (a) one-on-one semi-structured interviews; (b) classroom library audits; and (c) a division-wide questionnaire. I chose to use these three methods of data collection because they are all commonly used in ethnographic studies, particularly the one-on-one semi-structured interview which is one of “the most popular forms of ethnographic data collection” (Creswell, 2007, p. 131). The semi-structured interview provided focus questions but allowed participants to elaborate and provide more spontaneous responses when they chose to do so. My second data source was the classroom library audit which I felt was important in providing concrete evidence to validate or perhaps, in some cases, show disconnects between participants’ perceptions of what they believe and the reality of their choices. My third source—the anonymous division-wide questionnaire—was selected in order to provide a broader context in which to see if there was any discernable difference between the non-Aboriginal participants selected for my study and anonymous participants who may or may not be Aboriginal.

During regularly scheduled visits to the six schools in the study I conducted hour long one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F) consisting of seven questions, with six different teachers. The semi-structured interview focused on the seven questions indicated, but as the interview unfolded I often asked probing or clarifying questions in addition to the original seven questions. These were directed mainly at the use and criteria for selection of Aboriginal children’s literature however some elaboration of Native Studies courses also occurred. In the interest of time and in order to allow teachers to prepare and fully formulate their thoughts, teachers were given the questions one day prior to the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview took place with each teacher at a time that was convenient for them; most often right after school ended for the day, in a private, quiet location where we were not interrupted and there was no noise to interfere with the sound recording. The six teachers’ semi-structured interviews were audio recorded using a computer program called *Audacity* or my cell phone audio recorder. In the interest of time and to keep the flow of the semi-structured interviews as natural as possible, I jotted down supplementary questions related to their responses which I asked later in the interview, when it seemed appropriate to do so, or at the end of the interview. The participating teachers were informed that all hard copy data gathered would be destroyed using a professional shredding service and all electronic data would be deleted upon completion of my thesis.

The second form of data collection was the performance of a classroom library audit. This involved taking digital photographs of the location of the library within the classroom, counting all the books in the library, identifying and photographing each piece of Aboriginal children's literature in the collection, and finally recording the location, total number of books, number of Aboriginal children's literature titles, and the title and author of the books on the Classroom Library Audit Form (see Appendix G). Due to time constraints in some locations, it was necessary to photograph, count, and record the book titles while some students were in the classrooms, working with their teacher, but they were not involved in the process and no photographs of any students were taken.

The third and final method of data collection was an anonymous Division-Wide Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix H) including a Division-Wide Teacher Questionnaire Consent form (see Appendix I) which was sent via email to all teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in the division. It contained the same questions that were asked in the one-on-one semi-structured interview with the six teachers in my study. The four responses I received from the division-wide questionnaire provided an additional sense of what teachers said they believed about choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature and a slightly broader context in which to analyze my results since those who responded may or may not have been in a cross-cultural teaching context.

Data Analysis

The analysis of my three data sources involved finding categories and themes that described the data in relation to how teachers said they chose and used Aboriginal children's literature. Data from each participant's one-on-one semi-structured interview was transcribed using a two column format arranging the semi-structured interview transcription on the left hand side with line numbers for easy reference and a column for coding on the right hand side.

The codes derived from the data have been presented in Tables 1 to 6 preceded by a rationale for how the data was coded. Descriptive codes were established based on themes suggested by participants' responses. Due to the low number of responses to the division-wide questionnaire and the similarity in the responses, I chose to code and record both sets of data in the same tables. The data from the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and the division-wide questionnaire will be discussed together in this results chapter. The following six tables identify the codes drawn from the seven questions asked during the one-on-one semi-structured interview and the division-wide questionnaire.

Questions number one and three (see Appendix F) produced data that could be coded using the same categories and sub-categories. This appears to have been due to how the participants interpreted the questions. In this case, in Table 1, I chose to combine data from the two questions into one table to avoid repetition. I have provided descriptions of the categories and quotes as examples of what the participants said that exemplified each category.

Table 1

Categories and Sub-categories Used to Code Interview Questions One and Three.

Category	**Sub-Categories**	**Description**	**Example**
Building Positive Self-Image	Belonging	Reference to A.C.L.* building a sense of belonging in students.	"Everybody needs to belong."
	Connection	Mention of possibility of Aboriginal students connecting with authors of A.C.L.	"Aboriginal books should help to form a cultural connection with the author."
	Importance/value	Discussion of how A.C.L. reinforces student's importance or value in the world.	"If they don't see themselves in the literature that they read then it can give a wrong impression of their importance in the world."
	Mirror	References to the importance of Aboriginal children seeing themselves represented in literature.	"I think they need to see themselves in the literature they read; and see their communities; and see their families; and also see others in the literature they read."
Valuing Diversity	Exposure	Remark about the importance of children being exposed to cultures other than their own.	"I think it's very important to expose children to Aboriginal literature. That way children from all cultures can learn from and enjoy stories, legends, or learn from texts."
	Tolerance	Statements of building tolerance by learning about other cultures.	"Learning about different cultures will enrich their knowledge and vocabulary and it will help students to be tolerant toward Aboriginal and other cultures."
	Otherness	Reference to a term used to refer to the difference or unlikeness of those who are not from the dominant, white power group.	"I think, a sense of being different or 'other' and I think they need to see themselves in the literature they read...and also see others in the literature they read."
	Prejudice/Stereotypes	Allusion to differences among and between groups.	"That there are no limitations put on them because of who they are…"
	Window	Indication that A.C.L. can help children learn about cultures other than their own.	"Picture books which have photographs also play a function in allowing… children who might not be in a Native community [to] see

Category	Sub-Categories	Description	Example
			what it's like; to perhaps see life from a Native perspective."
Social Significance	Representation	References to how Aboriginal peoples are represented in society and/or literature.	"I feel that Aboriginal students are sometimes not represented enough in society."
	Relevance	Recognition of the relevance of Aboriginal peoples and issues involving Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society.	"I feel that exposing children to Aboriginal literature is very important with the way we are developing as a society in Canada. It's very important for all children of Canada to learn."
	Role Models	Mention of Aboriginal authors as role models for students.	"I think it's important that if they are Aboriginal authors, that it be noted and be brought out and recognized for your students if they are of Aboriginal decent…"
Universal Themes	Family	Mention of A.C.L representing parents or siblings.	"They start with themselves, they start with me, and then they [move to] me and my mom, and then it becomes me and my family."
	Community	Reference to A.C.L. reflecting the communities they come from.	"I mean if they have some texts that we can review together or on their own and they can make connections to what people are doing in isolated communities or non-isolated communities, then they might be able to say, hey I do that at home."
Teaching & Learning to Read	Curriculum	Mention of using A.C.L to teach reading and other curricula.	"Just last week our resource teacher got us a whole bunch of guided reading books from the Turtle Island series…"
	Culture	Indication of the use of A.C.L. to teach Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students about Aboriginal culture	"And it's very interesting, the kids are already learning a bit about their culture in their Ojibway classes so this brings it right back to that—just helps them a little bit more…"
	Student Interest	Indication that students are consulted about what kinds of books they would like to choose from for self-selected reading.	"At the beginning of the year I ask my students what kinds of books do you like and they write down what they want and I make sure that I have a lot of those books available in my classroom."

Category	Sub-Categories	Description	Example
	Reading Attitude	Suggestion that A.C.L. positively impacts students' reading attitudes.	"Students enjoy seeing people like themselves and it seems to enable them to believe reading and books are for them."
	Reading Ability	Statement that student reading ability is positively impacted by using A.C.L.	"It has been my experience that students can better predict what will happen in a story and more easily decode the words in Lorraine Adams' Eaglecrest series as the characters talk like people from their community."

A.C.L.* = Aboriginal Children's Literature. This abbreviation is employed for all succeeding tables.

The data presented in Table 2 conveying how participants defined Aboriginal children's literature, was initially coded using the InVivo method. That is, literal or verbatim codes derived from words or short phrases from a participant's own language which "honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). This elemental method is useful in educational ethnographies and was well suited to my semi-structured interview format where participants often made very frank and descriptive statements. The InVivo codes were then condensed into descriptive categories and sub-categories. Descriptive words or phrases are bolded within the participants' quotes to show the words taken from their responses to generate each category or sub-category.

Table 2

Categories and Sub-Categories Used to Code Interview Question Two.

Category	Sub-Category	Description	Participant Quote
Author	Aboriginal Author	Stated that A.C.L. is written by Aboriginal authors.	"Aboriginal children's literature is defined by looking at **authors—**if they are known Aboriginal authors."
	Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal authors	Stated that A.C.L. could be written by anyone.	"Well it can be several things. It can be literature that is written **by Aboriginals** or it could be written **by anybody else**."
Content	People and Communities	States that the content is about Aboriginal peoples and communities	"It could be literature **about Aboriginal people** and about Aboriginal **communities**"
	Contemporary Family Life	Explained that A.C.L. shows Aboriginal families living in a positive way in today's society.	"I would define Aboriginal children's literature as stories that show **Aboriginal children** and their **families** in **everyday** positive **activities**."
	Oral Stories	Indicated that A.C.L. could represent traditional oral storytelling.	"…if [the] references at the back of the book [indicate that they] are scribed from **oral storytelling**.
	Illustrations	Indicated that A.C.L. should have authentic illustrations that represent the traditions and cultures of Aboriginal peoples.	"By the illustrations, if the **illustrations** are **authentic** to [the] types of traditions and cultures the Aboriginal people share…"
Purpose	Teach History	Indicated that A.C.L. is written to teach the history of Aboriginal peoples.	"Allow students to **learn about their people and** learn about what their **ancestors** went through or what they lived through and how did that shape and form the people their ancestors were."

Category	Sub-Category	Description	Participant Quote
	Explain World	Stated that A.C.L. is written to explain the world and teach lessons.	"Stories that help to **explain the world** around you; stories that **give a lesson** to be learned or **a moral**; stories that involve **trickster tales**."
	Celebrate Culture	Indicated that A.C.L. was written to celebrate Aboriginal peoples and their cultures.	"I define Aboriginal children's literature as **books that celebrate Aboriginal people and culture.**"

Data from question four of the one-on-one semi-structured interview and division-wide questionnaire, were analyzed and organized into a table based on, Criteria for Choosing Quality Aboriginal Children's Literature, adapted from Jones and Moomaw (2002), Seale and Slapin (2005), and Slapin, Seale, and Gonzalez (1995) (See Appendix J). My adapted list of criteria began with the headings and some of the descriptors found in *Lessons From Turtle Island—Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms* (Jones & Moomaw, 2002), which I cross-referenced and combined with the list in *How to Tell the Difference—A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias* (Slapin, Seale, & Gonzales, 1995). I then looked at the guide for evaluating photo essays in *A Broken Flute* to see where similar criteria were used. Where there appeared to be similar criteria I combined the descriptors under one heading to create my adapted criteria for those aspects of Aboriginal children's literature.

I chose these sources because I was made aware of them in a Masters level course and because I was frequently coming across either one or all of them in different sources I was using in my research. I visited the websites of three Canadian Universities—the University of Toronto, OISE; the University of Saskatchewan; and the University of British Columbia—who all include *A Broken Flute* and the Oyate website in their list of recommended resources to evaluate

Aboriginal children’s literature. Furthermore, *A Broken Flute* won *Multicultural Review’s* American Book Award in 2006 and was recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. I believe these sources to be reliable but I acknowledge that there are other resources available and that the opinions expressed in *A Broken Flute* and on the Oyate website may not be shared by everyone. It is beyond the scope of my study to achieve consensus among scholars on this point.

The Criteria for Choosing Quality Aboriginal Children’s literature became the codes for question four so a description of the code was not necessary. The bolded text in the participants’ quotes highlights what the participants said that led me to place the quotes under those categories. Category number 13, ‘Other’, includes the six different responses which did not fit under one of the other 12 categories.

Table 3

Categories Used to Code Interview Question Four.

Category	Participant Quote
1. Author’s biographical information qualifies them as a credible source.	“Ya. That’s a good question. I look at who wrote the book and **who they are** and if I know of their reputation.”
2. Avoid stereotypes.	“I always ensure I review books beforehand to analyze for **gross stereotypes** and discriminatory content—as many books can perpetuate negative ideas about certain people.”
3. Avoid generic images of Aboriginal people.	“That particular moon happens during strawberry season, so it’s a way that you can communicate to students of any culture how **one particular culture** associated with time of year by watching the moon.”
4. Has well-developed characters.	“Picking a book that has good elements of story too; having **good characters**, the setting, the events in the story if they have a beginning and an ending or if the theme is carried through the whole book…”
5. Uses respectful language.	“Some of **the words they use**, like Indian, I will not have that at all in any of my books.”
6. Relates to curricula.	“Some of the material I’ve **chosen for the curriculum content** as part of my ELA plan. Specifically a read aloud called, *Thirteen Moons on Turtle’s Back*, by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London [which] is a collection of poems that provides information describing what happens as the seasons change in relation to the thirteen moons.”
7. Aboriginal literature used throughout the year, not as a unit of study.	“I always like to look for things on Seven Teachings and whatnot as well. It’s very important because we do the Seven Teachings **every month** here at the school.”
8. Illustrations do not degrade or objectify Aboriginal peoples.	“Books that are **respectful and represent** Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples **positively.**”
9. Portrays Aboriginal peoples today.	“I had a fight with my friend and we had trouble sharing our toy or whatever. Just **common childhood problems** would be nice to have where the **pictures are of Aboriginal children**.”
10. Historically accurate and told from an Aboriginal perspective.	“When it’s relating to Aboriginal culture, for instance, when it’s to do with hunting, maybe hunting **tools that were used**, the methods that they’ve used.”

Category	Participant Quote
11. Portrays positive role models; reflects childhood issues in an Aboriginal context.	“Reflecting on how there are **good** examples of **role models of Aboriginal decent**….People are moving ahead with technology and so it’s important that there are stories written about **kids going to the movies** and what types of movies they might be wanting to go to…”
12. Shows standards of success.	“Books that include cultural activities and **family values** that my students can relate to and can broaden their experiences.”
13. Other	“Part of it is **price** because I have no money.” “For example, when David Bouchard **recommended** a series and was involved in the making of it, I trust that source.” “Well it has to be obviously at their **reading level** that they can understand.” “It’s hard to get books… that are **in the** Ojibway **language** but sometimes I will come across them.” “If it is **grade appropriate**.” “I think for all readers at this age no matter what their reading level is it’s important that the books have **colourful pictures** to provide reading cues and maintain interest.”

Data gathered from question five pertaining to where participants obtained Aboriginal children’s literature was organized into two main categories. Participants indicated that they were getting Aboriginal children’s literature on-line and in person from someone or from one of several brick-and-mortar stores. The bolded text indicates what the participants said that led me to the categories or sub-categories in Table 4.

Table 4

Categories and Sub-Categories Used to Code Interview Question Five.

Category	**Sub-Category**	**Participant Quote**
On-Line	Google	"**Amazon** is always a good one too if you're trying to find titles of good literature you can Google it."
	Book Store Websites	"Chapters…I don't usually go there and go through all the books, I just do a search **on-line** and they'll have it."
In Person	Local Book Store	"**McNally** (Robinson) is the only **place** I have currently purchased…"
	Local Publishers	I've **gone to** Pemmican Publishing in Winnipeg."
	Library Services	"Maybe **ask** the…**librarian** for resources that would be helpful in adding to our library; where they've purchased."
	Language Centre	"It's an Aboriginal language centre. It's where the Aboriginal teachers have their own **little building** and it's full of Aboriginal books, Aboriginal games."
	Catalogues/Flyers	"Mostly, so far, from flyers that have been **delivered to the school**….I have a tendency to just do it out of one catalogue to save time."
	Exhibits/Conferences	"Purchases of Aboriginal literature, I made twice and both times they were **at exhibitions displaying** and promoting Aboriginal culture."
	In School	"We have a selection **in our schoo**l library, guidance counselor's office, and in our own classroom libraries."

Data for interview question six regarding whether or not participants had taken any Native Studies courses was coded using thematic descriptive codes. I have bolded the text in the participants' quotes to show the specific idea units I used to create the categories and sub-categories. I asked this question with the intention of discovering who had taken pre-service or in-service university accredited courses. Those who took university level accredited courses cited a variety of courses designed to increase personal knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives or how to teach Aboriginal perspectives. While the question did not specifically ask the participants to give an explanation if they did not take an accredited Native Studies course, participants voluntarily elaborated on other experiences they felt were somehow related to Native Studies awareness and perspectives. Thus the second category—No Native Studies Courses, is also divided into sub-categories.

Table 5

Categories and Sub-Categories Used to Code Interview Question Six.

Category	Sub Category	Description	Participant Quote
Yes, Has Taken Native Studies Course	Acquiring personal Awareness and Perspective	Indicated courses designed to inform pre-service teachers of issues, priorities, and events as they pertain to Aboriginal peoples.	"I have a minor degree in Canadian Studies where **I took Aboriginal knowledge courses**... and a variety of law courses which looked at treaties; landmark Supreme Court decisions were analyzed."
	Teaching of Native Studies	Cited courses that dealt with how to teach Native Studies courses.	"**How to Teach Native Studies** From an Aboriginal Perspective, I think that's what it was called."
No, Has not Taken Native Studies Courses	In-Service Training	Mentioned Department of Education mandated treaty education training sessions.	"The one that's been the most useful and the most recent was taking **training from the Manitoba Treat[y] Commission**."
	Life Experience	Mentioned that they gained knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives by living in Aboriginal communities in the north.	"**Life experience** living in Northern Communities."
	Related Courses	Cited no courses dealing specifically with Native Studies but did take a related course.	"No, I took a **course on Diversity** in Teacher's college though."
	Exposure and Awareness Opportunity	Referred to an event designed to provide exposure and increase awareness of Aboriginal culture.	"I did not take any Native Studies courses because my schedule did not allow for a native study class but we did have that **opportunity which was a mandatory [cultural awareness] day** at least."

Table 6 presents the data from question seven regarding the types of professional learning opportunities and supports participants felt would be helpful when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature. Two categories, professional learning and supports, were explicitly stated in the question therefore I began organizing the data under these two main categories. Within these two categories further sub-categories emerged. I have included descriptions of the sub-categories and bolded text within the participants' quotes to show the idea units used to create the sub-categories.

Table 6

Categories and Sub-Categories Used to Code Interview Question Seven.

Category	Sub-Category	Description	Participant Quote
Professional Learning	Conferences	Mentioned conferences were interesting and valuable to hear authors and view their books.	"We had a **conference** in my school that brought in an author who is Native and …it was interesting to listen to them and see the books [he] published."
	Workshops	Indicated that special area workshops focused on Aboriginal perspectives were helpful.	"Professional learning opportunities, well like I said earlier whenever I look through **SAGE*** and it has something to do with Aboriginal content I try to go to it."
	Presentations	Cited presentations on Canadian Aboriginal authors and storytelling.	"Probably opportunities that would be based around **someone presenting** who are the good Canadian Aboriginal authors. Another one might be more on storytelling…"
	Networking	Stated that networking opportunities would be helpful.	"More **opportunity to communicate with other teachers** across Manitoba about what they are teaching."
Supports	Where to find Authors and Titles	Suggested that a database of where to find Aboriginal authors and titles would be a valuable resource.	"Well, information about **where to find** works would be one key resource specifically **authors and titles** of children's/adolescent literature."
	Lists of Aboriginal Authors	Indicated that having a way of knowing if an author was Aboriginal would be helpful in making selections.	"Also, maybe which **authors** are **of Aboriginal decent** because that could help stimulate a stronger connection to the book."
	Book Reviews	Cited books reviews as a support they would use.	"I would look up **book reviews**…"

Category	Sub-Category	Description	Participant Quote
	Colleagues	Identified other teachers and their colleagues as valuable supports because they could share titles and how they are using them.	"**Teachers and colleagues** would be another helpful source. They are able to tell which books they're working with—reading, and so forth."
	Community	Suggested that people or places within the community could be a support.	"Well like our school has the **Language Centre** and there's a lot of **Traditional Knowledge Keepers** here and a lot of the workers that work for our school that are Aboriginal."
	Authors	Stated that they thought meeting authors in person was a support because they could get information directly from the source.	"And my all-time favorite since I had the [good] fortune of **meeting** the **authors** before…Any questions related to their book, you know they would say which age group it's aimed at. Anything that you want to know they would tell you."
	Department of Education	Mentioned the Department of Education as a support for resources and curriculum documents.	"Also there's a book through the **Department of Education** on Aboriginals and Aboriginal resource books as well as a curriculum document that has been a little bit helpful."
	Division On-Line Catalogue	Specified a divisional on-line site they felt would help them when it became available.	"Ya well additional supports would be when that …**Division on-line catalogue** becomes available to me."

SAGE*= Special Area Groups of Educators

The second data collection method was the classroom library audit. To collect this data I looked at each book on every shelf in all six classroom libraries. Table 7 provides an example of part of a Classroom Library Audit Form completed in May's classroom. Books assessed as

Aboriginal children's literature were listed on a Classroom Library Audit Form and then pictures were taken of each book or group of books as they appeared on the shelves or in bins.

Table 7

Example of Part of One Classroom Library Audit Form.

Classroom Library Audit # 1-May			
Location in Classroom	**Total # Books**	**# A.C.L.**	**Title of Book**
Reading carpet open book shelf	38	0	
Reading carpet pile by chair	52	3	1. Rabbit's Snow Dance (Bruchac) 2. Saltypie (Tingle) 3. Big Turtle (McLimans)
Shelf 1 – Bin 1	64	1	4. Collecting Eggs (Adams)
Shelf 1 – Loose on Shelf	140	3	5. The Mouse and the Sun (Griffiths) 6. Rabbit's Wish for Snow (Tchin) 7. Fun on the Sled (Adams & Bruvold)

A book was deemed Aboriginal children's literature if,

- It was written by an Aboriginal author or illustrated by an Aboriginal artist I was familiar with.
- There was biographical information that identified the author or illustrator as Aboriginal.
- The book included Aboriginal perspectives relating to Aboriginal peoples, places, or cultures either past or present.

I acknowledge that books may have been missed if I was not familiar with the author or illustrator, or there was no biographical information indicating that either was Aboriginal. This will be discussed in greater detail as a limitation in Chapter 5. Data recorded on the Classroom

Library Audit Form was then condensed into a table representing the total number of books, the number of Aboriginal children's books, and the percentage of the total classroom collection that was Aboriginal children's literature.

As previously mentioned, data from the division-wide questionnaire were analyzed and organized using the same methods as the one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Due to the low number of responses to the division-wide-questionnaire and the similarity in the types of responses given by both the interview participants and the questionnaire participants, I chose to analyze and organize the data using the same methods and present the division-wide questionnaire responses for question four with those of the other six interview participants.

Summary of this Method Chapter

Chapter 3 outlined the methods I used to conduct my research study. This chapter includes three sections beginning with a section describing the research sites followed by a section discussing each of the study participants. The third section discussed my three data collection methods which were a one-in-one semi-structured interview, a classroom library audit, and a division-wide-questionnaire. Chapter 3 concluded with an explanation of the procedures I used for analyzing my data.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 4 I present the results of the analysis of my three data sources. I begin by sharing the results of the one-on-one semi-structured interview and the division-wide questionnaire. Due to the similarity of responses given by participants in these two data sources, and to avoid unnecessary or misleading repetition, the results are combined and presented together. The division-wide questionnaire was sent to all Kindergarten to Grade 8 teachers in the division so it is possible that those who responded may or may not have been in cross-cultural teaching situations. Based on the information the teachers provided at the top of the questionnaire, those who chose to respond included teachers in both single and multi-grade classrooms ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Three of the four teachers who responded had from six to ten years of teaching experience and the fourth one had taught for five years or less.

Following the semi-structured interview and division-wide questionnaire results, I present the results of the classroom library audit. This chapter is divided into sections with sub-headings for each question and an explanation of the themes revealed in the data. The data was collected and analyzed with the goal of determining what teachers said they believed about choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the results of my three data sources.

Participant Descriptions

What follows is a description of each of the six participants in my study. In Chapter 3 I provide a description of each participant which includes personal information such as their gender, age (or approximation), teaching experience, training, and ethnicity, as well as information regarding their school and classroom contexts. In my discussion of study participants all names are pseudonyms.

May

May is a non-Aboriginal, female teacher in her early fifties who was born and raised in a large urban centre in Manitoba. She is married and has two teenage sons; one attending high school and another attending a post-secondary institution outside the community. She has been teaching for 26 years in several small schools in northern Manitoba. May is currently in her third year as a teaching-principal in a two room school. She has a four year Bachelor of Education degree but no formal administrative training. There is one other teacher in the school who teaches Grades 4 to 9 plus a half time secretary who works every day from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

She has a class of ten students from nursery to Grade 3 and does not have an educational assistant. Her small class is diverse in terms of ability, socio-economic status, and culture. The students come from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds, the Aboriginal students being of Métis or Ojibway decent and the non-Aboriginal students from a variety of European backgrounds.

May's school was built in the mid 1900's when the local mine opened, creating an influx of miners and their families. May's school is accessible by a well maintained gravel road year around. Her classroom has high ceilings and two tall windows on one side of the classroom which allows an abundance of natural light to flood the space. The walls are painted a pale yellow and the floor is covered in grey-blue tiles. As you enter her classroom, moving clockwise around the room, there is a coat rack along one short wall where the students' coats and backpacks are kept. The next long wall has two large windows and a large bulletin board which she uses for her Word Wall and other English language arts related material. The next short wall has two smaller bulletin boards and a whiteboard. The last long wall has a SMARTboard, a long bulletin board, and clear wall space. These bulletin boards are displayed with blue backgrounds and colorful boarders in a rainbow of colours. Her bulletin boards are filled with professionally made posters and student work.

May’s classroom has a carpeted reading area, a horseshoe shaped table where she does small group instruction, a teacher desk, classroom library, and a sink and play area. Three low book shelves are used as dividers to create the different spaces within the room. These bookshelves house the classroom library, student work, and other materials such as games and supplies. Books can be found in bins, loose on the shelves, and in piles on the floor of the reading corner. She has three low tables located down the centre of the room for student to sit at while they do seatwork. May’s classroom is open, bright, and inviting.

Fritz

Fritz is a non-Aboriginal, female teacher in her mid-forties who was born and raised in a small rural town in southern Manitoba. She is married and has two children who attend the school where she teaches but are not in her class. Fritz is currently in her first year as a multi-level teacher in a small two room school. She has been teaching in the same remote northern community for over 20 years. Before teaching at this school she was the Vice-Principal at the nearby locally controlled First Nation school across the lake on the mainland. She has a four year Bachelor of Education degree and has worked as a Vice-Principal but has no formal administrative education. There is a teaching-principal in the school, who teaches Grades 4 to 9, as well as a half time secretary who works every day from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Fritz has a class of nine students from nursery to Grade 3 with no educational assistant. As with all groups of children, no matter how few, there is some diversity and Fritz’s class is no exception. Her students are diverse in age and ability as well as culture. The Aboriginal students in her classroom are Oji-Cree and the non-Aboriginal students are from a variety of European backgrounds.

Fritz's school is located on a small island which is accessible year round by airplane and by ice roads in the winter. Her school consists of two portable classrooms connected by an entrance hallway, small staffroom, and an office. When you enter her room there is a coat rack, sink, and washroom area separated from the classroom by a wall. There are two small windows, one at the back of the room near the coat rack and another on the opposite side of the room in the exit door. When you enter her room, the long wall to your right has several bulletin boards and a whiteboard running down the entire length of the room. As you turn the corner, there is an exit door and another whiteboard. Beside the whiteboard, filling the rest of the space on the wall is a large floor to ceiling book shelf filled with books. On the second long wall are more low bookshelves and a wall mounted SMARTboard.

Fritz's small, tidy classroom is cozy and inviting. There is student work on the walls along with store bought English language arts themed posters and an Aboriginal themed printed alphabet. Her bulletin boards are bright and cheery and reflect the season or the theme of study going on in her classroom. She has open facing book shelves filled with a variety of books for the varying ages of students in her class. Other shelves are situated strategically to divide the room into specific areas such as the play area, reading area, and Fritz's teacher space. These shelves are filled with bins of books organized by theme, author, or genre. Some shelves are used to store teaching resources, hands-on materials for the students, and bins for student work. There are two low round tables; a larger one where the nursery students work and another smaller one which is used as extra space for students when needed. The older students have individual desks arranged side-by side in two rows, facing the whiteboard. Fritz has a teacher desk and bookshelf near the entrance to the room.

Candy

Candy is a non-Aboriginal, female teacher in her forties who was born and raised in a large urban centre in Manitoba. She is married with three grown children and one stepson. During the week, she lives in a teacherage in the community where she works but returns to her home in the city on weekends to be with her family. She began her career by earning her Early Childhood Educator diploma from Red River Community College and working in a daycare for many years. She went back to school to earn her Bachelor of Education degree and has been teaching for eight years, all of which have been in northern Manitoba schools. Candy is currently in her fifth year teaching at this large Nursery to Grade 12 First Nation school.

Candy has a class of 19 grade two students and an educational assistant for part of the day. All of the students in her class are either Ojibway First Nation or Métis. There is very little cultural diversity but there is a wide range of academic and behavioral needs in her classroom.

Candy's school is located on a First Nation reservation accessible by road year around. It was built in 1969 and had subsequent additions added as the student population continued to grow. Candy's room is an adequately sized classroom for the number of students she has. It has hanging fluorescent lights and a good sized window in one corner of the classroom. The view is somewhat obstructed by metal screening over the window which lessen the aesthetics but still allows natural light into the room. The walls are painted white and the floor is covered in light grey tiles. There are several brightly colored book shelves around the perimeter of the room. As you enter her classroom, to the left, there is a small bulletin board and then a low book shelf running the rest of the length of the wall. This is where she has a U-shaped table to bring small groups together to read. Turning the corner is another bulletin board with shelving underneath and then a long whiteboard that covers most of the rest of the long wall until you come to another other small bulletin board in the corner. As you turn the corner of the third wall there is another bulletin board and a then a good sized window in the corner. The last long wall has more bulletin board space and a SMARTboard centred in the wall. Between the SMARTboard and the door are two student desks with a microwave and a toaster where the educational assistant or Elder heats the students' lunches or makes them toast for breakfast. The students' coats and backpacks are kept in cubbies outside the room in the hallway. The bulletin board displays are a combination of professionally made posters and student work. You can see student writing and artwork; English language arts and math reference material; as well as social studies and science visuals related to the themes they are studying. Candy's bulletin boards and bookshelves provide splashes of color which brighten up the otherwise neutral space.

Candy's classroom has a teacher desk, several bookshelves along the perimeter of the classroom, and a horseshoe shaped table where she does small group reading and math instruction. Individual student desks are arranged in quads to facilitate cooperative learning. These bookshelves house the classroom library, student work, and other materials such as games and supplies. Books have been sorted according to their purpose; for use in small group reading instruction or for students' self-selected reading. Some books are in bins on shelves while others are arranged loosely, and still others are arranged outward facing on shelving under the whiteboard. Candy's room is a well-organized, warm, and inviting space.

Anne

Anne is a non-Aboriginal, female teacher in her fifties who was born and raised under the Apartheid system in Cape Town, South Africa. She was married and is now separated and has three adult sons. She lives in a teacherage in the community where she works and returns to her out-of-province home for holidays and summers. She began her teaching career in South Africa but had to recertify when she came to Canada 25 years ago. While she upgraded her teaching credentials she worked as a Registered Practical Nurse. Anne has been teaching for 23 years, the last four of which have been in Northern Manitoba communities. She is currently in her second year of teaching at a large Nursery to Grade 9 school.

Anne's school is located on a First Nation reservation accessible by road year around. It is a new school which was built after their old school was destroyed by fire. Anne's room is adequately sized for the sixteen students she has. The room has a beautiful view and is flooded with natural light from the long wall of windows across one side of her classroom. The walls are painted a light tan color with blue and green accents. The floor is a neutral tone which coordinates with the colors of the room to create a calming atmosphere. As you enter her classroom, moving clockwise around the room, there is a whiteboard and SMARTboard running the length of the wall. Turning the corner, the wall has shelving halfway up with windows above the shelving running the full width of the room. Turn the corner again, and you will find Anne's desk area and a portable shelving unit with book bins. Filling the rest of the back of the room, beside the portable shelving unit, is a large storage closet where supplies and teaching materials are kept. The fourth wall has more bulletin board space and the doorway into the room.

I would describe Anne's classroom as neat and orderly. There is no clutter and there is a minimal amount of materials on the walls and bulletin boards. The students' desks are arranged in four quads to facilitate cooperative activities. Her classroom library is housed in bins on top of two rolling carts and a shelf under the window.

Matt

Matt is a non-Aboriginal, male teacher in his forties who was born and raised in a small rural town in southwestern Manitoba. Matt worked for several years as an accountant prior to completing his four year Bachelor of Education degree. This is his third year at the small two room school on the island. His situation is somewhat unique in that his wife also teaches at the school (Nursery to Grade 3) and his two children are in his class! He admits this can be challenging at times. Considering the small number of students who attend the school, they are fortunate to have two teachers, one educational assistant, and a half time secretary who works every day from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Matt has a class of nine students from Grades 4 to 8 with no educational assistant. The diversity in Matt's classroom is surprising given the number of students. There are differences in academic abilities, socio economic status, and cultures within this small group. The Aboriginal students in his classroom are Métis or Ojibway and the non-Aboriginal students are from a variety of European backgrounds. The academic abilities range from a child far above grade level who is creating amazing science fair projects to others who struggle to achieve grade level expectations. Last but not least, the cultural and socio economic differences often create tensions between the students. In this small community when fishing is good the fishers can make a very good living, but it is seasonal and a good catch is not always guaranteed. This can cause rifts between families who have other occupations such as teachers or construction workers who often make considerably more money than the fishers. There are also several children in care, who have issues that affect the climate and atmosphere of the school.

Matt's school is located on a small island accessible by ferry during the summer and an ice road in the winter. His school consists of two classrooms, a small gymnasium, a multipurpose space which houses the school library and secretary work area, and a small kitchen which doubles as the music room when the fiddle instructor visits. When you enter Matt’s room you are immediately struck by the open, spacious feel of the room. This is in part due to the large bank of windows which run the whole length of one long wall and the fact that his room opens onto the multipurpose space which houses the school library and additional space for students to work. The classroom has a beautiful view of the lake which is just a short distance from the school. Because of the openness, there is very little wall space for bulletin boards so their student work is often hung outside the classroom on a small bulletin board in the hallway. There are very few professionally created materials. On one of the two shorter walls there is a whiteboard extending almost the whole length of the wall and on the opposite facing shorter wall is the SMARTboard.

Matt’s spacious classroom has ample room for the nine student desks which he has arranged to form three groups of three to facilitate cooperative learning. He has his desk and work space in the back corner of the room opposite the door. Next to his desk is a rectangular table which holds extra materials and space to collect completed student work. There are two other smaller rectangular tables in the room where he works with small groups of students or where students can go during art and while working on projects when they need more room to spread out their materials. Because the room is adjacent to the library space there are few bookshelves in the classroom. The only shelf in the room is located near Matt’s desk and has bins, binders, and folders which contain the books students are currently reading, writings in progress, and their social studies and science work. Matt’s room has a bright, open, airy feel which creates an energizing atmosphere for learning.

Bill

Bill is a non-Aboriginal, male teacher in his late thirties who was born and raised just outside of a large urban centre in Ontario. Bill completed one year of university before taking a year off to work as a long haul truck driver. He went back to school to earn his Bachelor of Education degree and has been teaching in Manitoba ever since. He taught the first three years of his career in locally controlled First Nation schools. This is Bill's tenth year teaching at this large Nursery to Grade 9 First Nation school. He is single and lives in a teacherage situated next door to the school.

Bill has a multi-grade class of 17 students; 10 Grade 4 students and 7 Grade 5 students. Bill's class is homogeneous in terms of culture as it is comprised of 100% Aboriginal students who identify as Salteaux or Métis. The class is also homogeneous in terms of their socio economic status, but there are some differences within the community due to local politics and family income. Several community members are fishers which can provide a good income when the fish are abundant and weather conditions are favorable.

Bill's school is located on a First Nation reservation accessible by plane all year around and by ice road in the winter. It was built in 1967 and has had subsequent portable additions added as the student population continued to grow. Bill's classroom has hanging fluorescent lights and a small window in one corner of the classroom. The floor and three walls are all beige. A splash of color was added by painting the fourth wall a dark reddish-brown. There are several book shelves around the perimeter of the room with one low shelf protruding from the wall to section off an area for a classroom library and quiet reading area. Here the books are standing on display on top of the shelf and organized by theme or author in bins on the lower shelves. There is also a metal rotating book rack with a collection of non-fiction books for students to choose from. As you enter his classroom, moving clockwise around the room, there is a long wall of black chalk boards with a SMARTboard mounted in the centre of the wall. Turning the corner is a small window which looks out onto the side of another portable classroom. It blocks the view but still allows natural light into the room. The wall has several professionally made posters and another bulletin board with shelving underneath. As you turn the corner on the second long wall, there are three long bulletin boards that run the whole length of the wall. They are used to display student work and professionally made material. The second short wall has shelving and storage for resources, manipulatives, and bins and binders of student work. There is also a small student desk with a microwave for students to warm up their lunches.

Bill's classroom has very little extra space beyond the room needed for the students' desks and a kidney shaped table where he calls small groups or individuals to meet with him to work on reading or math. The student desks are arranged in quads to facilitate cooperative learning with his desk and work space located in the corner of the room beside the window. Next to his desk is a rectangular table where the educational assistant works with students to provide extra support. Bill's small, busy room is verging on over stimulating, but still manages to be a pleasant space for learning.

Semi-Structured Interview & Division-Wide Questionnaire

As with the data analysis, questions one and three are combined because the participants interpreted the two questions similarly and gave answers relevant to both questions. The other five questions were analyzed separately and the resulting themes are organized under a sub-heading for each question.

Questions 1 and 3

In question 1 I asked participants how important they thought it was to expose children to Aboriginal children's literature and why. All participants stated that they believed it was either important or very important to expose children to Aboriginal children's literature. In question 3 I asked participants how or why they chose Aboriginal children's literature for their classroom library and/or instructional purposes. The only clear distinction between how or why they chose books for their classroom libraries or for instructional purposes was when they discussed using a series of levelled books for guided reading. Otherwise, none of the teachers indicated that they had certain books used exclusively by them for instructional purposes. Their reasons for believing Aboriginal children's literature was important and how or why they chose it, fell into the following five categories, 1) Developing a positive self-image, 2) valuing diversity by building understanding of cultures other than their own, 3) the social significance of using Aboriginal children's literature, 4) its ability to connect children through universal themes, and 5) the role of Aboriginal children's literature in teaching and learning curricular content in a variety of areas, specifically learning to read.

Developing a Positive Self-Image

Four of the six interview participants and all four questionnaire respondents gave responses related to developing a positive self-image. They emphasized the importance of children's literature as a mirror in which children can gain a sense of identity because they "see themselves in certain characters" in the books they read. They suggested that the presence of Aboriginal child characters or the lack there-of can affect their sense of belonging and value in society. As Fritz, explained,

> We are always learning about different cultures of people and of course being that Aboriginal people were the first people in the country it only seems fair that we learn more about a culture that is part of our heritage as being Canadian.

Furthermore, participants believed it was not only important that Aboriginal children be represented in the literature, but that they are represented in a positive non-stereotypical manner. Participants also felt that when students are able to relate to what they are reading by making cultural connections, they are more likely to want to read and become more engaged in learning. For example, Bill felt that,

> Having a connection can bring stronger meaning to place and so having a book for Aboriginal students about Aboriginal students, and interaction in traditional culture and also modern day society and then going further to have books that have Aboriginal authors can enhance that connection even further.

This notion of connection was echoed by another participant who stated that the use of Aboriginal children's literature allowed Aboriginal children "to have a way of identifying who they are in literature." When books show Aboriginal children going out on the land, hunting, fishing, or trapping, Aboriginal children who have had these experiences are able to make connections. She also noted that there are non-Aboriginal children who have had these same experiences, stating, "So you know, Aboriginal children's literature… it fits in with the way of life here with us."

Valuing Diversity

The second category, valuing diversity by building understanding of cultures other than their own, centered on notions of learning about different cultures from around the world, and the importance of learning about Canada's first peoples. Five of the interview participants and two of the questionnaire respondents gave responses that related to exposure, tolerance, otherness, prejudice or stereotypes, and children's literature as a window to the world. Participants felt children's literature provided visual aids and words which created images to help children understand Aboriginal narratives. One participant stated that "learning about different cultures will enrich [students'] knowledge and vocabulary and it will help students to be tolerant toward Aboriginal and other cultures as well." May suggested that if Aboriginal children are not represented accurately and respectfully, they get a distorted sense of their value in the world, "a sense of being different or 'other.'" Participants suggested that all cultures could learn from and enjoy Aboriginal stories by providing an Aboriginal perspective or world view of familiar themes in children's lives. Four responses pertained to the notion of Aboriginal children's literature being a 'window' for "children who might not be in a Native community to see what it's like—to perhaps see life from a Native perspective." Lastly, two participants made reference to how "Aboriginal children's literature can help to maybe dispel some of the notions, those myths, and the stereotypes that people" may have toward Aboriginal peoples.

Social Significance

The third category identified by the participants and the questionnaire respondents was the social significance of Aboriginal children's literature. This category relates to children's literature as a product and representation of our society and referred to the ideas of representation, relevance, and role models. For example, one participant stated that, "a lot of the books are dominated by popular [non-Aboriginal] authors and I don't think [there are] enough stories that have First Nation content in the school setting or public libraries."

Three interview participants and one questionnaire respondent indicated that as we evolve as a society in Canada, it is very important that all children learn about the many different cultures that make up our multicultural country: none the least of which are the cultures of the first peoples which are such an important part of Canada's heritage. The idea of relevance was echoed by several participants in statements suggesting Aboriginal children's literature could help "bring awareness to specific Canadian cultural groups." The notion of relevance was stated more clearly in responses such as, "when choosing Aboriginal children's literature I always consider the circumstances and situations in my community. I try to empower students through resilience and cultural awareness." It was stated most explicitly by Candy who said, "I always…make it relevant to the children's life. So…relevant to their daily lives, relevant to their past, [and] relevant to their future."

The third idea in this category was the notion of Aboriginal authors and characters as models for children. Several participants believed that if stories were written by Aboriginal authors, students might view those authors or the characters in their books as role models. For example one participant said,

> Another aspect of children's literature is the modeling it can do. If children live in a community where there are no jobs and they don't see people in their community working. They see everybody a certain way, they don't know that it can be another way…I think it helps to broaden their horizons a little bit and that, hey, maybe this is possible for me. Maybe I could go away and learn to do this and bring that back to my community whatever this may be…Also they can model problem solving. You might read about a character who has the same problem you do and see how they solve their problem…and sometimes the author has a way of talking about them or their behaviors that help you understand that person you know in your real life a little better and you go,

> ‘Oh my gosh I never thought of it like that! Maybe my friend is similar. Maybe this person is doing it for the same reason.’

Another participant stated that if a book was written by an Aboriginal author, perhaps children would, “see that they can succeed. That because they are Aboriginal doesn’t mean they can’t be a writer….That there are no limitations put on them because of who they are: that they are open to everything.”

Universal Themes

The fourth category into which I grouped the various responses to questions 1 and 3 related to universal themes common to children of all cultures. These included such things as family, friends, and community. Four interview participants and three questionnaire respondents included references to family and community. One participant stated that she would like

> General stories about human beings and their problems and how to solve their problems and get resolutions for little children. [For example] I had a fight with a friend and we had trouble sharing our toy…I lost my dog…common childhood problems would be nice to have where the pictures are of Aboriginal children.

Other examples given by participants referred to particular family members such as “[My] Granny does this, she makes bannock” or described the community in some way, such as “The characters talk like people from [our] community. We live in a Métis community.”

Teaching and Learning to Read

The final category identified in the responses to questions 1 and 3 related to teaching and learning in a variety of curricular areas and more specifically to reading. Here five participants and all four of the questionnaire respondents made specific references to how Aboriginal children’s literature could be used by teachers to teach various curricula including teaching children to read or by students to learn to read. The sub-categories here were students' reading attitudes, students' interests, culture, and curriculum. In terms of student's reading attitudes, participants felt that, "Students enjoy seeing people like themselves and it seems to enable them to believe reading and books are for them." The suggestion here is that by having material that students can relate to and see themselves in, the students might be more engaged in reading and have a more positive attitude toward reading.

Two participants talked about taking students' interests into account when choosing Aboriginal children's literature for their classrooms. Candy said,

> I always try and make sure that it's something very interesting to them. I also always ask them, 'What do you want to learn about?' What do they already know and what do they want to learn…? At the beginning of the year I ask all my students what kind of books [they] like and they write down what they want and I make sure I have a lot of those books available in my classroom.

Another participant indicated that he "consulted a lot with the kids" and asked if there were any "series of books that they [were] reading or [wanted] to read to try to increase the amount or reading that they [were] doing."

Culture was another sub-category under teaching and learning to read. Here four interview participants and four questionnaire respondents made reference to how Aboriginal children's literature was used specifically to teach both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children about Aboriginal culture both past and present. Matt, for example, made reference to trying to

> bring in Aboriginal materials that are obviously accurate…knowing that there [are] a couple of kids that all they want to do is find out more about their culture, so we will work with that and go into some books that way.

One questionnaire respondent stated that he/she used “Aboriginal culture themed books leading up to, and following, Aboriginal Days to learn more about early peoples, their culture, and their way of life.” Yet another respondent indicated “an Aboriginal instructional book as well as Aboriginal library books, help to enhance students’ understandings of their own and other’s cultures.”

The last sub-category in this section refers directly to teaching and/or learning to read or the use of Aboriginal children’s literature in other curricular areas. Four participants made specific reference to using Aboriginal children’s literature for small group reading instruction. They talked about selecting levelled reading material written from an Aboriginal perspective on Aboriginal topics for use in guided reading lessons. When students finished with the books in guided reading they could read them independently to build fluency. As one participant enthusiastically explained,

> I’m pretty excited about this! Just last week our resource teacher got us a whole bunch of guided reading books from the Turtle Island series…I like the fact that the books are…different levels. The illustrations are just beautiful, beautiful, beautiful! The kids just love [them].

Another participant stated that she would use Aboriginal children’s literature to “teach them directly and you can teach them all the strategies for reading that [they] need.” In addition, the participants indicated that they used Aboriginal children’s literature as material for read alouds or mentor texts and models to teach reading and writing skills and strategies.

Several teachers mentioned using Aboriginal children’s literature in content areas such as social studies and science. One participant indicated she would use it in “social studies if [they] were learning about a certain Aboriginal group; trying to find stories from that Aboriginal group so the stories reflect a bit of their past oral storytelling and to learn more about them." Another participant shared that she was using it in Grade 2 social studies to teach about Canada. They were learning about Canadian cities and "even little towns that have Aboriginal names like Neepawa." One participant shared how she used a book called, *Flour Sack Flora* (Delaronde, 2001) to teach children how to use plants to make dye to color clothing. In this book the grandmother was getting color from the fruits and vegetables so the teacher related it to her science curriculum. She also uses Aboriginal children's literature to teach children about the medicinal uses of many plants which also connects to the science curriculum. Two references were made to using the illustrations found in Aboriginal children's literature to teach art. They did not elaborate on exactly how they use it but they did state that they believed the beauty and authenticity of the art was an important factor in capturing the interest and imaginations of their students.

Question 2

The second question I asked participants was how they defined Aboriginal children's literature. The questionnaire respondents and six interview participants' definitions of Aboriginal children's literature all included the following elements: Aboriginal children's literature could be written by Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal writers about Aboriginal peoples including historical, spiritual, and cultural aspects of their life and their communities. All participants except Fritz stated that Aboriginal children's literature could be written by Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal authors. They explained that in some cases non-Aboriginal people may live their whole lives in Aboriginal communities and have knowledge of that particular context. They felt that a non-Aboriginal writer could have adequate knowledge and skill to qualify him or her to write on certain Aboriginal topics. In their opinion as long as non-Aboriginal writers do not claim to write from an Aboriginal perspective but rather from their own perspective about the Aboriginal context they are in, it can be considered Aboriginal literature. The lone participant, Fritz, who felt that only Aboriginal authors should write about Aboriginal people, cultures, or communities, also felt that it was important to have illustrations that "are authentic to [the] types of traditions and cultures" being presented in the text.

There were two points of consensus. The first was that Aboriginal children's literature has to be about Aboriginal people, citing topics such as Aboriginal cultural traditions including the Seven Teachings and oral storytelling, communities, history, and art. Anne felt that "good art work [would] also capture the imagination [of the reader] and drawings [are] a big part of [Aboriginal] culture so if it depicts things meaningful to them, certainly it will be of help to them." The second point on which they all agreed was that whether an author is Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, his or her work must be authentic and accurate and must not represent Aboriginal people in a stereotypical or disrespectful way. None of the participants actually elaborated on what the definition of authentic meant to them. In this context I understand and take this to mean that the works of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers must be acceptable and believable based on verifiable facts or that they conform to truths held by particular groups of Aboriginal peoples. Accuracy and authenticity are similar in many ways but in this case I believe the participants who mentioned accuracy were referring to the accuracy of representing Aboriginal images in illustrations more than the accuracy of the text. Again, since none of the participants actually elaborated on their understandings of the two words, I can only deduce their meaning based on the overall interview and my own understandings.

While all participants noted authenticity, accuracy, and not using stereotypes as defining elements of Aboriginal children's literature, there were several other elements mentioned by one or more of the participants that were unique to their particular definitions. For example, Fritz also included the element of “a good story that has characters, setting: all the good elements of a story.” Candy said, “I define [it] by the children learning about something from the past especially related to their culture.” And Bill explained that to him Aboriginal children’s literature is “storytelling…that explains the world around you; stories that give a lesson to be learned or a moral; also stories that involve trickster tales.” One questionnaire respondent included the caution, “Stories shouldn’t have the ‘noble savage’ image or a society on the brink of extinction.”

Question 4

The fourth question posed to participants was what criteria they used when selecting good Aboriginal children’s literature for their classroom library and/or instructional purposes. Table 8 represents the number of responses given by the six interview participants and the four questionnaire respondents for each criterion. The responses given by the interview participants are listed under their pseudonyms and the questionnaire responses are displayed under the headings Q#1-Q#4 respectively. The responses were analyzed and matched with one of the 12 Criteria for Choosing Quality Aboriginal Children’s Literature (Appendix J) adapted from Jones & Moomaw (2002), Seale & Slapin (2005), and Slapin, Seale, & Gonzalez (1995). All but one participant had at least one response that did not align with one of the twelve criteria; consequently I created the thirteenth category of “Other” to accommodate those responses. This resulted in a list of thirteen criteria into which the data could be categorized.

The first criterion relates to the author/illustrator’s biographical information and whether their background qualifies them to write or illustrate about Aboriginal people or particular cultures. This appears to be the most important of the criteria, except for the “Other” category, as seven of the participants indicated that the author’s credibility was important and that they “look at who wrote the book”, “what the bias” of the author might be and “what community or province they come from.” Those who felt non-Aboriginal authors could write about Aboriginal issues made it clear that it was important that they “did [their] research” and that they were presenting what the participant believed to be accurate information. It should be noted that there was limited elaboration on how they would confirm the accuracy of the text or the illustrations. However, May explained that she might confirm accuracy by giving the book in question to an Aboriginal person she knows and ask them specific questions such as, “Is this offensive or is this accurate? What do you think of this book?”

Four participants indicated that they looked for connections to their curricula when selecting Aboriginal children’s literature. Anne indicated only one criterion for selection of Aboriginal children’s literature and that was that the material relates to curriculum topics. One questionnaire respondent made direct references to “Manitoba Education, in Grade 3 science [where] students learn about [structures] such as the wigwam, teepee, and longhouse.” Other references were more general, indicating that they select books based on themes or topics “they are going to be doing in units in social studies or science.”

None of the remaining ten criteria were mentioned by more than three participants which leads me to believe they are less important to this group of teachers when choosing Aboriginal children’s literature. Of these ten criteria, I find the low number of references (only one), to criteria three and eight which refer to images and illustrations, somewhat surprising given the many references made by the participants to the importance of the illustrations in Aboriginal children’s literature. Participants mentioned the importance of having beautiful images to engage young readers and accuracy in portraying historical information but they never explicitly acknowledged avoiding generic, degrading, or objectifying images of Aboriginal peoples.

Table 8

Criteria Used by Participants When Choosing Aboriginal Children's Literature.

	May	Fritz	Candy	Anne	Matt	Bill	Q # 1	Q # 2	Q # 3	Q # 4	Total %
1. Author's biographical information qualifies them as credible source	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**			**X**		**70**
2. Avoids stereotypes	**X**							**X**			**20**
3. Avoids generic images of Aboriginal people						**X**					**10**
4. Has well-developed characters	**X**	**X**									**20**
5. Uses respectful language			**X**				**X**				**20**
6. Relates to curricula	**X**	**X**				**X**				**X**	**40**
7. Used throughout the year, not as a unit of study			**X**			**X**					**20**
8. Illustrations do not degrade or objectify Aboriginal peoples							**X**				**10**
9. Portrays Aboriginal people today	**X**	**X**					**X**				**30**
10. Historically accurate, told from an Aboriginal perspective	**X**			**X**		**X**					**30**
11. Positive role models/ reflects childhood issues in Aboriginal context			**X**	**X**		**X**					**30**
12. Shows standards of success			**X**				**X**				**20**
13. Other	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**		**90**

Note. Q = Division-Wide Questionnaire Respondent

Nine of the ten participants provided a response that I categorized as ‘Other’. These responses related more to Question 3 which dealt with how or why they chose Aboriginal children’s literature rather than criteria specific to the Aboriginal nature of the literature. The category of other included criteria such as

- Colorful pictures that combine with text to support meaning
- Leveled according to popular leveling systems
- Recommended by a reliable source
- Written in an Aboriginal Language
- Variety of forms e.g., graphic novels, poetry, fiction, non-fiction
- Age or grade appropriate for attention span and interest
- Purchase Price

Question 5

The fifth question I asked required participants to explain where they purchased or gathered Aboriginal children’s literature for their classroom library or for instructional purposes. I have separated the responses for purchasing and gathering Aboriginal children literature. When purchasing Aboriginal children’s literature the participants specified seven sources; (1) Google (2) book store websites (3) local book stores (4) local publishers (5) division library services (6) catalogues or flyers and (7) exhibits or conferences. When gathering resources on loan they indicated they rely on; (1) division’s library services (2) the local Aboriginal Language Centre and (3) the school (libraries, guidance counselor, and resource room).

Table 9 below represents the number of responses for each of the nine sources mentioned by the interview participants and the questionnaire respondents. Note that the division library services department was mentioned when purchasing and when gathering. The interview participants are labeled using their pseudonyms and the questionnaire respondents are labelled using a ‘Q’ followed by the number I assigned to the questionnaire. I split the far left column into two sections to show the online and in-person sources mentioned by the participants.

Table 9

Sources From Where Participants Purchase or Borrow Aboriginal Children’s Literature.

		May	**Fritz**	**Candy**	**Anne**	**Matt**	**Bill**	**Q # 1**	**Q # 2**	**Q # 3**	**Q # 4**	**Total %**
Online	Google	X	X									20
	Book Store Websites			X						X		20
In Person	Local Book Stores	X		X		X					X	40
	Local Publishers		X	X			X	X				40
	Library Services	X	X			X		X				40
	Language Centre			X								10
	Catalogues/ Flyers	X	X									20
	Exhibits/ Conferences				X					X		20
	In School						X		X		X	30

Note. Q = Division-Wide Questionnaire Respondent

Two participants said they bought Aboriginal children's literature on-line from sites such as Amazon and other places they found by doing Google searches. One participant recalled "a place in Saskatchewan that [she] ordered books from." She could not remember the name of it but she said she "Googles *Aboriginal books* and it just shows a bunch of websites." Two other participants indicated they ordered on-line from book stores such as Chapters and McNally Robinson.

Two participants bought Aboriginal children's literature from flyers or catalogues that were sent to the school. One participant talked about an "Aboriginal based teachers' support catalogue" which she felt was a very good resource because the material they offered featured "children of Aboriginal decent." Another participant admitted she had a "tendency to just [order] out of one catalogue" for convenience sake and because the material offered in the catalogue "appeared …to be good quality books" she was familiar with.

Purchasing directly from publishing companies was cited by four participants as a source for purchasing Aboriginal children's literature. Participants made specific reference to two local publishing companies; Peguis Publishers and Pemmican Publications, which they believed "had some good Aboriginal literature." Other publishing companies mentioned as a result of Google searches were Eaglecrest Books located in Duncan, British Columbia, and Scholastic Canada located in Markham, Ontario. The participant who mentioned Scholastic Canada was happy to share that "even Scholastic Canada is a place now, where you can purchase some books…they don't have a lot but they are starting to create themes around Aboriginal content."

McNally Robinson Booksellers and Chapters were cited by four participants as favorite places to go to browse and buy Aboriginal children's literature. May explained that she went to McNally Robinson Booksellers and looked through their whole Aboriginal literature selection and concluded that they were all good! She stated that she "would be happy with any of [the] books and [had] no way to pick and choose [her] $800 worth because [she] wanted them all." In the end she contacted her school division Library Services Department and asked them to use her library budget of $800 to purchase Aboriginal children's literature for Nursery to Grade 8 from McNally Robinson Booksellers. Candy explained that she goes on-line or phones Chapters to see if they have particular books she is looking for. She said, "There are always a lot of people there that help me. I'll phone them up and they usually have it ready for me."

Four participants mentioned purchasing Aboriginal children's literature through the school division's Library Services Department. This is different than the situation described above where May went into the bookstore and browsed the bookshelves, became familiar with the books that were available, and then had them ordered through Library Services. In this case, the selection of the books is done by the Library Services clerk based on themes or topics provided by the participants. Participants do not know what books are being selected and have no input into the choices that are made. The books are ordered and charged to their school budgets and shipped to the schools. It is as much a surprise for the teachers as it is for the students. It appears these participants have considerable trust and confidence in the Library Services staff; or they have very little confidence in their own ability to choose quality Aboriginal children's literature if they are willing to relinquish the power of choosing classroom resources to someone else.

The final category, exhibits or conferences, was mentioned by only two participants. The first response under this category was by a teacher who said she bought Aboriginal children's literature at exhibitions or professional development events where the author was presenting and selling his/her books. She noted that "the last time [she attended a professional development event] in particular it was really good because the author read his book to the audience and for sure [she] selected that book because the book now [had] more meaning." Both participants indicated that purchasing Aboriginal children's literature at these events was a better experience and more meaningful to them because they could communicate with the authors and/or other teachers to see how they were using the material.

The second part of question five required participants to explain where they go to collect, not purchase, books for use in their classroom. Participants identified three sources from which they gathered resources for their classrooms, (1) division library services, (2) local Aboriginal Language Centre, and (3) in school (resource room, school library, and guidance counselor's office).

The school division has a central Library Services Department which purchases books for school libraries and loans resources to schools. Four participants said they contacted Library Services to gather Aboriginal children's literature for their classrooms. I found it surprising that this number was not higher considering the significant role this department plays in the schools.

Another three participants said they borrowed Aboriginal children's literature from places within their schools such as the library, the resource room, or the guidance counselor's office. One of the participants indicated that the selection within the library was limited and another simply stated that there was a selection.

Only one participant mentioned borrowing resources from a language centre. This reflects the unique circumstances of that particular community since it is the only school that has a local Aboriginal Language Centre.

Question 6

The next question I asked the study participants was whether they had taken any Native Studies courses either in their pre-service training or later in their careers—perhaps while taking Post Baccalaureate or Masters level programs. Four interview participants and three questionnaire respondents stated that they had taken at least one Native Studies course during their pre-service training, while two participants and one questionnaire respondent said they had not. Those who indicated they had taken a Native Studies course interpreted and identified Native Studies courses in a variety of ways such as:

- Cross-cultural education course
- Pre-Contact and Post Contact
- Native Studies I
- How to Teach Native Studies from an Aboriginal Perspective
- Canadian Studies/History/Native Studies
- Plains Indians of Western Canada
- Aboriginal Knowledge courses
- Teaching in a Native Community
- The History of Native People in Canada

In the following sections I elaborate and discuss what the interview participants or questionnaire respondents said about the courses they identified above as Native Studies.

May

May recalled taking a cross cultural education course but was not sure of the exact title. She did however recall that it was taught by an Aboriginal man who she believed was Métis. Her memory of him was that he was a very good teacher and she was very happy in the course because she

> Learned a lot about perspective from him; how not to try to interpret everything through [her] 'white eyes' and [sub-urban] experience. Things are not always how they look. There might be another reason for what [she] saw. It was pretty useful to [her].

This response led me to ask how this course had affected or informed her practice in the twenty-five plus years she had been teaching. While May did not remember many of the specifics of the class, she quickly said she recalled one or two things in particular because they were so shocking to her at the time. One such revelation was that there was "another reality out there" and the magnitude of "how sheltered [her] upbringing had been."

Candy

Candy, the second participant who indicated taking a Native Studies course, took what she called Pre-Contact and Post Contact, but again was not sure if that was the exact title. The course covered Aboriginal life before and after contact with European explorers and dealt with the damage caused to Aboriginal peoples and their ways of life. I asked her how she felt this course helped her in her career and she said,

> It totally helps me a lot because it's stuff that I never learned when I went to high school. They just never taught us about that so a lot of it was new to me so I did not realize the damage that was done to these Aboriginal families. I really enjoyed it.

Candy also recalled taking a children's literature course where the professor brought in children's literature which was not accurate. These books were from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and in her opinion were, "very, very saddening…They portrayed [Aboriginals] as being really bad—like savages and …very much stereotyped them…some of the books were actually still [being used] in the classroom."

Matt

Matt indicated that he took two courses during his first year in university, the first was *Native Studies I* and the second he thought was called, *How to Teach Native Studies from an Aboriginal Perspective*. Matt described his experience of taking *How to Teach Native Studies from an Aboriginal Perspective* as being a "unique experience," in which he was the only non-Aboriginal student in a class with 36 Aboriginal students and an Aboriginal professor. Matt said it was the most informative course he has ever taken and it had nothing to do with the course material. He shared that it was the first time in his life he was a minority. He felt this class offered a glimpse into what many Aboriginal people go through when they are in university or some school situations. Matt went so far as to say that it changed his perspective and brought into focus how important perspective is in terms of how we view history and the accuracy of historical information. He felt it heightened his awareness of whose perspective many history books were written from and how the colonizer perspective and the myths generated by that perspective, are held to be true when in fact they are only one group's version of history. He stated that he felt he had truly learned something. A seemingly simple statement indicating he learned something which transformed his thinking and in turn informs his decision making in the classroom.

Bill

Bill indicated that he took three courses but could not recall the exact names or content of the courses as he said it was 18 years ago. He could remember that one was a Canadian

Studies/History/Native Studies course which could be applied to any of the three areas of study. He said it was about

> Place and what place means to people and [how] being from a particular place may give you a different perspective than individuals who are from another place. It also meant that you didn't only have to be in a different physical place, it could mean a different place in your life. Like whether you are young or whether you are older.

The second course Bill recalled taking was about "Plains Indians of Western Canada and how their life was being changed as settlers moved farther and farther into the west and the adaptations and changes they had to make." He explained that the course focused on the situation from the conflicting perspectives of the different groups involved. The third course he mentioned was about the Maori. He included this course in his response because it was about Aboriginal peoples and how settlement of European people changed their traditional lifestyles.

He felt these courses helped inform his decision making process in the sense that it made him aware of how his perspective is influenced by the place where he was raised outside a major city and how his students' perspectives are influenced by the small, often isolated communities they live in. He said that when he chooses literature he thinks "about the idea of place—where they're at and where I'm at and how can children make connections."

The questionnaire respondents did not go into the same detail as the interview participants and I could not ask any probing questions regarding how these courses inform their decision making processes, therefore the discussions that follow are brief.

Questionnaire Respondents

The first questionnaire respondent indicated that s/he had a minor degree in Canadian Studies which included "Aboriginal knowledge courses, independent study courses, human rights and rights theories, and a variety of law courses that looked at treaties [and analyzed] landmark Supreme Court decisions" relating to Aboriginal issues.

The third questionnaire respondent said s/he took a Canadian Studies course in 2003 which focused on Aboriginal content but, again, that person could not recall the exact title of the course. S/he said it dealt with "the role of Aboriginal peoples in Canada today."

The fourth and final respondent noted that s/he took a course called *Teaching in a Native Community* and a history course called *History of Native People in Canada* but did not elaborate on the content of either course.

Those who did not take Native Studies courses did not simply say, "No they did not." Rather, they made a point of mentioning doing other things or taking other courses which they considered relevant or similar to a Native Studies course such as; a mandatory cultural awareness day, on-going professional development sessions based on different Aboriginal ways of teaching; and a course on diversity in education.

Fritz, who did not take any Native Studies courses, referred to the professional development she received while teaching for 15 years at a First Nations school as useful in learning how to make curricula more culturally relevant. Fritz shared that she felt she learned a great deal from a one day professional development session delivered through the Treaty Education Initiative (TEI) whose learning outcomes are "that all Manitoba students should be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the topics, concepts and understandings of the Treaties and the Treaty Relationship by the end of grade 12 (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, 2016). She stated that the professional development session was particularly informative and helpful in deepening her understanding of the treaties and what they mean to all Canadians.

Question 7

I posed my seventh and final question to find out the kinds of professional learning opportunities or supports participants believed would be helpful to them in choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in their classroom libraries or for instructional purposes. The question suggests two categories—professional learning and supports, which are the main categories under which I organized all responses into 12 sub-categories. The four sub-categories under professional learning are (1) conferences, (2) workshops, (3) presentations, and (4) networking. Sub-categories under the main category of supports are, (1) where to find authors and titles, (2) lists of Aboriginal authors, (3) book reviews, (4) colleagues, (5) community, (6) authors, (7) the Department of Education, and (8) division on-line catalogue. Table 10 illustrates the category of response given by each interview participant and questionnaire respondent and shows the total percentage of responses for each sub-category.

Table 10

Suggested Professional Learning & Supports for Choosing/Using Aboriginal Children's Literature.

		May	Fritz	Candy	Anne	Matt	Bill	Q # 1	Q # 2	Q # 3	Q # 4	Total %
Professional Learning	Conferences				X		X					20
	Workshops		X	X				X				30
	Presentations		X								X	20
	Networking									X		10
Supports	Where to find Authors & Titles			X			X	X				30
	Lists of Aboriginal Authors					X	X					20
	Book Reviews	X			X					X		30
	Colleagues			X	X							20
	Community			X					X			20
	Authors				X		X					20
	Department of Education			X								10
	Division On-Line Catalogue	X										10

Beginning with the category of Professional Learning, both Anne and Bill made reference to divisional conferences where they have opportunities to listen to a variety of guest speakers on topics related to Aboriginal issues in general and Aboriginal literature specifically.

Bill said it is interesting to listen to authors and see the books they have published. He noted that he also found it interesting to see that “Native authors don’t just publish work about traditional Native life.”

Two interview participants, Fritz and Candy, and one questionnaire respondent indicated that workshops were useful. Fritz stated that learning about oral storytelling and learning to share stories would be beneficial “because of course oral storytelling is a traditional way of sharing stories.” Candy suggested that workshops put on by Special Area Groups of Educators (SAGE) that focused on Aboriginal children’s literature or other Aboriginal topics in general, were professional learning opportunities she finds useful. Questionnaire respondent number one suggested that Aboriginal themed workshops highlighting Aboriginal writers, the Seven Teachings, and how to bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom would be helpful.

The sub-category, Presentations, was only mentioned by Fritz who thought it would be an effective way to learn about Canadian Aboriginal authors. She also suggested that presentations on the different “ways of seeing things” or world views of different Aboriginal peoples would be helpful. Finally, she proposed in-services with presentations on general themes of study such as the Seven Teachings and “how life was lived back when it all began.”

The fourth and final sub-category under the Professional Learning category was Networking, which was mentioned by only questionnaire respondent number three. The respondent noted that they would like “more opportunity to communicate with other teachers across Manitoba about what they are teaching.”

The first sub-category under supports was, Where to Find Authors and Titles, which had the most responses. Two interview participants and questionnaire respondent number one indicated they needed support in this area. Candy shared that there are a “lot of good websites out there about children’s literature” that help teachers choose good books. She shared her excitement when she discovered a book called *Bannock Boy* (McLeod, PeeAce, & Eley, 1995) through one of the websites she found. Bill also indicated that he would like “information about where [he] could look and research” Aboriginal children’s literature on his own. The questionnaire respondent indicated s/he would like information on publishers where books and audio books could be purchased.

Matt and Bill were the only two who thought lists of Aboriginal authors would be helpful. Matt described his apprehension about having to sort through the many books that are in the book stores and on-line. He stated that if he was trying to create a collection of Aboriginal children’s literature it would help to know if the author was Aboriginal or not. Bill said he would like to know “which authors were of Aboriginal decent because it could help stimulate a stronger connection to the book because the students [might] realize, ‘hey that [author] is from the community where I’m from.’”

May, Anne, and questionnaire respondent number three all claimed that book reviews would aid them in choosing and using Aboriginal children’s literature. May stated that she would like a mentor text list that explained what the book would be good to model. The example she gave was, “This one is really good for teaching little children to write repetitive stories or this one is good for alliteration. So when you want to do a lesson…you just go to your list and see if you have a book that fits that criteria and you go there and get it.” Anne said she would look up book reviews before purchasing Aboriginal children’s literature and would favour those who had worksheets or other supports that went with the books. Questionnaire respondent three noted that an “annotated list of the Aboriginal [children’s literature] that is out there with grade level so it is easily accessible to all teachers” would be a wonderful support.

Colleagues, was a sub-category of support that both Candy and Anne mentioned they found helpful. Candy explained that there is a Language Centre adjacent to the school, where there are Native Language speakers such as Traditional Knowledge Keepers and a colleague who does not have a teaching degree but comes into her classroom several times a cycle to teach Ojibway to her students. She explained that this Native Language instructor is great at "helping [her] choose things for the classroom and [telling her] whether it is authentic or not." Anne also acknowledged the value of other teachers and colleagues as supports because they are able to tell her which books their students are reading and what is working for their students.

The fifth sub-category, Community, was mentioned by Candy and questionnaire respondent number two. Candy identified Traditional Knowledge Keepers and other workers from the community who work at her school as supports. In contrast the questionnaire respondent mentioned that s/he "wished community members would come into the school to read to students but every attempt had been unsuccessful."

Anne and Bill indicated that meeting Aboriginal authors in person and hearing them talk about what inspired them to write their books and how they envision their books being used in a classroom would be helpful. Anne appreciated the opportunity to ask the author questions related to the age group of children the books might be best suited.

The Department of Education and the Division On-Line Catalogue were each only mentioned by one interview participant. Candy stated that a "book through the Education Department on Aboriginals and Aboriginal resources as well as a curriculum document" had been "a little bit helpful." May indicated that she was eagerly anticipating the day when a divisional on-line catalogue would be available. She felt it would be a great support when she was “in [a] bookstore, saying, ‘This is wonderful! Do I have this one? I don’t remember.’” She would be able to access the list on-line, in the moment and make her decision.

Classroom Library Audit

The classroom libraries audited in my study varied in size, organization, and content. Some were as small as a couple of bins on a cart, others consisted of several shelves filled with books in bins like the one shown in Figure 3, and still others consisted of many bookcases which were part of the whole school library. Some were organized into quiet reading areas with cushions or mats for children to sit on while others were simply rows of books on low shelves which doubled as classroom dividers. Some libraries had bins organized and labeled by genre such as poetry, themes like dinosaurs, or subject areas such as science. Most consisted of books in bins on shelves or metal racks. Often books that connected to a theme of study were displayed on outward facing shelves so children could easily see the covers. Figure 4 shows a variety of children’s books arranged on a low outward facing rack for easy access. All classroom libraries were arranged in a manner that made the books accessible to the children.

Figure 3. Book bins on shelves in classroom library.

The classroom library audit involved counting all the books in each teacher's classroom library and recording and counting those which met my criteria of Aboriginal children's literature. The criteria I used was: trade books and other texts involving Aboriginal perspectives, written by and/or about Aboriginal peoples for an intended child audience from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, including prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction. For example, Figure 5 shows a collection of books in one classroom library from a new Aboriginal series called, Turtle Island Voices published by Pearson. It includes traditional Aboriginal stories, modern realistic fiction, and non-fiction texts. I then calculated the percentage of the total classroom library that was categorized as Aboriginal children's literature. Table 11 shows the results of my classroom library audit.

Figure 4. Example of easy access, outward facing book display.

Figure 5. Selection of books from Turtle Island Voices series.

Table 11

Classroom Library Audit Results.

Classroom Library	Total Number of Books	Number of A.C.L. Books	% of Collection that is A.C.L.
May	722	10	1.4%
Fritz	588	105	17.8%
Candy	929	39	4.2%
Anne	367	24	6.5%
Matt	1810	79	4.4%
Bill	645	50	7.8%
Overall Total	5061	307	6.0%

The difference between the classroom library with the least number of books and the classroom with the greatest number of books was 1443, with the fewest number of books occurring in what is considered a large school and the greatest number of books occurring in a small school. The percentage of the collection which was Aboriginal children's literature was almost two percent lower in the larger collection than the smaller collection. Overall there were 5061 books in the six classroom libraries, of which 307 were Aboriginal children's literature, representing 6% of the combined collection.

The number of books counted as Aboriginal children's literature in any of the collections ranged from 10 to 105. This represented 1.4% and 17.8% of each collection respectively. The library containing 10 Aboriginal titles had the third highest amount of books but the fewest Aboriginal titles. It should be noted that the classroom containing 105 Aboriginal titles included multiple copies of several titles which children were allowed to use for independent reading. The classroom library with the highest percentage of Aboriginal titles had the second lowest total number of books in the classroom library.

In addition to identifying the number of Aboriginal children's literature titles in each classroom library, the audit also revealed a significant number of authors writing Aboriginal children's literature (See Appendix K). In total there were 150 different authors of which 26 appeared in more than one classroom. The 26 authors who appeared in more than one classroom included authors of levelled collections such as the Turtle Island Voices and Eaglecrest series which have been written from an Aboriginal perspective about Aboriginal topics. Also appearing in multiple classrooms were popular trade books written by well-known authors such as David Bouchard, Michael A. Kusugak, Paul Goble, and Joseph Bruchac. The Aboriginal children's literature found in the classrooms consisted of traditional stories, universal themes, historical stories, and cultural teachings.

Summary of This Results Chapter

In Chapter 4 I presented the results of the analysis of my three data sources which were a semi-structured interview, a division-wide-questionnaire, and a classroom library audit. First, I presented the results of the six semi-structured interviews combined with the responses from the division-wide questionnaire. Then I presented the classroom library audit in Table 12 with a commentary on the data.

The three data sources appear to suggest that despite the fact that Aboriginal children's literature accounts for a relatively small percentage of the classroom libraries in my study, all participants and questionnaire respondents in my study believe it is important to use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. Furthermore, the participants feel that Aboriginal children's literature can be written by Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal authors, as long as the content is accurate and authentic. The participants attempt to choose Aboriginal children's literature that mirrors their students' lives or provides a window to ideas and events beyond their lived experiences. The participating teachers' choices are based on quality and student interest with the purpose of teaching content area themes, Big Ideas, and reading. The participants reported using all of the *Twelve Criteria for Choosing Quality Children's Literature* (Appendix J). All participants and questionnaire respondents were aware of places to go and people to contact to purchase or gather Aboriginal children's literature for their classrooms. Four participants and three questionnaire respondents have taken some kind of Aboriginal education or awareness course at some point in their pre-service or in-service career. A variety of professional learning opportunities and supports ranging from presentations or workshops by and about Aboriginal authors, to lists or databases of Aboriginal children's literature from which to choose were suggested. Finally, responses made by those who completed the division-wide-questionnaire where consistent with those given by the six semi-structured interview participants.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In this final chapter of my thesis, I discuss the results presented in the previous chapter. I begin by highlighting the key findings and questions raised by this study. Next I discuss the limitations of my study followed by the theoretical and research implications. I then explore the possible pedagogical implications and end with my concluding remarks.

Key Findings and Questions

This section highlights the key findings of my study and what I believe to be important questions raised by the research. As an English Language Arts instructional coach working with teachers in cross-cultural teaching contexts, I was curious to know what factors influenced and informed teachers' decisions when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. I set out to discover what some teachers said about how and/or why they made decisions to choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms.

The participants in my study revealed several key factors that affected their decision making processes when selecting and using Aboriginal children's literature. Overwhelmingly, participants agreed that using Aboriginal children's literature in the classroom was essential to the development of positive self-images in Aboriginal students, and helped to eliminate stereotypes and "shatter images of 'the other' by presenting characters that are both like ourselves and those who are very different from us" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 109). Participants indicated that they selected books which mirrored their students' lives, thereby allowing them to see themselves as an important part of the Canadian narrative. Aboriginal world views and realities are more frequently being represented in children's literature as part of a more complete and honest reflection our society which is validating and empowering for

Aboriginal children. When Aboriginal peoples are represented accurately and authentically it provides a window for non-Aboriginal children and adults, into places, events, ideas, and world views other than their own. When used effectively Aboriginal children's literature can help to eliminate stereotypes, increase empathy, and build understanding of the diverse Aboriginal cultures in Canada.

However, despite participants' unanimous belief that Aboriginal children's literature is of great value and all the good reasons they gave for using it, Aboriginal children's literature accounted for only 6.0% of the total number of children's books in the classroom libraries audited in this study. In my opinion this is a distressingly small percentage for any classroom library, and even more so in classrooms where the student population is as high as 100% Aboriginal. It would appear that even though teachers say they believe in the value of Aboriginal children's literature, that belief is not manifesting itself in the purchase and use of Aboriginal children's literature in these classrooms. Furthermore, even though teachers stressed the importance of Aboriginal children's literature, they gave limited examples and explanations of how they used it in their classrooms. Overall, the participants used Aboriginal children's literature in a variety of ways but no one teacher used it in a wide variety of ways. As individuals, the participants used Aboriginal children's literatures for limited purposes and seldom as a part of text sets for cross curricular topics in social studies or science or as catalysts for critical literacy and social justice pedagogy. One may argue that perhaps some of the discrepancy can be accounted for by the limited budgets available to teachers for their classroom libraries, but over time even the smallest budget can yield a substantial collection of books.

I am left wondering why these teachers with their strong belief in the value of Aboriginal children's literature are still not choosing and using it more extensively in their classrooms. I feel the greatest obstacle preventing teachers from using more Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms is their lack of confidence in selecting 'good' Aboriginal children's literature. The notion of 'good' Aboriginal children's literature was frequently cited as a concern and an area where participants felt unsure. They expressed concern over whether or not the books they were choosing were accurate and authentic. Here is where, I believe, the most important question is raised by this study. Who decides what is accurate and authentic? This seemingly simple question is actually very complex and seems to be the main reason that many non-Aboriginal teachers have a difficult time choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature.

The first hurdle brought to light by this question is the disagreement within the Aboriginal community as to what is considered accurate and authentic. For example, there are critics such as Doris Seale, co-editor of *A Broken Flute*, who suggest that many texts written by non-Aboriginal writers are, "inaccurate, inauthentic, patronizing, full of lies, and altogether a huge insult" (Seale & Slapin, 2005). In this resource she and other reviewers have been accused of using "a scornful tone" (West, 2005, p. 426) when reviewing works by non-Aboriginal writers such as Paul Goble, but a much more celebratory tone when reviewing books by Aboriginal authors (Bryan, in press). The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) from the British Columbia Ministry of Education holds a similar—though perhaps less scornful—position on the matter. They state that "authentic First Peoples texts are historical and contemporary texts that are created *by First Peoples* or through the substantial contribution of First Peoples" (FNESC, 2012, p. 9, emphasis added).

On the other hand there are occasions where the work of a non-Aboriginal writer is endorsed by some Aboriginal people. For instance, Lakota writer S.D. Nelson celebrates the work of non-Aboriginal author Paul Goble (Bryan, in press). Similarly Chief William Charlie of the Sts'ailes People endorses non-Aboriginal author Scot Ritchie's (2015) book *P'ésk'a and the First Salmon Ceremony* when he states,

> Dear Readers,
>
> I am pleased to see this book, which helps bring to life the ancient life of our people. The Sts'ailes are actively revitalizing our history, language and culture through education, both for our own people and for others, and this book will be a valuable tool in this ongoing effort.
>
> Scot Ritchie's artistic expression of Sts'ailes life and culture is based on careful research and is also very respectfully executed. I am glad that it will be available for children from all places to read.
>
> For those who want to learn more, Sts'ailes is a warm and welcoming community. Maybe some day you will visit us! (Ritchie, 2015, "A Letter from Chief William Charlie, paras. 1-3)

While the reviewers in *A Broken Flute* may be justified in their criticisms, clearly there are others who have differing opinions. Whose opinion should be given the final say? Whose opinion is the authority? It is beyond the scope of this study to determine who has the 'authority' to deem a book accurate or authentic but I would hazard to say that Traditional Knowledge Keepers from the communities where these books are to be used should be considered authorities within their communities at the very least. This supports the notion of culturally responsive teaching, which promotes the use of community members as valuable resources and links between the school and the community. At the same time, however, this position assumes a united, consensus opinion among the

Traditional Knowledge Keepers of a community. Of course, this is not necessarily the case.

It seems that as teachers grapple with the uncertainty of what is accurate and authentic Aboriginal children's literature and what is not, they default to the notion of: when in doubt—do nothing. Several participants indicated they would like lists of Aboriginal children's books that could be accessed either in digital or hard copy format. In fact, lists such as these do exist and most are easily accessible on-line. They have been compiled by government groups or committees such as the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) as well as school divisions, publishers, and Aboriginal advocacy groups. It seems the teachers in my study are looking for someone within our division whom they consider an authority to do the work of determining the accuracy and authenticity of the Aboriginal children's literature available to them. I acknowledge that teachers are very busy and finding resources can be time consuming. However, I find this desire somewhat problematic because the process of looking at a book through a critical lens—in this case to determine if it is authentic and accurate—is exactly the critical literacy skill we are proposing students should be taught. If teachers must rely on others to choose what is appropriate and what is not, how will they be able to teach their students to do this with the books they read? This is critical literacy in action! If we do not make the choices, someone else will make them for us. It is the professional responsibility of teachers to make informed decisions based on what they believe to be the best criteria available. Lists are a good start and there are many out there, however, it is highly likely that in any list, there will be books that someone thinks should not be used. It appears a combination of resource support and professional development to build teachers' confidence in finding and selecting Aboriginal children's literature is necessary.

The participants also seemed apprehensive about using Aboriginal children's literature as a catalyst for meaningful discussions about real issues facing Aboriginal peoples both historically and in contemporary times; issues that focus on "diversity and difference, injustice in society, and, at times, people working together to make a difference in the world" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 61). Again, they wrestled with who is the authority and what if those who have the authority disagree? There are texts which we could all agree are blatantly offensive and ought not to be used in a classroom, but what of the books that are less obvious; less overtly offensive or perhaps inaccurate in a way that is not apparent to someone outside of that particular group? It seems a daunting task and one which may for all practical purposes be impossible to come to absolute agreement upon. Perhaps 'absolute agreement' is not a desirable goal in any case. Depending upon the individual teacher, his/her students, the school context, and the educational goals, there should be room for the use in some situations of materials appropriately deemed unsuitable or inappropriate for use in other situations.

Some participants were apprehensive about using Aboriginal children's literature because they felt that as non-Aboriginal teachers they should not be teaching about Aboriginal peoples. Candy recalled a time in one of her pre-service education classes when she was told by an Aboriginal instructor that if she was "not Aboriginal [she] had no business teaching Aboriginal content." She avoided any Aboriginal content for the first few years of her teaching career until she realized that yes, she could teach about some Aboriginal issues and topics as long as she was doing "a lot of research" to make sure what she was teaching was accurate. In fairness, perhaps the instructor was referring to sacred teachings which are “only shared with permission and/or in certain situations” (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2012, p. 8), however that was not Candy’s recollection. So long as non-Aboriginal teachers question whether or not they ‘have any business’ teaching Aboriginal content, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students may be missing out on a vital piece of the education they both need and deserve. I would also argue that as long as teachers feel they have no business teaching about Aboriginal issues they will not feel compelled to educate themselves about Aboriginal history or current affairs. This is problematic if all teachers across Canada are expected to implement recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), which means they will unavoidably be teaching Aboriginal content regardless of their own ethnicity.

The view, that non-Aboriginal teachers should not teach about Aboriginal issues or topics, may be justified in specific instances, but it is highly unrealistic as a broad restriction for several reasons. First, currently the majority of classroom teachers are white, middle class, females of Euro-Canadian background, many of whom are teaching in cross cultural teaching situations—if they do not teach it, who will? Second, every content area curriculum mandated by Manitoba Education has specific outcomes stipulating the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives. It is highly unlikely that every school has the funds or the human resources available to hire Aboriginal teachers to teach about Aboriginal issues especially when Aboriginal perspectives are expected to be infused into every teacher’s program. Third, as indicated above, given the times we are entering as a country and the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is apparent that as Canadians we all have an obligation to engage in dialogue focused on difficult and often controversial topics related to Aboriginal issues. I do not mean to suggest that this should be done without teachers having sufficient knowledge of the topics being addressed (such as Treaties or residential schools, for example). What I do suggest is that with the appropriate background knowledge, professional development, lived experiences, and community resources or supports, non-Aboriginal teachers can teach about Aboriginal issues. Furthermore, Aboriginal children's literature is an effective and powerful way to approach many of these delicate and complex issues with children of all ages regardless of ethnicity.

Using Aboriginal children's literature as an instructional resource can help teachers to more effectively fulfill their roles as educators especially when they choose books which mirror the lives of their students or provide a window into ideas and events beyond the lived experiences of the students they teach. The notion of Aboriginal children's literature as a mirror was reflected by interview participants and questionnaire respondents in words and phrases such as "like themselves", "relate to", "connect to", "represented", and "depicting". These words all suggest that Aboriginal children's literature can reach young Aboriginal readers on a personal level that allows them to see themselves and their culture represented in the text. Not only are books such as these often more engaging for young Aboriginal readers but they are validating in the sense that it confirms their membership in the larger society.

Again I am left wondering, if so many of the participants felt this was important, why is there so little Aboriginal children's literature in the classroom libraries for students to select from or so little Aboriginal children's literature being used by teachers for instructional purposes? With the increased emphasis on Aboriginal education and awareness Aboriginal children's literature has an important role to play in classrooms across Canada. They can be mirrors for Aboriginal children and windows for non-Aboriginal children but only if they are purchased and used in classrooms.

In recent years there has been a surge in children's books by talented First Nations, Métis, and Inuit authors and illustrators. According to Gillian O'Reilly (2015), editor of *Canadian Children's Book News*, publishers want Aboriginal children's literature to "reach a wide audience of, FNMI [First Nation, Métis, Inuit] and non-Aboriginal readers" (p. 12). Aboriginal publishers such as Louise Flaherty of Inhabit Media recognized the lack of books that mirrored her own life growing up and started a publishing company to "make sure the children in [her] daughter's generation had more appealing books than [she] had" (O'Reilly, 2015, p. 14). Similarly, Randal McIlroy, editor of Pemmican Publications, uses the window and mirror analogy to describe how important Aboriginal children's literature is to members of the Métis community, when he says the books "recognize and validate our cultural heritage. For those from the outside, these books are a great chance to learn more about it" (O'Reilly, 2015, p. 12). Sheila Barry, publisher of Groundwood Books, also borrowed the mirror and window analogy by titling their most recent catalogue, *Windows and Mirrors: Celebrating a diverse world through children's books* in which she states that books, "give children a mirror in which to see themselves reflected, as well as a window through which they can see the wider world" (Barry, in Groundwood Books, 2016, p. 1). Clearly, teachers will have to do more than laud the value and importance of Aboriginal children's literature. They will actually have to invest time and money into selecting books for their classroom libraries and then use them for instructional purposes, layering them across all content areas in a consistent and intentional way.

One place teachers can turn for resources is the division's Library Services Department. This central lending resource library is reasonably well stocked with Aboriginal children's and adolescent literature. I was surprised that only four participants indicated that they requested resources from the library. If the resources are there, why are teachers not accessing them? I suspect this goes back to the point of teachers being hesitant to use the resources for fear of offending or not knowing how to incorporate them into their lessons. Perhaps the language and culture consultants, library staff, and division English Language Arts coaches, could team up to provide more professional development and/or information to teachers about what is available through Library Services and how they might incorporate Aboriginal children's literature into their unit and lesson plans.

The last finding that I felt was cause for concern or at least surprising, came from Question Six. The intention behind this question was to see how many of the participants had taken courses that might inform their decision making processes when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature. Admittedly, I was under the assumption that taking at least one Native Studies course would provide information or awareness of Aboriginal issues and perspectives which would somehow positively impact teachers' decision making processes and to some extent I believe that it does. However, what I discovered in this case was that even though four participants and three questionnaire respondents said they had taken some form of Native Studies course, there was very little difference in their choices or use of Aboriginal children's literature compared to that of the participants who did not take any Native Studies courses. This could suggest that there is no guarantee that taking Native Studies courses will result in teachers incorporating Aboriginal perspectives by using Aboriginal children's literature or it may suggest that life experience and in-service training are just as effective in preparing teachers to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their lessons.

Limitations of This Study

While I have made every effort to ensure the reliability of the results in my study, it is not without its limitations. The participants' awareness of being part of a study may have impacted their responses. This is always a potential problem in research where participants know of their involvement in a study. The participants may have felt like they had to say the 'right thing'. In this case, participants may have said they thought it was important to use Aboriginal children's literature in the classroom when in fact they may not have believed that or at least may not have thought it was as important as they indicated in their response. Given that participants said it was important but in reality did not do much with it in their classrooms might suggest that they were potentially trying to say the right thing. The fact that they said one thing and did another could have been for my benefit because it would have sounded bad to say; no I do not think using Aboriginal children's literature in the classroom is important.

Some may argue that six interview participants is a relatively small sample. Clearly a larger sample would have yielded a larger amount of data which in turn may have revealed different results. It is possible that the six interview participants in my study are not representative of most non-Aboriginal teachers who teach in cross cultural situations. In order to increase my participant numbers, I included the division-wide questionnaire. Unfortunately, this only yielded four additional study participants. In a future study, it would be interesting to see if a larger sample of teachers reveals different results.

The classroom library audit which I conducted in each of the six teachers' classrooms included only hard copy books. Aboriginal children's books which may have been available in digital format were not included in my study. I chose not to include digital formats of books because the access to digital resources is not equally reliable in all schools across the division.

Another limitation also associated with the classroom library audit is the fact that I may have inadvertently missed some Aboriginal children's books. For example, if the author or illustrator of the book was not known to me as an Aboriginal author or artist and the author or publisher did not indicated in some way that either person was Aboriginal, I did not count it. There is a possibility that there were authors or illustrators who did not identify themselves as Aboriginal in which case there would have been no way for me to know to include then in the count.

Only four teachers from across the entire division returned the anonymous questionnaire which was sent to all teachers from Kindergarten to Grade Eight. This disappointing return may have been indicative of low interest in the topic since the topic of Aboriginal children's literature does not come up often in professional discussions with teachers across the division. It may also have been due to a flaw in the recruitment process. Perhaps if I had sent the questionnaires to the principals of each school to distribute to their teachers, rather than sending them directly to each teacher, the teachers would have felt more compelled to participate. Also, I may have had a greater response if there was an incentive for completing the questionnaire, similar to what there was for the interview participants. However, it would have been difficult to maintain anonymity and give those who returned questionnaires a reward.

Another limitation to my study is the fact that not everyone agrees on what constitutes 'good', 'authentic', and 'accurate' Aboriginal children's literature. While the editors and critics who contributed to the reviews in *A Broken Flute* are highly respected and trusted by many, there are many who disagree with their opinions. Opposing views can be supported and justified resulting in a dilemma for those of us who are trying to make decisions based on what those with the 'authority' to make these judgements are saying about the books. It also raises the question of how authority is bestowed upon those who appear to have it. After all, "membership in a group does not mean an author is immune from inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 62). I believe the final authority must be the parents, Elders, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers within the communities where the books are being used. In the end it boils down to how the books are interpreted by the students and community members who are reading them. It does not matter how good or authentic someone deems a book, if community beliefs and values are challenged by what it says, the book will not be used for fear that it will offend parents or turn students off reading. This dilemma is one example of why cultural responsivity in teaching is so important. If schools do not reach out to members of their communities for guidance in areas such as these, they not only overlook valuable resources but they deny communities the empowering opportunity to contribute to the education of their children.

Research Implications

In this section I discuss the theoretical and research implications of my findings as they relate to culturally responsive decision making and certain teachers' decisions to choose and use Aboriginal children's literature specifically. In this study I was interested in how these teachers said they chose Aboriginal children's literature and used it in their classrooms. My goal was to describe the situations as teachers perceived them to be. I made no attempt to influence teachers' levels of cultural responsiveness. The value in this study is the description of these situations so the teachers in the study can improve their level of cultural responsiveness and for future research which may try to inspire or facilitate an increase in the level of cultural responsiveness in all teachers.

I believe the findings of my study add to the body of work supporting the theory of culturally responsive teaching by providing insight into some factors affecting teacher decision making in cross cultural contexts; and by highlighting some challenges facing non-Aboriginal teachers who are afraid to offend or do harm to their students self-image by using Aboriginal children's literature that is inaccurate or inauthentic.

My study sheds light on the intentionality with which teachers approach the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives in their planning and instruction. It appears that, while teachers assert the importance of including Aboriginal perspectives into their lessons, their decision-making does not indicate a high degree of urgency to do so. For example, teachers mentioned connecting students' cultural knowledge and prior experiences and learning styles to instruction but very few specific examples were given of what that might look like in the classroom. Also, as evidenced by the lack of use of Aboriginal children's literature in the content areas, the teachers in my study were not embracing “sociocultural realities and histories of students through what [they] taught and how” they taught it (Kozleski, 2010, p. 3).

My findings represent the decisions made by non-Aboriginal teachers in cross cultural teaching contexts. To make a more complete and accurate picture it would be of value to have the same study replicated with different participants and/or settings. For instance it would be of interest to see if similar results would be obtained working with Aboriginal teachers in similar northern teaching contexts. Also, given that one of the factors deterring teachers from choosing and using Aboriginal children’s literature was that they were unsure of the accuracy and authenticity of the content; it would be interesting to know if Aboriginal teachers would have the same hesitation.

What would Aboriginal and/or non-Aboriginal teachers teaching in band-controlled schools say about how they choose and use Aboriginal children’s literature? In schools where Aboriginal languages, world views, values, beliefs, and traditions are the guiding principles around which their system is organized, one can speculate that the participant responses might be different.

What would the results of the study be if it was done in rural Manitoba schools where the student population was predominantly non-Aboriginal with Aboriginal and/or non-Aboriginal teachers. Since the decision making process is derived from teachers’ cultural responsiveness, would this then necessarily change if the predominant culture of the community changed? How would the results be similar or different if the study was replicated in an urban setting with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers?

Research which includes observations of teachers’ instructional practices and planning would provide insight into whether what teachers say they believe about the importance of using Aboriginal children's literature is actually supported by practice. Future research in the above-mentioned areas would paint a more complete picture and provide valuable information for university instructors, school administrators, and curriculum coaches charged with teaching, supporting, and advising teachers in the use of Aboriginal children's literature.

As I have discussed in this chapter, the issues of accuracy and authenticity are subjective and they imply the notion of authority. Who has this authority and how is the authority bestowed? How will the authorities themselves be authenticated? Given that participants made frequent references to these notions, and as I mentioned earlier there are often conflicting opinions regarding the accuracy and authenticity of Aboriginal children's literature, more consistent guidelines would be helpful. Further research in this area is necessary but "examining cultural accuracy is tricky. Cultures are dynamic and changing" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 63) so there may always be differing opinions within the Aboriginal community about who should write Aboriginal children's literature and what is accurate and authentic writing. It is likely that common understandings will evolve and questions such as these and others will emerge through an organic process stemming from critical events of our time. Until relatively recently, by comparison, Aboriginal writers were not highly represented in the authorship of the Canadian children's literature collective. Perhaps as more and more Aboriginal writers take up the pen to write about Aboriginal topics, issues, and perspectives, non-Aboriginal writers will no longer see it as 'their place' to write these stories. On the other hand if non-Aboriginal writers are able to "do a sensitive job in representing realistic, nonstereotyped characters and situations" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 63) they can play an important role in adding to the valuable cache of Aboriginal children's stories.

Pedagogical Implications

In this section I will discuss the pedagogical implications of my study. There are several areas where my study can inform the pedagogical practices of teachers. When I began my study it was my assumption that if a teacher had taken a Native Studies course they would be more likely to use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. I based my assumption on the premise that teachers who took a Native Studies course would have a deeper understanding of Aboriginal issues, topics, and perspectives and the importance of bringing these things to light in their classrooms. Furthermore I believed that since they were teaching students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 where children's literature is commonly used, they would see Aboriginal children's literature as a vehicle to do so. However, this was not the case with this particular group of teachers. Having taken a Native Studies course was no guarantee that Aboriginal children's literature would be used in these classrooms.

I believe my study highlights the need for more effective professional development in the area of Native Studies at both the pre-service and in-service levels. In-service teachers are constantly updating and adding to their pedagogical knowledge and skill through professional development. This professional development should focus on increasing personal knowledge about Aboriginal issues, topics, and perspectives in a way that explicitly links this knowledge to the myriad ways of using Aboriginal children's literature across all curricular areas. For example, a teacher might use *Sky Sisters* by Jan Bourdeau Waboos (2000) as part of a science lesson on the topic of the northern lights; or *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back: A Native American Year of Moons* by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London (1992) in a social studies or science lesson focusing on the value of oral traditions and Aboriginal perspectives to explain the world; or Shirley Sterling's (1992) *My Name is Seepeetza* to approach the tragic era of residential schools in Canadian history in social studies class; or the beautifully illustrated board book, *We All Count: Book of Ojibway Art* by Jason Adair (2013) in a Kindergarten or Grade 1 classroom to teach numbers from one to ten.

My study suggests giving pre-service teachers enrolled in children's literature courses more time devoted to the use of Aboriginal children's literature across all curricular areas. This would afford new teachers the opportunity to recognize, appreciate, and put into practice the notion that Aboriginal children's literature is a valuable form of children's literature that can be used in classrooms to "create space to discuss social issues that arise within the school or classroom" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 10) and "tell the stories of people taking social action to make their world better" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 134). I find it encouraging that we have entered a time of expanding resource development focused on Aboriginal issues and perspectives. With the increasing amount and diversity of resources now available, there is potential for it to be easier and much more common to see teachers using the beautiful and powerful Aboriginal children's books as "cultural resources" (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 9) to engage and initiate critical conversations about relevant social issues occurring in our society.

As I alluded to previously, I believe critical literacy is an area for which my study lends support. Given today's social climate and current events related to Aboriginal peoples in Canada such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, now more than ever teachers must be responsive and courageous enough to invite students to engage in these difficult conversations. Critical literacy deals with issues of ‘otherness’ and whether or not children see themselves in the literature in their classrooms; power and agency and the notion of activism; and the fact that no text is neutral, no reader has a neutral stance, and our social contexts impact our interpretations of the texts we read.

All three of these aspects of critical literacy and more, can be addressed through the use of Aboriginal children’s literature if teachers are open to using it in such a way. In order to do so, Vasquez (2010) argues teachers must take a critical literacy perspective or stance, whereby “issues and topics of interest that capture students’ interests as they participate in the world around them can and should be used as texts to build a curriculum that has significance in their lives” (p. 2). This building of curriculum around issues of significance to our students relates to the notions of teacher autonomy and cultural responsiveness, which my study suggests some teachers find difficult. Lopez (2011) believes that “it is not enough to understand the theoretical underpinnings of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies; teachers must be able to answer for themselves the question of what does this look like and feel like in my classroom?” (p. 76). In order to take on the challenge and responsibility of building curriculum, teachers must find ways to overcome the barriers inhibiting them from seeing Aboriginal children’s literature as “texts through which we may better be able to create spaces for critical literacies” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 2).

Another pedagogical implication identified in my study, which also relates to teacher decision making, was the request by teachers to create a database of accurate and authentic Aboriginal children's literature for teachers to choose from. Teachers identified the desire to have book reviews, catalogued lists of authors, and information explaining where to find particular authors and titles such as websites and publishers. There is no denying that all of this would be helpful for teachers but I also believe it will enable teachers to allow someone else, with no knowledge or understanding of their unique community context, to decide what is accurate and authentic Aboriginal children's literature. I question whether it is possible to create such a database that would meet the needs of all teachers across divisions spanning large geographic areas and diverse cultural contexts. While I recognize that teachers are very busy and we should do everything we can to support them in the good work they do, I feel strongly that teacher autonomy is foundational to the professionalism of our field and it is incumbent upon all teachers to make their own informed choices when it comes to choosing and using resources for their classrooms. As long as teachers abdicate their responsibility to choose for themselves, someone will necessarily choose for them, in which case there is less chance the resources will be culturally responsive or reflect the diversity of their classrooms and communities. Having said that, if there was a way to create and organize such a database by combining the expertise of teachers and library personnel, with the perspectives and knowledge of Traditional Knowledge Keepers and parents in the communities we serve, a valuable support could be created.

The pedagogical implications for me as an English Language Arts instructional coach are clear. The results of my study indicate that as I support classroom teachers in planning for instruction or as I coach and mentor classroom teachers in instructional strategies, I must be more mindful of whether or not they are choosing Aboriginal children's literature and how they are using it in their classrooms. I cannot assume that just because teachers are teaching Aboriginal children in Aboriginal communities; or that because the social climate is such that awareness of Aboriginal issues and pressure to take action are at the forefront of socially conscious educators, politicians, and citizens in general across Canada; or that because of the important current and historical topics represented in Aboriginal children's literature which offer wonderful opportunities for critical conversations, teachers will seek out and use Aboriginal children's literature with intention in their classrooms. I must be much more intentional in my approach with teachers in order for them to be more intentional in their instruction.

To that end, at the classroom level I will make the use of Aboriginal children's literature a priority when working with teachers to develop long range year plans as well as unit and lesson plans ensuring that they are consistently and purposefully including Aboriginal children's literature in their planning. This will undoubtedly require follow-up support in the form of modeling and suggestions for purchasing Aboriginal children's literature especially in the content areas. When asked to recommend resources I must ensure that I am recommending Aboriginal children's literature that has been evaluated based on criteria verified by local Knowledge Keepers or others with an Aboriginal perspective that would qualify them to do so.

At the divisional level, it would be beneficial to increase collaboration with members of the Language and Culture department to a) bolster my knowledge of Aboriginal issues and perspectives, and b) share ideas concerning the use of Aboriginal children's literature to infuse or layer Aboriginal perspectives across disciplines. I have worked with members of the Language and Culture department to infuse Aboriginal perspectives into our divisional English Language Arts assessments of communication and comprehension. By collaborating to share ideas and perspectives and discussing our desired outcomes, we were able to identify a Big Idea to anchor our assessments. Another opportunity for such collaboration is the area of resource development. The Language and Culture department have amassed a vast amount of valuable information for teachers to use; unfortunately much of it is not in a format that would be accessible or engaging to students. We have had conversations about the possibility of developing resources based on current and historical events and topics related to our communities.

In this same spirit of collaboration I have initiated conversations with the following three departments; Library Services, Language and Culture, and English Language Arts, to work together with teachers and local Traditional Knowledge Keepers to develop criteria for the selection of Aboriginal children's literature and to create the type of database teachers suggested in my study. All three departments have expressed keen interest in the project and have agreed to further conversations and the creation of a proposal to bring forth to the school board for the development of these supports. If accepted, the Library Services department would have the responsibility of managing the database and providing the starting point for the project by building upon the current database of Aboriginal children's literature resources. The Language and Culture department would contribute the cultural artifacts, documents, and human resources to verify and authenticate materials. Finally, the English Language Arts department would provide the instructional perspective and the recommendations for using the resources to support various curricula. One culturally responsive outcome of this collaboration would be the pulling together of a committee of Traditional Knowledge Keepers from representative communities across the division to authenticate the accuracy of the books included in our libraries.

Concluding Remarks

I planned this study with the intention of investigating the decisions made by teachers when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in cross-cultural teaching contexts. My study was sparked by both personal and professional motives. At a professional level, I have attempted to provide some insight into the decision-making process and the factors taken into account when teachers choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms. My study confirmed the work of McPherson (2009) that suggests when teaching children from cultures different from their own, teachers have to be mindful of the decisions they make when selecting materials and how they use them in their classrooms. The teachers in my study expressed varying degrees of mindfulness of their contexts and the students they were teaching. This study also supports the notion that teachers' decision-making processes are a reflection of their levels of cultural proficiency. The teachers in my study clearly demonstrated varying levels of cultural proficiency as described by the cultural proficiency continuum (Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2013). This study has provided me with valuable information to inform my work and "maximize the skill, potential, and self-reflective abilities" (Hall & Simeral, 2008, p. 14) of teachers as they choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in their classrooms.

On a personal level, I started this journey believing in the beauty, power, and importance of children's literature and my study affirmed this belief. I have also become more aware of the fact that some children may not be experiencing this to the same degree because of the limited use of mirror and window books that represent all children and not just the privileged majority. I believed all children should have the opportunity to see themselves and their culture represented in the books they choose for independent reading and those chosen by teachers for instructional purposes. Children's books are one of the first ways children see themselves reflected as members of our society. As such, Aboriginal children's literature has an important role to play in the lives of all children and are worthy of our thoughtful consideration.

As this chapter of my thesis closes, so too does a chapter of my life. I am thankful for having found—albeit very late in life—my mirror books; the books that reflect my childhood, culture, and ethnicity. Even this late in life it was an extremely validating and joyful experience. I leave you with the words of Nicola Campbell,

> Stories have sustained us since time immemorial through laughter, inspiration, tears, despair and most importantly, they have sustained teachings about our sacred lands, waterways, governance and histories. Our elders say stories are alive, they heal and they can sing. Stories awaken the hearts and minds of children, parents and all people. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, art, performance or music, I choose stories of joy, resurgence and transformation because these are medicine for our people. What do you choose? ("Meet our Aboriginal", 2016, para. 1)

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APPENDICES

(Appendix A)

Letter of Permission for [redacted] Superintendent

Research Project title: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett

Phone (Work) (Home)

Email

Research Advisor: Dr. Gregory Bryan

Phone

Email

Dear ([redacted] Superintendent),

This letter is a request for permission to send an anonymous, division-wide teacher questionnaire consisting of seven questions via email to all K-8 teachers in [redacted] School Division. My name is Angela Burdett and I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Bryan. A copy of this permission form will be left with you for your records and reference. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all information provided.

Study Overview

Studies suggest that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content. Children's literature, in particular, has a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works (Grant, 2007). Besides seeing themselves, children must also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way. The purpose of my research is to investigate the decisions teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature for classroom libraries and instructional purposes.

Teacher Involvement

All teachers in Kindergarten to Grade 8 will be sent an email containing a questionnaire consisting of the following seven questions:

1. How important do you feel it is to expose children to Aboriginal children's literature and why?
2. How do you define Aboriginal children's literature?
3. How/why do you choose Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?
4. What criteria do you use when selecting Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?
5. Where do you purchase or obtain Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?
6. Have you taken any Native Studies courses? If so which one(s) and when?
7. What professional learning opportunities or supports would help you to choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in your classroom?

The responses from the division-wide questionnaire will provide a sense of what teachers say they believe about choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature and a broader context in which to analyze my results.

All data gathered from the questionnaires will be kept anonymous and compiled and stored on a memory stick. The completed questionnaires and memory stick will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. I am requesting and expecting the submissions to be anonymous; however, if identifiable information is inadvertently provided, it will be covered when sharing the data with my faculty advisor and thesis committee. All data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service upon completion of my thesis.

I will provide a complete written summary of my research results to you in electronic form or in hard-copy depending on your preference, within three months of completing my thesis if you so request by indicating below. My research results will be shared with my thesis advisor and thesis committee.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding the participation of teachers from [redacted] School Division in this study. In no way does this waive the teachers' legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. The teachers are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If they choose to discontinue the study, all information gathered to that point will be destroyed by a professional shredding service. You and the teachers' continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the research study.

The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxx . A copy of this permission form and the Division-Wide Questionnaire has been given to you to keep for your records, and reference.

[redacted] Superintendent's Signature_________________________________ Date: ______________

Please send me a written summary of your research results. Yes □ No □.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

(Appendix B)

Letter of Permission for Superintendent

Research Project title: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett

Phone (Work) (Home)

Email

Research Advisor: Dr. Gregory Bryan

Phone

Email

Dear (Superintendent),

This letter is a request for permission to conduct a research project with six teachers in Area 3. My name is Angela Burdett and I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Bryan. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what the teachers' participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Study Overview

Studies suggest that both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content. Children's literature, in particular, has a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works (Grant, 2007). Besides seeing themselves, children must also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way. The purpose of my research is to investigate the decisions non-Aboriginal teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in cross cultural teaching contexts.

Teacher Involvement

My research project will include one, sixty minute semi-structured interview consisting of seven questions pertaining to the factors that go into each teacher's choice and use of Aboriginal children's literature for their classroom library and instructional purposes. The semi-structured interview will be conducted outside of school hours at a time most convenient for the teacher. I will also conduct a classroom library audit which will take place at a time when the children are not present. I will take photos of each teacher's classroom library and the Aboriginal children's literature found in it. I will also count all books in the library.

I will use purposeful sampling based on my knowledge of the teachers I work with and whether they meet the following criteria. I will recruit participants who are teaching:

- Early and/or middle years students.
- Aboriginal students.
- Students from a culture(s) different from their own

I will recruit the teachers by reading a scripted letter of oral recruitment in person or by phone. If they agree to participate I will give them an Informed Consent Form for Teachers to read and sign.

All data gathered during the semi-structured interviews and observations will be kept confidential. All observation and semi-structured interview notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. All identifiable information will be covered when sharing the data with my faculty advisor and thesis committee. All data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service upon completion of my thesis.

I will provide a complete written summary of my research results to you in electronic form or in hard-copy depending on your preference, within three months of completing my thesis if you so request by indicating below. My research results will be shared with my thesis advisor and thesis committee.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding the participation of six teachers from [redacted] School Division in this study. In no way does this waive the teachers' legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. The teachers are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If they choose to discontinue the study, all information gathered to that point will be destroyed by a professional shredding service. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the research study.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxx. A copy of this permission form has been given to you to keep for your records, and reference.

Superintendent's Signature________________________________ Date: _____________

Please send me a written summary of your research results. Yes □ No □.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

(Appendix C)

Letter of Permission for Principal

Research Project title: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett

Phone (Work), (Home)

Email

Research Advisor: Dr. Gregory Bryan

Phone

Email

Dear (Principal),

This letter is a request for permission to conduct a research project with one teacher in your school. My name is Angela Burdett and I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Bryan. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what the teacher's participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Study Overview

Studies suggest that both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content. Children's literature, in particular, has a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works (Grant, 2007). Besides seeing themselves, children must also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way. The purpose of my research is to investigate the decisions teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in cross-cultural teaching contexts.

Teacher Involvement

My research project will include one, thirty minute semi-structured interview consisting of five questions pertaining to the factors that go into the teacher's choices and uses of Aboriginal children's literature for his/her classroom library and instructional purposes. The semi-structured interview will be conducted outside of school hours at a time most convenient for the teacher. I will also conduct one, sixty minute classroom observation of the same teacher using Aboriginal children's literature for instructional purposes. No data will be gathered on the students in the classroom so no permissions are required for this study. Finally I will take photos of the classroom library and conduct a classroom library audit. My criteria for the selection of participants is, teachers who are teaching:

- Early and/or middle years classes.
- Aboriginal students.
- Student from a culture(s) different from their own

I will recruit the teacher by reading a scripted letter of oral recruitment in person or by phone. All data gathered during the semi-structured interview and observation will be kept confidential. All observation and semi-structured interview notes and audio recordings kept on flash drive will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. All identifiable information will be covered when sharing the data with my faculty advisor and thesis committee. All data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service and deleted from the flash drive upon completion of my thesis.

I will provide a complete written summary of my research results to you in electronic form or in hard-copy depending on your preference, within three months of completing my thesis if you so request by indicating below. My research results will be shared with my thesis advisor and thesis committee.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding the participation of one teacher from your school in this study. In no way does this waive the teacher's legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. The teacher is free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions he/she prefers to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If he/she chooses to discontinue the study, all information gathered to that point will be destroyed by a professional shredding service. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the research study.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxx. A copy of this permission form has been given to you to keep for your records, and reference.

Principal's Signature________________________________ Date: _____________

Please send me a written summary of your research results. Yes □ No □.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

(Appendix D)

Script of Oral Recruitment

Research Project Title: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom.

Researcher: Angela M. Burdett

Hello (Participant) I am a graduate student working on my Master of Education at the University of Manitoba and I was wondering if you would consider participating in my research study. I am studying the decisions teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature. I thought you might find this topic interesting and you meet the criteria I am looking for in a participant:

- Teaching early and/or middle years level(s).
- Teaching Aboriginal students.

The study consists of two parts. First is a one hour, one-on-one audio taped semi-structured interview with six questions pertaining to how you value, define, select and purchase Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and instructional purposes. Second is a classroom library audit which involves counting and taking photos of your classroom library and the Aboriginal children's literature it contains. Both parts will take place during one or two of my regularly scheduled visits.

If you agree to participate in this research project, I have a consent form which will give you a more detailed description of the process and your role and expectations within the study. The data collected will be kept until my thesis is complete and then destroyed by a professional shredding company. Do you have any questions?

Please take some time to consider my request and if you think this is something you would find interesting and potentially helpful, you can contact me in person, by phone at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxxx. I appreciate you taking the time to consider my request.

Thank you.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

(Appendix E)

Informed Consent Form for Teacher

Research Project title: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's literature in the Classroom.

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett

Phone (Work) (Home)

Email

Research Supervisor: Dr. Gregory Bryan

Phone

Email

Dear (Teacher),

This letter is an invitation to participate in a research project. My name is Angela Burdett and I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working toward my Master of Education under the supervision of faculty advisor, Dr. Gregory Bryan.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Study Overview

Studies suggest that both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content. Authors of children's literature, in particular, have a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works (Grant, 2007). Besides seeing themselves, children must also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way. The purpose of my research is to investigate the decisions teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature for instructional purposes and classroom libraries.

Your Involvement

My research will include two components. First is a one hour, one-on-one semi-structured interview consisting of six questions about how you choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in your classroom. Second is a classroom library audit identifying the total number of books in your classroom library as well as the number of Aboriginal children's literature titles included. Digital photos will be taken of the Aboriginal children's literature found in your classroom library. I will use a computer audio recording program called Audacity to record the one-on-one semi-structured interview. All other records will be in the form of anecdotal notes which I will record in my field notebook.

Your participation in this study may be of benefit to you by increasing your awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal children's literature, Aboriginal authors, and the importance of culturally responsive decision making.

I anticipate little or no risk to you in participating in this research project. The questions will be given to you in advance; however, you may experience limited anxiety about the one-on-one semi structured interview. I believe our professional working relationship is well established and based on mutual trust, which should help to alleviate any stress you may feel during the interview. My role as an English Language Arts consultant does not include teacher evaluation. I have no evaluative power so you can be assured that this is in no way an evaluative exercise. My focus will be solely on the factors that influence your choice and use of Aboriginal children's literature in your classroom. Following the interview and the classroom audit I will debrief with you and give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have. At this time I will also show you the anecdotal notes I have taken.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential by meeting in a private location of your choice and by not divulging the nature of our meetings with anyone. Given that regular one-on-one meetings with all English language arts teaching staff are a routine part of my visits to your school even if we are seen meeting, the nature of our meeting will remain confidential. All data gathered during my visit will be kept confidential. All interview data will be saved on a flashdrive and along with my anecdotal notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office. Only my faculty advisor and members of my thesis committee will have access to the information I collect. When sharing information with my faculty advisor and my thesis committee, all identifiable information will be covered. All hardcopy data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service and electronic data will be deleted upon completion of my thesis.

As compensation for participating in this research project you will receive a copy of an Aboriginal children's book to share as a read aloud with your class and add to your classroom library.

You may withdraw from this research project at any time without any negative consequences by simply requesting that I discontinue the interview or observation session. If you choose to discontinue the research project, all information gathered to that point will be destroyed by a professional shredding service or deleted from the flash drive.

Shortly after the sixty minute one-on-one semi-structured interview and following my classroom library audit, I will arrange to debrief with you to allow you to ask clarifying questions, make observations, or add insightful comments about the session or the audit. Within 2 months of completing my data collection I will give you a brief summary of the data collected.

I will also provide a 1-2 page summary of my research results to you in electronic form or in hard-copy depending on your preference three months after completing my thesis. My research results will be shared with my faculty advisor and my thesis committee. The results may also be used in journal articles at a later date.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxxx . A copy of this permission form has been given to you to keep for your records, and reference.

Participant’s Signature____Date:_______________

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(Appendix F)

One-On-One Semi-Structured Interview

Name of Research Project: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom.

Date: ______________________________ Time: ____________________________________

Location: __________________________ Interviewer: _______________________________

Teacher: ___________________________ Grade Level: _______________________________

1. How important do you feel it is to expose children to Aboriginal children's literature and why?

2. How do you define Aboriginal children's literature?

3. How/why do you choose Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

4. What criteria do you use when selecting good Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

5. Where do you purchase or obtain Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

6. Have you taken any Native Studies courses? If so which one(s) and when?

7. What professional learning opportunities or supports would help you to choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in your classroom?

Thank you for participating in this semi-structured interview. All of your responses will be kept confidential. There are no further semi-structured interviews required for this study; however, I may need to meet with you briefly or email you if I require clarification of a response(s) during my analysis of the data.

(Appendix G)

Classroom Library Audit Form

Name of Research Project: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom.

Date: ____________________________ Time: _____________________________________

Location: ________________________ Auditor: ___________________________________

Record of Aboriginal Children's literature in Classroom Library			
Location in Classroom	Total # of Books	# of Aboriginal Children's Literature Titles	Title & Author

(Appendix H)

Division-Wide Teacher Questionnaire

Name of Research Project: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom.

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett

[redacted]

Phone: Work Home Fax

Email

Please answer the following questions in the space provided. If you require more room, please feel free to include additional pages as needed. As this is an anonymous questionnaire, please do not include any identifiable information in your responses. Return your completed questionnaire by mail or sealed envelope to the address listed above by XXXXXX. Do not include a return address or any other identifiable information on the envelope. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study, it is greatly appreciated.

I teach Grade__________

Circle the range that describes the number of years you have been teaching:

0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31+

1. How important do you feel it is to expose children to Aboriginal children's literature and why?

2. How do you define Aboriginal children's literature?

3. How/why do you choose Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

4. What criteria do you use when selecting Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

5. Where do you purchase or obtain Aboriginal children's literature for your classroom library and/or instructional purposes?

6. Have you taken any Native Studies courses? If so which one(s) and when?

7. What professional learning opportunities or supports would help you to choose and use Aboriginal children's literature in your classroom?

Please return by fax or sealed envelope to the address or fax number listed above by **XXXXXXX**. Do not include a return address or any other identifiable information on the envelope. Address fax cover sheets to Angela Burdett, re: Division-Wide Questionnaire, with no other identifiable information. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

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(Appendix I)

Division-Wide Teacher Questionnaire Consent Form

Name of Research Project: Culturally Responsive Decision Making: Choosing and Using Aboriginal Children's Literature in the Classroom.

Principal Investigator: Angela M. Burdett, [redacted]

Phone: Work Home Fax

Email

Research Supervisor: Dr. Gregory Bryan

Phone

Email

My name is Angela Burdett and I am a Master of Education student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Bryan. I am requesting your anonymous participation in my study by answering a division-wide questionnaire. The information you supply will help to provide a sense of what teachers say they believe about choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature and a broader context in which to analyze my results. If you choose to complete this questionnaire, please return it by fax or sealed envelope to my office by XXXXXX.

Study Overview

Studies suggest that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students benefit from curricula presented from an Aboriginal perspective and which includes Aboriginal content. Children's literature, in particular, has a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works (Grant, 2007). Besides seeing themselves, children must also be able to see others represented in a fair and respectful way. The purpose of my research is to investigate the decisions teachers make when choosing and using Aboriginal children's literature in cross-cultural teaching contexts.

Your Involvement

This questionnaire consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

My research includes an anonymous division-wide questionnaire consisting of five questions that will be sent to teachers in Kindergarten to Grade 8. Participation is voluntary and participants may answer all or part of the questionnaire.

I anticipate little or no risk to you in participating in this research project. You may experience limited anxiety over maintaining your anonymity through this process but I assure you that every effort will be made to eliminate any identifiable information.

All data gathered from the questionnaire will be kept anonymous. The completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. When sharing information with my faculty advisor and my thesis committee, all information will be kept anonymous. All data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service upon completion of my thesis.

Unfortunately, due to the large number of potential participants, there will be no compensation for participation other than my acknowledgement of the time taken to complete the questionnaire and my sincere gratitude for your contribution to my study.

Due to the anonymity of the participants in this part of the study, it will not be possible for me to withdraw completed questionnaires once I have received them. There will be no way to know which questionnaire you submitted and your name will not appear on any research material or documentation. If you would like a summary of my research results, anonymity will have to be broken and confidentiality will take effect. I will send you a brief 1-3 page summary in electronic or hard copy depending on your preference, within three months of completing my thesis.

Your return of the Division-Wide Questionnaire indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction all information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator at [redacted] or by email at xxxx@xxxxxx . A copy of this permission form has been given to you to keep for your records, and reference.

(Appendix J)

Criteria for Choosing Quality Aboriginal Children's Literature

Below are some criteria to consider when selecting quality Aboriginal children's literature.

1. **Scrutinize the author's biographical information**. Many Aboriginal authors will acknowledge their First Nation, Inuit or Métis affiliation. Is there something in Non-Aboriginal authors' backgrounds that qualify them to write about Aboriginal people or describe authentic experiences with particular cultures?
2. **Look carefully for any stereotypes in the text and illustrations**. Mono-dimensional images, such as warrior, princess, environmentalist, stoic, and primitive should be avoided.
3. **Avoid books that lump all Aboriginal cultures together into generic images**. Each Aboriginal society has its own culture, language, religion, and traditional dress.
4. **Examine the characters**. Are they real and genuine people, with in-depth personalities and both positive and negative aspects to their character?
5. **Look for loaded words**. Is the language respectful?
6. **Think about how the book relates to your overall curriculum**. Does it fit into a more global topic, such as families or homes so children can see similarities as well as differences among cultures?
7. **Resist highlighting Aboriginal cultures as topics for study**. Integrate Aboriginal books and materials all year, just as you would with other groups.
8. **Do not include books in your classroom that show children playing "Indian" or depict animals dressed as Aboriginals**. This degrades and objectifies Aboriginal peoples and cultures.

9. **Look for books that portray Aboriginal peoples today**. Aboriginal peoples are often thought of in an historical frame of reference and not as members of today's society, living everyday lives in a delicate balance of old and new. Preschool children in particular do not understand historical references.
10. **Seek out books that are historically accurate and include a Native perspective on historical events or periods for early years children.** Children of this age can distinguish between the present and history.
11. **Look for books that have positive role models with whom an Aboriginal child can identify and reflects childhood issues in an Aboriginal context.** Are children portrayed as being taught by their Traditional Knowledge Keepers? Is there anything in this book that would harm an Aboriginal child's self-image?
12. **Look for standards of success.** Are Aboriginal values of cooperation, generosity, sharing, honesty, and courage seen as integral to growth and development?

Adapted from Jones & Moomaw (2002), Seale & Slapin (2005), and Slapin, Seale, & Gonzalez (1995)

(Appendix K)

Authors of Aboriginal Children's Literature

Adair, J.

Adams, L

Ahenakew, F.

Alexie, S.

Andrews, J.

Archambault, J.

Aska, W.

Baker, O.

Ballantyne, B.

Bania, M.

Bartok, M

Barton, B.

Beaver, J.

Blackned, J.

Book, R.

Bouchard, D.

Boulanger, D.

Brave, J.

Brooks, M.

Brownridge, W. R.

Bruchac, J.

Buchan, B.

Buffie, M.

Bushey, J.

Byles, M.

Cameron, A.

Campbell, N. I.

Chanin, M.

Charleyboy, L.C.

Chartrand, J.

Choyce, L.

Cleaver, E.

Cohen, C, L.

Colecough, K. K.

Common, D. L.

Creech, S.

Crook, C. B.

Cutting, R.

Dabcovich, L.

Dadey, D.

Davis, D.

Delaronde, D. L.

Denny, E.

dePaola, T.

Dorion, B.

Dumas, W.

Dumont, D.

Eyvindson, P.

Feagan, R.

Field, E.

Football, V.

Fox, M. L.

Franklin, K. L.

Frost, H.

George, J. C.

Goble, P.

Griffiths, R.

Guebert, L.

Harrison, T.

Head, L.

Helmer, M.

Henderson, C.

Hewitt, G.

Highway, T.

Hill, K.

Hobbs, W.

Hudson, J.

Hughes, S.

Ingulak School

Jordan-Fenton, C.

Kassirer, S.

Kay, V.

Keehn, S. M.

Keewatin, S.

King, T.

Kirkpatrick, K.

Kleitsch, C.

Klippenstein, B.

Koopmans, C.

Krensky, S.

Kusugak, M. A.

LeBox, A.

Lenski, L.

Lerangis, P.

London, J.

Longfellow, H. W.

Lopez, B.

Loyie, L.

MacGregor, R.

Marston, S.

Martin Jr. B.

McDermott, G.

McGraw, E. J.

McLellan, J.

McLeod, I.

McLimans, D.

Meili, D.

Meyer, C.

Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs

Moncure, J. B.

Munsch, R.

Murray, B.

Noel, M.

Obed, E. B.

O'Dell, S.

O'Halloran, S.

Olsen, S.

Paulsen, G.

Paver, M.

Pignat, C.

Pitawanakwat, R. L.

Plain, F.

Price, S.

Priddle, F.

Ranson, C. F.

Reid Banks, L.

Rhoads, D.

Ritchie, S.

Robertson, D. A.

San Souci, R. D.

Santella, A.

Saskatchewan, J.

Scribe, M.

Shaw-MacKinnon, M.

Shetterly, S. H.

Sheve, V.D.H.

Singh, R.

Skofield, J.

Solomon, C.

Speare, E. G.

Speare, J. E.

Stafford, W.

Sterling, S.

St. Pierre, A.

Taylor, C. J.

Taylor, H.P.

Tchin

Thompson, R.

Thornhill, J.

Tingle, T.

Toye, W.

Upper, M.

Valgardson, W. D.

Van Laan, N.

Vermette, K.

Vickers, R. H.

Waboose, J. B.

Wagamese, R.

Wallace, M.

Walters, E.

Whetung, J.

Wiggins, K.

Wollison, M.

Wosmek, F.

Yolan, J.