"The Things We All Celebrate":
Aboriginal Parents' Conceptualizations of a Broad Aboriginal Identity in the Context of the Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver

by

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Abstract

This thesis provides a thematic analysis of how urban Aboriginal parents (N=31) discussing the Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver conceptualize the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity. Participants conceptualized the broad Aboriginal category as a reflection of the lived experience of urban Aboriginal peoples, as a group with cultural commonalities including shared practices, norms and values, as a collection of diverse Aboriginal cultural groups in which subgroup diversity contributes to the value of the broad Aboriginal identity, and as a basis for solidarity and resilience in response to mistreatment from outgroups. Results also suggest the broad Aboriginal category is most likely to be accepted when it is perceived to be constructed by Aboriginal people themselves. These findings are situated within the Social Identity Theory approach (Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010) and add nuance to research on multicultural identities, intragroup relations and the political implications of social category construction.

Keywords: Aboriginal peoples; superordinate identity; cultural identity; identity construction; multiculturalism; collective resistance

This thesis is dedicated to Vonnie Hutchingson. Over the past three years, Vonnie has been a source of wisdom and strength, a trustworthy research collaborator, a gracious mentor, a colleague, and an inspiration. She has also become a good friend. Thanks for taking a chance on me.

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List of Acronyms

AANDC   Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

AFS   Aboriginal Focus School

OCAP   Ownership of, Control of, Access to, Possession of (research data)

RCAP   Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

SFU   Simon Fraser University

TRC   Truth and Reconciliation Commission

VSB   Vancouver School Board

1. Introduction

In the Fall of 2012, the Vancouver School Board opened an "Aboriginal Focus School" in the heart of East Vancouver's Aboriginal community. But what can it mean for a school to focus on "Aboriginal" culture, given the incredible diversity of Aboriginal peoples? Since time immemorial, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have organized themselves into relatively small tribes and family groups. These groups often shared a geographically distinct territory where they sustained themselves by harvesting resources from the land (Brealey, 2002; Morin, 2015; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). Their cultures and lives were inextricably linked to these ancestral lands, which informed and shaped their traditional practices, stories and values (Coulthard, 2010, 2013; Davis, 2009; Morin, 2015; Simpson, 2014). Uniquely land-based cultures enabled tribal groups to successfully live and flourish in their social and physical environments, and were passed down through generations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2012). Thus, due in part to the vast geographical and ecological diversity of the North American landscape, Aboriginal peoples and their respective cultures and languages were historically, and continue to be, incredibly diverse (Brealey, 2002; Frideres, 2008). At present, there are 617 unique First Nations communities in Canada that represent more than 50 distinct cultural groups and 50 unique Aboriginal languages (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC], 2015a), in addition to the unique cultures and languages of Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada.

Despite this incredible diversity, the hundreds of First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups in Canada are frequently categorized together as "Aboriginal" peoples. There are many terms which refer to this broad superordinate category comprised of so many unique Aboriginal cultural groups including "Aboriginal peoples", "Indigenous peoples", "First peoples", "First Nations", "Natives", "Indians", or even simply "our people" depending on who is using the term, and in what context. While some of these terms are contested, and Aboriginal people have preferred certain terms over others at different

times in history (Retzlaff, 2005), all of them refer to the large, and diverse group of people who are descended from the first inhabitants of the lands that now make up North America. In this thesis, I will use the term "Aboriginal" to refer to this broad categorization, although I acknowledge that others (e.g. Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) find this term problematic. The term "Aboriginal" was most relevant here because it was widely used in participants' discussions of the "Aboriginal Focus School" that provided the context of the study. When I refer to the "broad Aboriginal category" my focus is on the superordinate category that includes all of the First Peoples of Canada, not any specific term associated with this category. I will use the term "subgroups" to refer to the many diverse cultural groups that comprise this broad Aboriginal category including unique First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups.

The broad Aboriginal category is a relatively novel historical phenomenon, especially as a basis for self-identity and cultural connection. In North America, the broad Aboriginal category only began to take on meaning with the onset of European colonization. When European colonizers first arrived on the shores of North America they saw the Indigenous inhabitants as a single, essentialized "race", and thus came to refer to them in monolithic, and negative, terms as "Indians" (Berkhofer, 1977; Frideres, 2008). Whether they could not see, or were indifferent to, the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, the differences between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples were more meaningful to the colonizers than were the differences between the hundreds of unique Aboriginal groups (Restoule, 2000). This cultural homogenization of Aboriginal peoples by colonizers has been instrumental in the colonial project of assimilation (Restoule, 2000) and contributes to the ongoing mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Statnyk, 2015).

Given the incredible diversity amongst Aboriginal peoples, and the fact that this broad categorization was originally imposed on Aboriginal peoples by colonizers, it is interesting that this categorization has taken on significant meaning for some Aboriginal people. Aboriginal sociologist James Frideres refers to this phenomenon as the "new emergence of Aboriginal identity" (Frideres, 2008, p. 336) and observes that this broad category is becoming an increasingly meaningful basis for cultural identification amongst Aboriginal peoples. However, there are other Aboriginal leaders, scholars and laypeople

(e.g. Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Haber, 2007; see also Ward, 2015) who find this broad construction of Aboriginal culture to be irrelevant at best, and harmful or oppressive at worst. Regardless of the variety of opinions on its appropriateness, the broad Aboriginal category is regularly *used* by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and institutions alike. It is therefore important to understand how the broad Aboriginal category is conceptualized by those it ostensibly represents; how, and when, do Aboriginal peoples use the broad Aboriginal category, and what does it mean to them?

To contribute to this understanding, this study employs a Social Identity Approach (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) to examine the different ways that Aboriginal peoples conceptualize, and use, the broad Aboriginal category. The Social Identity Approach provides a robust framework for understanding how psychological processes interact with both the social and the political context, for example how social categories pattern social behavior, or mobilize political action (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011; Reicher, et al., 2010).

Using this framework, I provide an analysis of interview and focus group data collected from urban Aboriginal parents in Vancouver, BC as they discussed their experiences and expectations of the "Aboriginal Focus School" in Vancouver. The Aboriginal Focus School (AFS) is a culture-focused elementary school program that uses the broad Aboriginal category as a basis for its organization and curriculum. Aboriginal parents' discussions about the AFS are therefore an excellent context in which to study how Aboriginal people conceptualize the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity.

1.1. The Psychological Importance of Social Categories

At a most basic level, social categories function to differentiate people into meaningful groups, thus enabling people to organize, and interpret, their social world (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Tajfel, 1974). Among many other things, social categories help people know who they are (as well as who they are not), facilitate people's relations with other groups, delineate the boundaries of whom to trust, or favour

and provide a psychological "home" with similar others (Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds & Schmitt, 2010). Furthermore, rather than thinking of themselves in solely individual terms, people may form "collective identities[1]," defining themselves at the level of a group or social category to which they belong (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Onorato & Turner, 2004). A person may have many different collective identities, and some identities may be larger than others, with smaller subgroup identities nested within them. For example, the broad Aboriginal category includes hundreds of smaller, more specific, Aboriginal cultural groups. The relevance of a certain level of categorization, and associated identity, also varies with the local social context (Reicher, et al., 2010). For example, the broad Aboriginal identity may be most relevant in urban centres where there is a great deal of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (Frideres, 1998; Restoule, 2000).

Collective identities are important because they provide group members with a variety of cognitive, motivational and emotional resources. The cognitive aspects of identification with a group might include knowledge of the norms, values and behaviours that group members typically share (Ashmore et al., 2004; Jetten, Spears & Manstead, 1996). This information provides a template that can guide group members' actions and choices (Taylor, 2002; Taylor & de la Sablonnière, 2015) and can also help reduce feelings of personal uncertainty when a social group has a clear prototype and a high degree of intragroup similarity (Hogg, 2000; Jetten, Hogg & Mullin, 2000; Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007). Social groups also bestow group members with ideas and perspectives that enhance their ability to meet their goals, thus improving self-efficacy (Wright, Aron & Tropp, 2002; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes & Haslam, 2009). Thus, collective identities also have motivational consequences in that group members who identify with a social category self-regulate in line with the values and social norms of their group (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1997; Hogg, Turner & Davidson, 1990; Oyserman, 2007). Thus, when a person identifies with a group, their behaviour and goals tend to align with those of other group members, and diverge from those of

[1] In line with the suggestion of Ashmore et al. (2004) and Brewer and Gardner (1996) I use the term "collective identity" to refer to what Tajfel and Turner (1979) and many other writers in the social identity approach refer to as "social identity". "Collective identity" is a more precise term for group-based identities as other forms of identity (e.g. personal identities) are also "social".

outgroup members (Oyserman, 2007; Oyserman, Fryberg & Yoder, 2007; Turner et al., 1987). Finally, collective identities have emotional consequences in that social groups can offer group members a coherent worldview that provides a sense of meaning and connection to the past (Chandler & Lalonde; 1998; 2008; Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997; Salzman & Halloran, 2004), a positive sense of self (Usborne & Taylor, 2010, 2012;) and a sense of belonging and social support (Haslam, et al., 2009; Neville, Oyama, Odunewu & Huggins, 2014). If the broad Aboriginal category is a meaningful identity for Aboriginal people, it should meet group members' cognitive, motivational and emotional needs in these ways.

Beyond providing resources for individual group members, identification with one's social group is also a basic precondition for collective behaviour (Turner, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). For example, social categorization and collective identification enable group members to take collective action to improve the status of their group (van Zomeren, 2014; Wright, Taylor & Mogghadam, 1990) in part by contributing to a heightened sense of collective efficacy or empowerment (Drury, Evripidou & van Zomeren, 2015; van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008). Group memberships also form an important basis for solidarity in the face of oppression (Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt, Spears & Branscombe, 2003) and resistance to oppressors (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Thus, to the extent that the broad Aboriginal category is a meaningful identity for people, it could also serve as a basis for collective action and resistance to oppression.

Given the valuable resources derived from identification with social categories, and the forms of collective behavior they enable, the ways in which people choose to self-categorize have important psychological and political implications (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). To the extent that the broad Aboriginal category meets peoples' identity needs, we might expect that it will serve as a source of meaningful identity. However, people do not merely "choose" their identities on the basis of which identities will meet their needs. Rather, the extent to which people identify with categories is highly influenced by the social context, and depends in part on the extent to which the category helps people to make sense of the social world as they perceive and experience it (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Reicher et al., 2010). Furthermore, the way social categories

are constructed can always be contested, and social identification may depend on the degree to which an individual agrees with a particular construction of a given social category (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). I will now draw on work from Aboriginal scholars and social psychologists to explore why, and when, Aboriginal peoples may embrace, or reject, the broad Aboriginal category.

1.2. Embracing the Broad Aboriginal Category

There are several plausible antecedents that may make Aboriginal peoples more likely to embrace the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity. First, the perception of a common fate in treatment by outgroups can be a powerful basis for a meaningful self-categorization (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1981). A shared historical narrative can provide a sense of common fate to members of a group and help form the basis for a superordinate group identity, even if the larger group is comprised of diverse subgroups (Hammack, 2008). Thus, the shared history of European colonization and oppression, which impacted all Aboriginal cultural groups across North America in similar ways (Taylor & de la Sablonnière, 2015), may make "Aboriginal" a meaningful category when it would not have been prior to European contact (Haber, 2007; Wilcox, 2010). Similarly, many Aboriginal people share the experience of rejection by non-Aboriginal people. Some psychologically meaningful groups can be based on the shared feeling of identity that derives from common treatment by an outgroup (Reicher, 1996; Turner, 1984). When members of diverse groups (e.g. different First Nations) experience similar mistreatment from an outgroup (e.g. non-Aboriginal peoples), a superordinate identity can emerge on the basis of this shared mistreatment (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Schmitt, et al., 2003). Furthermore, a sense of shared identity amongst groups or individuals with a common oppressor, can provide social support which helps buffer against the stress of oppression (Branscombe, et al., 1999; Drury & Reicher, 1999; Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Ramos, Cassidy, Reicher & Haslam, 2012). Thus, Aboriginal people may embrace the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity because their sense of common fate provides a supportive basis of solidarity and ingroup cohesion to alleviate the harms of prejudice, discrimination and ongoing colonialism.

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In addition to serving as a basis for mutual ingroup support in the face of oppression, a sense of common fate may also lead to seeing the broad Aboriginal category as a foundation for resistance to colonial oppression. In the earliest days of colonization, Aboriginal resistance to the encroachments of settler colonial governments gave rise to alliances between Aboriginal groups who may have had little in common historically or had perhaps been in conflict themselves (Dowd, 1992). This solidarity amongst diverse Aboriginal groups in the face of shared oppression continues in modern Indigenous struggles against destructive resource extraction on traditional territories or fights against education policies that are seen to contribute to the ongoing assimilation of Aboriginal cultures (Blomley, 1996). These struggles are often shared by many different Aboriginal groups and broad social movements like "Idle No More" in Canada or the movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States demonstrate the willingness of diverse First Nations to band together in collective opposition to ongoing colonialism (Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014; Solnit, 2016). The broad Aboriginal category may therefore increase Aboriginal peoples' perceived sense of collective efficacy and improve their collective ability to counter systemic oppression and discrimination (Drury et al., 2015; van Zomeren et al., 2008). In this sense, the broad Aboriginal identity provides a basis of solidarity for collective resistance to ongoing colonial oppression (Hollinsworth, 1992). Dudgeon and Walker (2015) use Spivak's (1990) term "strategic essentialism" to describe this phenomenon which they summarize as, "a process by which marginalized populations set aside local and particular differences to forge a sense of collective identity and solidarity on the basis of shared knowledge to strengthen their position in political and social movements" (p. 284).

Of course, meaningful categorizations do not only emerge from shared treatment by outgroups, but also emerge when there is a perception that there are positive similarities amongst group members, or in the case of a superordinate categorization, amongst subgroups. When these perceived similarities within the superordinate category are positive, and distinct from relevant outgroups, this category is more likely to meet people's identity needs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, people may embrace the broad Aboriginal category based on what are perceived to be positive, shared commonalities between diverse subgroups. For example, Frideres (2008) contends that, "a central value of Aboriginal culture is individual respect and reciprocation" (p. 320) and describes

a shared Aboriginal worldview as a, "network of relationships" (p. 322) and a "knowledge of and respect for unseen powers" (p. 322). He further claims that all Aboriginal people hold, "a distinctive set of values, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and place" (p. 322). Many Aboriginal cultures also share a deep connection to their traditional territories and have developed sustainable ways of living on their land. For example, Battiste and Henderson (2009) describe the various manifestations of Indigenous knowledges as reflecting an "ecologically centred way of life" or "express[ing] a sustainable humanity" (p. 5).

Emphasizing the apparent commonalities among Aboriginal cultural groups does not necessarily entail devaluing the significant cultural diversity between Aboriginal groups. In fact, recognition of the incredible diversity within the broad Aboriginal category may be a crucial condition of accepting the category as a meaningful and positive basis for identity (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Verkuyten, 2006). One of the potential risks of a superordinate identity (e.g. the broad Aboriginal identity) is that it may threaten the distinctiveness of its constituent subgroups, or increase intersubgroup competition (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2009; Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy & Pearson, 2016). People who strongly identify with their subgroup may be wary of attempts to emphasize the similarity between their subgroup and other subgroups and are likely to respond defensively to protect the distinctiveness of their identity (Jetten, Spears & Manstead, 1997). Aboriginal people might feel more comfortable identifying with the broad Aboriginal category if they know that this identity normalizes the value of subgroup diversity and recognizes the need to not homogenize subgroup cultures. Qualitative research on how British Muslims construct a dual identity suggests that an ideal scenario is when subgroup members can find a way to construct their subgroup identity as contributing to, rather than being subsumed by, the larger superordinate identity (Hopkins, 2011). Similarly, experimental research finds that threats to subgroup distinctiveness can be neutralized if a person has both the superordinate category and their more unique sub-group made salient to them in an intergroup context where the two identities are relevant (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a). Recognizing the importance of within-category diversity helps satisfy the psychological need for group distinctiveness at the level of specific subgroups, despite categorization at the more inclusive level (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Integrating the broad, and subgroup, levels of Aboriginal categorization

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is a complex challenge and the importance of a subgroup (e.g. Squamish) versus superordinate (e.g. Aboriginal) identity may shift depending on the context. Nevertheless, if the broad Aboriginal category is constructed as comprised of both the unique contributions of Aboriginal subgroup cultures as well as things shared in common between all Aboriginal peoples, this may facilitate the formation of a dual identity and serve as a meaningful and legitimate categorization for Aboriginal people (Dovidio et al., 2009; Hopkins, 2011). Alternatively, if Aboriginal peoples perceive that the broad categorization does not sufficiently acknowledge the importance of their unique heritage identities, they may reject the category as it presents a threat to the distinctiveness of their unique heritage culture.

Finally, some Aboriginal people may find meaning in the broad Aboriginal category because this is the primary category available to them when they seek out opportunities for cultural connection. This may especially apply to people who have been disconnected from their more unique First Nation heritage culture(s) as a result of colonial policies. A particularly insidious means of cultural disconnection was the Indian Residential School system that separated at least 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities and prohibited them from speaking their heritage languages or practicing cultural traditions (Macdonald & Hudson, 2012; Milloy, 1999; TRC, 2015). This state-sanctioned process of cultural dislocation continued for multiple generations as many residential school survivors had their own children taken from them, either to be enrolled in residential schools as they had been or, beginning in around the 1960s, adopted into non-Aboriginal families where they were most often completely separated from their heritage cultures (Sinclair, 2007; Strong-Boag, 2004). This calculated and devastating program of assimilation amounted to nothing less than "cultural genocide" (Johnston, 2013; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012; TRC, 2015), and has had a profound, negative impact on generations of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. For example, descendants of residential school survivors have been shown to have higher rates of suicidal ideation, sexual abuse and academic underachievement than Aboriginal people whose family members did not attend residential schools (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014a).

Despite the fundamental disconnection of Aboriginal families from their traditional languages and cultures because of colonial policies of assimilation, Aboriginal peoples are resilient. A movement of decolonization and cultural resurgence has begun where many Aboriginal peoples are now enthusiastically reconnecting with their traditional cultures (Bombay et al., 2014a; Corntassel, 2012; Fonda, 2012; Simpson, 2014). However, given the dwindling number of culturally knowledgeable elders in many Aboriginal communities, many urban Aboriginal people's geographical dislocation from their home communities, and the challenge of representing the significant diversity of Aboriginal cultures in cultural programs, some Aboriginal people may not have opportunities to connect with their specific heritage culture or language. In these cases, a broadly constructed form of Aboriginal culture may function as a collective identity that meets many, if not all, of Aboriginal people's psychological needs for cultural connection.

Cultural connection on the basis of the broad Aboriginal category may be particularly common in urban Aboriginal communities (Frideres, 1998). As of 2011, 56% of Aboriginal peoples in Canada reside in urban centres (AANDC, 2015b), many far from their traditional territories. A 2010 Environics Institute survey of Aboriginal peoples in Canada found that approximately 40% of Aboriginal people residing in cities feel disconnected from their home communities. At a minimum, physical dislocation from one's home community can make connecting with one's specific heritage culture more difficult. Regular interaction with people from wide range of Aboriginal cultural backgrounds within such a diverse milieu may contribute to the formation of a meaningful, broad Aboriginal identity that is defined by cultural diversity, cultural commonality, and the shared lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples (Frideres, 2008).

Finally, the broad Aboriginal identity is also mediated through Aboriginal institutions and programs created to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal communities (Frideres, 1998). Cultural programs designed to reconnect urban Aboriginal individuals with 'their' cultures may not be able to provide content that is relevant to each person's unique cultural background and therefore often focus on the shared values or practices of many Aboriginal subgroups to best meet the needs of everyone. Thus, urban

Aboriginal institutions and programs are both a response to the needs of diverse communities as well as sites of production of a broad Aboriginal culture and identity.

1.3. Rejecting the Broad Aboriginal Category

While many Aboriginal people have responded to cultural dislocation with resilience and a tenacious desire to maintain, or reconnect with their cultures, it is also clear that others have not. It is not surprising that after years of persistent exposure to the systematic oppression and explicit devaluation of Aboriginal cultures many Aboriginal people have also come to believe and internalize negative conceptualizations of Aboriginal culture and identity (Gonzalez, Simard, Baker-Demaray, & Iron Eyes, 2014). David and Derthick (2014) refer to this phenomenon as "internalized oppression" and define it as "a set of self-defeating cognitions, attitudes, and behaviours that are developed as one consistently experiences an oppressive environment" (p. 14). David and Derthick stress that while not all members of an oppressed group will necessarily experience internalized oppression, those who do are likely to experience significant challenges to maintaining a positive identity. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that people may try to leave a negatively evaluated group, particularly when they feel that it is impossible to improve their group's status. Indeed, Aboriginal scholars connect the experience of internalized oppression to the widespread disconnection of many Aboriginal peoples from their traditional lifeways, communities and even the natural world (Gonzalez, et al., 2014). Therefore, some Aboriginal people might reject the broad Aboriginal identity because they do not want to identify with *any* Aboriginal group.

Alternatively, an Aboriginal person may choose to reject the broad Aboriginal category because they feel it is constructed in ways that are inaccurate, or problematic and in some cases, may be serving as a tool of ongoing colonial oppression. Despite its colonial origins, the broad Aboriginal categorization has been for the most part repurposed by Aboriginal peoples (Retzlaff, 2005). In an article describing the resurgence of Aboriginal non-engagement with settler-colonial states, Cherokee political scholar Jeff Corntassel (2006, p. 37) writes "It is time again to represent ourselves on our own terms" and goes on to quote the founding declaration of the World Council of

Indigenous Peoples, "We vow to control again our own destiny and recover our complete humanity and pride in being Indigenous people." Self-determination of identity is enshrined within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) and Indigenous scholars argue that this is crucial for maintaining consistency with Indigenous theories of self-understanding (Nyoongah, 1992) and to protect against assimilation (Churchill, 1999; Restoule, 2000). Given the importance of Aboriginal self-determination, Aboriginal people may reject certain constructions or expressions of the broad Aboriginal categorization if they perceive that these are being created, or imposed by non-Aboriginal people. This is true in part because the broad Aboriginal category may look very different when constructed by non-Aboriginal people, especially if they hope to achieve certain political goals by promoting certain constructions of Aboriginal identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Non-Aboriginal constructions of Aboriginal identity frequently emerge in dominant, government-controlled spaces such as the education system, health system, and prison system, often in the form of "culture-focused" programs or interventions (Friedel, 2010; Marker, 2009; St. Denis, 2009). Such constructions can be problematic for Aboriginal people, but strategic for non-Aboriginal institutions. For example, Martel and Brossard (2008) describe how the "Aboriginalization[2]" of Canadian prisons has favoured a hegemonic construction of Aboriginal identity that homogenizes Aboriginal cultural diversity, is replete with essentialist notions of nostalgic, "traditional Aboriginal culture", and rather importantly, is depoliticized. A depoliticized identity serves the purposes of the dominant institution by fostering personal, rather than collective, responses to disadvantage, and can be a factor in maintaining the status quo (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Indeed, Martel and Brossard (2008) concluded that the Aboriginalization of Canadian prisons has led to the, "apolitical racialization of Aboriginal women's prison experiences" (p. 356). To the extent that Aboriginal people see collective action as a means of improving the status of their group, the imposition of a depoliticized, outgroup-constructed version

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[2] "Aboriginalization" refers to a Canadian response to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in Canadian prisons that sought "to modify [the] criminal justice apparatus to improve its fit with the cultural claims of Aboriginal groups. For example, sentencing circles sprouted across the country, and mediation became a preferred mode of intervention with Aboriginal offenders. In prisons, Elders were introduced, Aboriginal spiritual ceremonies were allowed, sweat lodges were built, and Aboriginal (round) rooms were designed while prisoners were granted permission to carry medicine bundles inside prison." (Martel & Brossard, 2008, pp.343-344).

of Aboriginal identity may be seen as undermining the political goals of Aboriginal people. Beyond the political, the perception that the broad Aboriginal category is being imposed by non-Aboriginal peoples may also have psychological implications. A long tradition of research within Self-Determination Theory has established that personal autonomy is a basic psychological need (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and this line of research has recently been expanded to examine the importance of collective autonomy, the extent to which a group can control the construction of its own identity (Kachanoff, Taylor, Caouette, Khullar, & Wohl, in prep). Social psychological research on the negative impact of threats to collective autonomy suggests that the perception that one's group identity is controlled or imposed by an outgroup may lead group members to reject that identity (Kachanoff, Taylor, Caouette, Wohl, & Khullar, 2016). In particular, a threat to perceived collective autonomy has been found to reduce a person's satisfaction with the parts of their identity that they perceive they do not have control over (Kachanoff, et al., 2016). In sum, Aboriginal peoples may reject the broad Aboriginal category as a tool of ongoing colonial oppression if they believe that it is a category that has been created, and imposed, by non-Aboriginal people.

2. The Present Study

The data analyzed in this study were collected as a part of a larger research project on community members' perceptions of Vancouver's Aboriginal Focus School (AFS). This larger project included a total sample of seventy-one participants and sought to understand how the AFS was perceived by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents with children who did, and did not, attend the AFS. For more details on this larger project, and a more detailed description of the AFS, see Neufeld, Schmitt, and Hutchingson (2016).

In this analysis, I focus on the responses of the thirty-one Aboriginal parents of minors (children under age eighteen) to explore how urban Aboriginal parents construct a broad Aboriginal identity as they discuss their experiences and expectations of the AFS. The AFS is a program created by the Vancouver School Board (a mostly non-Aboriginal institution) to provide a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for Aboriginal students by incorporating Aboriginal cultures into the elementary school classroom. Although the specific motivations for the creation of the AFS are a matter of some speculation and debate amongst Aboriginal community members, it seems most likely that the AFS was created in part as an academic intervention to address inequities in Aboriginal high school completion rates (Archibald, Rayner & Big Head, 2011) and also as a means of attracting more students to an underpopulated inner city school that had been threatened with closure in 2010, two years prior to the opening of the AFS in Fall 2012.

Most importantly however, the AFS was a response by the school board to calls from the Aboriginal community in Vancouver for an Aboriginal-focused school (Archibald et al., 2011). The AFS must therefore also be seen in the context of a movement of decolonization and cultural resurgence that has been growing amongst Canada's Aboriginal peoples since the early 1970s (Corntassel, 2012; Fonda, 2012; Frideres,

1998; Simpson, 2014). Since the Indian Residential Schools system in Canada was mostly dismantled in the 1960s, Aboriginal people in Canada have been trying to heal from the intergenerational trauma of colonialism. For many Aboriginal people, this healing involves reconnecting with their heritage cultures, often by learning Aboriginal languages, traditional songs and practices, or cultural teachings in the context of Aboriginal culture-focused programs (Gone, 2013). The AFS is a typical example of such a program.

Of special importance for this research is the location of the AFS in a large urban centre characterized by high levels of Aboriginal cultural diversity. As an illustration of this diversity, when the AFS opened in 2012 the program enrolled 16 students who identified with 19 different First Nations (Rossi, 2012). Faced with the challenge of providing a program that is culturally relevant to students from a wide range of Aboriginal cultural groups, the school strives to "focus on the shared values, experiences and histories of Aboriginal peoples as well as the aspects that make each [Aboriginal] nation unique" (Vancouver School Board, 2014, p. 3). The school therefore serves as an example of an institution where the broad Aboriginal category is being constructed in the curricula and day-to-day incorporation of Aboriginal cultures into the school.

In the larger study, Aboriginal parents discussed their vision of what they felt culture-focused education in an Aboriginal-focused school should include, their past experiences with Aboriginal education programs, and various other aspects of their lived experience as urban Aboriginal peoples. These discussions are an excellent data set for this study as they provide a candid look into how Aboriginal parents in East Vancouver conceptualize, and relate to, the broad Aboriginal category. Furthermore, because interview questions did not explicitly ask about how people conceptualize the broad Aboriginal identity, discussions were more likely to capture people's use of the Aboriginal category in "ordinary language" (Potter & Reicher, 1987, p.25). This enabled an analysis of how people conceptualize and use this category in practice.

The research was guided by three questions:

1) Is the broad Aboriginal category a meaningful identity for urban Aborignal parents?

2) To the extent that the broad Aboriginal identity is meaningful to participants, how do they conceptualize this identity?

3) What, if any, constructions of the broad Aboriginal category might make people more or less likely to accept or reject this category?

My review of research from the social identity tradition points to a few areas of focus in answering these research questions. First, I will search for ways in which the broad Aboriginal category is constructed as meaningful within the context of an urban centre with a majority non-Aboriginal population. Second, I will pay attention to how participants construct a broad Aboriginal identity that emphasizes commonality amongst all Aboriginal peoples while also respecting and maintaining subgroup distinctiveness. Third, I will examine how experiences of discrimination from outgroups serve to reify the broad Aboriginal category, and how this shared experience may be a basis for solidarity and resistance.

2.1. Collaborative Approach

Any study that attempts to describe or make claims about the construction of a group's identity, particularly a group identity not shared by the researcher, needs to proceed carefully, and respectfully, in close collaboration with the community itself (Naveling, 2013). Indeed, research with Aboriginal peoples has a long and sordid history of harms associated with the colonial project and there is a great need to navigate this "tricky ground" with an awareness of colonial history, and a decolonized approach to research method (Smith, 1999; 2007). Thus, in order to carry out this research project in a respectful manner, certain practices were required.

Although the AFS is in an urban centre on the overlapping traditional territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish First Nations, it is not under the jurisdiction of any specific First Nation or Aboriginal group. For this reason, an Aboriginal leader (and Squamish nation member) at SFU recommended that approval from a specific band council would not be required for this study. Instead, the primary point of engagement with the Aboriginal community on this project was the principal of the AFS throughout the course of the research, Vonnie Hutchingson (Haida, Tsimshian). Vonnie was a close collaborator and co-researcher on the larger project (See Appendix A for the

research agreement between the three co-researchers) and has remained an advisor on this thesis project. Vonnie's contributions ensured the research remained respectful and contextually grounded in the Aboriginal context. In this way, the larger project incorporated some of the practices of community-based participatory research where a research collective made up of both academics and community members jointly determines the project's focus, methods, data analyses and interpretations in addition to how the research will be disseminated and applied (Torre, Fine, Stoudt & Fox, 2012). This approach is particularly appropriate for research with Aboriginal peoples (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, TCPS2, Article 9.12, "Collaborative Research") and shares similar values with the "OCAP" (Ownership of, Control of, Access to, and Possession of research data) guidelines that were specifically developed by First Nations people to reduce negative research practices in their communities (First Nations Centre, 2007).

The collaborative approach to this project also included consultation with Aboriginal leaders at SFU and in the community surrounding the AFS in order to solicit feedback on ways of conducting this research project that would be respectful to Aboriginal peoples. Suggestions from these community leaders were then integrated into the research strategy[3]. Results and interpretations of the data from the larger study were presented back to participants through a community presentation at an early stage of analysis to honour their contributions to the project and solicit their feedback. This presentation was followed up by presentations made to the school board's senior team and staff at the AFS. Finally, a community research report (Neufeld et al., 2016) based on the larger study, which included practical recommendations for the AFS and the school board, was prepared and disseminated widely in the community of the school. In these ways, this study is situated in the tradition of field research (e.g. Cherry & Borshuk, 1998; Lewin, 1946) that uses social psychological methodologies and theories to contribute to community development in addition to increasing social psychological knowledge of group processes.

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[3] As one example, the research strategy switched from exclusively using one-on-one interviews to primarily using focus groups after an Aboriginal community collaborator suggested focus groups would be more culturally appropriate in this sample.

2.2. Epistemological Approach

I take a critical realist approach to this research (see Bazeley, 2013, p. 21, Willig, 1999). Critical realism holds that mental processes are real and that there is a real world that can be known empirically. However, critical realism also acknowledges that human knowledge and experience of the world is constructed in the interactions between personal and environmental factors, and is therefore subject to change (Bazeley, 2013). Importantly, a critical realist perspective holds that the way we construct reality has implications for the actions we take in the real world. So, for example, the way that Aboriginal parents construct the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity has real implications for how they will respond to a program like the AFS. Furthermore, beyond mere documentation of how the social world is constructed, a critical realist approach enables the analyst to move further into explanations of why particular constructions exist, what functions they serve, and what histories they orient to (Willig, 1999).

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Methods

This study primarily employed focus groups as a means of data collection with semi-structured, one-on-one interviews used in addition whenever this was more appropriate to the participant or context. Because of their natural, conversational tone, focus groups are an accessible methodology for marginalized groups (such as Aboriginal peoples) with difficult histories of colonial research practices in their communities (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and traditionally oral cultures (Maar et al., 2011). Focus groups (and interviews) generally followed a line of questioning laid out in Appendix D, with flexibility for participants to bring up, and discuss, additional topics, critiques or questions that seemed relevant or important to them. I introduced focus groups and interviews to participants as "a discussion about how parents make difficult educational choices for their kids as well as", either, "your thoughts and opinions on the Aboriginal Focus School" or "the kinds of things that influenced your decision to register your children at the Aboriginal Focus School." Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity in their responses, encouraged to speak freely and from their personal experience, and encouraged to respond to each other's comments in addition to the researcher's questions. Interview schedules for all focus groups and interviews included asking participants to describe what they knew about the AFS, or what they expected it to be like, asking participants to comment on an official description of the school based on a school brochure, asking participants to provide their reasons for or against sending their children to the school, questions about the expected, or observed, benefits and challenges of the AFS, questions about the value of the AFS for non-Aboriginal students, and questions about intergroup relations with non-Aboriginal parents/children. In focus groups and interviews with parents who did not have children enrolled in the AFS, the interview schedule also asked participants to respond to a statement from the school's brochure that suggested the school will "respect the aspects

that make various First Nations unique" as well as "the shared values, experiences and histories" of all Aboriginal peoples", and then asked participants if they thought there were shared values of Aboriginal peoples and what they were.

3.2. Demographics

Prior to all focus groups or interviews, participants completed a brief demographics questionnaire. Information collected included participant age, gender, and if they identify as Aboriginal, (if "yes", participants specified which First Nations they were affiliated with). For the purposes of this study, only a subset of demographic responses is used to describe the sample. Additional questions, including the follow-up questionnaire, are included in Appendices C and E.

3.3. Procedure

Focus groups and interviews were organized in collaboration with staff at the AFS, two preschools located near the school (one of which was also Aboriginal-focused), and another nearby elementary school. Focus groups and interviews were held at these sites and were scheduled in the evenings (five focus groups) and in the morning after parents dropped their children off at school (two focus groups, four interviews) to maximize accessibility for parents[4]. Food was provided for participants before focus groups, child care was offered during focus groups, and participants were remunerated with gift cards to a local grocery store for their time. Parents were recruited through school announcements, posters, personal visits I made to research sites to introduce the research to potential participants, and snowball recruiting. Thus, this sample represents a convenience sample. No one who was invited to participate

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[4] One parent arranged for a one-on-one interview because none of the focus group times worked with her schedule, another parent followed up her contributions to a focus group with an additional interview because she had more to say, and two parents participated in interviews because these were most appropriate to the context of the preschool where they were recruited.

refused. However, several individuals who had signed up for focus groups or interviews did not show up.

Participants read and signed consent forms (Appendix B) and completed a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C) before each focus group or interview began (see Appendix D for focus group/interview preface and interview schedules), and then completed a brief follow-up questionnaire (Appendix E) after the focus group or interview had finished. Participants were informed that they could opt to withdraw their data from the study at any time up to one week from the date of data collection by contacting me. In addition to audio recording all focus groups and interviews, I also took notes during each focus group and interview and compiled these, along with general impressions of the setting, participants, and feel of the interview or focus group, into field notes recorded soon after each data collection. This process of immediate reflection on the data constituted an early level of analysis and interpretation that informed how I asked questions in later interviews and focus groups and contributed to the ongoing, iterative process of data analysis and theory development (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Data collection began on April 7, 2014 and concluded with the final focus group on May 12, 2014. In total, I conducted seven focus groups and four interviews with Aboriginal parents, yielding 9 hours and 26 minutes of audio-recorded data. Interviews ranged from approximately 19 minutes to 27 minutes in duration and focus groups ranged from approximately 38 minutes to 1 hour and 33 minutes in duration. Three research assistants assisted me in transcribing audio files into Microsoft Word and additional research assistants helped check these transcripts for accuracy with the recording and remove identifying information in order to anonymize them.

3.4. Participants

Thirty-one parents self-identified as Aboriginal on the demographics questionnaire and indicated they were a parent or guardian[5]. These 31 participants included 6 men (19.4%) and 25 women (80.6%). Amongst participants who reported their age (n=26), ages ranged from 21 to 68 with a mean age of 37.15 years and a standard deviation of 11.05 years. Participants reported identifying with 29 unique Aboriginal groups (e.g. Cree, Gitxsan, see Figure 1) and 8 participants reported identifying with multiple Aboriginal groups. Twelve participants were parents/guardians of children enrolled in the AFS and the remaining nineteen participants had children enrolled in elementary schools or preschools located in the neighborhood of the AFS.

Figure 3.1. **Twenty-nine unique Indigenous identities reported by participants**
Note. Size of word corresponds to frequency of identity (e.g Nisga'a = 4). Created using http://www.wordle.net/create

[5] One parent who indicated that she identified as Aboriginal on her demographics form was excluded because she did not list any First Nations she was affiliated with, listed several non-Aboriginal ethnicities, and contributed only one small phrase to the focus group discussion that implied that she did not have Aboriginal ancestry. Another parent who identified as Aboriginal was excluded because she suddenly left the focus group after just ten minutes and her single verbal response in the focus group did not reference Aboriginal culture or identity. One parent indicated she was "not" a parent/guardian on the demographics form, yet referred to her high school aged children throughout the focus group. She was therefore included in the sample.

3.5. Thematic Analysis

Results are based on a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Bazeley, 2009; 2013) that also employed some aspects of the methods, but not epistemology, of discourse analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Reicher, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2008). Thematic analysis is a tradition of qualitative analysis that identifies patterns in qualitative data, which, when applied within a deductive, theory-driven approach, are then interpreted with reference to the researchers' conceptual and theoretical framework. Themes in this study were therefore not determined on the basis of prevalence of certain sentiments in the data but rather on the basis of relevance and importance in answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis understands speech as a form of social action and takes seriously the role of speech in constructing the social world and accomplishing social functions (Willig, 2008). I draw on discourse analytic techniques to explore how participants construct the contours, and content, of the broad Aboriginal category in their everyday discourse (Potter & Reicher, 1987). This involves close reading of transcripts to identify patterns in participants' speech that reveal how social categories are constructed, and how particular constructions of the category have implications for those represented by the category (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Willig, 2008).

I used QSR International's NVivo 11 qualitative software (2015) to organize and code transcribed data from all thirty-one participants who identified as Aboriginal parents. First, I closely read all interview and focus group transcripts, using NVivo to flag especially interesting or relevant excerpts from participants' speech with notes and short memos. This reflective process of close reading combined with annotation and memo writing enabled me to develop initial queries and ideas to be elaborated or examined more closely in later analyses. In this initial close reading, I also coded all references to the broad Aboriginal category to create a "data set" comprised of only the relevant excerpts of the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The creation of a data set helped to focus subsequent rounds of coding and analysis and enabled me to make an estimation of the prevalence of participants' references to the broad Aboriginal category across all transcripts. The data set coding included all explicit references to the broad Aboriginal category (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, Indians, Natives, Indigenous peoples, First Nations),

statements about unique Aboriginal sub-groups (e.g. region-specific Aboriginal categorizations such as Coast Salish, Prairies, British Columbia First Nations as well as more specific First Nations groups such as Squamish, Blackfoot etc.) that imply certain shared characteristics between them and other Aboriginal groups, broad level distinctions made between Aboriginal peoples in general and other non-Aboriginal groups, and participant references to connecting with the cultural practices or traditions of Aboriginal cultural groups that were not a part of their personal heritage (e.g. a Coast Salish participant who referred to her connection with Ojibway songs and language). This initial round of coding therefore excluded sections of the transcripts where participants were discussing issues unrelated to the broad Aboriginal category (e.g. a summer camp program) or their specific Aboriginal heritage cultures without reference to the broad Aboriginal category. I also did not include any of the responses from the six non-Aboriginal parents who participated in focus groups with Aboriginal parents in this data set coding.

After this initial round of coding, I conducted a second, more interpretive round of close reading and coding. Most of these interpretive codes were determined in advance (see Appendix F for a list of preliminary codes and examples) and were based in part on a preliminary coding of field notes written immediately following each interview and focus group. This preliminary coding was refined by consulting theory and concepts from Aboriginal political scholarship and the social psychological literature on social categories and identity. Additional codes were added to the coding framework as unanticipated patterns in the data were identified. Regular memo-writing and reflection tracked the addition of new codes, the evolution of code definitions and the merging of codes throughout the process of coding and analysis, creating an audit trail that traces how analyses developed and conclusions were eventually drawn out of the data (Bazeley, 2013; Carcary, 2009).

In the final stage of analysis, all coded excerpts were re-read in close detail to identify linguistic and conceptual patterns within codes. Excerpts in each code were categorized into sub-themes, summarized in paragraph form, and then read by and discussed with my senior supervisor. Code summaries were then revised in the process of ongoing interpretive analysis (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999). During this process,

patterns and sub-themes identified in different coding categories were sometimes merged, or patterns within the same coding category separated. In a final stage of analysis, the specific findings and sub-themes were summarized on cue cards and post-it notes and organized into the first order themes and sub-themes presented here.

3.6. Credibility of Analyses

Elliot and colleagues (1999, see also Carcary, 2009) suggest several means of checking the credibility of qualitative analyses including allowing informants (participants) to review and comment on conclusions derived from analysis of the data, allowing an additional analyst to verify that one's conclusions and interpretations do not rest on misinterpretations or overextensions of the data, and triangulating one's findings with relevant outside factors such as quantitative or qualitative research conducted in a similar context. In its initial stages, aspects of this analysis were presented back to participants and community members, including staff at the Aboriginal Focus School, in a series of community presentations. In the context of these presentations, participants had an opportunity to provide comments or feedback on the developing interpretations of the data and no one registered their objection to my analyses of how the broad Aboriginal category was conceptualized. Similarly, throughout the ongoing process of coding, analysis and interpretation I have had informal conversations about my emerging findings with several Aboriginal friends and colleagues including our key community collaborator on the larger research project, Vonnie Hutchingson (Haida, Tsimshian). These conversations helped to affirm and focus my analysis. While these presentations and conversations are not as rigorous as a more formal "member check" (e.g., Simpson & Quigley, 2016), they do increase confidence in the credibility of my analysis. The iterative process of coding, memo writing, interpreting data and revising codes also took place in the context of ongoing discussion and collaboration with my senior supervisor. He provided a second opinion on matters of interpretive ambiguity in the data, helped to develop the interpretation and identification of patterns in the data, and called attention to aspects of my developing interpretations which were overstatements of the data. While this collaborative relationship was not as rigorous as a third-party analytic auditor might be, it too provides additional credibility to these analyses. Finally, by searching out

and regularly reading the published news media on the Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver I sought to triangulate my findings with statements made by other members of the Aboriginal community in Vancouver that described their experience of the broad Aboriginal category in the context of Aboriginal-focused education programs (e.g. Hamilton, 2014; Hyslop, 2011). In addition, I compared my findings with those of Archibald and colleagues (2011) who produced a report based on summaries of what they heard from Aboriginal parents and stakeholders at the consultation fora that led to the creation of the Aboriginal Focus School. These two avenues of triangulation provided additional confidence in the credibility of my analyses.

4.   Analysis

This analysis first addresses the extent of participant endorsement of the broad Aboriginal category across the data set (RQ#1) and then describes four themes in the data which illustrate the various ways in which participants conceptualized the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity (RQ#2). One final theme suggests an important determinant of the likelihood that participants would accept the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity (RQ#3). To protect participant anonymity, pseudonyms have been used when referring to quotes and participant's heritage cultures are only included where relevant. The quotes and extracts that illustrate various aspects of the analysis were selected for their representativeness of the relevant theme and their clarity as exemplars. Quotes have been edited slightly to ensure clarity and brevity, while preserving meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

4.1. Widespread Support for the Broad Aboriginal Category Within the Sample

The first guiding research question in this study asked to what extent participants endorsed the broad Aboriginal category as the basis for a meaningful identity. Across all 11 transcripts there were approximately 325 unique excerpts that were coded as relevant to the broad Aboriginal category (i.e. participants spoke specifically about, or in terms of, the broad Aboriginal category). Coding these references for attitude further suggested that the broad Aboriginal category was frequently endorsed by participants, or used in ways that implied the speaker accepted the category. Participants spoke of the experiences and characteristics of "Aboriginals", "Indigenous peoples", "Natives", "Indians", "First Nations", and sometimes more generally of "our people." Importantly, these terms were most often used to describe either the superordinate group of all Aboriginal peoples, or something that was relevant to this group (e.g. "Aboriginal

education") and were only very rarely a mere reference to the "Aboriginal" Focus School that was central to participants' discussions.

A small number of participants suggested the broad Aboriginal category was their *most* meaningful identity, elevating its importance above their more unique heritage culture identities. For example, Stephanie clearly stated that in an urban context "Just being proud of being an Aboriginal person" was all she expected as an outcome from Aboriginal education and Andrea said "Me, I'm just Aboriginal" and explained that she did not distinguish herself by her First Nations identity unless someone asked. However, this was not the norm. Most participants seemed to identify strongly with both their unique heritage culture and the broad Aboriginal category. Some participants even spoke of both levels of Aboriginal categorization in the same sentence. The trend of participants speaking both in terms of the broad Aboriginal category and their more unique heritage identities suggested that these identities were not mutually exclusive. In summary, most participants were very comfortable using the broad Aboriginal category in ways that suggested it was meaningful to them. The next four themes respond to the second research question by describing *how* participants conceptualized the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity, namely as a reflection of the lived experience of an urban Aboriginal community, as a group with cultural commonalities including shared practices, norms and values, as a collection of diverse Aboriginal cultural groups in which subgroup diversity contributes to the value of the broad Aboriginal identity, and as a basis for solidarity and the establishment of positive identity based around resilience to historical and ongoing mistreatment from outgroups.

4.2. "That Community That We Have Here": The Broad Aboriginal Category Reflects the Lived Experience of Urban Aboriginal Peoples

The first theme in participants' talk about the broad Aboriginal category is oriented around the context of these data in an urban Aboriginal community. A majority of participants in our sample, and much of the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver, come from a wide diversity of non-local Aboriginal cultural groups. The lived experience of this concentrated cultural diversity makes the broad Aboriginal category

the primary basis of commonality amongst members of the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver. Indeed, participants commonly referred to the "Aboriginal", "Indigenous" or "First Nations" community in Vancouver. Furthermore, no participant ever referred to an urban Aboriginal community based on a more specific Aboriginal culture (e.g. the "Cree community" in Vancouver). Participants such as Lisa described a small, tight-knit community that provided urban Aboriginal people with plenty of opportunity for interaction and social support. She emphasized the social interactive nature of this community by explaining that, "We all gather in the same places…that community that we have here is really small, like when you think about, how often, we really cross paths and have conversations about things" and told of how local culture nights at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre (located just a few blocks from the AFS) were a social hub for the community.

Beyond social interaction, participants referred to the Aboriginal community as bound together by shared concerns related to life as an Aboriginal person in the city. In this respect, the Aboriginal community was commonly constructed as a political entity, a group that needed to be consulted with and involved in decision-making and policy implementation that would affect Aboriginal people in Vancouver. This dimension of the Aboriginal community came up frequently when participants critiqued the school board's development of the AFS for not sufficiently involving "the Aboriginal community." For example, Erin claimed that "the Aboriginal community" had not been made aware of the school board's "Aboriginal mandate", and felt that it should have been.

One final aspect of this theme is the role of Aboriginal institutions in the urban Aboriginal community. The data set was replete with references to people's participation in a wide variety of Aboriginal institutions (e.g. Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Native Education College, Native Housing, Aboriginal Head Start, National Aboriginal Day), all of which are predicated on the broad Aboriginal category, rather than a more specific cultural category (e.g. Tsimshian, Anishinaabe). Broadly Aboriginal-focused institutions such as these are necessitated by the cultural diversity found in urban Aboriginal communities; to accommodate all members of the Aboriginal community, institutions must construct themselves in terms of the broadest relevant category (Frideres, 1998). Thus, an additional way in which the lived experience of urban

Aboriginal community members produces a meaningful broad Aboriginal identity is through the many institutions that mediate the urban Aboriginal experience, and enact the broad Aboriginal category in the process. Aboriginal institutions provide a place of belonging and welcome for the members of a diverse Aboriginal community, in part because they reflect their broad Aboriginal identity. For example, Stephanie is someone who identifies most strongly with the broad Aboriginal category. She described an Aboriginal-focused education program she attended in Vancouver as "A place, and a structure that really validated how I felt as a person." In general, parents seemed very comfortable with the idea that a school or program could have a broad Aboriginal focus and frequently referred to various programs or schools as "Aboriginal-focused."

4.3. "The Things We All Celebrate": The Broad Aboriginal Category Is Perceived to Have Shared Practices, Norms, and Values

Participants frequently constructed the broad Aboriginal category as meaningful because of the perception that Aboriginal cultures have many common attributes. For example, Melissa described how all Aboriginal cultures:

> Feast together celebrate together that's a part of all of our cultures doesn't matter what nation we come from ...there are certain things between all of our different nations that we all celebrate, we all celebrate medicines, we all celebrate... like the red road, being good to each other, being kind to each other...our beliefs in our dreamcatchers...

Participants tended to emphasize the cultural homogeneity of Aboriginal peoples when describing their expectations of how culture could be appropriately integrated into the AFS, when discussing their experiences of Aboriginal culture in urban settings, and in order to differentiate themselves from an equally broadly constructed category of "non-Aboriginal people." Participants also described the cultural commonalities of Aboriginal peoples when, during the interviews, I referred to a portion of the AFS brochure that stated that the school's curriculum would emphasize "The shared values, experiences and histories of all Aboriginal peoples", and then asked participants if they agreed that there were shared values of all Aboriginal peoples and if they could describe them.

Participants' constructions of Aboriginal cultural commonalities are divided into two sub-themes here that capture (1) the shared behaviors and practices that help define who is categorized as Aboriginal and (2) the shared values and norms that prescribe what it means to be Aboriginal.

4.3.1. "Stuff that we do as Aboriginals": Enacting a broad Aboriginal identity by engaging in shared practices.

A very common theme in participants' responses and discussions about what all Aboriginal peoples had in common were descriptions of shared practices, or, as Rachel referred to them, "Stuff that we do as Aboriginals." One of the most common categories of shared practices was forms of cultural expression that many Aboriginal groups share, but express in their own unique ways. For example, many participants expected, or suggested, that students at the AFS should have opportunities to engage in drumming, singing, or making traditional handicrafts. In almost all cases parents did not suggest that the particular style of drumming, the specific songs to be sung, or the certain crafts to be made should come from any particular Aboriginal culture. Rather, parents assumed that these practices would be broadly relevant to all Aboriginal students. For example, Jennifer suggested that in order to increase the cultural content at the AFS, "They should be pullin' in someone upstairs, teachin' them the songs." The generality of the phrase, "the songs" (used by several parents, in a similar way) suggests that parents like this one expected their children could be taught a collection of well-known "Aboriginal" songs, and this would constitute appropriate cultural connection in the AFS. While all of these songs doubtlessly originate in particular Aboriginal cultures, cultural specificity was generally not emphasized when parents talk about shared Aboriginal practices like singing traditional songs. In this sense, "singing songs" functions as a marker of engagement with a broad Aboriginal identity.

Another common example of a shared Aboriginal practice was engaging with Pan-Aboriginal symbols (e.g. medicine wheels, dreamcatchers). Some participants, such as Amy, directly linked engagement with Aboriginal symbols or objects to the act of self-categorizing as Aboriginal, "None of our kids...wear a medicine bag to help protect themselves where they should be...being able to wear something of their tradition... and

not be ashamed of it and not hide it away, just to say that they're Aboriginal." This grandmother felt that the AFS could do more to facilitate students' Aboriginal pride by enabling them to engage in something constructed as a broadly Aboriginal practice: wearing a medicine bag.

Consistent patterns in the shared Aboriginal practices that parents expected their children to engage with in an Aboriginal-focused school (e.g. singing songs, drumming, smudging, engaging with or making Pan-Aboriginal symbols such as medicine wheels or dreamcatchers etc.) suggest that these things could be thought of as comprising a broadly Aboriginal "cultural repertoire." Including practices from this repertoire in an Aboriginal program may assure some parents that their child is indeed engaging with their Aboriginal identity and culture in appropriate ways. For example, Rebecca explains that she would not feel comfortable sending her child to the AFS, which was unfamiliar to her, but she does feel comfortable sending her child to an Aboriginal-focused preschool because she "Knew for a fact that there was a *cultural singer* going in there every other day." It does not necessarily matter if the songs being sung by the cultural singer are relevant to her child's specific heritage culture, but the fact that the person is singing traditional Aboriginal songs is enough to assure her of the broad relevance, and legitimacy, of the program to her child's Aboriginal heritage.

While this analysis suggests that many parents saw engaging with shared practices as a means of enacting a broad Aboriginal identity, a few parents were careful to emphasize that engaging with shared practices should facilitate more than mere self-categorization as Aboriginal. For example, Melissa was adamant that cultural practices be accompanied by explanations and teachings that could take students deeper into engagement with their Aboriginal culture:

> You want to give us an Aboriginal education? Tell the children this drum is made of deer hide and WHY it's made out of deer hide, what the process was to make it and the reason we do what we do.

Melissa suggests there is more to be learned about Aboriginal culture from making a traditional drum than merely the skill or practice itself. Instead, drum-making, and many other practices, can be an entryway into a deeper engagement with traditional teachings

and Aboriginal knowledge, worldviews or stories. This was related to several parents' critique of approaches to Aboriginal education that they perceived to be superficial "arts and crafts" projects in lieu of any deeper academic or cultural engagement. For example, Angela critiqued the practice of pulling Aboriginal students out of class to engage in cultural activities that she felt were ultimately superficial:

> How tired can you get of being offered to go make a dream catcher you know? (laughs) like come on…dream catchers are awesome! But…[the AFS] is more real I think, and more appreciative of what it really means to be the way we are, our values, our land and culture system, our laws…it's way more available than just learning about…those token pieces that people identify really easily.

To her, engaging with Aboriginal practices and symbols (e.g. making a dreamcatcher) was important, but not sufficient, for engaging with a broad Aboriginal identity.

4.3.2. "There's just a way that we are": Shared Aboriginal teachings, values, and norms

In addition to a collection of shared Aboriginal practices, participants frequently expressed their belief that there was a broadly Aboriginal "way of being" that included shared norms, values and teachings. This aspect of the broad Aboriginal identity was evident in participants' many references to "our ways", "an Aboriginal way", or "the way we are". Essentialist references to Aboriginal ways of being were also occasionally brought up as a means of critiquing non-Aboriginal culture. For example, Mary referred to a seniority-based teacher hiring policy in the school board as "not an Aboriginal way". Participants made numerous references to "our values" (Angela), "our traditions" (Melissa), or "our teachings" (Amy) and Stephanie expected that the AFS would be "influenced by Aboriginal teachings…Aboriginal traditional values." Indeed, Stephanie hoped that the AFS would be able to capture something quintessential and ineffable about all Aboriginal peoples by being "More reflective of our urban community of First Nations people, I don't know, there's a way we joke with each other…there's just a way that we are."

Beyond a general assumption that all Aboriginal peoples shared a common, and distinctive way of being, many participants also gave specific examples of what they felt

were shared Aboriginal values, teachings or norms. One of the most common was a respect for mother earth or connection to land. Many participants, such as Jason, expressed this directly and explicitly as a shared value of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, but also, of Indigenous peoples globally, "There's always one main teaching that's the same…and that's respect for our mother Earth... and that is the common teaching. We say it differently, we do it differently, but it's the exact same thing." Other participants spoke of a shared Aboriginal value for "land" and how important it was for Aboriginal people to learn "the history of the land" (Melissa), to maintain ties to ancestral lands (Angela), and to maintain a "respect for mother nature, the people and the land" (Kimberley).

Another common example of a shared Aboriginal cultural attribute endorsed by many participants was a value for interpersonal, and intragroup, relationships founded in a deep respect for others. Some participants expressed this in terms of a perceived shared Aboriginal value for family. Jason made this point by contrasting Aboriginal with non-Aboriginal family dynamics, "We're intergenerational people…the children, the elders, youth, parents, family, we're all together…we didn't send our elders off to rot in some building." Participants also suggested that Aboriginal peoples "Are very giving people, we care about people, big time" (Laura), "Aboriginal people, they're very giving and… they're respectful" (Crystal), and that "It's a really big part of our everyday, culture for First Nations people to have those relationships where they can sit there, and just talk" (Lisa). As with other perceived Aboriginal values, some participants suggested interpersonal "respect" was a point of positive distinctiveness, "Aboriginal people…one of their values is respect right…whereas that's probably not so much spoken of in mainstream schools right?" (Kimberley).

A third commonly perceived shared Aboriginal value was a particular respect for "elders" who were themselves constructed as serving a special purpose in mediating the broad Aboriginal category. "Elders" are referred to very frequently throughout the data set, often when participants would suggest that "They gotta bring the elders in" (Jessica) to integrate more cultural content into the AFS. Many participants shared stories of consulting elders for advice, turning to elders for informal governance of urban Aboriginal communities, or of elders who fulfilled a teaching role in an Aboriginal

education program of some kind. For example, Erin referred to a shared norm of Aboriginal people seeking guidance in proper processes from elders because, "They're the ones who know how things should be done."

Beyond a general shared Aboriginal value for elders, elders were commonly seen by participants to be arbiters of traditional cultural knowledge, which it was assumed would be of relevance to all Aboriginal people. Thus, part of the reason for the instrumental function of Aboriginal elders in teaching traditional culture or providing advice is that elders are seen as prototypical members of the broad Aboriginal category. For example, Melissa bemoaned the fact that the AFS did not have "Well-versed elders…people who are living the lifestyle to role model or...to say, 'This is the proper way to live'", suggesting that she saw elders as a source of knowledge for how to live an appropriately Aboriginal way of life. Furthermore, when participants advocated for elders to play a more central role in the AFS they almost never said they should be from a specific Aboriginal cultural group, implying that a trustworthy elder can be from any cultural group, so long as they are a member of the broad Aboriginal category. Thus, to participants in this sample, elders are representative of the broad Aboriginal category both in terms of the shared respect that Aboriginal peoples have for them but also in terms of the perceived broad relevance of their teachings to all Aboriginal peoples.

While there were many more less common examples of values, teachings or norms that participants suggested were shared by all Aboriginal peoples (e.g. spirituality, beliefs in the creator, red road teachings, artistic aptitude etc.) what is most important to note is that many Aboriginal participants believed that there *were* common cultural attributes that all Aboriginal peoples shared. Thus, for many people the broad Aboriginal category is associated with cultural content that makes it a meaningful and important identity for them.

4.4. "Aboriginal Culture Has Always Been a Mishmash of What Different People Bring to the Table": Acknowledging and Valuing the Diversity Within the Broad Aboriginal Category

Participants' emphasis on the similarities between Aboriginal cultures did not diminish their simultaneous attention to the diversity within the broad Aboriginal category. In fact, participants such as Joseph went out of their way to acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal cultures:

> We have a lot of pretty diverse population here, there's Cree, Shuswap, people from the surrounding areas …and we're in Squamish territory, and Musqueam and I'm in my extended Shuswap area…we all come from a diverse culture.

Several participants also drew attention to the inevitability of concentrated Aboriginal cultural diversity specifically associated with urban Aboriginal communities. For example, Lisa described how "We're in Vancouver…there's gonna be so many different [Aboriginal] cultures within one, even one room" and Erin said, "I also think about our community here…how diverse we are." Acknowledging the diversity within the broad Aboriginal category seemed, for many participants, to be at least equally as important as emphasizing similarity within the category. Furthermore, several participants also recognized that these opposing aspects could be in tension, and were thus careful to temper their discussions of Aboriginal similarity by acknowledging the reality of Aboriginal diversity at the same time. For example, Lisa suggested that all Aboriginal cultures "Have things that are similar, but also things that are different." Sometimes this tension emerged in participants' hesitance when talking about Aboriginal commonalities. When describing things that all Aboriginal cultures celebrate, Melissa said "I don't want to say like generic Aboriginal things but in a sense it is you know?" She then went on to explain how beliefs about dreamcatchers varied from nation to nation, but were nevertheless a symbolic object shared by many Aboriginal groups. Her hesitance to refer to "generic Aboriginal things" suggests a wariness of overemphasizing Aboriginal commonality at the expense of acknowledging diversity. In sum, cultural diversity within the broad Aboriginal category was seen by many participants as a valuable aspect of the broad Aboriginal identity, rather than an impediment to it. Participants' great respect for

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Aboriginal diversity is illustrated with two sub-themes that summarize how participants (1) connect with non-heritage Aboriginal cultures as a meaningful expression of their own broad Aboriginal identity and (2) follow norms which help maintain respectful relations between Aboriginal subgroups.

4.4.1. "Singing another nation's song": Connecting with non-heritage Aboriginal cultures

One might expect that a person of Cree heritage would only seek out opportunities to connect with their Cree culture, and eschew the cultural traditions or practices of Inuit or Haisla peoples as irrelevant to their personal or collective identity. However, this exclusive focus on one's heritage cultures was almost non-existent in participants' discussions. Instead, cross-cultural sharing amongst Aboriginal cultures within the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver seemed to be the norm. A poignant example of this was a story told by Christina about her interaction with another Aboriginal parent whom she perceived to have violated this norm for cultural openness. Christina described the other parent as "Focused on her First Nations" and reported with indignation how this parent had questioned why her children should have to learn about a non-heritage Aboriginal culture (which happened to be Christina's heritage culture). To Christina, being too "focused" on your own heritage culture, and not being open to learning about other Aboriginal cultures or sharing your culture with others, was anti-normative, and negative. Another participant in the same focus group (Rebecca) responded to Christina's story with her view that there could be a greater focus on local Aboriginal cultures in Vancouver, but she followed up this point by assuring everyone that nevertheless she did share the normative value for intercultural connection, "Yes, it is nice to learn and experience other [Aboriginal] cultures, I am totally down for that." Many participants seemed to believe that sharing culture was a valuable, important, and expected feature of participating in the Aboriginal community and, as Lisa observed, somehow it "Always [comes] together quite nicely when you have diversity."

In particular, a number of participants spoke positively about cultural education that included practicing or learning about the traditions of many different Aboriginal cultures. Stephanie, an Aboriginal cultural teacher herself, expected the AFS would

promote a version of Aboriginal culture that she felt had "Always been a mishmash of what different people bring to the table." Her expectation for a broad Aboriginal culture was that it would form organically out of the contributions of whomever was present in an Aboriginal space. She later referred to Aboriginal cultural education programs like the AFS as "A mix", language echoed by Brian, who assumed the AFS would include a "Mix bag of teachings" from different Aboriginal cultures, and Jamie, who expected the AFS would "Be bringing different Aboriginals from different tribes and branching out their culture, sharing with one another." As a concrete example of such cross-cultural sharing, Kelly described how her son was learning "Somebody else's [non-heritage] language" at his Aboriginal preschool, but that she "Doesn't mind [because] he's pretty proud of it." The fact that Kelly "doesn't mind" her son learning a non-heritage language suggests that she recognizes others might not agree with this practice, but to her, it is justified by the fact that it contributes to her son's sense of cultural pride as an Aboriginal person. In another example, Amy, a Coast Salish grandmother, described her delight that her granddaughter had been taught an "Ojibway" song at the AFS, and how nice it was to hear her come home "Singing another nation's song." This final example is especially interesting as Amy contrasts the Ojibway song with another song her granddaughter had learned at the AFS about "my pony", which she did not appreciate. In one sense, both songs are from "another nation." However, the "my pony" song has a European origin, and is therefore not seen as relevant, whereas the Ojibway song is acceptable because it is associated with the broad Aboriginal category, and singing it thus represents a connection to the broad Aboriginal identity. As Jessica said, she is "Grateful for anything that [her children] get from an elder or anyone in any language really…as long as it's Indigenous", indicating a willingness for her kids to connect with many different cultures, so long as they are all within the broad category of "Indigenous".

Two examples of connecting with non-heritage Aboriginal cultures bear some attention as special cases. The first pertains to a widely-accepted Aboriginal protocol of honouring the cultures of local First Nations (elaborated in more detail in the next section). Thus, an Aboriginal person who connects with a non-heritage Aboriginal culture from the territory on which they live may do so because they believe it is their moral responsibility to follow this protocol, not because they see all Aboriginal cultures as

relevant to them within the broad Aboriginal category. The second pertains to a story told by Amy. She described how:

> I never knew my language...the only language I knew when I was going to residential school was the Cowichan language because... a lot of the children came from the Cowichan reserve and we weren't supposed to speak our language but we [would] get together down the hill somewhere and these kids would talk and they would uh... say things in their language and I picked it up.

In this case, learning a non-heritage language or culture could be understood as a form of resistance to colonial oppression and assimilation. While it would be a mistake to draw any firm conclusions from this one story, this example does provide another way of interpreting the broader phenomenon of connecting with non-heritage Aboriginal cultures. In the absence of an opportunity to learn her own heritage language, Amy chose to learn the Aboriginal language that was available to her, perhaps in part as a means of maintaining a positive, broadly Aboriginal identity and resisting the cultural assimilation that was a primary purpose of residential schools.

Finally, some parents' openness to connecting with multiple Aboriginal cultures may be a product of their familiarity with cross-cultural connection in the context of their own families. Within this sample, many parents discussed how their children were connecting with multiple Aboriginal cultures because these cultures were represented in their child's mixed heritage. For example, James (Nisga'a) and Michelle (Ditidaht) discussed how happy they were that the AFS enabled their son to "Play both roles" in the classroom, where "One week he'll be Nisga'a and the next week he'll be Ditidaht...so nothing's left out" (James). Similarly, Kelly (Nisga'a, Haisla, Tsimshian) and Robert (Kwakiutl) discussed how they appreciated that their son's Aboriginal preschool made space for him to learn, "[Kelly's] culture, [Robert's] culture, and [Kelly's] grandmother's culture" (Kelly), in addition to another, non-heritage First Nation language.

4.4.2. "Some sort of a rule or hidden guideline that's embedded in Aboriginal people": Norms for connecting with other Aboriginal cultures respectfully

Parents' discussions also made clear that there were many tensions, and potential pitfalls, associated with the phenomenon of connecting with a wide range of Aboriginal cultures, especially in the context of broadly Aboriginal-focused education programs. These tensions suggest a need for shared norms associated with the broad Aboriginal identity that dictate how people may respectfully engage with the cultures of other Aboriginal subgroups, and how these subgroup cultures may be represented in the broad Aboriginal identity in respectful ways. The clearest reference to such norms was expressed by Heather who explained that she felt there was:

> Some sort of a hidden rule or guideline…embedded in Aboriginal people…when you meet an Aboriginal person and you start talking about your culture…you automatically listen, you automatically respect them just for sharing with you… when you start talking about your culture all of a sudden your mood changes to where you're very attentive.

However, social norms of this sort are rarely referred to so directly, but are instead taken for granted as they do their quiet work of facilitating respectful intersubgroup relations. The presence of such norms became most apparent however when participants would give examples of times when these norms had been violated. There were enough instances of this throughout the data set to suggest that indeed, norms were an important means of facilitating a broad Aboriginal identity comprised of many Aboriginal cultures. I provide several examples, organized into two categories, urban norms, to help maintain subgroup distinctiveness in the novel context of diverse urban Aboriginal communities, and ancient norms (traditional protocols), to communicate honour and respect between Aboriginal subgroups.

The first category of norms was most associated with the relatively novel context of highly concentrated Aboriginal cultural diversity in cities, and the integration of these diverse cultures into educational or cultural programs. These norms seemed to function primarily to maintain cultural distinctiveness in an environment that was described by some as a cultural "mishmash" (Stephanie). For example, Julie told a story of Aboriginal

teachers who she felt had a "Lack of value for the differences between our culture" and she critiqued the practices of some Aboriginal dance groups in which she had participated that she felt had assumed that "Everybody from BC is a certain type of Native." Julie felt uncomfortable when she perceived other Aboriginal people had violated either a norm of valuing Aboriginal cultural differences or a norm of not suggesting that Aboriginal peoples in BC could be represented by a single Aboriginal culture. In another example, Kelly described her conditional acceptance of her son learning a non-heritage Aboriginal language, "As long as he doesn't get it mixed up with our culture." If he were to "mix up" these various cultures, the implication is that this would undermine the distinctiveness of each culture, and violate a norm for the proper compartmentalization of Aboriginal cultures in the context of cultural sharing. Similarly, there was also a norm for balancing the representation given to specific Aboriginal cultures in an Aboriginal program. This was evident in the responses of parents like Lisa, who said she had many questions about the AFS including, "What First Nations teachings are they focusing on?", and Julie who said "I feel distrusting because Aboriginal Focus School is like a huge broad spectrum, there's all sorts of different Aboriginal focuses that you could focus on." These parents' concern is that when the AFS attempts to represent the significant diversity of Aboriginal cultures this might entail a privileging of certain cultures over others, rather than equal representation. This could be problematic because, as Julie worried, "Only the stronger ones are gonna come out and be taught to my kids, not the dying ones like my culture." This norm of balancing cultural representation was especially important to this parent given the precarious status of her heritage culture. Violating this norm could mean promoting a kind of cultural assimilation and homogenization within Aboriginal education, and contribute to the further loss of her culture.

The second category of norms associated with the broad Aboriginal category was more clearly connected to traditional Aboriginal protocols that have helped to facilitate intergroup relations between Aboriginal peoples for millennia. One of the most common traditional protocols participants mentioned was the importance of acknowledging and respecting local First Nations. Many participants felt that local Aboriginal cultures should be prioritized in the cultural content of the AFS, with some implying that the need for a focus on local cultures was obvious. For example, Laura

said, "West coast [culture] should always be first because … we are out west, right?", and Melissa said "We're on traditional Coast Salish territory so it only makes sense that you would bring in a Coast Salish elder…somebody who could teach these kids a thing or two about where you stand." Conversely, Stephanie and Lisa were surprised that the AFS' brochure did not include an acknowledgement, or even the names, of the three local First Nations in Vancouver, and felt this was disrespectful. The ubiquity of this expectation of respecting local First Nations suggests that this protocol could also be considered another example of a shared feature of all Aboriginal, or even all Indigenous, cultures. As Jessica, an Indigenous woman from another country, explained, she expected that the AFS would encourage, "Having respect for this [local] territory as well and learning the language of this territory 'cuz that's what I would expect in my country, so I would want my children to do that here."

Some participants also had concerns about the protocol of prioritizing local First Nations cultures. For example, Rebecca observed that in her experience there was a disproportionate focus on Northwest Coast Aboriginal cultures (e.g. Nisga'a, Haida, Tsimshian) as well as Prairie cultures in the Vancouver Aboriginal community, and not as much focus as she would like on more local First Nations cultures (including her own Nuu-chah-nulth cultures from Vancouver Island). Importantly, this participant did not suggest that there should be an *exclusive* focus on local First Nations, just that the emphasis in cultural programs should shift to prioritize local, more than non-local, cultures. In contrast to Rebecca's plea for more recognition of local First Nations, other participants (from non-local First Nations) suggested that they would be concerned if there was *too much* of a focus on local First Nations in the AFS, and not enough representation of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, including their own. Laura, a woman with Mi'kmaq heritage from Eastern Canada stated this most strongly when she said that "'Yes we're on the west coast, but…there's tons of [Aboriginal cultures] and we need to know everybody's culture…rather than us always being stuck", that is, "stuck" learning only local First Nations cultures. Laura also presented somewhat of an extreme case as she suggested that a respect for the true diversity of the Aboriginal community in Vancouver was a boundary condition for her support for an Aboriginal-focused school. In her experience, "Sometimes, these schools might forget about the East coast natives, forget about the Algonqu-, the Mohawks, the Mi'kmaqs, the Inuit and stuff, so, that's

where I might not [support the AFS] …only that situation." This example illustrates the significant importance for some participants of seeing their heritage cultures represented in expressions of the broad Aboriginal identity.

One final example of an ancient norm associated with the broad Aboriginal category was an expectation of honoring cultural ownership of songs or teachings. As a teacher of Aboriginal culture, Lisa expressed her concern over "Which First Nations teachings are they focusing on?" and discussed her personal guideline (which she suggested was followed by many Aboriginal culture teachers) of "Only teaching what you know…what I've been taught by my grandparents and grandmothers." Following this guideline is a way of respecting protocols of cultural ownership, maintaining subgroup distinctiveness, and representing cultures accurately. On the contrary, Stephanie, another Aboriginal cultural teacher in the same focus group, presented a contrasting view to Lisa when she said that as someone who had grown up "Not feeling very connected to teachings" she did not "Have the insight to really, think that way" and did not necessarily share Lisa's concerns about cultural ownership protocols when teaching culture in an urban setting. This example illustrates an important point. While protocols for respecting cultural ownership (as well as other norms for maintaining respectful intersubgroup relations amongst Aboriginal cultures) certainly exist, certain Aboriginal people may not have the cultural knowledge to be aware of them, or may choose not to adhere to these norms in practice.

4.5. "Because We're First Nations": Shared Experiences of Historical and Ongoing Mistreatment as a Basis for the Broad Aboriginal Category

One final way in which participants conceptualized the broad Aboriginal category was in terms of the shared Aboriginal experience of historical and ongoing mistreatment from non-Aboriginal people. One illustration of this was the way in which participants spoke of the importance of learning about the shared history of Aboriginal peoples. While "Aboriginal history" could mean several things (e.g. pre-contact accounts of Aboriginal conflicts), participants in this sample constructed Aboriginal history almost exclusively as the history of colonization. For example, Crystal equated colonial history

with Aboriginal history when she explained how she would love her kids to learn "The history of colonialism…you know, the history that the First Nations have went through." Similarly, Jason referred to colonialism as a shared history of Indigenous peoples all over the world who have been "Tricked in the same colonialism…that has disconnected the people from the teachings." This shared history of colonial oppression was commonly constructed as a basis of solidarity amongst diverse Aboriginal peoples and many participants spoke in similar ways about their shared experiences of ongoing colonial mistreatment and discrimination. Importantly, participants' perceptions of outgroup mistreatment were *always* constructed in terms of the broad Aboriginal category. This was illustrated very clearly by Christina, who rejected the AFS, "I wouldn't put my children in it because like [another participant] said, to segregate your children…because we're First Nations and diluting it…the education and stuff …why would I wanna do that to my children?" The phrase, "Because we're First Nations", suggests that this parent expects discriminatory treatment on the basis of membership in the broad Aboriginal category, "First Nations", not on the basis of more specific Aboriginal categories (e.g. Christina's Ojibway identity). Thus, the perception that discrimination targets members of the broad Aboriginal category helps reify that category as a meaningful identity.

For some participants, the shared experience of discrimination was accompanied by a subjective feeling of rejection that was also perceived to be common to all Aboriginal peoples. For example, Angela shared how a group of Aboriginal youth at a conference had shared with her how they did not feel welcome in the town nearest to their reserve, an experience which she said she did not need to inquire further about because she "already [knew] why" they felt unwelcome. This "feeling" of rejection is something that diverse Aboriginal peoples share in common. It is a part of what it means to be a member of the broad Aboriginal category, and in this case required no explanation.

The broad Aboriginal identity is thus in part a response to shared outgroup mistreatment. I will now describe two sub-themes which illustrate how this aspect of the broad Aboriginal identity served two important functions for Aboriginal group members by (1) helping to establish the broad Aboriginal identity as a positive one and (2)

providing information about specific forms of mistreatment that Aboriginal people can expect to encounter, and should be vigilant to avoid.

4.5.1.   "We're still here": Establishing a positive broad Aboriginal identity in response to outgroup mistreatment

While this aspect of the broad Aboriginal identity is constructed around shared experiences that are negative, it nevertheless serves as the basis for establishing a positive Aboriginal identity. One example is a consistent pattern where participants would bring up stories about colonialism or discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in ways which enabled them to attribute the present challenges and problems of Aboriginal communities (e.g. poverty, addiction, involvement with social services) to the intergenerational effects of historical trauma and colonial violence, rather than to something inherently dysfunctional about Aboriginal peoples themselves. For example, Melissa acknowledged the widespread problems in Aboriginal communities, but attributed this to the impact of colonialism, "I really hate to say it like this, but a lot of children that come from Aboriginal families, come from a lot of broken homes… because a lot of our grandparents went to residential school." The use of historical explanations for negative aspects of the broad Aboriginal identity helped to protect that identity, and enabled a sense of pride in Aboriginal peoples for having survived colonial attempts at assimilation and cultural genocide[6]. This was related to some parents' insistence on the importance of teaching Aboriginal children the brutal history of colonialism. A good illustration of this was Melissa's outrage that her daughter had heard an account of residential schools from a visiting elder at the AFS which she felt was inaccurate:

> They sweeten it up a little bit, they're like, "Oh…some of the people were…living in a house with all these people they didn't know," "No, they were stolen (laughs) from their reserves, and forced into a residential school, where they were raped of their language and their

[6] The pattern of using colonial history to explain the present challenges in many Aboriginal communities in ways that protected the Aboriginal identity was also identified as a strategy directed towards non-Aboriginal people. For example, Jason suggested that teachers at the AFS needed to understand how colonialism continued to impact Aboriginal peoples and noted that the Aboriginal community is "dealing with all kinds of challenges... the impacts of colonization... so these teachers are unempathetic, [they] do not understand the impacts and are perpetuating the colonial impacts."

culture, and their hair and were not allowed to speak their language!"
and [my daughter's] like, "Wow, that's not what they told us."

The brutal honesty of stories about residential schools is crucial for explaining the severity of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Aboriginal communities. Without accurate knowledge of the harsh treatment of Aboriginal peoples in residential schools, Melissa's daughter, and other students, may not be able to fully understand the current challenges of their Aboriginal communities, or fully appreciate the resilience of Aboriginal peoples in the face of attempted cultural genocide. Indeed, several parents described celebrating Aboriginal resilience as an expected benefit of the AFS. For example, Melissa suggested the AFS would allow Aboriginal students "To celebrate…we're here, look what we've done we've managed to make it through despite everybody's…concern for us…we're still here" and Angela suggested that for her daughter, "Being at this school I think will really help her to celebrate that…we've survived." Emphasizing resilience, or survival, is thus an important way in which participants envisioned establishing a positive Aboriginal identity.

A similar pattern of establishing positive identity emerged in the way that participants spoke about negative Aboriginal stereotypes. For example, a number of participants made generalizations about Aboriginal peoples that could be considered negative stereotypes, but stated them as descriptions of the consequences of marginalization rather than judgements about the inherent dysfunction of Aboriginal peoples. For example, Julie assumed that the AFS would have extra supports because Aboriginal families tend to be low income, Rebecca spoke of "A high percentage of Aboriginal people that are, involved with the ministry [of Children and Family Development]", Laura observed that Aboriginal children "Need more help learning the basics" in school, and Amanda expected the AFS would have more supports for children with special needs designations because it was Aboriginal-focused. In each of these examples, participants emphasized the conditions of Aboriginal peoples, not the qualities of Aboriginal peoples. When participants referred to negative Aboriginal stereotypes held by non-Aboriginal people, they did so in order to reject these negative claims about Aboriginal identity, and assert a positive identity instead. For example, Angela described with outrage how a non-Aboriginal teacher had confided in her, "Oh, you know his

mom's Aboriginal right?" to explain a kindergartener's poor performance in math, an experience which made her become defensive of Aboriginal students' intelligence. Similarly, Laura described how she had "Seen people patronize my [Aboriginal] people, and…I'm like 'Just stop that…we're not stupid, we get it, you don't have to explain it, so many times'." By only referring to negative generalizations of Aboriginal peoples as the consequences of marginalization and rejecting negative stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples, participants were actively working to establish the broad Aboriginal identity as a positive identity.

4.5.2. "Same old, same old": Expectations of specific forms of outgroup mistreatment

The broad Aboriginal category was also associated with information about the specific forms of outgroup mistreatment that Aboriginal peoples could expect to encounter. One common example was the way in which participants connected past experiences of outgroup mistreatment to the present. For example, Jason referred to what he perceived as a condescending relationship between the school board and the Aboriginal community with regard to the AFS as the, "Same old, same old…we're gonna help you poor Indians up, you can't learn, we have to teach you how to build a school." He went on to characterize this patronizing treatment as "How it's always been…when the colonizers came into our land…they came with the intent that [Aboriginal peoples] needed help, and we don't need help" and, "There's no partnership here, it's the same old residential school perpetuation." Many participants employed similar past examples of negative colonial relations, and destructive colonial policies (such as residential schools), as a means of interpreting, and condemning, the present treatment of Aboriginal peoples by outgroups. Importantly, the ability to make such comparisons and interpretations depends in part on an Aboriginal person's knowledge of the specific ways in which Aboriginal peoples have been mistreated historically. Thus, by sharing stories about specific forms of mistreatment that Aboriginal peoples commonly face, members of the broad Aboriginal category gain the ability to interpret opportunities directed at them with a critical eye, and avoid possible mistreatment.

Participants reported many specific forms of mistreatment that Aboriginal people commonly experience, even though outgroup mistreatment was not a focus of my interview questions. Participants frequently brought these topics up on their own when they were describing their hesitations about the AFS. A common pattern was for parents to express skepticism of the (relatively unknown) AFS because of their negative experience in a similarly Aboriginal-focused program in the past. As a result, a majority of the examples of mistreatment participants referred to were of particular relevance to Aboriginal experiences in the education system. One of the most prevalent examples of mistreatment was the experience of forced or unwanted segregation of Aboriginal students in a specialized Aboriginal education program. Several participants described their perception that non-Aboriginal school officials wanted to "Shove all the Indian kids in one room" (Melissa) or "Keep 'em all in a corner… keep our kids in, one group" (Kelly), emphasizing their perception that many Aboriginal-focused programs are negative and forceful interventions into the lives of their children and families. Some participants also told stories of experiencing segregated education programs that were humiliating, "You got centered out and end up in a special class…we're one step down from wearing a bib all the time" (James), that had led to them getting "stuck" (Crystal) in Aboriginal programs even when they had wanted to pursue other courses in high school, that had led to their being discriminated against simply because they were categorized as in a special program (Brian), and that were problematic because they limited Aboriginal students' experiences of other cultures (Kelly).

The most strikingly specific example of expected mistreatment was the phenomenon described by participants of being "pushed through" the school system. Participants' accounts of being "pushed through" followed a consistent pattern where they would describe how non-Aboriginal teachers stereotyped Aboriginal students as academically weak (often in the context of specialized Aboriginal education programs), teachers would then subsequently, and perhaps unconsciously, lower academic standards for Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal students would move through the school system without actually achieving the required level of academic proficiency. Many participants perceived that this experience of being "pushed through" had left them significantly less prepared for high school or university than their non-Aboriginal peers, and at a permanent disadvantage. Thus, the phrase "being pushed through" describes a

complex interaction of various forms of injustice that coalesce to form a highly specific example of expected mistreatment. Despite its complexity and specificity, "being pushed through" was brought up in all but one of the eleven interviews and focus groups, suggesting that this was one of the most common forms of mistreatment participants had experienced. It was also one of the most relevant for participants in naming their apprehensions about the AFS. For example, Kimberley described her decision to send her daughter to the AFS:

> It's an Aboriginal Focus School … so even with myself like I juggled with if it would academically challenge my daughter …and not lower the bar for her … and for her to just kind of go through the system you know, and that does happen with Aboriginal children often.

In a similar example, Andrea referred to "Native schools" where students did not receive a proper high school diploma at the end, severely limiting their options, "There was too much of that…that's what they did to me…I don't want that for my children or my grandchildren." That these participants, and many others like them, could refer to a highly specific form of institutional discrimination as something that happens to members of their group frequently suggests that this is an important piece of information associated with the broad Aboriginal identity.

The consistency in the language of "being pushed through" is further evidence that information about specific forms of mistreatment is associated with the broad Aboriginal identity. For example, participants said, "I feel like Aboriginals get pushed through schools for statistics" (Julie), "I got pushed through the school system" (Erin), "I don't want them to be pushed through anymore" (Andrea) and "Did they just push her through? Did they say she was a good student and yet she wasn't?" (Joseph). The similarity in language suggests that this specific form of discrimination is frequently described and discussed within the Aboriginal community. In a focus group conversation between Lisa and Stephanie about how they felt the school board did not trust the Aboriginal principal of the AFS, Lisa explained how people "Don't realize how critical some of our own people can be about those situations...don't realize how small our First Nations communities are…we gather in the same places and these conversations happen all the time." This suggests that critical conversations about the forms of mistreatment that Aboriginal people have experienced in the past, can expect in the

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future, and should guard themselves against, are a part of the shared life of the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver. In this way, specific expectations of mistreatment are associated with the broad Aboriginal identity.

4.6. "Where Exactly Is This Coming From?": The Broad Aboriginal Category Is Viewed with Suspicion When Perceived as Being Imposed by a Non-Aboriginal Outgroup

One additional example of a specific form of mistreatment participants expected, and were wary to avoid, was when non-Aboriginal people would create their own version of the broad Aboriginal identity and impose it on Aboriginal peoples. This form of mistreatment is unique in that it concerns the construction of the broad Aboriginal category itself. The most relevant example of this for participants was the perception that non-Aboriginal people (i.e. the school board) had control over the AFS, and therefore may be controlling the ways in which the school constructs and embodies the broad Aboriginal category. In her strong opposition to the AFS, Mary quoted local Aboriginal scholar and elder Dr. Lee Brown who had asked "Where exactly is this [the AFS] coming from?" when the AFS was first proposed. Mary then went on to explain that the fact the AFS was the school board's idea "Makes me nervous." Participants spoke in very strong terms of (1) their suspicion of Aboriginal institutions controlled by non-Aboriginal people, (2) their concerns with outgroup constructions of the broad Aboriginal category and (3) the importance of Aboriginal people constructing and controlling the broad Aboriginal category themselves. For some participants, Aboriginal control represented a clear boundary condition of whether they would accept the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity (and support the AFS), or not. Thus, this final theme in the data responds to my third research question by suggesting one condition under which the broad Aboriginal category may be accepted or rejected by Aboriginal peoples.

4.6.1. "The school board wanted to do it": Aboriginal parents are highly suspicious when non-Aboriginal people control institutions that embody the broad Aboriginal category

In general, participants expressed reservations about the broad Aboriginal category when it was perceived to be controlled by non-Aboriginal people or institutions. This was apparent in parents' suspicions of what had motivated the school board (perceived to be comprised of mostly non-Aboriginal people) to initiate the AFS, and then promote it to Aboriginal people with such eagerness. For example, Kelly shared her suspicions of the school board's intentions by relating her experience of people "Tryna convince us that it's okay to keep our kids in, one group" at the AFS to what she imagined Aboriginal parents must have felt when they too were convinced that residential schools would be good for their children. Similarly, the perceived heavy-handedness of the school board in deciding where to locate the AFS was taken by many participants as a sign that the school itself was suspect. Mary recounted how she had been dissuaded from supporting the AFS after hearing that it had been imposed unilaterally on an existing school with little or no consultation of parents with students currently at that school, simply because "The school board wanted to do it." Participants' perception that the non-Aboriginal school board was trying to force Aboriginal parents to support a program related to "Aboriginal" culture raised their suspicions and, for some, was interpreted within the framework of past Aboriginal programs (e.g. residential schools, other Aboriginal education programs) that were also imposed onto Aboriginal students by non-Aboriginal people, with devastating results.

Participants were similarly uncomfortable with non-Aboriginal people holding staff positions in Aboriginal programs. For example, Nicole asked if "Aboriginal people run the [AFS]", Christina asked if the school board was going to run the school and if the teachers would be "First Nations", and Jessica said that she "Sees non-Aboriginal workers working with Aboriginal communities" and she "Just doesn't get it…I just can't understand." Some participants simply equated having Aboriginal teachers in an Aboriginal school with the success of the school and related this to the ability of the Aboriginal community to exercise some collective autonomy as well by having a say in the hiring process. Interestingly, while participants were unanimously opposed to non-Aboriginal teachers in the AFS, no participants expected that a teacher should be from a

specific Aboriginal cultural group. For example, Jessica (who was neither Anishinaabe or Blackfoot) went out of her way to describe her child's teacher at the AFS as "Anishinaabe Blackfoot or something" while saying how much she appreciates "Everything that she contributes" culturally in the classroom. For this parent, and for many others in this sample, membership in the broad Aboriginal category seemed to be a more important criterion for teachers than affiliation with a specific Aboriginal culture.

While most participants agreed that it was crucial to have Aboriginal teachers and leaders in the AFS, several participants suggested Aboriginal identity was not the only important criterion for these positions. One particularly insidious way that non-Aboriginal institutions could impose a problematic version of the broad Aboriginal identity is by hiring Aboriginal teachers or leaders who are disconnected from their teachings, have little Aboriginal cultural knowledge and who may be more likely to promote a homogenized or inaccurate version of Aboriginal culture. Some participants critiqued Aboriginal people who they felt were poor representatives of the broad Aboriginal category, but who had nevertheless been given positions in non-Aboriginal controlled institutions where their job was to represent Aboriginal people or teach Aboriginal culture. For example, Joseph made a strong critique:

> Even our own [Aboriginal] people are startin' to stereotype our own people you know… like you look at the general population how many are raised in non-Native, White homes? They were given up for adoption they were stolen in the sixties scoop…They were raised in residential schools, and these are the people that are teaching us now you know? And what kind of values do they have? They're not ours that's for sure…then you got all these [Aboriginal] people that are graduatin' with different degrees and everything and they're supposed to be experts? Experts at what? You know? It's not our [Aboriginal] experts… my grandmother was my expert.

Joseph's comments express a deep skepticism of whether colonially-disconnected, and Western-educated Aboriginal people can truly be faithful representatives of the broad Aboriginal category. Similarly, Erin criticized those who she perceived to be elite members of the Aboriginal community in Vancouver as not being "Truly in touch with their tradition…where they come from" and as having forgot "Everything their grandparents taught them" after coming to live in an urban setting. She felt their cultural disconnection had manifested most egregiously in the ways they had not followed proper

protocol in setting up the AFS, including their lack of real consultation with the Aboriginal community. Another strong critique of inadequate representatives of the broad Aboriginal category was Melissa's accusation of a "Lack of culture" in the supposedly culture-focused AFS, something which she attributed in part to Aboriginal elders she had seen brought in to the classroom who she "Wasn't even aware that they were, elders…they were not very well-versed in our culture …you know it's a little scary to see like, these are the people who [we're] giving our children over to." These participants' concerns with not only the Aboriginal identity, but also the authenticity of Aboriginal leaders, teachers, and facilitators of Aboriginal culture suggest a critique of Aboriginal people who might be benefitting from, or at least not resisting, the interests of non-Aboriginal outgroups. To these participants, constructions of Aboriginal culture, and Aboriginal institutions that embody these constructions, must be mediated and controlled by Aboriginal people who truly represent the broad Aboriginal category, and are committed to the interests of Aboriginal peoples.

4.6.2. "That's not what Aboriginal people are about": Problems with non-Aboriginal constructions of the broad Aboriginal category

There were several categories of reasons participants gave for their concern with non-Aboriginal control of Aboriginal institutions or non-Aboriginal constructions of the broad Aboriginal category. Some participants were concerned that non-Aboriginal teachers in an Aboriginal program would discriminate against Aboriginal students, and that this would be even more likely if a non-Aboriginal teacher had a class of mostly Aboriginal students. For example, Christina had "A lot of questions" about non-Aboriginal teachers in the AFS:

> Do they know any knowledge about our people, our history…and what are they gonna do for our children for their future? Are they gonna stereotype them? Are they gonna belittle them? Are they gonna not let them move up and just keep them down here?

In a more extreme case, Jason strongly decried "Non-Indigenous people…teaching [Aboriginal] children" as a "Perpetuation of a residential school approach…bringing in other people outside of our community to teach our children." He suggested that by

hiring some non-Aboriginal staff and teachers at the AFS the school was in fact perpetuating colonialism by facilitating "Assimilation, with a bit of a twist." Thus, one concern was that non-Aboriginal teachers in an Aboriginal-focused program would enact many of the same, or even more concerted, forms of discrimination and mistreatment that participants had experienced in mainstream schools.

Many participants also had doubts that Aboriginal cultural practices would truly be supported in Aboriginal programs that were controlled by non-Aboriginal people. This was illustrated by several participants who shared stories about times when they, or someone they knew, had been reprimanded for practicing their culture within a supposedly Aboriginal institution. For example, Amy recounted how an Aboriginal teacher at the AFS had been reprimanded for smudging in the school. When Amy asked another teacher at the school to smudge her one morning she noticed the teacher was very nervous and scared which "Reminded [her] of residential school where we had to sneak around to speak and learn other people's languages." Erin recounted the story of a non-Aboriginal former principal at the AFS who had "Got in real big trouble" from the school board after she helped organize a very meaningful Aboriginal ceremony where parents came and prayed for the school. Erin explained how this experience made her feel that she, as an Aboriginal woman, had even less of a chance of having her requests for more cultural inclusion in the school respected by the school board. Other parents went further and suggested there were incompatibilities between the way they felt an Aboriginal institution should operate according to "Aboriginal ways", and the rules and policies of a European institution like the school board. For example, Brian said he expected that an Aboriginal-focused school would have a difficult time integrating culture within the confines of the school board's procedures and policies and that Aboriginal students, "Wouldn't be able to get the full story", leading to a compromise on the expression of Aboriginal culture in the school.

Perhaps the most serious concern parents had with an Aboriginal institution being controlled by non-Aboriginal people was with how program content would construct Aboriginal culture. For example, Rebecca said her "Very big question" was "What is it that they actually do Aboriginal" at the AFS and Joseph wondered if the AFS would "really" be Aboriginal focus, or perhaps "VSB [school board] focus" or

"Government focus" instead. Many participants were suspicious that non-Aboriginal constructions of Aboriginal culture would not serve the interests of Aboriginal peoples. As one example, some participants critiqued outgroup constructions of Aboriginal culture as inadequate because they felt they did not engage deeply with the true complexity of Aboriginal cultures. For example, Melissa was incensed that a teacher in the AFS made a habit of showing her class episodes of "Raven Tales", a children's cartoon developed by Calgary-based New Machine Studios that depicts stories and legends from a wide variety of Aboriginal cultures (http://www.raventales.com/about-us). In Melissa's opinion, the Raven Tales cartoon was not only age-inappropriate for her daughter but it was also an inadequate and inaccurate depiction of Aboriginal peoples. She described her response when she found her daughter watching Raven Tales videos on YouTube at home:

> I'm like, that's silly that's not what Natives are about that's not, what Aboriginal people are about, you know? It's…very, sixties White man thinking about, (laughs) the way Aboriginal people live and their tipis with their face paint, and their headdress.

To Melissa, the depictions of Aboriginal peoples in Raven Tales are outdated ("sixties"), outgroup-constructed ("White man thinking"), and overly stereotypical, and she questions their value in an Aboriginal-focused classroom. Similarly, in their focus group, Erin and Joseph both critiqued outgroup depictions of Aboriginal peoples as "One-sided" and discussed how non-Aboriginal researchers and authors produce books on Aboriginal peoples that only tell "Their version" of the story. Maintaining Aboriginal control of the story of Aboriginal peoples is important in part because of the implications for being able to build a positive Aboriginal identity around pride in Aboriginal resilience. Outgroup accounts which emphasize cultural loss and the conquest, or assimilation, of Aboriginal peoples do not facilitate the establishment of a positive Aboriginal identity. Finally, some participants also suggested that Aboriginal control of the AFS was important because they did not trust that non-Aboriginal people possessed the knowledge or skills to construct a version of the broad Aboriginal category that would appropriately respect Aboriginal cultural diversity. For example, Erin explained how she felt the school board was not aware of, and had not accommodated, the diversity of the Aboriginal community in the AFS. Thus, participants saw Aboriginal people as both more

trustworthy, and more capable, than non-Aboriginal people to construct the broad Aboriginal category in authentic and appropriate ways.

4.6.3.   "The only way that I would consider it is if the Aboriginal community had control": The importance of Aboriginal control of the broad Aboriginal category

The most obvious solution to participants' concerns about non-Aboriginal control of Aboriginal institutions or constructions of the broad Aboriginal category was for Aboriginal people themselves to have control. Many participants referred to the need for the AFS to be "Driven by [Aboriginal] community inclusion" (Jason), or "People driven" rather than "Chiefs and council…[or] Vancouver School Board driven" (Erin), and that the Aboriginal community should "Make [the AFS] our own" (Laura). Some participants, such as Jessica and Laura, spoke favourably of examples where their home communities had achieved success for Aboriginal students by taking control of their education systems. Jessica even suggested that not being connected to the school board at all would be ideal and went on to explain how she had hoped the AFS would have "Broken away from the [non-Aboriginal school] system completely to avoid all these problems" and in this way serve to promote Aboriginal "Self-determination" and "Empowerment." For some parents like Mary, Aboriginal control was so crucial that the *only* way they would consider the AFS was "If the Aboriginal community had control."

Other participants had less stringent demands for Aboriginal control of the AFS, but still felt strongly that there needed to be more engagement, consultation and collaboration with the Aboriginal community in the ongoing development, and operation of the AFS. Julie brought up the idea of a "review program" for the AFS that would give Aboriginal parents a regular opportunity to assess, critique and offer suggestions that would then be implemented by the school board. Erin shared how she felt personally disrespected, "As an Aboriginal mother" by the perceived lack of real consultation with parents at the school before the location of the AFS was chosen. She suggested that a major oversight of the consultation process had been the fact that it had missed the "Grassroots people", and instead had concentrated on consulting with elite members of the Aboriginal community. She felt that the school board needed "To be thinking of [the AFS] more as a collaboration" with the Aboriginal community, and also suggested that

the school board should do more to facilitate a true partnership because participation in meetings was difficult for Aboriginal people suffering from colonial trauma. Of crucial importance to many participants was that the school board truly prioritize listening to the Aboriginal community. Erin expressed both her concerns, and her hopes, for possible future collaboration with the school board that might truly dignify Aboriginal people by giving them more agency over the way they are represented in the AFS:

> Is [the] Vancouver School Board gonna be able to, come together and put behind all their stereotypes…all their assumptions about who we are, and come to the table, with an open heart, and being able to be receptive…and not just sit there and listen and play around with pens and stuff, but actively listen, and hear what the people have to say, because we're human beings, we just wanna be respected.

5. Discussion

The broad Aboriginal category was widely used in participants' talk and experienced as a meaningful identity by a majority of participants in this sample (RQ #1). Two clear examples were how participants' primary criterion for appropriate teachers, or elders, at the AFS was membership in the broad Aboriginal category (as opposed to membership in a more unique Aboriginal group) and how participants understood their experiences of discrimination exclusively in terms of their membership in the broad Aboriginal category, not their more unique cultural identities. The prevalence of participants endorsing the broad Aboriginal category as a meaningful identity is especially interesting given the incredible diversity of Aboriginal cultures encapsulated within it, and the fact that the broad category originated as a homogenizing misnomer imposed by colonizers (i.e. "Indians", Berkhofer, 1979). There were four distinct ways in which the broad Aboriginal category was constructed as a meaningful identity for participants (RQ #2). These were, (1) as a reflection of the lived experience of the urban Aboriginal community, (2) as a superordinate category with real cultural commonalities including shared practices, norms and values, (3) as a collection of diverse Aboriginal cultural groups in which sub-group diversity contributes to the value of the broad Aboriginal identity, and (4) as a basis for solidarity and the establishment of positive identity around resilience to historical and ongoing mistreatment from outgroups. A final theme in the data (5) suggested that the broad Aboriginal category was most likely to be accepted (RQ #3) when it was perceived to be controlled and constructed by Aboriginal people themselves.

Social psychologists most commonly study intragroup processes of superordinate identity construction and the preservation of subgroup distinctiveness in controlled laboratory settings using quantitative methods (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b). However, these contexts and methods are limited in their ability to examine how members of natural groups themselves construe the bases of self-categorization or construct superordinate identities (Hopkins, 2011). My qualitative analysis of how

Aboriginal parents talk about, and use, the broad Aboriginal category themselves offers a novel means of examining such identity processes. The present findings contribute to past literature in three key ways (1) by describing how subgroup members construct a superordinate category in a manner that effectively balances intragroup commonality with intragroup diversity through the use of social norms that govern respectful intersubgroup relations, (2) by adding to a small but growing literature on how Aboriginal peoples meet their identity needs in an urban context, and (3) by going beyond research on the role of superordinate identities in decreasing intersubgroup conflict to suggest how such identities can also organize expectations of shared outgroup mistreatment and provide a basis for collective resistance. In general, this study contributes to research in the Social Identity Approach by using novel methods in a novel context to demonstrate identity processes that have mostly been theorized and tested in highly controlled laboratory settings using quantitative methods.

5.1. The Broad Aboriginal Category as an Effective Superordinate and Multicultural Identity

Much research in social psychology has demonstrated that when subgroups are de-emphasized and individuals from different groups are recategorized into a more inclusive, common identity, this promotes intergroup harmony (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). This is in part because formerly conflicting groups now see each other as members of the same ingroup, activating psychological processes of ingroup favouritism which improve positive attitudes towards fellow common group members (Gaertner et al., 2009). While a superordinate identity such as the broad Aboriginal category can promote intergroup harmony amongst subgroups, other research has suggested that such identities can also have a "dark side" for subgroups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy & Pearson, 2016). For example, when a common ingroup identity is constructed in such a way as to subsume, replace, or emphasize the similarities between subgroup identities, subgroups may feel their distinctiveness is under threat and respond with hostility toward other subgroups (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b; Crisp, Stone & Hall, 2006). Research has also suggested that a superordinate identity can present a challenge for intragroup relations to the extent

that it increases competition amongst subgroups to claim that their respective identities are more prototypical of the broad category, a phenomenon referred to as "ingroup projection" (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2007).

How then does the broad Aboriginal category manage to function as a meaningful identity for participants in this sample? Social psychological research has also identified several factors that influence the extent to which superordinate identities may encourage intersubgroup harmony by not threatening subgroup distinctiveness. When the superordinate identity is represented as complex in the way it is comprised of diverse subgroups, it is less likely that subgroups will compete to be represented as prototypical (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Peker, Crisp & Hogg, 2010; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003). Aboriginal participants in this sample did construct the broad Aboriginal category as complex, as evidenced by the way they explicitly valued connecting with, and respecting, many diverse Aboriginal cultures. Indeed, participants seemed to conceive of the broad Aboriginal category as a collection of "combinable and complementary subgroups that are indispensable for defining the common identity, similar to a mosaic or jigsaw puzzle" (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2016, p. 9). The extent to which a superordinate identity explicitly values intragroup diversity can also determine whether the identity will threaten subgroup distinctiveness (Crisp et al., 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b; Verkuyten, 2006; Dovidio et al., 2009). Participants in this sample seemed to hold a deep respect for all Aboriginal cultures, and saw connecting with Aboriginal cultures or languages other than their heritage cultures as a means of connecting with their own, more broadly constructed Aboriginal identity. In addition to confirming past research on what makes for an effective superordinate identity, the qualitative design of this study also extended this research by illuminating the role of norms associated with a superordinate identity to help ensure respectful intersubgroup relations and mitigate against distinctiveness threat. For example, several participants mentioned norms for balancing the representation of Aboriginal cultures within Aboriginal education programs, maintaining subgroup distinctiveness and facilitating respectful cross-cultural connection. Thus, it seemed that rather than threatening subgroup distinctiveness, the broad Aboriginal identity was constructed in such a way that subgroup distinctiveness was explicitly valued, and protected.

The perceived clarity of a superordinate identity may be another factor that contributes to whether subgroup identities are threatened by the superordinate identity or not. Whereas some scholars (e.g. Taylor & Kachanoff, 2015) have suggested ways in which a lack of cultural identity clarity presents a major challenge for disadvantaged groups negotiating identities in a multicultural context, other evidence suggests that a somewhat unclear superordinate identity may make it more difficult for any one group to see themselves as prototypical of the broad category, thus reducing intersubgroup competition (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Ufkes, Otten, van der Zee, Giebels & Dovidio, 2012; Waldzus et al., 2003). The incredible cultural diversity of Aboriginal cultures, the lack of a clear Aboriginal majority subgroup[7], and an explicit value for intragroup diversity all make it likely that the broad Aboriginal identity will be difficult to define clearly. This was illustrated by several participants who described how Aboriginal cultures had much in common, but also many differences. Furthermore, Aboriginal cultural commonalities described by participants tended to be represented in abstract terms (e.g. respect for mother earth, respectful interpersonal relationships) or as shared practices that could be expressed differently by each unique Aboriginal culture (e.g. all Aboriginal people drum, but in different ways). Thus, a lack of identity clarity may also help explain why the broad Aboriginal identity did not appear to threaten subgroup identities, or privilege any specific Aboriginal subgroups as prototypical of the broad category (Waldzus et al., 2003).

In general, Aboriginal participants in this study had little trouble identifying with both the broad Aboriginal identity and their more unique heritage culture, suggesting many participants had a "dual identity" that enabled people to embrace both the commonality of the broad category and the unique identity offered by their Aboriginal subgroup (Dovidio, et al., 2009; Hopkins, 2011). This, along with the norms for maintaining subgroup distinctiveness and lack of identity clarity, suggests that the broad Aboriginal identity could be thought of as a model multicultural identity (Verkuyten,

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[7] While there are certainly differences in size and relative power between various Aboriginal subgroups, none of these groups represent a clear "majority group" in the same way that Euro-Canadians are the majority group within the Canadian national context. The marginalization of Aboriginal peoples within the wider context of Canadian society also means that any potential majority group within the broad Aboriginal category remains a minority group within Canada.

2006). Whereas most research on the negotiation of dual identities, common ingroup identities or multicultural identities is conducted in majority-minority contexts (e.g. immigrant minority groups and native Dutch in the Netherlands, Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2016), this study suggests that novel insights could be gained by examining these identity processes in contexts such as the broad Aboriginal category, which lack a clear majority group.

5.2. The Psychological and Political Importance of a Broad Aboriginal Identity That Facilitates Identification with Specific Heritage Cultures

In this study, the broad Aboriginal identity and participants' more unique heritage culture identities clearly were not mutually exclusive. This is important for both psychological and political reasons. As discussed above, the broad Aboriginal identity may be a somewhat unclear identity because of how it embodies Aboriginal diversity. While an unclear broad Aboriginal identity may facilitate subgroup relations, research also suggests that unclear identities can have negative implications for well-being (Salzman & Halloran, 2004; Usborne & de la Sablonnière, 2014; Usborne & Taylor, 2010; 2012). A more specific Aboriginal cultural identity (e.g. Cree, Squamish) may provide more clarity than a broadly constructed Aboriginal identity because of its deep roots in a particular territory and association with highly specific cultural practices, stories and language (Simpson, 2014). For example, a person of Haida heritage may be able to learn their traditional Haida language (Xaayda Kil), gain the ability to converse with community elders who still speak Xaayda Kil, and become familiar with the Haida-specific traditional teachings and worldviews that have been intimately shaped by the traditional territory of the Haida people for millennia. If a broad Aboriginal identity were to somehow supersede this person's identity as a Haida person, this would clearly represent a loss, simply because the broad Aboriginal identity is not so intimately and ancestrally connected to a specific territory. The clear connection to a specific territory embedded in unique Aboriginal cultural identities is what drives some Aboriginal people's beliefs that Aboriginal education must be exclusively heritage-specific and directly linked with ancestral lands. Scholars such as Glen Coulthard (2014), Leanne Simpson (2014) and Derek Rasmussen (2016) contend that what is commonly

considered Indigenous education (the AFS would be an example) is "not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes" (Deloria, 2001, pp. 58-59; as cited in Simpson, 2014, p. 9). These scholars advocate traditional Indigenous forms of land-based education as a means of resistance to Eurocentric education models[8] which they believe serve to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their communities in part by removing Indigenous bodies from the land (Rasmussen, 2016; Simpson & Coulthard, 2014). Disconnection from ancestral land has political implications for asserting Aboriginal title, negotiating land claims, and preserving culture (Brealey, 2002; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox & Coulthard, 2014; Wilson & Peters, 2005). Thus, the broad Aboriginal identity should not replace more unique, land-based heritage culture identities as these have both psychological and political importance.

Both the potential psychological and political limitations of the broad Aboriginal identity may be overcome to the extent that the identity facilitates, rather than inhibits, connection with specific, land-based Aboriginal cultural identities, as it seemed to for participants in this study. For example, several participants with children in the AFS commented on how they appreciated one way in which their children's teacher was communicating a general Aboriginal value for "the land" by encouraging students to learn the name and location of their heritage First Nation's territory on a map pinned to the classroom wall, and then introduce themselves each morning in terms of this land-based identity. In this example, the broad Aboriginal identity and associated general value for land, facilitated, rather than undermined, students' connections to their specific territories and heritage identities. The broad and specific levels of Aboriginal identity, as constructed in this way, were thus mutually reinforcing, rather than mutually exclusive. However, this may not always be the case. The relationship between the broad Aboriginal identity and specific heritage identities depends entirely on how the broad Aboriginal identity is constructed. One area for future research would be to examine the conditions under which constructions of the broad Aboriginal identity appropriately

[8] It is interesting to note that very few participants in this study expressed any hesitation around the general concept of an Aboriginal-focused school. One possible exception was Joseph, a Shuswap elder and grandfather, who expressed his skepticism of university-educated Aboriginal teachers and experts, stating instead that his "grandmother was [his] expert."

respect intragroup diversity, or do indeed disconnect Indigenous peoples from ancestral lands by subsuming subgroup identities. For example, what are the implications for heritage culture identification or connection to land if the broad Aboriginal identity is defined by a non-Aboriginal outgroup, or defined to emphasize cultural homogeneity?

5.3. The Broad Aboriginal Identity Meets Identity Needs in an Urban Context

This research also adds to a small but growing literature on how Aboriginal peoples effectively meet their identity needs in the diverse cultural milieu of an urban Aboriginal community (Environics Institute, 2010; Frideres, 1998; Peters & Anderson, 2013). Participants spoke of the Aboriginal community in Vancouver as an important part of their lives that included the celebration of diverse Aboriginal cultures, solidarity and information sharing about outgroup mistreatment, and significant social interaction and support. This constant, direct interaction amongst ingroup members from the broad Aboriginal category, probably more than ingroup members from one's specific heritage culture, serves to create the Aboriginal community through the sharing of lived experience and makes "Aboriginal" more than an abstract category encompassing the hundreds of cultural groups across Canada. This shared lived experience of an urban Aboriginal community is an important addition to the perception of common fate and shared history that all Aboriginal peoples do share. The intergroup context of an urban Aboriginal community, with arguably more opportunities for interaction with non-Aboriginal people than in a reserve community in a rural area, also helps to explain why the broad Aboriginal category was meaningful for participants. As Self-Categorization Theory has long pointed out, specific social categories become more relevant in certain contexts when the similarities within a given ingroup category are greater than the differences between the ingroup and an outgroup, a phenomenon referred to as "comparative fit" (Reicher, et al., 2010; Turner et al., 1987). Aboriginal sociologist James Frideres (2008) understands this phenomenon well when he explains that a broad "Aboriginal identity is formed in the crucible of interaction with outside others" (p. 321). Thus, the broad Aboriginal identity may have special relevance in a city like Vancouver where comparisons are constantly being made between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

peoples, despite a significant degree of concentrated of cultural diversity amongst the Aboriginal ingroup (Restoule, 2000). This also suggests that the broad Aboriginal identity may have less relevance for Aboriginal peoples living on a reserve in a rural area where there is less contact with non-Aboriginal people and the differences within the community, or with nearby Aboriginal groups, may be more salient. Exploring potential differences in the endorsement of the broad Aboriginal identity between urban, and rural Aboriginal people is another area for possible future research (Frideres, 2008).

The broad Aboriginal identity may also have special relevance in urban contexts for those Aboriginal people who have been dislocated from their heritage cultures and traditional territories. Over half of Aboriginal peoples in Canada reside in urban centres (AANDC, 2015b) and many Aboriginal city-dwellers feel disconnected from their heritage communities (Environics Institute, 2010), both because of their physical dislocation and intergenerational cultural loss through residential schools (TRC, 2015). Indeed, many of the participants in this study expressed their interest in the AFS in terms of their desire to reconnect their families with their heritage cultures. Opportunities to participate in Aboriginal culture in an urban centre are therefore a valuable, and for some people their only, means of maintaining or developing a cultural identity, which research has consistently linked to well-being (Corenblum, 2014; Salzman & Halloran, 2004; Smith & Silva, 2011; Usborne & Taylor, 2010; 2012).

However, the significant cultural diversity in urban Aboriginal communities makes it very challenging for Aboriginal cultural programs to provide content that is relevant to every person's unique Aboriginal heritage identity. One way this challenge is overcome is through the construction, and embrace, of a broad Aboriginal identity that both emphasizes the perceived commonalities of all Aboriginal cultures (e.g. respect for mother earth) while simultaneously embodying a deep respect for the diversity within the superordinate Aboriginal category. In the absence of opportunities for an urban Aboriginal person to connect with their specific heritage cultural identity, they may be able to meet many of their identity-related needs (e.g. belongingness, normative guidance, sense of meaning) by connecting with a broadly constructed version of Aboriginal culture, or even the cultural practices or teachings of non-heritage Aboriginal cultures (Frideres, 1998). Indeed, several participants suggested that the broad

Aboriginal identity was a meaningful identity to them precisely because of their disconnection from their traditional territory and their participation in the urban Aboriginal community. For these participants, and many others, it was an attractive feature of the AFS that it sought to "[emphasize] the shared values, experiences and histories of all Aboriginal peoples as well as the uniqueness of individual First Nations" (Vancouver School Board, 2014, p. 3). Despite the problems of an exclusive connection with the broad Aboriginal identity discussed above, connecting with a broad Aboriginal identity will likely be more beneficial for individual well-being than not having any cultural identity to connect with at all.

5.4. The Broad Aboriginal Category as a Basis for Resistance to Outgroup Mistreatment

An important critique of the broad Aboriginal identity is that it may inhibit resistance to colonialism by assimilating and depoliticizing Aboriginal peoples. For example, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2005) are critical of Indigenous peoples who embrace the Canadian constitutional category of "Aboriginal" in lieu of identification with any "cultural or social ties to their Indigenous community or culture or homeland" (p. 599). They argue that an "Aboriginal" identity is "purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state's attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic" (p. 598) and see such broad categorizations of Aboriginal peoples as "a powerful assault on Indigenous identities" (p. 599). Some Indigenous groups in Canada have similarly rejected both the term "Aboriginal" and the associated broad identity as an example of assimilation, either by outlawing its use within their communities[9] (NationTalk, 2008) or requesting that journalists stop using the term when they report on Indigenous stories (Welch, 2014; Ward, 2015). Similarly, Martel and Brossard (2008) call attention to the homogenizing effect of some versions of a broad Aboriginal identity in their research on

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[9] In 2008, the Anishnabek Nation, a confederacy of 42 First Nations in Ontario officially prohibited the term "Aboriginal" from being used in their nation. As Chief Patrick Madahbee of Aundeck Omni Kaning said: "Referring to ourselves as Anishinabek is the natural thing to do because that is who we are. We are not Indians, natives, or aboriginal. We are, always have been and always will be, Anishinabek" (NationTalk, 2008, para. 4).

incarcerated Aboriginal women's experiences in Canadian prisons. They argue that Aboriginal culture-focused programs in Canadian prisons can be oppressive when they construct an "oversimplified, over-generalized version of Aboriginal identity, and impose it on [their] Aboriginal populations" (p. 344), increasingly requiring Aboriginal inmates to participate in such programs as a condition of their release. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Martel and Brossard find that under these conditions of duress, most of their Aboriginal participants accepted the prison's hegemonic construction of Aboriginal culture, even though it clearly homogenized the diversity of Aboriginal peoples with a monolithic construction of "traditional" Aboriginal culture. Furthermore, only a small minority of Aboriginal inmates in their sample expressed a politicized Aboriginal identity that enabled them to make claims for better treatment or resist their subordination and loss of autonomy within the prison. Martel and Brossard argue that this depoliticization of Aboriginal inmates may be linked to the way in which cultural programs in Canadian prisons construct an apolitical Aboriginal identity.

While these critiques are valid and important, in each of these examples the homogenizing and depoliticizing nature of the broad Aboriginal identity is the result of outgroups constructing the broad Aboriginal identity on their terms. When the broad Aboriginal identity is constructed by Aboriginal peoples themselves it can serve as a basis for resistance to outgroup mistreatment, and promote both the politicization of Aboriginal peoples and the preservation of Aboriginal cultures. One way participants in this sample constructed the broad Aboriginal identity in clearly political terms was as a response to shared outgroup mistreatment. For example, many participants felt that the "Aboriginal community" in Vancouver should be consulted on matters of importance for Aboriginal education, partly because this would enable them to oppose the further mistreatment of Aboriginal students in the education system. A broadly constructed Aboriginal community presents a stronger political force to represent the interests of Aboriginal people than would a numerically smaller community of Aboriginal people with a more specific cultural background (e.g. the Nisga'a community in Vancouver), and thus provides an important political advantage in this context. While the phenomenon of diverse subgroups with a common oppressor banding together to increase their collective power is a well-documented form of resistance to oppression in post-colonial scholarship (commonly referred to as "strategic essentialism", Spivak, 1990), this

phenomenon has received less attention in social psychological studies of superordinate identity, which tend to focus on how superordinate identities can help reduce intergroup conflict between subgroups, and ignore how superordinate categories could also be a basis for collective action. Participants' constructions of the broad Aboriginal identity as a response to shared mistreatment and a basis for collective resistance exemplify a phenomenon at the intersection of social psychological research on superordinate identities and collective action, and suggest possible areas of future inquiry. Future studies could integrate these two areas of research to understand how subgroup identities are negotiated within the context of a superordinate identity in the service of fostering collective resistance to a common oppressor. How might processes such as ingroup projection or subgroup distinctiveness threat serve to undermine the effectiveness of a superordinate category's collective resistance, and what strategies might mitigate against these risks to superordinate identity?

The construction of the broad Aboriginal identity in response to shared outgroup mistreatment is also connected to several important psychological predictors of collective action. Most relevant for this analysis was a sense of shared collective identity amongst all Aboriginal peoples, a necessary condition of collective action (Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez & de Weerd, 2002; Haslam & Reicher, 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Significantly, shared mistreatment by outgroups was a key basis for this collective identity; participants spoke of their experience of discrimination and injustice exclusively in terms of the broad Aboriginal category. Participants discussed the myriad ways in which they had come to expect Aboriginal students to be mistreated within the education system (including highly specific examples of systemic oppression and discrimination), all of which were met with outrage and a sense of injustice by parents. Perceptions of injustice are another important predictor of collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008), providing further evidence to suggest that for many Aboriginal participants in this sample the broad Aboriginal identity was constructed in a way that is consistent with a politicized identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). While participants did not speak directly about

engaging in collective action on behalf of Aboriginal peoples[10] (this was not a focus of interview questions), these data do suggest a political dimension to their constructions of the broad Aboriginal identity.

Contrary to claims that the broad Aboriginal identity may homogenize Aboriginal cultures, participants in this sample constructed the broad Aboriginal identity in a way that not only prevented intragroup homogenization through norms to maintain subgroup distinctiveness but also promoted cultural preservation by widening the sphere of acceptable cultural connection. With the unprecedented loss of Aboriginal cultures and languages due to colonial policies such as residential schools, acts of cultural connection can also be thought of as subtle forms of resistance to assimilation. A particularly relevant example was Amy's story of learning a non-heritage language (Cowichan) in residential school. This was an act of resistance in part because it took place in a context that was created to ensure the assimilation and silencing of Aboriginal cultures, languages and identities. Such stories of resistance within residential schools are important to tell alongside the predominant narrative of residential schools where staff promoted violent intragroup dynamics between Aboriginal students which served to prevent effective collective resistance (Matheson, Bombay, Haslam, & Anisman, 2016). The common practice amongst participants of connecting with non-heritage Aboriginal cultures and languages could also be interpreted as an attempt to valorize, respect, and preserve as much cultural and linguistic diversity within the broad Aboriginal category as possible. This action becomes political in the face of ongoing threats of assimilation for Aboriginal cultures, and the impending extinction of a majority of Aboriginal languages in Canada (First Peoples' Culture Council, 2014). These acts of quiet resistance to assimilation may contribute to the building of collective movements, which counteract colonial assimilation to the extent that they become a source of collective pride and empowerment as Aboriginal people share stories of resistance and remind themselves of the resilience of Aboriginal cultures (Wright, 2010). As Leanne Simpson (2015, para.

[10] One year after data collection for this study was completed, a group of Aboriginal parents from the AFS took collective action to oppose the school board's potential closure of the AFS by writing an open letter addressed to the school board and organizing several protests. This collective action was clearly based on perceived injustices towards Aboriginal people of the sort commonly described by participants in this research and both the protest and open letter constructed the issues at hand in terms of the broad Aboriginal category.

19) explains, "When my Indigeneity grows I fall more in unconditional love with my homeland, my family, my culture, my language...and I have more emotional capital to fight and protect what is meaningful to me." Subtle acts of resistance such as this have received very little attention in the psychological study of collective action and present another interesting avenue of future research (Wright, 2010).

5.5. Variability in Knowledge of and Value for Traditional Cultural Sharing Protocol

The phenomenon of sharing Aboriginal cultures and languages widely within the broad Aboriginal category also raises issues related to traditional protocols of cultural sharing. For example, in some Aboriginal cultures a traditional protocol for cultural sharing may include securing permission from a song's author to sing it, or performing a ceremony whereby such a song is "gifted" to another person, giving them the right to perform this song. While an Aboriginal person may find it meaningful for themselves or their children to learn the teachings, songs, or languages of a non-heritage Aboriginal culture, members of that culture may see this as an unacceptable disrespect for protocol, and an unwelcome cultural appropriation. However, many Aboriginal peoples may be unaware of such protocols (the reported cultural practices of many participants suggested a general disregard or ignorance of such norms to respect cultural ownership) as a result of disconnection from their teachings. Alternatively, Aboriginal people may be aware of these protocols, but choose to disregard them because they find them unnecessary or overly cumbersome in an urban context where a high degree of cultural sharing is normative. As author and politician Wab Kinew (2015, p. 197) recounts in a story about being criticized by an elder for teaching the Indigenous language of Anishinaabemowin despite not being a fluent speaker himself, "With a language in decline, we [do] not have the luxury of waiting for perfect language teachers to come along. Instead, each of us should do our best to spread the knowledge we [have]." This sentiment was echoed in the responses of participants like Stephanie who felt that a broad Aboriginal culture emerged in urban settings out of the amalgamation of "What different people bring to the table" in terms of their own unique cultural knowledge.

The observed variability in participants' knowledge and value for cultural sharing protocols within the broad Aboriginal identity reflects an interplay between the sometimes contradictory goals of meeting identity needs in an urban context and maintaining subgroup distinctiveness by enforcing norms of cultural exclusivism. The varying importance participants placed on intragroup norms that prescribe the limits of cultural sharing exemplifies the evolving and socially constructed nature of collective identities, and the norms that facilitate intersubgroup relations. Future research could explore this variation in knowledge and practice of cultural sharing protocols, examining the extent to which individuals consciously adapt such protocols to meet the needs of certain contexts and comparing the importance and use of such protocols in urban and rural contexts. Furthermore, research could examine the extent to which Aboriginal cultural teachers' use of sharing protocols differs when sharing with other Aboriginal people compared to when sharing with non-Aboriginal people.

5.6. Implications for Broadly Aboriginal-Focused Institutions

There are several implications of this study for broadly constructed Aboriginal culture-focused programs. The significant cultural diversity within urban Aboriginal communities makes it difficult for institutions to fund or support cultural programming that is relevant to every Aboriginal cultural group represented in the urban community (Frideres, 1998). Furthermore, the perception that there is no unified "Aboriginal culture", and the concern that attempts to offer cultural programming that promotes a broadly constructed Aboriginal identity will be met with opposition by Aboriginal community members, could discourage school boards or cities from funding any such culture-focused programs because they are perceived to be too politically risky. In contrast, this study shows that parents in this sample were widely supportive of the broad Aboriginal identity and expected the AFS would be able to embody both the commonalities, and the diversity, of Aboriginal cultures in ways that would be meaningful and appropriate as a means of cultural connection for their children. However, for many participants, their support for the AFS was contingent upon Aboriginal peoples themselves having control over such constructions of the broad Aboriginal identity. Indeed, one participant explicitly

stated that the only way she would support the AFS was if, "the Aboriginal community had control." Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education programs in cities may take various forms but participants in this study were adamant that the AFS should be able to hire Aboriginal teachers and staff, that the Aboriginal community should have a say in selecting these Aboriginal teachers and staff on the basis of their community involvement and cultural knowledge, and that the school board should facilitate greater involvement from Aboriginal parents and elders in the classroom (Neufeld et al., 2016). Additional possibilities for increasing Aboriginal control in Aboriginal education include creating an Aboriginal advisory committee with significant influence in school boards' Aboriginal education policies (e.g. drafting and implementing Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements, distribution of Targeted Aboriginal Funds), and several models for this already exist in some BC school districts (see Neufeld et al., 2016). Beyond control of Aboriginal-focused institutions, it is also important that Aboriginal peoples themselves are able to construct the broad Aboriginal identity on their own terms. Aboriginal peoples are best positioned to tell their own stories and histories, to effectively navigate the complexities of respectful relations with diverse Aboriginal cultures, and to defend against the possible misuse of a broad Aboriginal identity for the purposes of homogenization, assimilation or depoliticization. Aboriginal control of the broad Aboriginal identity, and institutions that embody this identity, is also crucial for reducing the perpetuation of colonial harms and outgroup mistreatment associated with this identity. Finally, this analysis suggests that non-Aboriginal controlled institutions seeking to engage with Aboriginal people have an extra burden of responsibility to learn about the specific forms of past mistreatment that will likely be made salient in the context of the programs or institutions intended to serve Aboriginal people. For example, many participants described their experiences being "pushed through" the school system and unfairly disadvantaged in this way. The school board could greatly improve its relationship with the Aboriginal community and begin to rebuild trust by listening well to Aboriginal people and working hard to understand the complexities of specific past harms such as "being pushed through." This knowledge could be communicated widely within the school board, and would hopefully enable teachers, staff and administrators to work proactively against the possibility that their programs will in fact perpetuate past harms against Aboriginal peoples, or be perceived as doing so.

5.7. Limitations

The implications of this research must be considered in light of several limitations. Though this study aimed to recruit a range of participants from various schools and preschools in the neighborhood of the AFS, participants ultimately represent a convenience sample. However, this sample was of medium size for a qualitative study and there are no obvious reasons to believe participants were not representative of other parents in the Aboriginal community in Vancouver. While generalizability to a population in the usual statistical sense is not a realistic goal of most qualitative research, findings in one context may nevertheless be *transferable* to other contexts with similar features (Carcary, 2009). In this sense, findings from my analysis may be transferable to the contexts of other culturally diverse urban Aboriginal communities and broadly Aboriginal-focused institutions in Canada where urban Aboriginal parents are negotiating the tensions between Aboriginal commonality and diversity, supporting one another in the shared experience of discrimination, resisting ongoing discrimination and colonialism and struggling for control of how Aboriginal cultures are constructed. Another factor that may have affected participants' responses was my identity as a non-Aboriginal, White, male in a position of relative economic and racial privilege. This dynamic of the data collection context may have made participants feel uncomfortable or less willing to share certain aspects of their experiences, thus presenting another potential limitation to the depth of these data. However, there were no clear indications that participants felt uncomfortable during interviews or focus groups or in what ways this intergroup context may have affected participant responses. I shared food and small talk with participants before each focus group and all four interviews to build some initial rapport and participants generally seemed to speak with ease and candour, sometimes sharing very personal stories of abuse, discrimination and historical trauma. My identity as an outgroup member may have also created an intergroup context which made participants' membership in the broad Aboriginal category more salient in comparison to my membership in the broad non-Aboriginal category. This may have made it more likely that participants would speak in terms of the broad Aboriginal category and suggests that this analysis may have limited generalizability outside of intergroup contexts. However, such intergroup contexts are a constant feature of urban Aboriginal life and thus are not irrelevant. Future research could explore if there are differences in the

meaning and usefulness of the broad Aboriginal category in contexts which are more exclusively intragroup (e.g. with an Aboriginal interviewer). Finally, while this analysis included some forms of credibility checks (Elliot et al., 1999), these could have been more formalized, for example by including a more rigorous approach to member checking (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). The inclusion of numerous quotes and examples in the written analysis also gives the reader some ability to assess for themselves if my interpretations of the data are reasonable (Elliot et al., 1999).

5.8. Towards a More Robust Integration of the Social Identity Approach and Studies of Colonial Impacts

The Social Identity Approach in social psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987; Reicher et al., 2010) provided a well-theorized framework within which to understand how Aboriginal participants constructed a broad Aboriginal identity. This approach has produced much research on issues of intergroup conflict related to nationalism, racism, sexism, and collective action, but there has been comparatively little application of this theoretical perspective to the identity-related outcomes of colonialism. While some scholarship exists that applies social identity concepts to the impact of colonization on cultural identity clarity (Taylor, 1997; 2002; Taylor & de la Sablonnière, 2015; Taylor & Usborne, 2010), perceived discrimination and Aboriginal well-being (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010; 2014b), and the impacts of residential schools on Aboriginal intragroup dynamics (Matheson et al., 2016), further integration of the Social Identity Approach and scholarship on the impacts of colonialism would take both fields in new and profitable directions. The qualitative and community-based approach to this research in an Aboriginal community also adds richness and complexity to theoretical perspectives in the Social Identity Approach, including research on superordinate identities, intragroup relations and collective action, which have been developed using mostly quantitative and laboratory methods. This study demonstrates the robustness of past work in these areas, while also suggesting new opportunities for future research. For example, the construction of the broad Aboriginal identity in part as a response to outgroup mistreatment situates this research at the nexus of inter- and intra- group relations, an area of research that remains understudied (Dovidio, 2013).

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Furthermore, research into the intersubgroup dynamics of disadvantaged groups in colonial contexts could expand understandings of how identities shift in response to new intergroup relations, and how superordinate identities can be a basis for increased collective power (e.g. strategic essentialism) in addition to serving as a means of reducing intersubgroup conflict. As Matheson and colleagues (2016) point out, such research is important because a better understanding of how Aboriginal peoples may regain, and maintain, a sense of shared identity after colonial policies such as residential schools have undermined their intragroup dynamics, may contribute to Aboriginal empowerment and healing. Finally, it is important to explore the concepts and processes theorized in the Social Identity Approach (primarily developed in Western and European contexts) in a wide variety of cultural contexts. Social identity-based research in Aboriginal contexts may require novel methods (e.g. qualitative) and approaches (e.g. community-based research), but when such studies find support for the self-categorization, social identification and collective behavior processes predicted by a Social Identity Approach they demonstrate the robustness of this theoretical perspective (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011).

5.9. Conclusion

In a time of rapid globalization and urbanization characterized by powerful intergroup pressures of colonization, acculturation, assimilation and discrimination, collective identities around the world are constantly being threatened, and forced to change in response. For Aboriginal peoples, the shared experience of colonialism and unprecedented migration to communities of concentrated Aboriginal cultural diversity in urban centres has caused the broadly constructed Aboriginal identity to take on new meaning (Frideres, 1998; 2008). In this study, I used a qualitative approach to analyze how urban Aboriginal parents' talk about the broad Aboriginal identity in the context of an Aboriginal-focused school and elucidate several ways in which the broad Aboriginal category represents a meaningful identity for Aboriginal people. The broad Aboriginal identity was meaningful to participants as an expression of the lived experience of the urban Aboriginal community, as a shared cultural identity that both recognized cultural commonalities and embraced the value of Aboriginal cultural diversity, and as a basis for

solidarity in oppression and resistance to outgroup mistreatment. This analysis is important because examining the construction of collective identities is crucial for understanding how the social world is both constituted, and transformed, by social groups (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). In particular, the bases of category construction determine the contours of what is possible in terms of political mobilization and therefore present an important avenue by which groups may either work to engage, or suppress, collective social transformation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). If social categories are to be mobilized in ways that promote collective freedom and enable people to have their psychological and social needs met, it is of vital importance that their collective identities are represented on their own terms. Thus, as this study clearly shows, what is crucial for the broad Aboriginal identity to contribute to the liberation and empowerment of Aboriginal peoples is that constructions of this identity must be controlled by Aboriginal peoples themselves.

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Appendix A.

Research Agreement

Community members' perceptions of Aboriginal focus education

February 24, 2014

The collaborators on this research project are:

Scott Neufeld
Principal Investigator, MA candidate, Department of Psychology, SFU

Dr. Michael Schmitt
Faculty advisor, Associate professor, Department of Psychology, SFU

Vonnie Hutchingson
Principal, MacDonald Elementary/Aboriginal Focus School, VSB

We agree to conduct the above research project with the following understandings:

1. The purposes of this research project, as discussed with and understood by the collaborators, are:

    1. To investigate two key research questions:
        - What are the perceptions of the Aboriginal Focus School (AFS) held by parents in the community?
        - What have experiences of the AFS been like so far for parents/staff at the school?
    2. To use these findings to inform the school on how to better serve current students as well as attract more families to the school.
    3. To use these findings to assist the AFS in updating promotional materials to more effectively connect with parents in the community.
    4. To communicate findings to the broader community in order to raise awareness of the school, and address what we see as misperceptions or overlooked benefits of the AFS.

2. The scope of this research project is to explore these questions with parents of children at the AFS, parents of children at MacDonald but not the AFS, parents of pre-school aged children and children in grades K-4 who live in the area but have not registered their children at MacDonald or the AFS and relevant staff at MacDonald/the AFS, including the two AFS teachers. If new groups/interviews are to be added to this project the three collaborators must first agree to the changes and appropriate approval must be granted by SFU and the VSB in the form of a research amendment. to be used in this project are interactive focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

3. Community participation will occur in several ways. We will collaborate with key representatives from local organizations to recruit neighborhood parents (Aboriginal Head Start, Strong Start, Britannia elementary). Because this research has implications for the broader community, we will carefully consider feedback from community members and allow their insight to shape the project as it progresses. Furthermore, input from an array of relevant stakeholders (e.g. William Lindsay, Director of SFU Office of Aboriginal Peoples, Ron Johnston, Director of SFU Office of Indigenous Education etc.) has already been solicited and integrated into the design of the project. When the data have been analyzed initially, select participants will be brought in as "member checks" to assess the accuracy of preliminary interpretations. At the end of the study, the collaborators will organize community forums and public presentations to discuss the results with relevant community members.

4. Information collected is to be handled in these agreed ways:

   - All three collaborators will participate in the initial phase of discussion, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from focus groups and interviews. Any reports or publications of the results from the study must receive approval from all three collaborators before publication and/or presentation.
   - At the end of the study, a plain-language summary of the results will be provided to all interested participants and community members upon request. In particular, an abstract of the results will be provided to the VSB.
   - At least one public forum/presentation will be held in the community to share results from the project with participants in the study and anyone who is interested.
   - Findings from the project will be used as much as possible to inform and update promotional materials for the Aboriginal Focus School.
   - Scott will use the data from this project as the basis for his MA thesis. He will consult with Vonnie during the writing process and a final draft of the thesis will be provided to Vonnie for her review and approval before official submission.
   - The three collaborators will use the results from the project to co-author an academic paper to be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Other means of sharing the results of this study may include academic talks or a poster at a psychology conference.

5. Protocols for recruitment, informed consent, anonymization of data and confidentiality of data will be followed as laid out in the "study details" document submitted to and approved by the SFU Office of Research Ethics (ORE) and the VSB research board.

6. Project progress will be communicated via periodic emails and scheduled meetings with Michael, Scott and Vonnie when necessary.

7. If information from the project is to be shared with the media the three collaborators will reach a consensus on what information will be shared and how it will be communicated. Scott will draft any press releases.

8. Additional components may be added to this project in the future given the mutual consent of the three collaborators and approval from SFU's ORE and the VSB's research board.

Funding

Research costs will be covered by a Master's scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Scott) and a research grant from the Department of Psychology at SFU (Michael).

Benefits

- The collaborators will benefit from this project by using collected data in an MA thesis and presentations (talks, posters, articles) in peer-reviewed publications and conferences.
- The AFS will benefit from this project by gaining insight into how to more effectively engage with parents in the community. Results from this project will also be used to update the promotional materials for the AFS.

Commitments

Vonnie's commitments to the researchers are to:

- Facilitate connections between the researchers and community partners at Britannia, Aboriginal Head Start, Strong Start and the VSB.
- Assist with the recruitment of parents and staff from MacDonald/the AFS for focus groups and interviews.
- Work with the researchers to provide input and oversight of the project at every stage of the research process, to the extent that she is willing and able.

Scott and Michael's commitments to Vonnie are to:

- Inform Vonnie of project progress in a clear, specific, and timely manner.
- Collaborate with Vonnie on the analysis and interpretation of results.
- Work with Vonnie to use findings from the project to update promotional materials for the AFS.

The researchers agree to halt the research project if Vonnie decides to withdraw her support at any point.

[Dated signatures redacted]

Appendix B.

Consent Form for Focus Group/Interview Participants

Community Members' Perceptions of Aboriginal Focus Education [2014s0007]

Scott Neufeld
Principal Investigator, MA candidate, Department of Psychology, SFU

Dr. Michael Schmitt
Faculty advisor, Associate professor, Department of Psychology, SFU

Vonnie Hutchingson
Principal, MacDonald Elementary/Aboriginal Focus School, VSB

This study is being funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the SFU Department of Psychology.

Who is conducting this study and why?

This study is being conducted by a research team made up of two social psychologists from SFU (Scott Neufeld and Dr. Michael Schmitt) and Vonnie Hutchingson, principal of the Aboriginal Focus School, to learn more about community members' perceptions of Aboriginal focus education.

What will you be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a focus group/interview discussion of your familiarity with and perceptions of the Vancouver School Board's (VSB) new Aboriginal Focus School located at Macdonald elementary. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographics sheet and follow-up questionnaire. **Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to not answer any questions that you find uncomfortable**. If you decide after the focus group/interview that you would no longer like your data to remain in the study you may ask to remove it from the study up to one week from <u>today</u> by contacting Scott Neufeld by email (*******) or phone (******).

Are there any risks? Are there any benefits?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Participants will be reimbursed with a $20 gift certificate to show our appreciation for your time. However, the Aboriginal Focus School will benefit from the information gathered through this study. Your input will help the school more effectively connect with parents in the community.

Will my responses be confidential?

Focus group/interview discussion will be audio recorded then typed up and the recording deleted. We will ask you to use your name and that of others throughout the focus group/interview discussion but these and other identifying information will not be

included when the audio recording is typed up. Thus the data will be completely anonymized past this point. In order to protect the privacy of fellow focus group members we ask you to refrain from discussing the participation of others or their contributions to the discussion today outside of this group. However, we cannot control what other participants may do with the information discussed. Refusal to participate or withdrawal after agreeing to participate will not affect your compensation.

We are unable to assure participants that the data will be entirely destroyed after a specific period of time or that it will be stored in a way that would ensure that no one other than the principal investigator and collaborators would be able to access it. However, the data set that will result from this study will be completely anonymous. It will contain no information that could allow any participant to be identified. Thus, there is no way that this data could ever pose a risk to the privacy of individual participants even if the data set was made available to a wider group of researchers through at SFU, federal granting agencies or psychological associations.

The Research Ethics Board of Simon Fraser University (SFU), in accordance with Tri-Council's guidelines, and the VSB's research approval board have approved this study. We have not received permission to conduct this research from any First Nations Band council.

What will happen to the results of the study?

You are welcome to leave your contact information with us to be invited to a public forum in late spring 2014 where the results from this study will be presented. To obtain copies of the results upon the study's completion, please contact Scott Neufeld (********). Results from this study will also form the basis of the principal investigator's MA thesis in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology.

Who can I contact if I have any complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints with respect to participation in this research study as a research participant, you may contact the Director of the Office of Research Ethics:

Dr. Jeff Toward [email and phone number redacted]

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. By signing below, you consent to participate. You certify that you have received sufficient information describing the procedures and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You understand that you may withdraw your participation at any time without any negative impact whatsoever and may withdraw your data from the study up to one week from today by contacting the principal investigator. Furthermore, you agree to respect the confidentiality of your fellow focus group members by not revealing either the content or membership of the focus group discussion to non-focus group members:

NAME (PRINT):
SIGNATURE:
DATE (Month/Day/Year):

Appendix C.

Demographics Form

What is your age? _____

What is your gender? (male, female, other) _____

Do you currently work/study? Please circle one: full-time   part-time   no

If yes, what is your occupation? _____

Do you identify as Aboriginal?   Yes / No
If yes, what
nation(s)?:_____

If no, how would you describe your racial or ethnic background?:
_____

Are you a parent / grandparent / guardian (circle one) of children ages 0–9 (Gr 4)?

If yes, how many children are under your care and what are their ages/grades?

If you have pre-school aged children, what pre-school(s) do they attend?

If you have elementary school aged children, what elementary school(s) do they attend?

What neighborhood do you live in? What cross streets? Catchment area?

Would you send your child(ren) to the Aboriginal Focus School? (OR, Would you send another child to the Aboriginal Focus School?) Please indicate your response by circling the statement that best reflects how you feel:

- No, I definitely would not
- Probably not, but I'll think about it
- I'm not sure
- I might, and will consider it further
- Yes, I definitely would

Appendix D.

Focus Group/Interview Schedules

Question Guide for AFS Parents Focus Groups/Interviews

(Similar introduction and closing remarks were provided for all interviews and focus groups)

Preface to focus group discussion:
Hi everyone, thank you so much for coming today. My name is Scott Neufeld and I am a student at SFU. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are privileged to be on the traditional territories of the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Squamish first nations.

Before we get started, I want to take a bit of time to explain a bit more about this project and the approach we are trying to take. As you probably know already, my research supervisor (Dr. Michael Schmitt, an associate professor at SFU) and I have been invited to work together with Vonnie Hutchingson, principal of the Aboriginal Focus School at Macdonald elementary. We've also received permission from the Vancouver School Board to move forward with this project. As much as possible, we would like everyone to have a say and a voice in this research project, so if you have any concerns or suggestions for this project, I would be very happy to hear them and discuss them with you. We are continuing to work closely with the principal of the AFS in all aspects of the research process for this project and will seek her feedback during our analysis of the data and while preparing the results. Ultimately, we will be presenting the results of this study to the community at a public presentation in the community sometime in late spring. You will all be invited to this presentation and can leave your information with me after the discussion if you'd like to be kept informed about this presentation.

Today, I hope we can have a discussion about how parents make difficult educational choices for their kids as well as the kinds of things that influenced your decision to register your children at the Aboriginal Focus School. Your responses will help us better understand what features of a school environment are important to parents, information that may help educators improve the way education is provided so all students can reach their full potential. It's important to keep in mind during this discussion that we're interested in your honest thoughts and opinions on the questions we'll ask; there are no right or wrong answers. You are also welcome, but not required, to share from your own personal experiences. In addition it's important that you know that you don't have to answer any question you don't want to and you are welcome to leave the focus group at any time and withdraw your responses from the study. In fact, you may withdraw your responses from the study by contacting me at any time up to one month from today. I want to remind everyone of what was stated on the form you just read, that everything that is shared or discussed in this focus group needs to stay anonymous and confidential. This is first of all the responsibility of my assistant and I. The discussion today will be recorded and later typed up and the recording deleted. Once we do this, your identity will no longer be associated with your contributions to the discussion. However, confidentiality is also the responsibility of each of the members of this group. I

need everyone here to respect the privacy of the other members of this group by agreeing not to discuss what is said here today outside of this group.

Just a few more ground rules before we begin: Please put mobile phones on silent unless it's absolutely necessary to keep them on. If you need to take a call, simply step outside the room to minimize disruption to the discussion. If going to bathroom, just leave and return quietly without interrupting the person speaking. I want to encourage everyone to not only respond to me, the one asking the discussion questions, but to also respond to each other as different topics come up. Please try not to talk at the same time as someone else as this will make it very difficult when we try to type this up later. You may have strong opinions on some of the topics we discuss and I want you to feel free to disagree with one another and discuss your disagreements but always try to do so in a respectful way. In general, let's agree to not interrupt each other when we're talking. One exception might be me interrupting if we need to be moving the discussion along. I don't anticipate we'll have any issues but these guidelines are simply to make sure we have a productive discussion that is safe for everyone. This discussion should take approximately one hour. Are there any questions at this point?

Assign number to each participant seated around the table, get moderator's assistant to record each person's number every time they speak

All right, if we're all ready, I'm going to turn the audio recorder on and we can begin. (*Turn audio recorder on*).

Introductory questions:
Let's start by going around the table and having everyone say their name and then tell us if you could transform into any animal in the world right now as a way of expressing how your feeling today, what would it be?

If I were someone who didn't know anything about the AFS, how would you describe it to me?

How did you hear about the school? How easy was it to register?

"Just so we're all on the same page, I'm going to read a short description of the AFS that's adapted from some of the promotional material for the school":

 "The Aboriginal Focus School is a new program located at Macdonald Elementary on Victoria and Hastings. The program seeks to create a school environment that specifically emphasizes and celebrates Aboriginal culture. It has a curriculum that fulfills BC Ministry of Education requirements and is also respectful of acknowledging local First Nations, emphasizing the shared values, experiences and histories of all Aboriginal peoples as well as the uniqueness of individual First Nations, respecting the shared history between Aboriginal peoples and Canada, and a shared worldview between Aboriginal peoples and environmentalists. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students may register at the school."

Does that sound like an accurate depiction of the AFS? (If questions about the description, don't explain, instead ask what they think it means)

Experiences of the AFS so far:
Why did you decide you wanted to send your child(ren) to the AFS? What did you consider when making that decision?

Has the AFS fulfilled these expectations so far or not? How?

How have your child(ren) been affected by the AFS program so far? (Self-esteem? Sense of identity? Sense of cultural pride/connection? School performance? Segregation? Number of friends? Safety? Location? Logistics?)

From what you've seen in general, what are the benefits of the AFS? Challenges?
(looking for answers that are more "general" benefits or challenges now)

Increasing diversity at the AFS:
As you know, the AFS is open to students of all backgrounds:

From what you've seen, do you think the Aboriginal Focus School could be beneficial for children who are not Aboriginal? How?

Do you think it is valuable for your child(ren) to interact with children who are <u>not</u> Aboriginal at school? Why or why not? What about interacting with other Aboriginal children?

How would things change if there were more non-Aboriginal children at the AFS?

Aboriginal-Settler Intergroup Relations:
When there has been cultural disruption and cultural devaluation, as there has been for Aboriginal people in Canada, it sometimes affects how members of that group make decisions about where to send their children for school.

Did that past history and its ongoing effects play a role in where you decided to send your child(ren) to school? If so, how?

Other Parents' Perceptions of Macdonald/the AFS:
As we've discussed, there are lots of good reasons to want to send your children to the AFS. But despite this, the number of students registered at the school is still pretty low.

Why do you think more parents haven't sent their children to the AFS?

If "bad reputation" of Macdonald/neighborhood comes up, then ask:
Is that reputation fair? What would you say to someone who had that perception of the school?

What are other important things for people to know who are considering the AFS for their child(ren)?

Closing:
Are there any more points you would like to discuss or things you feel we've overlooked?

Thanks very much for your participation. As I mentioned before, this research is part of a community-based project so if you're interested in following up with what we find we'll be presenting the results at a public forum in the community sometime around the end of this school year. We already have your contact information and will contact you to invite you to this presentation closer to when it is scheduled. However, if you would not like to be contacted again about this study please let me know so I can make a note of it.
I will also be around for a little while if you'd like to talk more or bring up any concerns you may have with our discussion today or the research project in general.

Additional questions for non-AFS Parents at Macdonald Focus Groups/interviews:

If I were someone who didn't know anything about the AFS, how would you describe it to me?

Read the following description of the AFS (adapted from official AFS brochure)

The Aboriginal Focus School is a new program located at Macdonald Elementary on Victoria and Hastings. The program seeks to create a school environment that specifically emphasizes and celebrates Aboriginal culture. It has a curriculum that fulfills BC Ministry of Education requirements and is also respectful of acknowledging local First Nations, emphasizing the shared values, experiences and histories of all Aboriginal peoples as well as the uniqueness of individual First Nations, respecting the shared history between Aboriginal peoples and Canada, and a shared worldview between Aboriginal peoples and environmentalists. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students may register at the school."

Does that sound like an accurate depiction of the AFS? (How confident are you?)

Experiences of the AFS:
What were your first impressions when you heard an Aboriginal Focus School was going to be coming to Macdonald?

Based on what you know, how does the AFS differ from Macdonald? Other schools?

Did you consider registering your child(ren) in the AFS? Why or why not? (Self-esteem? Sense of identity? Sense of cultural pride/connection? School performance? Segregation? Number of friends? Safety? Location? Logistics?)

Thinking more generally, what might be other benefits of the AFS? Challenges?

Now that there is an AFS at Macdonald, what have been any new benefits or challenges for your child(ren) at Macdonald?

What would have to change to make you consider enrolling your children in the AFS?

Other Parents' Perceptions of Macdonald/the AFS:
Why do you think more parents haven't sent their child(ren) to the AFS/Macdonald?

If "bad reputation" of Macdonald/neighborhood comes up, then ask:
Is that reputation fair? What are important things for people to know who are considering the AFS for their child(ren)? What would you like to know about how these people see the school?   (*Clarify if it's just about the AFS or if it's about Macdonald*)

Aboriginal-Settler Intergroup Relations:
When there has been cultural disruption and cultural devaluation, as there has been for Aboriginal people in Canada, it sometimes affects how members of that group make decisions about where to send their children for school.

Did that past history and its ongoing effects play a role in where you decided to send your child(ren) to school? If so, how?

Do you think it is valuable for your child(ren) to interact with children from other racial or ethnic groups at school? Why or why not?

Do you think the AFS program could be beneficial for children who are not Aboriginal? Why or why not?

A majority of students at Macdonald are Aboriginal and the remainder is primarily of Asian heritage, mostly Chinese, Vietnamese and Filipino. As people who are mostly of Aboriginal heritage, you have a unique experience that is critical for us to understand the broader context of the AFS.

With both the Aboriginal and Asian students and parents at the school, what are ways they might come together? What are some shared connections between these groups? (History? Discrimination? Minority status? Children and cultural continuity?)

How do the Aboriginal students and Asian students at Macdonald get along? What about the parents?

Closing:
Are there any more points you would like to discuss or things you feel we've overlooked?

Additional questions for focus groups/interviews with parents who did not have children at either Macdonald Elementary or the Aboriginal Focus School

Starting Questions:
What's the first thing that comes to mind when I say "Aboriginal Focus School"?

Who here had heard of the AFS before you were contacted about this project? How did you first hear about the AFS? What were some of your first impressions?

How do you imagine an Aboriginal Focus School would differ from a regular elementary school? (Curriculum? Activities and events? Teachers? Approach to education?)

Which of these potential differences are features of the school that might encourage you to send your child(ren) to the AFS?

Read the following description of the AFS (adapted from official AFS brochure):

The Aboriginal Focus School is a new program located at Macdonald Elementary on Victoria and Hastings. The program seeks to create a school environment that specifically emphasizes and celebrates Aboriginal culture. It has a curriculum that fulfills BC Ministry of Education requirements and is also respectful of acknowledging local First Nations, emphasizing the shared values, experiences and histories of all Aboriginal peoples as well as the uniqueness of individual First Nations, respecting the shared history between Aboriginal peoples and Canada, and a shared worldview between Aboriginal peoples and environmentalists. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students may register at the school."

What are reasons you might consider sending your child(ren) to the AFS? Reasons you might not?

What do you think the reaction of your friends and family would be if you registered your child(ren) at the AFS?

What specific additional information about the AFS would you need that might influence your decision of whether or not to send your child(ren) to the AFS? (Content and 'legitimacy' of curriculum? Timetables? Safety? Quality of teachers? Bus? Breakfast/lunch program? Other supports at the school? Special needs support? Support staff? Class sizes? Aboriginal staff/teachers?

Aboriginal Focus:
In addition to a commitment to respect the aspects that make various First Nations unique, the AFS brochure mentions it will be respectful of the "shared values, experiences and histories" of all Aboriginal peoples.

Do you think there are shared values of Aboriginal peoples? What are they? (respect for Elders, connection to the land and ancestors, attention to spirituality, shared history of colonialism) Do you think there are any potential issues with this goal of the curriculum in particular?

Aboriginal-Settler Intergroup Relations:
For Aboriginal focus groups:
When there has been cultural disruption and cultural devaluation, as there has been for Aboriginal people in Canada, it sometimes affects how members of that group make decisions about where to send their children for school.

Did that past history and its ongoing effects play a role in where you decided to send your child(ren) to school? If so, how?

For Settler/mixed focus groups:
Racism and injustice based on race is a reality in our world and this sometimes affects where parents decide to send their child(ren) to school.

Has this reality played a role for you at all in your thoughts about where to send your child(ren)? If so, how?

For both Aboriginal and Settler focus groups:
Do you think it is valuable for your child(ren) to interact with children from other racial or ethnic groups at school? Why or why not?

Closing:
Are there any more points you would like to discuss or things you feel we've overlooked?

Appendix E.

Follow-Up Questionnaire

Would you send your child(ren) to the Aboriginal Focus School? (OR, Would you send another child to the Aboriginal Focus School?) Please indicate your response by circling the statement that best reflects how you feel:

- No, I definitely would not
- Probably not, but I'll think about it
- I'm not sure
- I might, and will consider it further
- Yes, I definitely would

Please circle an answer below to indicate how much <u>you</u> agree with the statement, "I feel angry about the unfair treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada":

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Please circle an answer below to indicate how much <u>you</u> agree with the statement, "I strongly identify with my heritage culture":

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

How important is it to you that <u>your child(ren)</u> is/are connected to their heritage culture?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

How important is it to you that <u>your child(ren)</u> is/are able to speak and/or understand their heritage language?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Please circle an answer below to indicate how much you agree with the statement, "In general, <u>my child(ren)</u> is/are well-connected to their heritage culture":

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Appendix F.

List of Preliminary Interpretive Codes with Examples

1) **History of marginalization/discrimination** on the basis of the broad Aboriginal category (rather than a more unique Aboriginal sub-group)

Example: "I find when people are working with first nations students they tend to dilute the original materials … without even testing a child, because they're "first nations" … and they automatically dilute and expect less from the student"

2) Negative view of the broad Aboriginal categorization because of its **association with the process of colonization** in particular (as opposed to discrimination in general) and settler European perceptions of Aboriginal peoples as culturally homogeneous (e.g. "Indians")

Example: "Same old of uh here's charity we're gonna give you... we're gonna help you poor Indians up you can't learn we have to teach you how to build a school um... we're y'know it's the same old same old... there's the school board doesn't trust us..."

3) Perception that the broad Aboriginal category is the creation of, or being **imposed by, non-Aboriginal people** (e.g. the VSB).

Example: "I find my daughter listening to YouTube, and watching, "Raven Tails" it's a little depressing (laughs) …I'm like that's silly that's not what Natives are about that's not, what Aboriginal people are about, you know? it's very, sixties white man thinking about the way Aboriginal people live and their tipis with their face paint, and their headdress"

4) Concern that one's **unique heritage First Nation culture might be eclipsed** by other (perhaps larger or more prominent) First Nations' cultures in a program with a focus on the broad Aboriginal category

Example: "This is an Aboriginal preschool, and…my son goes home speaking somebody else's language, which I don't really mind, he's pretty proud of it, and…he knows it's somebody else's language, and he knows who that person is and whatever, as long as he doesn't get it mixed up with our culture"

5) **Negative intergroup relations** between different Aboriginal sub-groups

Example: She was mad and angry at my people but she directed it at me and she was like, "well, I'm gonna talk to the principal about this because I don't want my children to learn about prairies" but yet it's okay for MY children to learn about yours and your beliefs and your ways? You know why isn't it okay for you to learn our ways? What did I do to you?"

6) Perception that **First Nations cultures are TOO diverse**, they cannot feasibly all be included in a broad cultural education program

Example: "I was just thinking about was, they're saying First Nations focus…which first nations? Because like, they're, the first nations there's west coast, you know there's prairie, here at [elementary school] we have North coast, we have prairie, we have Toronto, we have, um, a few Maori first nations, um, we, our, the culture, our culture is so diverse, you know the traditions and the teachings are similar, but different…so um, which first nations are you primarily focusing on?"

7) Perception that **First Nations cultures are not diverse enough** on their own, need for other non-Aboriginal groups to increase diversity in the AFS

Example: "Maybe if there was more diverse in the actual program…so it doesn't feel like it's just, an aboriginal…group"

8) **Negative Aboriginal stereotypes from non-Aboriginal peoples**

Example: "Rather than saying "oh that's just another Indian, that's another drunk Indian"… so… and it gets tiring after a while, it's very tiring to have to teach and teach and teach"

9) **Negative ingroup stereotypes endorsed by Aboriginal people**

Example: "I've heard kids grow up and say like, "well I can't get a job because I'm Native," and Getting into that like…racial, racism…

Interviewer: Kinda like self-racism?

Yes."

10) The perception that a broad Aboriginal categorization, especially cross-cultural connection practices, may **disrespect traditional Aboriginal protocols**

Example: "I think, that essentially is why, this Aboriginal focus school really bothers me, is because I found that… people talk about protocol like how…following protocol when things happen, I come to his territory I go to his people and say you know "We're here I'm from this place, I'd love to go fishing, is that okay with you?" And that's just out of respect for… you know his people…the leaders who started, talking about the Aboriginal focus school, should have known that"

11) Explicit endorsement - Broad Aboriginal category is **most meaningful in diverse (urban) context**

Example: "For me…Aboriginal teachings like in an urban setting means just being proud of being an Aboriginal person, and just having some positives associated being, with being Aboriginal"

12) Explicit endorsement - Perceptions of **common cultural attributes** shared by diverse Aboriginal cultural groups

Example: "I think there's shared values, our history… our culture? …Every nation drums, people use paddles, people use rows but everybody drums, sings or…

13) Implicit endorsement - References to connection with Aboriginal culture with **no specification** of a particular Aboriginal culture

Example: "I think one reason that I sent her there was because it WAS aboriginal focus, due to that we are in the city, and that she can get that on a daily basis, but I KNEW for a fact that there was a cultural singer going in there every other day or something and they WERE doing aboriginal arts and crafts"

14) Implicit endorsement – **Support for connecting with Aboriginal cultures other than one's heritage culture**

Example: "It was really good to hear her singing these songs … and I think they were taught an Ojibway song and for her to come home and sing another nation's song... it was really good to hear her singin"

15) Broad Aboriginal category as a **basis for political action**

Example: "The only way that I would consider [the AFS] is if if the aboriginal community had control"

16) Advocating for a **focus on local, Coast Salish First Nations** in accordance with a broadly shared Aboriginal protocol. **speaker's heritage culture must be a non-local First Nation

Example: "…and also having the respect for this territory as well and learning the, the the language of this territory 'cuz that's what I would expect in my country"