

**Teaching about Race and Racism in the  
Classroom:  
Managing the Indigenous Elephant in the Room**

by  
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## Abstract

In order to gain an understanding of the knowledge, self-awareness, and skills that educators require to successfully manage Indigenous-specific racism, I interviewed 10 educators and followed this with a focus group. I employed qualitative methods to determine what happens when anti-Indigenous racism is taken up by educators? What are the characteristics of anti-Indigenous racism that makes it challenging to manage in a classroom? And what are the strategies that seem to be successful as well as those that are not? The participants in the study self-identified as Indigenous (4), as White (3), and as racialized (3). Drawing on the findings, I conclude by outlining recommendations for educators addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

This thesis is an exploration of the way in which anti-Indigenous racism manifests in adult education classrooms. The findings from this thesis support the literature that exposes the high level of violence related to anti-Indigenous racism in education environments. Findings revealed that taking up anti-Indigenous racism in ways that are effective requires high levels of knowledge, self-awareness, and the skills to address the accompanying violence and racist ideology that supports it. Other key themes from the findings include the challenges of addressing resistance, and the traumatic impact of anti-Indigenous violence on educators, particularly those who are Indigenous. The racial standpoint and identity of the educator emerged as a significant factor and can inform the ways in which anti-Indigenous racism is negotiated in the classroom. Educators also identified strategies they use to manage and confront anti-Indigenous attitudes and behaviour providing examples of those that were successful as well as those that were not.

Anti-Indigenous racism is not new and what it is clear from this research is that in order to disrupt the unacceptable levels of anti-Indigenous attitudes and behaviours in the classroom, educators will need to equip themselves with an enhanced inventory of strategies in order to participate in meaningful change. This study will contribute to the growing body of work that critically addresses the pedagogy used to confront the way in which colonial history continues to manifest in the education system.

**Keywords:** Race; racism; anti-Indigenous racism; critical race theory; colonial dynamics; colonization; education

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To my Elder Gerry Oleman, I lift up my hands in respect and gratitude. From the beginning he has always reminded me of my place, of my role, and of my responsibility. When I wanted to leave the learning canoe I needed to only remind myself of the purpose of this work – to benefit my people – and I would keep paddling.

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something all of us have to deal with. As Australian Indigenous activist, academic and artist Lilla Watson (1985) said:

*“If you are here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us work together.”*

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# Chapter 1.

## Setting the Context

### 1.1. Prologue

*I am sitting in the boardroom listening to my co-facilitator, Tally, introduce the 5-day Aboriginal cultural awareness training we are going to deliver. She sits down and it is my turn.*

*I notice I am a little bit nervous. We haven't done this together before and the 25 people in the room are staring at us. Not all the stares seem all that friendly. Whatever. I get up and start to speak. I am on a roll.*

*"I really hope that over this week we will get to know each other and I also hope that we can begin to have those 'courageous conversations' that we don't get to have about these issues."*

*Out of the blue, a voice came from the back of the room.*

*"That's great! I always wanted to know why all the Indians are drunks!"*

*Oh my god. Did he just say that? Out loud? I hear Amber whisper, "Oh my god Cheryl!" behind me. I look down the room to where the young man is sitting. He has his feet up on the table and is leaning back in his chair. I want to go down there and push him over. So I start walking down toward him.*

*What am I going to say? Maybe someone else will say something? Oh no! What if somebody else says something?*

*I see that half the room is Indigenous women and they are staring at me. One of the women has her mouth open and her eyes are HUGE. One of the women says quietly to the woman beside her, "Wow, here we go already" or something like that. Huh?*

*What does that mean? After that there is silence. Everything seems like it is in slow motion. Why are they all looking at me?*

*I don't know what to do. I think about the agenda for a moment. My heart is pounding and my face feels really hot. I have memorized the Instructors Notes in the curriculum and I know for a fact that there is nothing in there about this kind of thing. What have I gotten myself into? Does this happen to everyone? How come we didn't have an in-service about this? Why did I say that thing about courageous conversations? What a stupid thing to say.*

*I keep walking slowly and finally arrive at the young man. He is grinning at me and I am aware that I want to wipe that smug smile right off his face.*

*I am able to mumble "Ummmm...well that is a very good question and I ummm...will make sure you have an opportunity to ...ahh ...learn about that over the next week."*

*I turn away and slowly walk back to the front of the room. I feel every single eye drilling into the back of my head. I am not sure how I am going to get through the next few minutes to the break, never mind get through the next 5 days.*

## **1.2. Introduction**

What is going on here? Is this typical everyday classroom behaviour? Or is this something that comes about only in the context of material related to Indigenous issues? Regarding the male student, does his question demand or highlight the need for a certain kind of response? How are we as educators supposed to interpret a statement such as this? Is this situation something that needs to be managed or handled by the instructor? If so how? What might be an appropriate or an effective response here? If the question from the student is left unanswered, what is the impact? On Indigenous and non-Indigenous students?

The classroom experience described above may not be unique and may even be familiar. I have had countless experiences like the one that I have shared here. Some experiences, like this one, were fairly benign but others have involved dynamics that have been unsettling. At times these experiences have had a powerful impact on me. Over time I have become curious and have asked myself why these experiences have such a profound effect? The scenario that I have shared in the Prologue illustrates these dynamics, dynamics which are useful for their potential to open up thoughtful

reflection of an issue – anti-Indigenous racism- that is often challenging to introduce and also to examine. This research raises questions about the dynamics in the scenario and also seeks to answer them.

But what exactly are these classroom dynamics? What is it about these situations that make them unsettling? The scenario above is a useful one for considering the plethora of responses, perspectives, and feelings that can occur when comments such as the one the young man made are expressed. This study is concerned with the way educators experience, create, make meaning from, and take action when Indigenous specific issues arise.

As educators, this story may also be familiar and resonate for different reasons. Perhaps we have had the opportunity to manage a comment or dialogue of this ilk. Perhaps these experiences went well, or maybe they did not. However if we have faced this type of experience, chances are we may also remember the feelings related to the experience. Feelings such as confusion, discomfort, fear, sadness, irritation, regret, anger, and yes, even exhilaration may come to mind. This spectrum of feelings is testament to the complexity of the dynamics and perspectives that are present when attitudes and beliefs related to Indigenous people surface in classroom environments. These are complex situations and incidents such as this arise in a specific context, time, and space.

As educators it is not enough to merely endure or tolerate experiences such as the one described. It behooves us to consider what knowledge, self-awareness, and skills might be helpful to effectively manage these situations. This study seeks answers to this thought-provoking question.

### **1.3. Unpacking the Story**

Unpacking the scenario that is described in the prologue is useful for clarifying multiple points of view. For example, the White male student who made the comment, “I always wanted to know why all the Indians are drunks!” has a perspective and a reason for making this comment. But what is this perspective? Who is this person and what was he thinking? Did he ask the question to be intentionally provocative or is this

comment simply a popular but unexamined colonial perspective? What is the impact of his comment and behaviour (grinning, his feet on the table) on others in the classroom?

What about the female Indigenous student who made the comment “Wow, here we go already”? What does this statement suggest? Is the student speaking for herself or is she also speaking for others? What is the backstory to this comment? Is she recognizing a familiar theme? Was her comment intended to silence or to provoke? Did he hear her? What is the impact of her comment on others in the classroom?

Other considerations that surface here are the relational aspects of the environment in which the comment was made. Who are the students? Are they part of a community of practice? Are they colleagues? Are they friends or adversaries? What are the norms or the organizational context in this classroom? There are several students in this classroom, and racial and cultural diversity is evident. How might this diversity of perspectives shape how this comment could be received?

As an educator in this classroom, I also have a perspective about the students, about the culture of the classroom, and about my responsibilities in this moment. There were many thoughts and concerns that surfaced for me. I was flooded with worry and anxiety. How was I going to manage this? Was this just an isolated incident? Was this an indication of what lay ahead for me? Was the comment intended in some way for me personally as an Indigenous woman or as an Indigenous educator?

The situation described here is probably a more common occurrence than we think and not necessarily a well understood one. What is the backstory and context for the comments that were made?

This research and dissertation comes from a deep desire to understand these dynamics. It will also help to illuminate an issue which is invisible to some, often unacknowledged, and sometimes ineffectively managed.

## **1.4. Situating Self in the Research: Identity Matters**

I am introducing myself in a purposeful way to explain who I am and why I am writing about these issues. I am an Indigenous woman with deep connections to the land and its history. I am Kwakwaka'wakw, a member of the 'Namgis' First Nations and the

T'sit'salwalagame Na'mima (meaning 'The Famous Ones'). These connections and relations come through my mother's noble lineage; Joseph (Tlakwudlas) Harris, K'ugwikila, and Tlalili'lakw. I know who I am and from where I come. And so I am affected by the legacy of colonization, of oppression, and have experienced the very racism –personally and professionally - that I seek to examine in this study.

My mother, Anna Jane, experienced significant anti-Indigenous racism throughout her life as a racialized Indigenous woman. These experiences not only shaped her life, but the lives of her children as well. My mother was a strong woman, fierce even. She was the first to teach me that the world was not a hospitable place for Indigenous people. As a result of racism she said we would have to think harder and work harder to be considered 'half as good' as other people.

As a young adult I remember thinking about how deeply my mother was affected by racist stereotypes and how hard she worked to challenge these stereotypes. She had very high standards and expectations for all of her children. For example, the question was never 'if' I wanted to have a career or whether I 'might' pursue post-secondary education; rather the questions were 'when and where was I going' and 'what would she need to do to help make this happen'. She taught me to be strong in the face of racial adversity and to remember that in the midst of difficult situations when difficult choices must be made, that there was no other option than to 'feel the fear and do it anyway'. The 'it' was always about doing the right thing, the hard thing, and the important thing. She was, and is the greatest mentor and influence in my life and I miss her greatly.

My father, Walter, was a 12th generation descendent of settlers of German and Irish ancestry. Both sides of his family were considered pioneers; they benefited directly from the colonial policies that provided them unfettered access to the land and resources. There is no question that the privileges that were afforded to my father's family came to them at the expense of Indigenous people. For example, at the same time that my father's families were accumulating wealth from the stolen land and resources, Indigenous people from those same territories were being dislocated from their land and forced onto Indian Reserves. The Indian Residential School system, colonial violence, and cultural genocide facilitated the development of settler privilege at the expense of Indigenous people. This history is also a part of who I am. I am the beneficiary of class and settler privilege.

Other aspects of my identity that are important to me are that I am a mother, a sister, an auntie, a niece, and a partner, and am part of a large extended family and community. I consider myself to be an activist, however I was recently instructed by an Elder that I am not an activist but rather am an “actionist- one who makes things happen”. I am also a professional educator and someone who is middle class, heterosexual, English speaking, and well educated. I was born in Canada, am able bodied, and have enjoyed considerable privilege in many contexts. While I have lived as a guest on the territory of the Snuneymuxw people for the past 17 years, I nevertheless maintain strong ties to the land and people of my territory, as well as to the small rural community in which I was raised.

I am cognizant of and experience the tensions that flow from the complexity of my identity. I am an Indigenous person as well as someone who has benefited from the unearned privileges afforded to White settler society. This tension has shaped me and fuels my work. It is a major driver of this research project.

## **1.5. Research Focus and Research Questions**

This research explores the ways in which anti-Indigenous racism manifests in the context of adult learning environments. Keeping this context in mind, this research also investigates the challenges to instruction presented by the attitudes and behaviours of learners when Indigenous issues are ‘in the room’. These attitudes and behaviours are sometimes referred to as ‘discourses of resistance’ (see for example Okun, 2010; Goodman, 2011). Examining these discourses of resistance may provide a framework for understanding the complexity of anti-Indigenous racism in the adult education environment.

With this context in mind, this study asks the following research questions:

- a) What are the characteristics of an anti-Indigenous racial dialogue that make the dialogue challenging for educators?
- b) How do educators address or not address resistance discourses related to anti-Indigenous racism?
- c) What intervention strategies have proved successful and unsuccessful in facilitating challenging dialogue on anti-Indigenous racism?

## 1.6. Significance-Purpose of the Research

The classroom vignette shared earlier was a momentous experience for me. I remember everything about the incident because what happened changed me. The young White male's comment "That's great! I always wanted to know why all the Indians are drunks!" stunned me. In an instant it moved me from being eager, keen, and enthusiastic, to feeling paralyzed and deeply unsettled. I quite simply did not know what to do and did not have the skills to manage this dynamic in the classroom. During those few moments after the male student made the comment, I also felt a deep sense of foreboding, of threat, and even of fear. I didn't know how to act on my knowledge that what this White male participant said was inappropriate and offensive. While I had a sense that there might be consequences to his comments, and in fact was alerted to this by a different participant's comment, "Wow, here we go already", I was also unsure of what to do about that added dynamic. All of the theory and instructional content I had learned in order to teach that course proved useless to me in that moment.

While I had had many experiences of racism in the classroom as a university student, being an instructor changed everything. I knew that if I were to continue on as an instructor, I would need to be armed with more than simply good intentions and a solid grasp of the minutiae of the curriculum to be delivered. Even though 'I didn't know what I didn't know' at the time, it was also painfully obvious to me that I would need to take action to prepare for the next time and what I assume to be the many next times which would follow.

During that week-long training, and for a long time afterward, I did considerable reflection on the experience. I often asked myself if other educators had these experiences. If so, then how did they respond? I particularly wanted to know if other Indigenous educators shared my experiences. How do they manage these kinds of classroom dynamics? What happens when Indigenous educators and others challenge these kinds of comments?

With these questions in mind, this research contributes to the existing knowledge and practice in the field of instructional pedagogy related to racism. In particular, this research sheds light on the issue of addressing the dynamic of anti-Indigenous racism in

the adult learning environment. The findings from this research will be relevant and useful to many educators.

I am grateful for the learning that occurred for me in that classroom. The incident is an example of the way in which colonial relations (including colonial violence) can surface in the adult education environment. While there has been a shift over time in the way I think about the incident -- from initially characterizing this incident as a stunning example of an unsafe learning environment in which I had a lead role (and feeling shame and guilt about that), to the development of a more fulsome understanding of what happened in that classroom, why it happened, and why it seems to continue to happen. The motivation for me to do this research project is undeniably connected to this and countless other similar classroom experiences. These experiences have driven me to learn more, to do more, and to speak up more. I have a desire to understand racism in the classroom -- specifically the kind of racism that emerges in an Indigenous and distinctly colonial context. At the end of this project I am hopeful I will have a more articulate response to this young man's question, one that goes beyond the muttering and stumbling I was able to offer in that moment.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature pertinent to this dissertation. This literature review is structured around primary themes including:

1. Theoretical Perspectives related to anti-Indigenous Racism and Education
2. Foundations: The Social Construction of Race
3. Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Context of Colonization
4. Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Colonized Classroom
5. Manifestations of Racism in the Classroom

This examination of literature includes an extensive review of published scholarly work and peer-reviewed journals. The literature highlights the work by seminal Indigenous scholars, and by theorists who have been able to apply a critical race lens to the issue of race in education, and specifically on the racism that targets Indigenous people.

#### **2.1. Theoretical Perspectives Related to anti-Indigenous Racism and Education**

##### **2.1.1. Indigenous Context for Research**

Maori Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) writes in depth about the importance of examining the research process, and especially the underlying sets of beliefs that inform it. She poses questions that researchers should ask, such as:

- Who defines the research problems?
- What knowledge will the community gain from this study?
- What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?
- What are some likely positive outcomes from this study?
- To whom is the researcher accountable?

- What processes are in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher? (p. 175-176).

The critical questions Smith poses are at the heart of this and any other Indigenous cross-cultural research projects. I wrestled with each of these questions, and indeed some of these very questions have shaped the design of the research question as well as the planning and research methods (interviews and focus group) I used. They led to an assessment and recalibration of the kind of support and guidance needed for doing the research in an authentic and trustworthy way. The reality of colonialism means research relating to and involving Indigenous people must be held to a high standard; the reality of the legacy of colonization is Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers is more highly scrutinized compared to research done by non-Indigenous people (Smith, 2012). Smith describes Indigenous research as a “highly political activity” that, while understood by some, can be perceived as threatening to established research practices and paradigms.

Indigenous research focuses and situates the broader indigenous agenda in the research domain. This domain is dominated by a history, by institutional practices and by particular paradigms and approaches to research held by communities of like-minded scholars. The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on a shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes. This makes indigenous research a highly political activity, and while that is understood by very experienced non-indigenous researchers and organizations, it can also be perceived as a threatening activity. (p. 141-142)

While all research is situated within a political landscape, what Smith calls to our attention is that Indigenous researchers reckon with an additional landscape that can include colonial anti-Indigenous racist narratives. These narratives threaten our research with perceptions that research by Indigenous people is “not rigorous”, “not robust”, “not real”, “not theorized”, “not valid”, or “not reliable” (Smith, p. 142). As this is the foregrounding for the theoretical perspectives that inform this study, it is important to make these issues transparent at the outset.

### **2.1.2. Anti-Racism/Decolonizing Anti-Racism**

Anti-racism theory privileges the subject of race and explicitly examines power relations. As a theoretical construct, anti-racism is not new – it is about three decades

old. At that time, anti-racism education was positioned as a critique of Canada's official 'multiculturalism' policy and as a radical alternative to the then popular perspective of viewing racial conflicts and discrimination as things that emerge from "cultural miscommunication and unexamined stereotypes" (McCaskell, 2010, p. 33). In the 1990s', policies and practices that flowed from this approach weakened in response to, among other things, the changing political landscape.

Anti-racism has since reappeared and is a robust discourse in the field of education, and in Indigenous educational issues (St Denis, 2011; Solomon, 1995; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Dei, 2001; McCaskell, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2010; Aveling, 2007; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Pollock, 2008). According to Dei & Calliste (2000), anti-racism theory has an explicit task to "identify, challenge and change" the structures that perpetuate and keep systemic racism in place (p. 21). It is "a critical discourse of social oppressions (such as racism, sexism, and classism) through the lens of race" (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 144).

As a discourse, anti-racism is not without criticism (Lawrence & Dua, 2011; Aveling, 2007). Lawrence and Dua (2005) critique antiracism theorists for failing to consider and integrate an understanding of colonialism into their work. As a result, anti-racism is implicitly based on a framework which accepts the colonial underpinnings of Canadian society, thereby participating "in the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples" (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 127). These authors go on to argue that international critical race and postcolonial theorists fail to address Indigenous people and colonization in fundamental ways including the absence of Indigenous people in race and racism theories, the history of slavery and theft of Indigenous lands, and equating antiracist and decolonizing politics (Lawrence & Dua, 2005).

In related work, Lawrence and Dua (2011) assert that deficits within antiracism theory serve to "segregate" Indigenous peoples' histories, resistance, and current realities (p. 23) and that this runs counter to the aims of anti-racism. To reconcile the goals of anti-racism with the reality of exclusion, Lawrence and Dua (2005) suggest theorists can 'take up' the issues and decolonize anti-racism work by including the context of Indigenous sovereignty and land restoration, and making colonization central and foundational to antiracism analysis and research (p. 25).

### 2.1.3. Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) originated in critical legal studies in the United States and migrated into the educational milieu in the mid-1990s. Similar to anti-racism theory and research, CRT focuses on research and theory (Milner, 2007). There are extensive publications about CRT, and it appears to be a transportable theory, both conceptually and in practice. CRT has strong footings in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, women's studies (Yosso, 2005), as well as education (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002).

In addition to a focus on race, CRT is positioned as a complex multidisciplinary challenge to dominant discourses, which are explicitly committed to social justice and the experiences of marginalized people (Ladson-Billings, 1996, p. 168). In his literature review on CRT and education, Tate (1997) argues that these elements represent only a beginning point, and explanations of race in an “ever-changing society” require constant re-analysis of theoretical positions and key elements of theory (p. 235).

Closson (2010) contends that critical race theory was conceived as oppositional scholarship and, while the theory has evolved, it is still under-theorized within education (p. 181). She discusses DeCuire and Dixson's (2004) five tenets of CRT: (1) the use of counter-storytelling; (2) the permanence of racism; (3) Whiteness as property; (4) interest convergence – the status quo will change only when the interests of Blacks and Whites converge; and (5) a critique of liberalism that challenges assumptions about race and the law, including that the law is color-blind and neutral, and change must be incremental, so it is palatable to those in power (p. 176). Again, what is missing in CRT analysis is recognizing and examining colonization.

In spite of the erasure of Indigenous people, some scholars see CRT as a theory and methodology (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Dunbar, 2008) and as a framework that can support Indigenous perspectives, provided it is modified (Dunbar, 2008). Denzin, Lincoln & Smith (2008) note that “Indigenous scholars argue that some versions of critical pedagogy undertheorize and diminish the importance of indigenous concepts of identity, sovereignty, land, tradition, literacy, and language” (p. 8). These are deficits that CRT must address if it is to have utility as a theory that addresses oppression experienced by Indigenous people.

One of the criticisms of all theory related to deconstructing race and racism is that Indigenous presence is minimal at best. Anti-racism and critical race theories are no exceptions. Importantly, anti-racism, decolonizing anti-racism, and CRT are central theoretical perspectives that inform the literature review for this study, as well as the methodology and analysis. In particular, I bring into my analysis the necessary modification of centering the context of colonization for the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people and the recognition that all non-Indigenous peoples, including Whites and settlers of colour, have benefited from the legacy of this history. A difficult topic, yes, and one that is at the very heart of the tensions and struggles between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These tensions and struggles manifest as both attitudes and behaviours in the classroom, a theme that will be examined throughout this dissertation. The following section addresses the ideological foundations necessary for the construction of race and race-based hierarchies.

## **2.2. Foundations: The Social Construction of Race and Racial Hierarchies**

### **2.2.1. The Social Construction of Race**

To engage with the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation, it is crucial to examine and interrogate the concept of race. Battiste (2013) describes race as a concept resulting from attempts to explain the world and human nature.

Race is a social or cultural construct of European consciousness. Race is not something that resides in the blood or genes of a group of people as characterized in biology. It has no biological source, like the colour of the eyes. Race was created in the social attitudes and beliefs of society. It was not created in the streets, but rather was created by social scientists at universities, as a product of the “Enlightenment” in the German universities, as a product of a particular rational and scientific project to understand the nature of the world and human nature. (Battiste, 2013, p. 131)

Race is generally understood as a constructed social concept, informed by the social attitudes and beliefs of the day. An early example was John Burke’s 1758 effort to bring biological, psychological and social attributes together in *The Wild Man’s Pedigree*

(Loomba, 2009). The hierarchical nature of this categorization of humans is evident in this description:

- a) Wild Man. Four footed, mute, hairy.
- b) American. Copper coloured, choleric, erect. Hair black, straight, thick; nostrils wide; face harsh; beard scanty; obstinate, content, free. Paints himself with fine red lines. Regulated by customs.
- c) European. Fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.
- d) Asiatic. Sooty, melancholy, rigid. Hair black; eyes dark; severe, haughty, covetous. Covered with loose garments. Governed by opinions.
- e) African. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat, lips tumid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease. Governed by caprice (Loomba, 2009 p. 100).

Modern concepts of race sit squarely within philosophical paradigms that not only embrace this hierarchical concept but also build on stereotypic views of Indigenous peoples as excessively sexual barbaric savages (Loomba, 2009).

“By attributing racial characteristics to biological differences such as skull and brain sizes, or facial angles, or genes, and by insisting on the connection between these factors and social and cultural attributes, science turned ‘savagery’ and ‘civilization’ into fixed and permanent conditions” (Loomba 2009, p. 102).

According to Henry & Tator (2010), concepts and ideologies of race are “not neutral”. They exist within a social context that is informed by many interpretive frameworks and worldviews (Henry & Tator, 2010).

While there may be some understanding that ‘race’ as a biological construct is not supported by science, racism continues to rely on construction of racial hierarchies. For that reason, it is not enough to say that race is a socially constructed phenomenon, and leave it at that. As Canadian anti-racism scholar Dei (2006) points out, the concept of race, along with other social categories (e.g., gender, class, sexuality) cannot be dismissed because it is critical to understanding social oppression and unequal power relations. Race is a “serious, enduring fact that requires sustained analytical and political attention” (Hier, 2007, p. 21). It is a powerful force that shapes the attitudes and life

experiences of all people, and consequently discussions about race, oppression and power can quickly become convoluted and strained.

### **2.2.2. Racial Hierarchy**

The social construction of race is directly related to perceptions that a racial hierarchy exists. Burke's (Loomba, 2009) value laden categories lay out attributes believed to convey the inherent gradations of people. Consider the two categories referring to people as 'American' and 'European':

- a) American. Copper coloured, choleric, erect. Hair black, straight, thick; nostrils wide; face harsh; beard scanty; obstinate, content, free. Paints himself with fine red lines. Regulated by customs.
- b) European. Fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws. (Loomba 2009, p. 100).

Note the contrast between behavioural characteristics of American Indigenous people as "obstinate, content, free" versus White European people as "gentle, acute, inventive". These differences illustrate how Europeans characterized themselves in positive terms and characterized racialized others in negative terms. These hierarchies of race conspicuously situate White Europeans at the top and demonstrate how race is conceptually constructed. Smedley & Smedley (2005) deepen the analysis by examining the subjective information used by Europeans to classify human beings and to position Indigenous peoples as "savage", "primitive" and "inferior" (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 21).

### **2.2.3. White Supremacy**

Many scholars contend that even though race is understood to be a socially constructed phenomenon, the reality is that people, including White people, are racialized. As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, an imagined hierarchy places White people as superior and all others as inferior. Frankenberg (1993) explains the construct of Whiteness as "a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of

domination” (p.6). She addresses the importance of naming “whiteness” to make this “site of dominance” visible and available for analysis. Otherwise, the unearned privileges and domination experienced by White people are cloaked in normativity and are structurally invisible to them. The difficulty White people have in recognizing and acknowledging this unearned privilege is explained by Frideres (2007) as resulting from this invisibility, which is “so ubiquitous and entrenched as to appear natural and normative” (p. 45).

Peggy McIntosh (2003) was influential in the early framing of White privilege as a condition that confers unearned benefits to White people, and further analysis of White privilege suggests there are other issues that radiate from this dynamic. According to DiAngelo (2011), Whiteness must be understood as referring to elements of racism that elevate White people over racialized people but not limited to specific privileges or behaviours of individuals. Frankenberg (1993) adds that reducing racism to individual and intentional behaviours serves to mask “historical and contemporary processes through which the racial order is maintained” and the “real and varying relationships of white people” to colonialism and neo-colonialism (p. 242).

While some White people may be oblivious to their unearned privilege, this privilege is not invisible to Indigenous or racialized people. Hanna, Talley and Guindon (2000) speak about this awareness as perception and “perspicacity”, something they describe as “the ability to see beyond appearances”, to “see through’ situations”, or “read between the lines”(p. 433). They contend that “people from oppressed or subordinate groups tend to be more perceptive than those in power” (p. 433) and can see the oppressor “in a clear, stark and direct fashion”. Survival depends on the ability to recognize the “habits, customs, moods, attitudes and idiosyncrasies” of the oppressor (p.433).

While it is necessary to acknowledge that Whiteness, including White identity and White resistance, is pertinent to the issue of anti-Indigenous racism, it must also be said that the landscape of Whiteness is vast with degrees of subtlety that are well beyond the scope and focus of this study. There is no shortage of literature related to the complexities of teaching about issues related to race and racism; the challenge is to bring relevant issues related to Whiteness and anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom to the surface. The sheer volume of literature available on this topic speaks to the

specificity of Whiteness as a significant force in the managing of classroom dynamics, including resistance, related to race and racism.

### **2.3. Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Context of Colonization**

Many scholars have made significant contributions to the discourse of race and racism in Canada (Alfred (1999); Battiste (2013); Cannon & Sunseri (2010, 2011); Dion (2009); Dua & Lawrence (2005); Henry & Tator (2010); LaRocque (2010); Monture (2011); Razack (1999, 2015); St. Denis (2002, 2011)). Their work tackles the weighty issues of colonization and makes critical linkages between colonization and racism including anti-Indigenous racism. This work is foundational to the Canadian context of racism, including anti-Indigenous racism, and is vital to the current study.

Many scholars have addressed the positioning of Indigenous people as racially inferior to White people (Battiste, 2013; LaRocque, 2010; Montgomery, 2006; Monture-Angus, 1999). Cote-Meek (2014) takes up this theme in her book *Colonized Classrooms* (2014). She describes racialized constructs of Indigenous people as a deeply rooted feature of colonization in Canada. Europeans and Indigenous people are categorized as “binary opposites”, with Europeans viewed as civilized and Indigenous people as barbaric or ‘less than human’. The inevitable result of contact between the two groups is the elimination of Indigenous people through death or assimilation (Cote-Meek, 2014).

The imagining of racial hierarchy was not a benign exercise but rather a vital factor in the history of colonialism. When the notion of race is further deconstructed, it becomes apparent that these identities are implicated in justifying the exploitation of Indigenous people and the taking of Indigenous lands (LaRocque, 2011; Loomba, 2009). Moreover, these attitudes inform the rationale for policies and colonial institutions including the Indian Act; Indian Residential Schools; Indian Hospitals; the Reserve system; and contemporary institutions such as corrections, justice, and child welfare.

The link between colonization and racism is not only historical; it continues into the present. Canadian sociologist Frideres (2001) writes about the in which way racism shapes and distorts the attitudes and beliefs of White Canadians towards Indigenous people. The impact of racism is such that “blatantly or covertly, many Canadians still

believe that Aboriginal people are inferior; as a result, these people believe that there is a sound, rational basis for discrimination against Aboriginal persons at both the individual and institutional level” (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 10).

The following section addresses anti-Indigenous racism in educational institutions.

## **2.4. Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Classroom**

### **2.4.1. Education, Racism and the Colonial Context**

Education is central to the reproduction of oppressive social structures through the dissemination of Eurocentric knowledge (Colin, Sheared, Johnson-Bailey & Brookfield, 2010). Battiste (2013) makes critical links between Eurocentric knowledge, racist ideology and education, and identifies “racial superiority, discrimination and racialization” as central tools and strategies.

A key question is how Indigenous people experience these dynamics within the education system. In a study of racial discrimination experienced by Aboriginal university students in Canada, researchers triangulated data from the United States and examined the impact of these experiences on mental health (Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing, and Veugelers, 2012). Using a small sample (n=60) of students attending a university in central Canada, researchers found that Aboriginal students faced significantly higher rates of discrimination compared to other students who experienced racial discrimination. Overall, 80% of Aboriginal students experienced racial discrimination in their lifetime and two-thirds experienced high levels of racism three or more times. In comparison, about one-third of African Americans and one-quarter of Latino Americans experienced racism three or more times in their lifetime. Aboriginal university students experienced racism two to three times more often than African and Latino Americans in the United States. Aboriginal students who considered themselves traditional or cultural were significantly more likely to experience racial discrimination (Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing, and Veugelers, 2012, p. 620). This study highlights the ways in which Indigenous students experience racism and identifies adverse psychological impacts associated with the experiences. The researchers noted that further research is

needed to examine whether there are links between racial discrimination and high attrition rates among Indigenous students in Canada.

There is a unique colonial context for the experiences Indigenous people have with education, and it is both historical and a reflection of current social and political realities. The following sections address these important and influential dynamics.

### **2.4.2. Whiteness in Education**

There is extensive literature regarding the experiences and challenges of White educators who deal with race and racism in the classroom (see Donadey, 2002; Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera & Lin, 2009; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012; Goodman, 2010; Manglitz, Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2005; Okun, 2010; Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Colin, Pederson, Brookfield, 2010; Young, 1998; Quaye, 2012); the dynamics of teaching and managing White resistance (Castagno, 2005; Fox, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Okun, 2011); and the problematizing of White hegemony in the classroom (Dua & Lawrence, 2000; Yoon, 2012). As well, there is emergent literature relating to the specificity of Whiteness, such as expressions of White privilege and White supremacy (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012; Leonardo, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; the newer articulation of White fragility and guilt (DiAngelo, 2011; Caouette & Taylor, 2007); and denial and avoidance in the context of Whiteness (Lund, 2006; Schick, 2000).

Other issues include beliefs that Indigenous people have no distinguishing status that sets them apart from other cultural or racial groups (St. Denis, 2011; Lawrence & Dua, 2011) and lack of insight and understanding related to racial identity, racial privilege, and particularly White racial privilege (Montgomery, 2006; Schick, 2000; Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Moreover, some associated beliefs that impact colonial classrooms are related to social inequities evident in the significant disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in health outcomes, income, education completion, suicide rates and life expectancy (Harris, Tobias, Jeffreys, Waldegrave, Karlsen, Nazroo, 2006; McGibbon & Etowa, 2009). These disparities embody stereotypical narratives and racialized constructs and are understood and rationalized as a cultural difference rather than structural or systemic issues (LaRocque, 2010; Schick & St. Denis, 2003). This is important because creating a map for deconstructing how Indigenous specific racism emerges in the adult learning environment is complicated and

connected to the larger social context of education. Understanding the myriad of issues related to this topic is foundational to this research project and will be a contribution to the body of scholarship that is necessary for addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

Considerable literature relevant to this study related to race and racism in adult learning environments exists (see Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Colin, Peterson & Brookfield, 2010). American publications are especially robust in the area of racialized discourse and education (Fox, 2009; Goodman, 2011; Haltinner, 2014; Leonardo, 2014; Okun, 2011). However, these publications reveal a bias toward studies about a racial binary of relational paradigms, specifically White and Black Americans. In her study of Indigenous women's experience at a predominantly White American University, Castagno (2005) critiques this paradigm.

As with any dichotomous way of thinking and seeing the world, the Black-White binary does not allow for other racial options; Indigenous women are thus socially constructed in ways that superficially force them into either a Black or a White identity in the eyes of others. Further, this paradigm encourages people of color to examine their lives only in relation to whiteness and blackness, thus obscuring the role of language, religion, immigrant status, colonization, and other elements of racism that might not be as relevant to the forms of racism experienced by Black Americans. (p. 464)

This Black-White racial binary often excludes discourse regarding the histories and experiences of American Indigenous people. This dynamic of exclusion is curious, and it is challenging to find educational research from the United States that focuses on the history of colonization and genocide and the resulting oppression of Native Americans. What also emerges from this dynamic of exclusion is the assimilation of Indigenous experiences within the larger 'minority' context as simply another 'ethnic group'. Castagno (2005) further troubles this issue and contends that Indigenous people become 'othered' even within the minority paradigm.

### **2.4.3. Educational Racism and Indigenous People**

The othering of Indigenous people in Canada has historical colonial roots and is a feature of anti-Indigenous racism. This othering also has implications for relationships between Indigenous and White people, as well as those between Indigenous people and other settlers. Historically, Indigenous people were viewed by Europeans as inferior

(Cote-Meek, 2014; LaRocque, 2010, Loomba, 2009). The ideology that informed these beliefs remains today, and indeed education is one of the sites where colonial relations and attitudes continue (Cote-Meek, 2014; St. Denis, 2010a, 2010b).

In a comprehensive investigation of racism and Aboriginal Education in Canada, St. Denis and Hampton (2002), explore several questions including:

- What social practices and educational traditions keep racism outside conscious and deliberate focus?
- What are effects of denying that race matters and that racism is a problem for Aboriginal people? (p. 5)

They found that racism is a significant obstacle for Indigenous youth, that denial of racism and racial discrimination is a problem, and that racism is experienced across the educational spectrum for Indigenous youth (p. 40-41). Other findings indicate an association between racism and low achievement, the impact of low achievement on self-esteem, and the disconcerting dynamic of silencing Indigenous voices (p. 40-41). They also found that racism is manifested in verbal and psychological abuse which has devastating consequences for Indigenous students (p. 41). Exploring manifestations of Indigenous specific racism in adult education environments is well supported in the literature and is a meaningful undertaking.

## **2.5. The Manifestations of Racism in the Classroom**

In examining this area of literature, it has been challenging to sift and sort through copious publications related to racism and education, and then to generate meaningful themes and categories that reflect the focus of this study. While key themes speak to manifestations of racism in the classroom, some of these themes are not germane to anti-Indigenous racism. Nevertheless, discussions of general themes contribute to a deeper understanding of the fundamental ways that issues related to racism emerge in the classroom.

The key themes examined are related to: triggers; resistance; resistance and anti-Indigenous racism; emotionality; microaggressions and everyday racism; and Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. These themes are not discrete, but rather they intersect, overlap, and connect with each other in complex ways.

### 2.5.1. Triggers

Obear (2007) writes about challenges in facilitating discussions of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and argues that both facilitators and participants bring the entirety of who they are to the learning environment. She states that

Whether conscious or not, facilitators and participants bring most, if not all, of who they are to the learning environment, including their fears, biases, stereotypes, memories of past traumas and current life experiences. (p. 1)

In this context, facilitators and educators may experience what Obear (2007) refers to as being “hooked” by the comments and actions of participants and feeling “triggered” emotions, including “anger, fear, embarrassment, pain and sadness”(p. 1). Hardiman & Jackson (2007) explain triggers as words existing outside of conscious awareness that connect to pre-existing anger or pain related to oppression and result in an emotional response. Both educators and students can be triggered by curriculum content, as well as by attitudes and behaviours of people in the room. Hardiman & Jackson (2007) provide examples that help to illuminate the types of comments that people find triggering:

- “I don’t see differences; people are people to me.”
- “What do you people really want anyway?”
- “If everyone just worked hard, they could achieve.”
- “I think people of color are blowing things way out of proportion” (p. 55).

This list provides a diversity of beliefs that expose particular ideologies and worldviews that can be troubled at a number of levels. The comments reflect different perspectives; some of which can be offensive, hostile, and racist. When these perspectives are shared aloud, the effect can be triggering for others. Being triggered can lead to feelings and behaviours such as anger, fear, embarrassment, and sadness (Obear, 2007).

Diane Goodman (2011) explains that an important aspect of self-awareness and mindfulness for educators is understanding personal triggers and how they impact educational effectiveness.

Most of us can think of words or behaviors that push our buttons-that make our stomachs tighten, our fists clench, our hairs stand up. There

may be things that make us freeze and feel paralyzed. I call these triggers. Some common triggers are, “You’re being too sensitive”, “Those people...”, “They all look alike to me”, “Why do they have to be so obvious?”, “She asked for it”, as well as eye rolling and other body language. Triggers can cause us to lose our composure, our clarity, and our ability to respond appropriately. (Goodman, 2011, p. 183)

Being triggered may also give rise to resistance, emotionality, and microaggressions. Examples showing the association between race and racism and potential triggering include:

- referring to and/or challenging ideologies of race, racism, and antiracism (Castagno, 2008; Fox, 2009; Goodman, 2011; Okun, 2010; Sue, Torino; Capodilupo, Rivera & Lin, 2009);
- learning about the history and legacy of colonization (Cote-Meek, 2014; Hill, Kim & Williams, 2010; LaRocque, 2010; St. Denis, 2011);
- engaging with topics of White identity, White privilege/domination, and White supremacy in general (Carr & Lund, 2007; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013b; Young, 1998); and
- making transparent the inequities, racial violence, and costs of racism to Indigenous people and racialized others (Castagno, 2008; Leonardo, 2004; Maybee, 2009).

## 2.5.2. Resistance

Consider the following:

- “I am fed up from hearing you people talk about racism.”
- “What you are talking about here is simply a revisionist perspective of actual history.”
- “Dwelling on the past is not helpful. I think that it is time you people just got over it and moved on.”

What is the common ground here? Is there a theme? The quotes above were directed toward me as a graduate student or as an instructor. These comments invariably occurred during presentations on colonial history or other Indigenous related content. According to Cote-Meek (2014), LaRocque (2010), Okun (2010), Goodman (2011), these kinds of comments are characterized as manifestations of resistance. They may also be indicators or markers of prejudice, bias, and other expressions of

racist ideology. Comments such as those above have a disruptive impact on the educational environment and they exemplify resistance.

Resistance is also a term associated with Indigenous people. For example, the *Idle No More* movement; Indigenous people *resisting* oppression; Indigenous *resistance* scholarship; and Indigenous *resistance* to settler encroachment and development on their land. However, for this study, I apply the concept of resistance not to Indigenous people but rather to non-Indigenous people. It is about *their* resistance to learning and engaging in Indigenous-specific content which requires examination.

Diane Goodman (2011) writes about the resistance that people from privileged groups demonstrate when confronted about content related to race and racism. She explains that resistance flows from a person's openness to consider the perspectives of others. When participants are unwilling to participate in prejudice reduction activities, Goodman (2001) describes this unwillingness as "*exactly what resistance is*" -- an unwillingness to engage. To educate on social justice, educators must assist participants to examine their prejudices. Therefore, dealing with resistance is an essential aspect of teaching or facilitating education around race and racism.

In an educational context, resistance and racism can be linked together in a variety of ways including resistance to learning about race and racism in general (Okun, 2010; Bell, Love, & Roberts, 2007; Tator & Henry, 2010; Schick, 2000). Ample literature addresses the classroom dynamics that can emerge when educators challenge individuals. These dynamics arise in a variety of ways and may be rooted in racist beliefs and other views which may not have been critically examined (Dion, 2009; LaRocque, 2010; Montgomery, 2013; Okun, 2010). They are often characterized in language such as 'challenges' (Montgomery, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Okun, 2010), and they sometimes occur in the context of 'difficult dialogues' (Jakubowski, 2001; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera & Lin, 2009). According to Goodman (2011), one of the many problems when resistance is activated, is that people are unable to engage with the material in a meaningful way and "they refuse to consider alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant ideology that maintains the status quo" (p. 63). Goodman (2011) deconstructs resistance as a dynamic influenced by a number of elements including socio-political and psychological factors. She identifies other factors that contribute to resistance such as reactions and responses to the racial

standpoint of the educator and resistance to learning about religious and cultural beliefs. Goodman (2011) also discusses her finding that White men are often the most resistant to learning about social justice (p. 76). Goodman (2011) identifies the sources of resistance as fear and discomfort when asked to examine one's belief systems, and that defensiveness and resistance serve to reduce "anxiety, assuage guilt or protect against painful feelings". Similar to triggers, resistance is described as an automatic reaction bypassing cognitive examination (Clark, 1991, p. 231).

Okun (2011), in *"Teaching about Race and Racism to People Who Don't Want to Know"*, explores the roots of resistance and offers an analysis of denial – something she contends is at the core of resistance. Okun (2011) states that predictable aspects of denial evident in race and racism education include attitudes and behaviours such as "silencing and shifting", "marginalizing", "trivializing", "rationalizing entitlement", "blaming the victim", accusations of "reverse racism", beliefs that "no intent = no racism", feelings of "guilt and shame", and "attention and engagement" (p. 42-62).

Goodman (2011) suggests resistance is a dynamic that may naturally occur when individual ideologies are threatened, and she links the activation of resistance to cognitive disengagement with learning.

## **2.6. Resistance and anti-Indigenous Racism**

There is no question that resistance is a substantial topic area and the previous section addresses concerns about the dynamic of resistance to learning about race and racism. However, the concept of resistance is also useful in understanding the attitudinal and behavioural dynamics that surface in the classroom when Indigenous content or perspectives are presented. Dynamics that can trigger resistance include:

- manifestations of "epistemic ignorance" (Kuokkanen, 2008),
- lack of foundational knowledge about the reality of Indigenous specific racism in Canadian society (Henry & Tator, 2010),
- the process of "deconstruction of previous misinformation" (LaRocque, 2002 in Cote-Meek, p. 92) and learning about the history of colonization (Cote-Meek, 2014; Dion, 2009; Godlewska; Moore & Bednasek, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2010),

- legacy of White supremacy and the identity of learners as settlers and beneficiaries of privileges, including settler privilege accrued from colonial history (Lee, 2014; Battiste, 2013), and
- the dynamics related to racial standpoints of educators and learners when one or the other is Indigenous (Cote-Meek, 2014; Watkins, 2014),

This list identifies the range and complexity of resistance when the scope is narrowed to Indigenous content. As these scholars point out, there is something unique about the nature of this resistance. Susan Dion (2009) speaks about the roots of this resistance and suggests that Canadians actually “refuse to know” that racism, which underpinned colonization, benefits not just the original settlers, but all non-Indigenous people living on this land.

Canadians “refuse to know” that the racism that fuelled colonization sprang from a system that benefits all non-Aboriginal people, not just the European settlers of long ago. This refusal to know is comforting: it supports an understanding of racism as an act of individuals, not of a system. It creates a barrier allowing Canadians to resist confronting the country’s racist past and the extent to which that past lives inside its present, deep in the national psyche. The need to deny racism in Canada’s past resurfaces again and again in its present. (Dion, 2009, p. 56-57)

This unwillingness to “know” serves to reassure that racism resides solely in individual acts and provides a defence from examining racism and systemic racism in the past and present day Canadian society (Dion, 2009, p. 56-57).

Dion (2009) maintains that Canadians rely on a variety of mechanisms “to defend against attending to the post-contact experiences of First Nations People in Canada” (p. 56) including:

- challenging the narrative’s relevance to one’s life in the present
- locking the events in a history that has no present
- dehumanizing Aboriginal people
- claiming “there is nothing I can do; therefore I don’t have to listen”
- asserting that the stories are too hard to listen to (Dion, 2009, p. 56).

Sami scholar Kuokkanen (2010) refers to ‘epistemic ignorance’ as “the ways in which academic theories and practices marginalize, exclude, and discriminate against

other than dominant Western epistemic and intellectual traditions”, and that this is a form of violence (p. 66). Kuokkanen (2010) argues that sanctioned ignorance is not accidental; rather it reaches into all aspects of the academy, and “[s]tudents, faculty, and staff are all guilty of this” (p. 67).

Manifestations of epistemic ignorance are not random offshoots or isolated incidents; they are rooted in academic structures that are complicit in colonization and that reproduce the inferiority of non-western epistemes (in the same way that the inferiority of peoples was produced earlier) in order to protect the interests of those in power. It is a question of the legacy of colonial histories and power inequalities but also of understanding. (Kuokkanen, 2010, p. 67)

Both Dion (2009) and Kuokkanen (2010) are speaking to the overarching ideological assumptions and the colonial context in which resistance occurs, something other scholars have also noted as a significant force in the classroom (Cote-Meek, 2014; Dion, 2009).

Schick and St. Denis (2003) identify specific beliefs related to both attitudes and resistance. These ideological assumptions include views that “race doesn’t matter (culture does)”, “meritocracy (everyone has an equal opportunity)” exists; and through “goodness and innocence -- by individual acts and good intentions -- one can secure innocence as well as superiority” (p. 61-63). These assumptions reveal not only the range of dynamics but also the underlying ideology that shapes resistance in the classroom. The beliefs reflect deep epistemologies related to the construction of knowledge and truth, rationalization of entitlement, and they may also reveal a comfort with ignorance and unexamined privilege. Schick and St. Denis (2003) explain that:

Students are often unaware of, or choose to forget, how disadvantage has been constructed historically. That they continue to benefit from historical practices of discrimination allows claims of innocence. That is why they can say with impunity, “Why do they always bring up the past? I wasn’t there”. (p. 1)

### **2.6.1. Emotionality**

Another way in which racism manifests in the classroom is through emotionality. These emotions can include feeling “anxious, fearful, confused, angry, guilty and resentful” (Goodman, 2011, p. 33). But what does this look like? Imagine the following scenario:

*Two female instructors (one Indigenous and one White) are leading a racially mixed class through the dynamics of White domination. During an exercise designed to help expose the way that White privilege accrues at the expense of Indigenous people, a White woman suddenly interrupts and yells angrily “I am so tired of you people always whining about racism” and “This wasn’t my fault”. She then bangs her head on the table and begins to sob. Several of her White classmates run to her side and console her. Some of the Indigenous students are not looking at the White student but instead are looking only at the two instructors.*

The layers of complexity in this scenario make it worthy of deconstruction. Some questions we might ask relate to the actions of the White student. For example, how did her expression of emotion disrupt the discussion of racism and White domination? What was the consequence?

One effect of this White student’s behaviour is how it impacts other students in the classroom. Note how her expression of emotion becomes the focus as the other White students move towards her to support her. The implicit lesson is that the topic of White domination is the problem and the *content* is unsafe and dangerous for White people. Matias (2016) writes about this dynamic as another manifestation of how Whiteness dominates space. She shares that:

In my classes, for example, many of my students are White teacher candidates and once the dialogue of race gets down and dirty, their tears appear. Though it is only natural to feel, it is unnatural to place more weight on the tears of the racially-dominant and thus structure our behaviors, discussion, and emotions around it. This is seen when the crying White teacher candidate expects to be coddled for feeling bad. Such comfort is not given to the humiliated teacher candidate of color who has just revealed how racism continues to harm her identity. Needless to say, there is an emotional dominance of whiteness that undergirds racial discussions, one which I reveal in my talks (Matias, 2016, p. 69).

The expressions of emotion, and in particular emotions expressed by White people, are a dynamic that DiAngelo (2011) examines. She suggests there is an ‘insulated environment of racial protection’ built to support White people’s expectation for racial comfort. Moreover, DiAngelo (2011) contends this insulation contributes to lowering White people’s ability to tolerate even a minimum amount of racial stress. Displays of emotion or behaviours such as “argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation” are defences used to mitigate this racial stress (p. 54).

DiAngelo (2011) calls this dynamic *White Fragility*. Extensive contexts which potentially trigger racial stress and White fragility include:

- suggesting that a white person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference (challenge to objectivity)
- people of color talking directly about their racial perspectives (challenge to white racial codes)
- people of color choosing not to protect the racial feelings of white people regarding race (challenge to white racial expectations and need/entitlement to racial comfort)
- receiving feedback that one's behavior had a racist impact (challenge to white liberalism)
- suggesting that group membership is significant (challenge to individualism)
- an acknowledgment that access is unequal between racial groups (challenge to meritocracy) being presented with a person of color in a position of leadership (challenge to white authority (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57).

What is clear from the literature and the examples above is that the topics of race and racism in classrooms can be both complex and demanding to manage. Not only does the issue generate emotionality, but it also gives rise to easily activated opinions, rationalizations, and judgments (Brooks & Arnold, 2013; Caouette & Taylor, 2007; Leonardo, 2013; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Okun, 2010). Tatum (1992), an American scholar who has written extensively about the application of racial identity development theory in the classroom, adds that emotion-laden defensive responses are particularly common when addressing race and racism related topics and issues.

In their work as academics teaching about racism, Dua and Lawrence (2000) share findings from a critical study they undertook related to anti-racism and Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. They interviewed 14 Indigenous women or women of colour in Canadian universities. The quote below details an experience of teaching about anti-racism:

When I teach about racism, the tension in the room is clear. Unlike in other classes, the students are deathly quiet and still, glaring, hostile, their pens on their desk. They are clearly telling me that they are not willing to learn. While I am supposed to have the responsibility to define what is being taught in the classroom, students are clearly asserting their power to say that this is their classroom - and I need to teach only what they want to learn. (Dua & Lawrence, 2000, p. 107)

Dua and Lawrence found that the educators who were Indigenous or racialized women of colour reported sharing similar experiences including considerable resistance and hostility from students. Resistance and hostility “ranged from an insistence on maintaining Eurocentric ‘readings’ of course material to expressions of overt anger at having to explore racism or colonialist relations in their courses” (p. 107). This theme of emotion represents a range of behaviours that manifest as resistance.

According to Grosland (2013), the pedagogical approaches of individual educators may be a key factor in understanding how they manage racial narratives and dominant discourses in the classroom. She explains that language is a way educators may resist being explicit or direct about the use of anti-racist pedagogy. For example, some educators avoid the “use of ‘race words’ such as *racist* or *racism*, instead opting for terms such as *diversity*, or *multiculturalism*” to “steer clear of the intense emotions that can arise” (Grosland, 2013, p. 326). Grosland (2013) suggests these are coded words that can alert students and educators about race-related content, as well as what type of race-related content is being avoided. Grosland (2013) argues that educator avoidance of triggering emotional responses is not helpful to anti-racist learning. As well, educators need to understand and be aware of such reactions because these “emotional changes help us better understand ourselves and our learners” (Grosland, 2013, p. 326).

The expression of emotions related to engaging in dialogue and learning about race and racism are complex, and they have far reaching impacts. The literature shows that ‘race talk’ in the classroom can yield an array of responses and emotionality is one response to ‘race talk’ that, even when it is normalized, can be challenging for educators and students to manage.

Young (2003) states that poorly managed emotion-laden incidents can have “disastrous consequences (anger, hostility, silence, complaints, misunderstandings, blockages of the learning process, and so on)”, but when skilfully addressed, they can be powerful learning opportunities (Young, 2003). As discussed earlier, classroom dialogue about race and racism can be minefields of ‘hot button’ issues that generate feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and fear (Sue & Constantine, 2007). As sociologists Roberts & Smith (2002) note in their work focused on managing controversial issues and emotions, “Class discussion can create a politically charged atmosphere, with supporters and resisters of specific issues becoming polarized. These clashing

sentiments may potentially damage or enhance a positive classroom atmosphere” (p. 292).

As these authors suggest, when race-based discussions occur in the classroom, they are not only potentially polarizing, but can also lead to resistance based responses that impact the learning milieu and learning engagement unless skilfully addressed and managed.

## **2.7. Microaggressions and Everyday Racism**

American scholar Derald Wing Sue has written extensively about the ways in which attitudes and behaviours can manifest as microaggressions. He defines microaggressions as:

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. (Sue, 2010, p. 3)

This definition is consistent with the notion of ‘everyday racism’, something Essed (1990) defined as “the various types and expressions of racism experienced by ethnic groups in everyday contact with members of the more powerful (white) group” (p. 31). Everyday racism is defined by those who experience it (Essed, 1990, p. 31). The concept of microaggressions expands our language for naming and understanding behaviours that occur in the classroom.

It is apparent that viewing attitudes and behaviours in the context of racial microaggressions is a useful frame for organizing complex issues. Cote-Meek (2014) and others (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, and Rivera, 2009; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009) uncover important indicators for ways students encounter race and racism in classrooms, and how microaggressions are expressed and experienced. Sue (2009a) suggests that “from the perspective of people of color, microaggressions are tinged with explicit and implicit racial snubs, put downs, or a pattern of disrespect” (p. 183). Racial microaggressions are a source trigger for classroom discussions on race as racialized students may “directly or indirectly confront perpetrators” (Sue & Constantine, 2007, p. 136).

Sue & Constantine (2007) stress that microaggressions “are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous” (p. 137). Microaggressions can instigate difficult dialogues related to race and racism because this subject matter can trigger ‘emotional hot buttons’ and faculty may be ‘ill prepared to deal with the often-explosive race-related emotions that manifest in the classroom”. (Sue & Constantine, 2007, p. 136)

## **2.8. Indigenous Perspectives in the Colonized Classroom**

Several scholars have noted that racism and violence is hurtful and traumatic (Cote-Meek, 2014; DiAngelo & Sensory, 2012; Fox, 2009; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, Solorzano, 2009; Truong & Museus, 2012). How is this perceived through an Indigenous lens? What happens when racist stereotypes about Indigenous people begin to surface in the classroom? What is the impact on Indigenous students?

Cote-Meek (2010) undertook a study focusing on “postsecondary classrooms as one site where narratives of colonial violence and Aboriginal people are introduced and how Aboriginal students view and come to understand narratives of colonial violence” (p. 60). A key research question Cote-Meek (2014) asks of the eight Aboriginal participants is “How do Aboriginal students confront curriculum on colonial history that is marked by violence, in this classroom?” (p. 4). She found *naming racism* as the primary negotiation Aboriginal students in her study confronted. She identified several themes in Indigenous students’ descriptions of racism they experienced in the classroom:

- denial of racism
- being silenced
- you’re not intelligent enough
- native studies courses are not real academic courses
- called to be the ‘Native Expert’
- called to be the ‘Cultural Indian’
- everyday racism. (Cote-Meek, 2014, p. 100-112)

Cote-Meek identifies several issues related to the landscape of the learning environment. These themes are consistent with other literature that speaks about the

dynamics of anti-Indigenous racism in an educational context (LaRocque, 2010; Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing & Veugelers, 2012). The themes of “Cultural Indian” and “Native Expert” are pervasive symbols of objectification within public settings and learning environments with which many Indigenous people have experience. Cote-Meek develops the theme of ‘everyday racism’ as spaces outside the classroom “where Aboriginal people are racially marked as deviant and criminal” (p. 111) and goes on to note that experiences were “especially apparent in mixed classrooms where Aboriginal students are usually represented in small numbers” (p. 127).

In Cote-Meek’s (2014) study she refers to these issues in the context of the *colonial classroom*. Her study brings to light the reality of Indigenous students experiences in education and the difficulty in listening to “historical and ongoing colonial violence perpetrated against Aboriginal people” in a learning environment that itself perpetuates racism. Indigenous students experienced emotional responses, “varying from sadness, anger, shame, embarrassment, feeling overwhelmed and the feeling of being under a microscope.” (p. 115). Her analysis makes visible the trauma experienced by Aboriginal students in the colonial classroom while contending with a racist environment, often created by both faculty and students, which is harmful to their well-being. Leonardo & Porter (2010) suggest there is “no safe space” for racialized and Indigenous students for the reasons we presented: racism in the colonized classroom, microaggressions, emotionality and White fragility, etc. The “violence is already there.” (p. 149).

The topic of safety in the classroom is not only an issue for Indigenous and racialized students, but is also for White students who express feelings of discomfort around race. In their article, “Getting slammed: White depictions of race discussions as arenas of violence”, DiAngelo & Sensoy (2012) tackle the issue of ‘safety’ in the classroom when ‘race talk’ is explicitly occurring. These authors problematize the issue of safety as a questionable -- even problematic -- goal for educators. It raises the question whether claims for the need for safety are perhaps a manifestation of resistance to race- based dialogue.

Clearly, there is vital research that speaks to dynamics occurring in relation to race and the classroom environment. Several notable Canadian scholars examine the essential question of how this research interfaces with a colonial context (see for

example the works of Battiste, 2011; Cote-Meek, 2014; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Dion, 2009; Lawrence & Dua, 2011; Lund, 2006; Montgomery, 2005; Schick, 2000; St. Denis, 2010a). This area needs to be further explored and expanded upon, both in the Canadian context as well as the US. While much of the literature from the US is relevant to understanding racialized dynamics in the classroom, it is also a part of the problem because Indigenous perspectives are almost always absent from this discourse. When anti-Indigenous perspectives have no presence, or are marginalized or invisible as they are in most of US research about educational environments, it is yet another example of the domination of non-Indigenous perspectives and the erasure of Indigenous people in the discussion.

In her doctoral work, "Colonized Classrooms", Cote-Meek (2014) writes about the dynamics of racism, trauma, and resistance in post-secondary education. She centres Indigenous experiences in post-secondary institutions and provides analysis in the context of colonization. My research builds on the foundation of scholars such as Cote-Meek and focuses on the dynamic of resistance. Resistance is a weighty issue related to our collective colonial experience as Indigenous peoples and settlers. However, if our intention is to reduce anti-Indigenous racism and improve the social status of Indigenous people, then resistance to Indigenous perspectives, and learning about privilege and White supremacy, must be named and courageously addressed.

## Chapter 3.

### Methodology

#### 3.1. Forming an Intention for this Research

This research is concerned with themes that capture the complexity and depth of issues linked to anti-Indigenous racism and how it manifests in the adult education context. This research also investigates instruction and educator challenges evident in learner attitudes and behaviours when Indigenous issues manifest. Lastly, this research identifies strategies that educators employ to manage anti-Indigenous racism constructively.

My vision for this research was to speak with and bring together educators who were willing to share their classroom experiences with anti-Indigenous racism and to explore how they may or may not have made sense of their experiences. I asked questions with the hope they would stimulate discussion about what educators *do* when anti-Indigenous racism comes up. What do they do or not do and why? Other questions focused on their thoughts and ideas about the roots of this issue. How do they feel about the student's attitudes and behaviours? What do they think educators need to know to manage the space where anti-Indigenous racism surfaces? These questions are explicitly and implicitly nested within the research and they reveal some underlying issues for educators who have an awareness of the breadth and depth of anti-Indigenous racism in learning environments.

In this study, my hopes were to connect with educators who were engaged in anti-racism work and to talk with those who wrestle with similar issues and concerns that I have struggled with throughout my career and learning journey as an educator. Ultimately, I hoped that together we would be able, like architects, to co-create and construct a pedagogy that would help us as well as other educators who are actively challenging anti-Indigenous racism. Challenging the dynamics of colonialism, including addressing the ongoing forms of violence in the classroom can be difficult (Cote-Meek, 2014; Henry & Tator, 2010). It is easier to ignore anti-Indigenous racism than it is to address it. However, taking this issue on in a meaningful way can be harrowing and it

can be penalizing. Sometimes it may feel as though educators are all alone as they do this work.

Responding to racism in the classroom means responding to colonization and that is a formidable task within academia. Lawrence and Dua (2011) contend that seriously addressing colonization means centering race and racism in theory construction, which can be challenging because tackling and responding to racism in any context may have risks. It may require us, as educators, to venture into the unfamiliar and unknown, and we may lack confidence about what we are doing or why we are doing it.

The intention of this research was to seek out educators who tackle anti-Indigenous racism in classrooms and create a compassionate, productive, and beneficial space where they could share their experiences and ideas. I anticipated that while each one had unique views, it was also likely that they shared experiences, mutual concerns, and insights. Like other Indigenous scholars, (Kovach 2010; Smith, 2012) I believe there are obligations when conducting research related to Indigenous people (Wilson, 2008). One obligation is that the research is useful and beneficial to those who directly participate in it.

Over my career, I have read hundreds of books and articles, mostly in the pursuit of understanding human behaviour. I am particularly interested in ideas about the attitudes and behaviours that are conducive to unpacking the ideology and production of racism. My research is consistent with these ideas, and I tried to wrestle with questions that move these issues and concerns forward. These questions relate to our roles as educators, our accountabilities; and our responsibilities to each other as human beings. Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach (2010) speaks about our ethical responsibilities as Indigenous researchers. Kovach writes, "Research is about collective responsibility: 'we can only go so far before we see a face – our Elder cleaning fish, our sister living on the edge in East Vancouver...- and hear a voice whispering, "Are you helping us?" (Kovach, 2010, p. 36). My ethical responsibility is what motivates me and, as I have learned, it is also what motivates others.

### 3.2. Positionality

This research is situated within a uniquely political and racialized context and this point needs to be made explicit. I am an Indigenous woman, and this research is about anti-Indigenous racism in adult learning environments. The research participants are racially diverse (self-identified as Indigenous, White, and as racialized, non-Indigenous people of colour) and their social location has shaped every experience, including their lived experience as a person with racial advantage (e.g., as beneficiaries of systems that benefit White people and all settlers), or as a person disadvantaged (e.g., as targets of racism, discrimination, bias, structural racism, and stereotyping) by race. Research participants offer perspectives that are uniquely shaped by their positionality (Goodman, 2011), specifically their racial identity (Lowman & Barker, 2015). Racial identity is a prominent feature throughout the research study.

My social location as an Indigenous woman, an experienced educator, and the researcher-interviewer is evident in this work, and some dynamics flow from this. As Kovach (2010) states, “a significant contribution of qualitative research ... has been its ability to gain recognition that the researcher is not a neutral instrument of the research process” (p. 32). Hence, I am aware that as a researcher and educator, I am not a neutral instrument. I also recognize that the participants, as educators, are also not neutral and the experiences they share about racism are not constructed in neutral terms. I am aware that I have a set of beliefs about racism (its roots, purpose, and ways of activation). I am also conscious of my perspectives about anti-Indigenous racism and the critical role educators play in managing racism in the classroom. Similar to Hampton (1995), I believe all research is subjective, not objective, and that there is always a motive behind research. As Hampton (1995) articulates, “When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to people around us” (as cited in Wilson 2008, p. 56).

Just as for Hampton, claims that research is neutral is a ‘goddam lie’ (1995), so too are claims that educators and researchers are neutral or dispassionate about racism, especially anti-Indigenous racism. This too, is a ‘goddam lie’. There is significant literature about the social location of educators and the relationship that positionality has with their work (Quaye, 2012; Leonardo, 2014; Okun, 2010), especially the impact of

educators who are White. In reviewing the literature, I have a sense of wonder as I reflect on my own reality as an Indigenous person and the years of experience as an educator. I remember the day when “I had had enough!” After years of co-facilitating in an interracial professional environment, I reached my tipping point of tolerance for challenges with students, particularly the resistance of White students to learning about the reality of colonial history. I decided I could no longer co-teach with an Indigenous instructor because of this resistance. I proposed to my employer that, if I was to continue with this work, I would need to work with White educators. I was convinced this would change the classroom climate and mitigate some of the challenges that seemed to arise when there were two Indigenous educators. These challenges related to managing an often hostile classroom environment, addressing resistance to learning, and managing the additional effort required to establish and maintain credibility as Indigenous educators. When I think about social location and positionality, I remember this experience and the courage it took for me to not only name the problem of White resistance, but also to suggest a course of action. It was a turning point for me in developing my pedagogy as an educator. I am now aware that I have beliefs about classroom environments and the ways in which resistance manifests, and have some experience with strategies (both successful and unsuccessful) that I have used to mitigate resistance. I bring all of this to this research project.

The questions used to guide the interviews and focus group are partly influenced by my knowledge and experience in the classroom, and partly by my experience as a university student. Creswell (2013) identifies this dynamic - deep experience with the subject matter - as something that is understood and managed through “bracketing”. Because there are some difficulties bracketing personal experiences, Creswell (2013) proposes that a new way to look at this dilemma is to shift the concept of bracketing to something that resembles “suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (p. 83). This makes sense to me, as it is unrealistic, if not impossible, to completely bracket ‘who I am’ and ‘how my identity has shaped my experiences’. However, there are genuine and important questions and issues related to presumed similarities and differences between me and the participants, as well as the dynamic of potential ‘ethnic matching’ in interracial research (Gunaratnam, 2003). These issues will be taken up in further chapters.

### 3.3. Theoretical Framework

In this research study, I examine the professional lived experiences of educators who address anti-Indigenous issues as part of their work. Their stories reflect shared experiences of wrestling with a specific kind of racism (anti-Indigenous racism) in a particular environment (the adult learning environment). An analysis of their shared experiences will potentially illuminate a path that leads to an enhanced understanding of the phenomena of experiences of educators who deal with anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. Due to its emphasis on understanding shared experiences, this research uses phenomenology as a theoretical framework to inform the research design, including the research methods and data analysis.

Given the context, scope and focus of this research, qualitative inquiry using a phenomenological approach provides a strong structure to guide and support the research process, which involves collecting and interpreting narrative or “subjective” data. As a theoretical perspective focused on making sense of subjective experiences, phenomenology provides a framework for analyzing qualitative data in a way that enables access to the spectrum of ‘social worlds’ people experience. As Miller and Glassner (2016) explain, delving into these social worlds illustrates what happens in them, and the stories people often tell to help “make sense of themselves, their experiences and their place within these social worlds” (p. 52). Researching from a phenomenological perspective allows for self-reflexivity in the research process, and enhances the researcher’s potential to theorize about these social worlds. Phenomenology also shapes research methods such as qualitative interviewing. Its emphasis on human behaviour is useful for drawing attention to participants’ experiences with ‘emotion’, which is a key subject area that surfaces in this topic.

A phenomenological research approach is useful because it “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76) and is a “useful methodology for Indigenous researchers who wish to make meaning from stories” (Kovach, 2009, p. 27). Creswell (2013) draws on the work of Moustakas (1994) to articulate what he calls the ‘defining features of phenomenology’ (p. 78). A key defining feature relevant to this work is exploring ‘phenomenon’ - in this case, educators and anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. As Creswell (2013) explains,

This turns on the lived experiences of individuals and how they have both subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people. Thus, there is a refusal of the subjective-objective perspective, and, for these reasons, phenomenology lies somewhere on a continuum between qualitative and quantitative research. (p. 78)

In keeping with Creswell's attributes of phenomenology, this study is about the individual's lived experience with the phenomenon of anti-Indigenous racism in the adult education classroom. Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) state that phenomenologists are interested in the common features of the lived experience and that "data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon -- and who can provide a detailed account of their experience -- might suffice to uncover its core elements" (p. 1375). Creswell (2013) suggests that phenomenology ends when its 'essence' can be described, that is, when the 'essence of the experience for individuals incorporating "what" they have experienced and "how they experienced it" (p. 79).

### **3.4. Participants and Recruitment**

All participants were recruited from four universities located on Vancouver Island and Vancouver, in British Columbia, Canada. To reduce transportation barriers, these geographic areas were close to my work, making it easier to meet with participants. There was no intent to recruit from specific faculties within the university.

A goal of the study was to interview nine to twelve people positioned in three racial groups of three to four people who self-identified as Indigenous, White or racialized non-Indigenous people of colour. This purposeful recruitment acknowledges the 'real world' conditions through which the issue of anti-Indigenous racism largely emerges. These different racial standpoints have meaning and impact on the classroom dynamics and are a recurring theme throughout this dissertation.

The study proposal was submitted for ethical review at the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and Vancouver Island University. The Research Ethics Board (REB) at Vancouver Island University indicated the potential for emotional risk to participants who have experienced racism in the classroom and whom may or may not be triggered in the interview or focus group. As a

condition of REB approval I was required to provide an additional list of resources that participants could access following the interviews and focus group (Appendix D).

Once Research Ethics was approved, a description of the study and invitation to participate was circulated on the four university campus bulletin boards, and also by word of mouth. This process yielded several inquiries through email to which I responded. Several people showed immediate interest and arrangements were made to do in-person interviews. Some participants came forward after hearing about the study from colleagues. Recruitment was ongoing during the interviewing to include more people in the research study. During my conversations and communications with prospective participants, we discussed how they had heard about the research project, we reviewed the intent of the research, and I asked about their interest in participating. All of the individuals who contacted me were currently involved in a teaching-educator role in their workplace, or they had previously been employed as an educator at a university. The interviews were conducted at the discretion of the participant and while I offered to meet participants at their work sites, many asked to be interviewed in a neutral space away from their work. Of the people who agreed to an interview, four self-identified as Indigenous, three self-identified as White, and three self-identified as non-Indigenous racialized person of colour. In terms of gender ratio, there were nine females and one male. Further details about the participants are not provided to protect their privacy.

Following the interview, all participants were invited to join a two-hour focus group. Seven out of the original group of people who had had individual interviews expressed interest in the focus group and five people were able to attend. In the focus group, the racial representations of participants included three who self-identified as White, one who self-identified as Indigenous, and one who self-identified as a non-Indigenous racialized person of colour. The focus group was held in Vancouver, BC because this was most convenient location for participants. Participants were provided financial compensation for transportation and given a small gift as a token of appreciation for their time and participation.

Tackling the broad issue of race and racism can look different, based on who is doing the looking. In this racially-informed research study, it was important to consider how racial standpoints among educators might shape this dynamic. Therefore, to gather

multiple perspectives and richer data, it was critical to recruit racially diverse participants. Capturing the range of experiences and perspectives meant purposeful recruitment of participants with due consideration of their race.

### **3.4.1. Accounting for Participant Risk**

Part of the process for receiving ethics approval involved applying to Research Ethics boards at four universities for permission to post information about the study and recruit participants. During the University Ethics Board approval process, one member of the Research Ethics Board put forward that while there were no known risks to the study, participants who were interviewed or participated in the focus group, and who may have experienced racism in the classroom, may be emotionally triggered during the interview process. As a result, individuals were informed of a range of available supports as part of the invitation to participate in the study process. These options included contact information for individuals and organizations with expertise in trauma, were outlined in a Resource Sheet (see Appendix D).

The notion of participant risk is interesting to me given that educators are exposed to and may witness and address Indigenous-related issues, including racism, as a matter of course in their educator role. Haskie and Shreve (2014), who write about teaching in the context of colonialism ask, “How does one engage people about some of the ugliest actions and most atrocious crimes committed in modern world history, especially when many in the classroom continue to feel the effects of those events?” (p. 97). They acknowledge that efforts to engage students within this backdrop can “be a difficult, even painful experience for any college or university instructor” (p. 97). For example, Haskie (2014), a Navajo scholar, writes about the personal challenges in teaching about Native American studies and racial/ethnic studies. He feels anger, shock, and personal pain while teaching about the genocidal acts perpetrated against Native Americans. As Haskie and others have shown, teaching issues related to the reality of our colonial history can trigger emotional responses. Wagner (2005) suggests that teaching “in non-traditional ways makes educators more vulnerable,” (p. 268) and further challenges their “authority, credibility and expertise,” which can be experienced as personally draining (p. 269).

This research illustrates the risk for educators of being triggered in the classroom environment. What is less clear in the literature is the potential for educators to be emotionally triggered when they are speaking about their experiences of racism *in the classroom*. Although taking part in a research interview and participating in a focus group about experiences with anti-Indigenous racism is not identical to having an experience of racism in a classroom, the dynamics associated with being emotionally triggered may still apply. Wagner (2005) suggests that given the realities of anti-racist pedagogy it can be useful to develop support systems such as a network of colleagues who can provide emotional support and share learnings based on similar practical experiences.

There was no question that the individual interviews and the focus group, in particular, generated a sense of community and deep sharing amongst the participants. Throughout the interviews and focus group, I observed that participants engaged quickly with the questions and dialogue, and expressed emotion appropriate to the content and context of their discussion. As Wagner (2005) suggests, gatherings such as this are potentially helpful and emotions are one aspect and reality of this work. I agree with Wagner and further suggest that bringing together people who share an understanding of this issue can spark a sense of community, intimacy, trust, and even hope to. This issue is pursued further in the following chapter.

### **3.5. Methods and Data Collection**

There were two phases of the data collection: initial individual interviews were followed up with a focus group.

#### **3.5.1. Individual Interviews**

For the first phase of the research, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews (See Appendix C) with ten educators experienced in working in adult learning environments where Anti-Indigenous racism surfaced. The three key questions I chose to explore were:

- a) How do educators address or not address resistance discourse related to anti-Indigenous racism?

- b) What are the characteristics of an anti-Indigenous racial dialogue that make the dialogue challenging for educators?
- c) What intervention strategies have proved successful and unsuccessful in facilitating challenging dialogue on anti-Indigenous racism?

All interviews occurred over a four-month period in 2015. During that time the researcher visited participants at their workplace, or met with them at another agreed upon location. Individual interviews were semi-structured, audio-recorded and lasted between 90 minutes to 120 minutes.

The interview was intended to provide a flexible structure for the participant to comfortably share what they knew (Brinkman, 2018); what they had experienced (Miller & Glassner, 2016); and how they had come to understand the phenomenon of race and racism in within an Indigenous context (Kovach, 2010). As well, interviewees had opportunities to share how the ways in which they managed these situations. The research questions were a guide and were not used to control the interview, but rather to learn from the conversation. Spradley (1979) captures the phenomenological approach to learning:

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (p. 125)

Developing early rapport with each participant was necessary to support personal and potentially emotional dialogue. Kvale (1996) comments on the challenge of creating the kind of interaction in which knowledge evolves through dialogue. He suggests that there is a delicate balance between “cognitive knowledge seeking and ethical aspects of human interaction” (p. 125). This balance emerges in an atmosphere where participants are encouraged to be as open as possible and to share their ideas and feelings freely. As such, participants “lived meanings may be immediately accessible in the situation, communicated not only by words, but by tone of voice, expressions, and gestures in the natural flow of a conversation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 125).

Time allocation was addressed early in discussions and appointments were made for 90 minutes to 120 minutes. Each interview began with a review of the purpose

of the research and of Informed consent (all forms and interview guides are in an appendix). All interviews were digitally recorded (as a precaution, two recorders were used during interviews) and I made brief notes. After each interview, participants were offered a small gift as a gesture of appreciation. Transcripts of each interview were forwarded to each participant for review, clarification, and comments. One participant responded with additional comments.

### **3.5.2. Focus Group**

When considering the type of interviewing which would be both practical and provide the most useful information for the research questions, I turned to Creswell (1998) who suggests that focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among the participants is intended to encourage dialogue and when the participants are similar and cooperative. Focus groups are increasingly used in qualitative research across a wide range of disciplines. This approach includes a variety of activities ranging from “being highly scripted to being wildly dialogic” (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis & Welker, 2018, p. 692). Silverman (2010) maintains that focus groups require skills to elicit dialogue including facilitation skills, flexibility and the ability to encourage and not direct group dynamics.

The focus group provided an environment where educators could discuss and critique the main themes and issues that emerged from the individual interviews from the perspective of their own experiences. The focus group was a space where participants could generate ideas and spark insights enhanced by the dynamics of group dialogue. Following the individual interviews, participants were each advised that they would be formally invited to participate in a focus group at a later date. Of the ten individuals invited to the focus group, five were able to participate. The makeup of participants in the focus group included people who self-identified as Indigenous (one), as racialized (one) and as White (three). The focus group was held in a city, place, and time that were convenient for the majority of participants. Travel costs were covered for participants. The focus group process included welcoming, reviewing the purpose of the focus group, a discussion of confidentiality, introductions, and an overview of the questions. Although the focus group was scheduled for 90 minutes, when approaching that milestone, the participants agreed to continue the discussion for an additional 30 minutes. Following protocols, the focus group audio recording was transcribed, and a copy was forwarded

by email to each of the participants inviting them to review, clarify, and provide further comments. None of the participants responded to this invitation.

The questions for the focus group evolved from experiences shared in individual interviews and deemed worthy of further exploration. The focus group provided an opportunity to talk about and further explore, clarify and expand ideas and insights from the core questions and responses from the interviews (See Appendix C).

As Silverman (2010) suggested, I found my role to be more as a facilitator than an interviewer and having previously interviewed participants, it allowed for a smoother re-engagement with the topics. In other words, the focus group became a continuation and deepening of the earlier dialogue. All participants were engaged in the subject area and their enthusiasm was evident and well supported by other focus group participants.

### **3.6. Approach to Data Analyses and Interpretation**

In alignment with qualitative research methodology, which is concerned with gathering knowledge from human subjects through observation and deep inquiry into human experience (Kovach 2010), this research used individual interviews from 10 people and a focus group of five people to generate in-depth data on participants' experiences. Considerable data was generated in both the interviews and the focus group. The process I undertook to make sense of this data was informed by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994). I have outlined the following steps to reflect the process of analysis:

- During and following the individual interviews I made brief notes on the question form for each participant.
- I thoroughly read each transcript, and then re-read the transcript with the audio on to capture inflections, tone, and emotion.
- On the transcript, I made handwritten notes related to the significance of a statement and developed a list for each participant. This was an iterative process of reading and re-reading the data.
- I choose to focus separately on each racial group at a time. For example, I began with the transcripts of the four Indigenous participants, and then moved on to the three White participants and finally the three non-Indigenous racialized participants. I focused, in depth, on significant statements from

each group, listed these statements and then grouped them into larger units of information, called “meaning units” or themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 192).

- For each racial group, I extracted participant experiences, including a description of what happened, and then cross-referenced this information with experiences of members of the same racial group. This process resulted in clusters of themes of varying strength. I supported the themes with verbatim examples and drew diagrams to show associations between ideas and experiences. As a part of this process, I coded experiences at multiple levels, first at a textural level or superficial level, then applying a second layer of coding and analysis of the themes to arrive at deeper insights.
- As findings emerged for each racial group, I developed a template for coding and began to cross-reference each group dynamic with the other racial group dynamic and I evaluated for experiences and consistency of interpretation and coding.

The process for developing the focus group analysis was not dissimilar to the process used for the interviews. The focus group questions were different from the interview questions, and they were intended to build on and further explore some of the issues that had surfaced in the interviews. Similar to the analysis process for the interviews, analysis for the focus group was iterative -- reading the transcript, listening to the audio tape and comparing it to the transcript while noting inflection, tone and emotion. Making meaning from the focus group data was a process of pulling significant statements (verbatim) from the transcript and noting who made the comment and how they racially self-identified.

This was an intensely iterative process and the analysis became sharper as themes were incorporated by cross-referencing racial groups. Interviewing people from three racial groups as well as facilitating a focus group added an interesting and important level of complexity to the data and yielded a richness that added to the goals of this study.

The participants in the study were self-identified as Indigenous, White, and racialized. Their identities were kept anonymous in the presentation of the data by allocating letter and numbers. The letter ‘I’ indicates that the quotation is from an Indigenous participant, the letter ‘W’ is used for a White participant; and the letter ‘R’ indicates a racialized participant. The four Indigenous participants are referenced as: I-1; or I-2; or I-3, or as I-4; the three White participants are referenced as W-1; or W-2; or as W-3 and the three racialized participants are referenced as R-1; or R-2; or as R-3. The

letter ahead of the number alerts the reader to the racial stand point of the participants. If the quotation comes from the focus group session, the reference is prefaced by 'FG'.

### **3.6.1. Challenges and Limitations of Data Analysis**

Phenomenology contributes to “deeper understanding of lived experiences by exposing taken-for-granted assumptions about these ways of knowing” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p.1317). It has been said that developing phenomenological analysis is fundamentally a writing exercise involving telling a story. According to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) “at the end of the story the reader should feel that she has vicariously experienced the phenomenon under study” (p. 1376) and come to similar or the same conclusions as the researcher.

Researching race and racism in education is inherently challenging due to myriad issues related to the historical, social, and political landscape in which individuals work and learn. This landscape shapes how each participant makes meaning from their experiences and having ten participants means there are ten discrete realities and interpretations of experiences. Inevitable complexities emerged as I attempted to find individual themes, and then cross-referenced with those of their racial group.

The issue of criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research has been discussed by several scholars (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 1995; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Tracy (2010) presents eight criteria that she believes characterize qualitative. They include (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence (p. 839). All of these criteria are highly relevant to this research project as end goals. Without going into each of them in detail, I am confident in stating that I believe in the relevance and importance of this topic area and grounded the writing and analysis in theoretical constructs appropriate to the field. In terms of sincerity and credibility, I was transparent in my own standpoint and am also self-aware of my own biases. For example I was aware when an interviewee shared perspectives that were not congruent with or contradicted my own experience or perspective. I noted my reactions and processed this later. It is my hope that this research makes a significant contribution to this field both theoretically and practically, thus achieving what it set out to do.

There are also several potential challenges and issues related to developing my data approach to analysis. First, *race is a socially constructed phenomenon* – there is no biological basis for the concept of ‘race’. Race is a myth. While I have organized participants into three groups ostensibly based on racial categories, this organization is a myth as well. Therefore, it must be noted that participants in the study do not, and cannot, fit into artificially constructed racial constructs. Their individual standpoints are unique and are shaped by gender, age, experience, relative privilege or lack of privilege, their phenotype, worldview and identity.

Second, the *findings are not generalizable*. This is understood and accepted as inevitable in this research paradigm. There are multiple variables related to the participants, their experiences and identities, as well as that of the researcher. All of these variables limit the ability to generalize the findings.

Thirdly, the *relationship between the participants and researcher, and between the participants*, must be considered. The network or community of educators engaged with anti-Indigenous racism is small. I used my contacts within the university community to circulate the ‘Invitation to Participate’ in the study. [Indeed a professor from a university, upon hearing about the study, called me and offered to circulate both the Invitation and the Poster. I recognize this as a privilege and advantage that others may not have access to.] I knew five of the participants professionally, (I had previously met three before in a professional context and I had had a professional working relationship with two). I had heard about two participants by their professional reputation but did not know them, and I had not heard of and nor did I know the remaining three participants. The element of ‘knowing’ is interesting. Given that the community of anti-racist educators is small it would not be unexpected that people would know each other. In fact, this knowing allowed for the inclusion of some participants who heard about the study from another participant. This ‘snowball sampling’ was responsible for several participants agreeing to join. During the focus group, it was clear that several participants knew each other and this may have had an impact on their engagement or the limitation of their engagement.

Lastly, *professional experience, self-reflexivity, and critical analysis* of the participants must be considered. One of the challenges and potential limitations with this study is the diversity of experiences and worldviews of the participants. As individuals,

the participants engage with the subject of racism differently. Each participant is unique and may also be at different stages of awareness, learning, and engagement with anti-Indigenous racism.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Research Findings and Analysis**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a manageable structure to deconstruct how educators engage with anti-Indigenous racism as well as when they avoid or evade the issue of Indigenous racism. Part of the research and data gathering that was and remains of considerable interest to me, is the process for educators who actually choose to engage with racism in their classrooms. Many participants spoke vividly about colleagues' who avoided engaging with topics related to Indigenous issues and/or who failed to respond to anti-Indigenous racism within their classrooms. For educators who do engage with this racism -- such as the participants in this research -- I am presenting the findings that emerged with the thought that their experiences will be as meaningful to others in addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

The structure that is used to organize and discuss the results captures the important topic areas that emerged repeatedly across interviews and the focus group. It also provides a way to organize the presentation of complex material, and to address the comprehensive nature of the findings. The topic areas include the manifestation of anti-Indigenous racism and resistance.

The catalyst for this process is the expression of anti-Indigenous racism, followed by a series of decision points that lead to two trajectories of engagement, one a decision to engage with racism and the other not to engage. The areas of focus, as mentioned above (educator competencies; resistance; impact on educator) are discussed and examined using data from the interviews and focus group, as well as drawing from the literature and applying my experience and analysis.

## 4.2. Manifestation of anti-Indigenous Racism: “Why don’t they just get a job?”

Anti-Indigenous racism can manifest in the learning environment in multiple ways. Examples include a comment, question, or an opinion that reflects racist ideology such as the use of racist stereotypes; racist language and insults, and/or the sharing of racist ideology that positions Indigenous people as inferior. Consider the following experience that an Indigenous participant shares:

I can remember people putting their hand up in the back of the room and just saying “Why don’t they just get a job?” And I remember just standing there and it’s just like, feeling completely resigned and just going, ‘oh my god, you know like really! Are we having this conversation, you know like’. I mean I didn’t say those words but I’m sure everybody was just ...and then, you know, just plow over that and into whatever we’re going to do next but you know I’m sure that my voice probably reflected that I was pissed off. (I-3)

In this example, the educator takes us through her response to the comment “Why don’t they just get a job?” This question is not benign, and it could be characterized as an anti-Indigenous microaggression. While the intent of the question is not clear, the impact on the educator is powerful. She reacts to the spirit of the question and is candid about feeling “pissed off”. The question, “Why don’t they just get a job?” could be viewed as both a manifestation of anti-Indigenous racism and a racial microaggression in the educator’s classroom.

In Chapter Two, the concept of microaggression theory (Sue, 2007) was discussed as a context for the way racialized people experience racism. Briefly, microaggressions are the “everyday slights and insults that individually and/or systemically denigrate people of color” (Sue, 2010, p. 109). Sue goes on to say that microinsults “include subtle snubs and espouse hidden messages of derogation oftentimes unknown to the perpetrator but insulting to the victim nonetheless” (p. 109). Microinvalidations are different and are “the behaviors and communications that nullify the thoughts, feelings and experiential reality of a person” (Sue, 2010, p. 109). An example of this is when an Indigenous person shares an experience of racism and a White person responds by saying “I am sure they didn’t mean anything by that comment” or “I think you are being overly sensitive.”

These definitions are helpful because they provide structure for understanding the different experiences of participants. The variations in anti-Indigenous experiences shared by participants shows how broad the scope of microaggressions is as well as the subsets of microinsults and microinvalidations.

These racial aggressions may be intentionally harmful, or simply an expression of ignorance. Regardless of intent, the expression of anti-Indigenous racist ideology is verbalized or exposed in the classroom, and witnessed by students and the educators. Consider the following experience provided by a White participant:

I was co-facilitating with an Indigenous facilitator. We were doing a workshop and there was a racialized man who made a racist comment in one of the scenarios. He said, "Indigenous people smell." And it was based on a scenario about a hospital setting where a family, a White family was making racist comments about an Indigenous patient and family. And basically blaming the smell on the Indigenous person...the Indigenous patient in the room, not their loved one, but the Indigenous person based on the stereotype, right. This deep racist stereotype. So, instead of understanding what we were getting at in this scenario this man actually voiced that he believes Indigenous people smell. That's what he said in the room. (W-2)

The context for this scenario was a workshop about Indigenous cultural safety provided to a leadership group, and as I have noted, was co-facilitated by both an Indigenous and a White educator. Both these educators were also participants in this research study. The individual in the workshop who made the comment "Aboriginal people smell" was a racialized man in a large cohort with other senior leaders.

Statements like "Why don't they just get a job?" and "Aboriginal people smell" do not stand by themselves. They symbolize colonial culture and illustrate how Indigenous specific racism manifests in the classroom. As Indigenous scholar Dr. Emma LaRocque asserts (2010) "[I]t is important to comprehend the stunning degree to which native peoples have been subjected to degradation" (LaRocque, 2010, p. 67). These kind of statements have hundreds of years of colonial violence attached to them. In other words these statements contain tremendous meaning, especially for Indigenous people. As someone who has been called a 'dirty Indian' a number of times, I know firsthand the sting and lasting impact of these kinds of words. This language is violent and saturated with colonial contempt and I can't imagine the context in which making this specific statement about an entire race of people would be considered acceptable, or respectful,

or be made without impunity. The following participant brings up an interesting point below.

. . . part of that I would say is that the stereotype is actually seen as truth and fact, so people feel that it's okay to say totally racist stereotypical things which aren't facts, as if they were truths and facts. Which is why it goes unchallenged, I think. (FG R-1)

As part of the same discussion another participant commented on the context for the level of violence targeting Indigenous people:

I think of so many examples that I have heard where comments are made. Really painful, offensive, violent comments are made and there's no recognition of that violence from non-Indigenous people in that space, or in that room, in that setting. And when, and I'm not saying all the time, but I think if a racist comment were to be made about another racialized group there may be some recognition. (FG W-2)

During the focus group, participants discussed the range of stereotypes that they had heard and other pejorative terms with which they were familiar.

The reality of anti-Indigenous racism is visible in the examples shared by these participants. Imagine the classroom where these thoughts, opinions, and beliefs are being expressed about Indigenous people. Where does one start with this? What do I need to know to tackle any of these issues? How would I do that? Any educator who has experienced anti-Indigenous racism in their classroom would know that responding is complicated and that there are myriad pitfalls and hazards attached to the issues.

#### **4.2.1. Resistance**

When anti-Indigenous racism shows up in a classroom, it can take many forms. While this type of racism has its roots in colonial history, it must be acknowledged that colonial ideology continues to shape the relationship between Indigenous people and settlers today.

One of the primary motivations for this research was to scrutinize classroom dynamics when anti-Indigenous racism emerged and to examine the dynamic of resistance. Resistance is a frequent response when students are exposed to information that illuminates the historical and continuing injustices that Indigenous people

experience. Resistance can be difficult for educators to manage and particularly so in the context of anti-Indigenous racism as one participant describes below.

It's like a minefield, you know. Like you're stepping very carefully because you're trying to balance the needs of everybody in the classroom and some classrooms just seem to have a more critical mass of particular kind of people than in other classes. So it really depends on who's in the classroom with you and where they're at in their own learning and how open they are as an individual. (W-1)

As participants described, dealing with resistance encompasses multiple issues, pressures, and tensions that challenge educators' foundational knowledge, their level of critical self-awareness, and the instructional skills that they possess.

#### **4.2.2. Roots of Resistance**

Goodman (2011) maintains that when certain root ideologies (such as beliefs in meritocracy, individualism, religion, and claiming a 'colour-blind' stance) are challenged, individuals may react and be resistant to learning (pp. 51-61). This is understandable when the information received is perceived to be threatening in some way. The emotional ramifications of this dissonance could naturally lead to resistance for some (Goodman, 2011, p. 59). For example, learning new information about colonial history (see policies of Indian Residential Schools, Indian Hospitals, cultural genocide, the forced sterilization of Indigenous women, theft of land, and medical experimentation on Indigenous children) may create cognitive dissonance for students. This history, especially the colonial violence, can be taxing and even threatening to students as the information may directly challenge their core beliefs about what it means to be Canadian living in a socially just society (Henry & Tator, 2010; Caouette & Taylor, 2007).

Goodman describes this experience in terms of cognitive dissonance as "the discrepancy between what we currently believe to be true and other contradictory information" (p. 59). One participant talked about this dynamic and shared her conviction that disrupting the worldviews of students is potentially profound:

Conviction about disrupting worldviews in education is violence. When we disrupt people's beliefs about the world, beliefs about themselves, beliefs about history, beliefs about values, and ideals, then when we disrupt all of that, it's a violent act. (I-3)

Regan (2010) does not refer to this experience as violence, but rather as a disruptive process of unsettling and deconstructing Canada's peacemaker myth (p. 83). She goes on to say that,

In the face of Indigenous people's accusations of genocide, racism, political non-recognition, and the theft of lands and resources, we comfort ourselves with the peacemaker myth, which precludes us from examining our own legacy as colonizers. Within the Canadian historical imaginary, our identity as a nation of peacemakers is predicated on the myth of our innocence regarding the profound extent to which we have erased an Indigenous presence from the consciousness of mainstream North America. For settlers who have long "suspected that we can never be at home in America because we were not Indians, not indigenous to the place," a version of history that declares our innocence and portrays us as heroes assuages a fear that our real identity is not peacemaker but perpetrator. (p. 106)

As we consider the roots of resistance in the classroom, we are faced with the reality that there are very significant socio-political and historical issues that influence student's attitudes and behaviours. Regan (2010) speaks to the primary beliefs that Canadians have about themselves (peacemaker archetype) and how these beliefs provide a buffer against facing the reality of colonial history, and the need to take responsibility for the social inequities between Indigenous people and settlers.

Making the connections between these concepts can be challenging for students, and as Goodman (2011) notes:

Students may realize that allowing oneself to fully acknowledge the injustice and suffering in the world may lead to disturbing emotions. Resistance can be a way to shield themselves from painful feelings of guilt, shame, sadness, anger, and powerlessness. Therefore, instead of being open to new information and exploration, they may choose, consciously or unconsciously, to shut down or push away. (p. 60)

For educators, understanding the roots of resistance is critical. These roots are as deep as they are entangled with colonial ideologies, the inferiorization of Indigenous people, the development of White supremacy, and the consequential privileging of all settlers.

### **4.2.3. Recognizing Resistance**

Consider this description by an Indigenous educator:

An Aboriginal person walks in the room and in clearly a position of power and I think this person was trying to remind me of my 'place' quote unquote. Which would be, you know, not in a position of power, not in a position in power in front of the room telling him anything, and you know 'go on reserve and be on the street or be, you know, live your dirty life'. It was really demeaning, really, really demeaning. So demeaning that he would say that in front of his bosses and about 35 people in the room, all manager level health care providers. So it was a very deep sense of entitlement for him. He was making a statement that Aboriginal people are kind of worthless, just nothing. (I-2)

Then consider the experience of a White educator:

You know, one of the things that comes up is 'tone' – do you get that? That people say they don't like your tone. [I] wrote a little paper about 'tone' at one point because it's a way of shutting you down, right, it's like they don't like your tone, like somehow your tone is - you know, you're too emotional, too hot under the collar and that's a hard one as an instructor because sometimes I get edgy when things are not quite going, you know. People are grumpy and sometimes my tone gets edgy. I don't want to take all the blame onto myself for that because I think sometimes I'm edgy because somebody says something that was just inappropriate and then for them to say that, you know, my tone was inappropriate or that my tone was I was cranky with them or something like that. (W-1)

How do we identify resistance? In both cases, comments were used to distract, deflect, or dismiss attention from the content. Participants described resistance as something expressed through attitudes and behaviours, something that may be intentional or unintentional. Additionally, resistance can occur without the resistor being aware that they are resisting. As one participant noted:

“I think there's many ways that resistance shows up. Sometimes quite overtly -body language - people will sit with their arms folded or, you know, be on their cell phone or have their legs up on the desk that communicates some resistance”. (W-2).

In addition to the physical manifestations of resistance indicated in the quote above, Okun (2010) suggests that resistance takes on many forms, including marginalizing, trivializing, rationalizing entitlement, blaming the victim, reverse racism, no intent = no racism, and guilt and shame (pp. 42-62). She contends that all of these forms of resistance are forms of denial which fundamentally “allows us to live in ignorance of our own privilege and the ways it shapes our lives at the expense of whole groups of people” (p. 42).

As an educator facilitating many race-based discussions, it has been a common experience for me to have participants exhibit the spectrum of behaviours named above. While my initial response is not always to assume that someone is 'resisting', I will always be alert to the potential for a student's attempts to deflect, hijack, or otherwise divert dialogue away from the core discussion. I am also aware that resistance manifests along a spectrum of attitudes and behaviours. What might appear to be resistance for one student, looks completely different for another. For example over the past few years I (and others) have noticed a trend amongst some White university students in particular to resist the opportunity to learn about colonial history, anti-racism, White privilege, oppression, and power. DiAngelo (2011) notes that "So-called progressive whites may not respond with anger, but still may insulate themselves via claims that they are beyond the need for engaging with the content because they "already had a class on this" or "already know this"" (p. 55).

In my experience, students who demonstrate these attitudes are sometimes the most challenging to work with because just under the surface of a statement like "I already know this" is a level of arrogance, hostility, contempt, and lack of respect for the knowledge and experience of others. Sometimes people are simply reacting without considering the implications of their behaviour.

What does it mean when someone says they 'already had a class on this'? Or 'I already know this'? What does this reveal about their level of care about Indigenous issues? As one participant shares:

So there's a lot of people who become more sensitive, and do become more conscious and do become interested and do become supportive but then there's a whole lot of other people that just don't care. You know, and you think, well what are these people even doing in social work, you know, like those are the people who are going to go to work in the social work office and they're just going to take their kids. And they're not going to answer their calls, and they're not going to care what they say or what their story is. (I-3)

The participant is making a critical link between student attitudes and future behaviour and you can hear the concern and frustration. She is concerned that Indigenous children will suffer the cost of the student not learning, not engaging, and/or not caring.

This situation is not unique to social work education, or indeed any educational environment that addresses critical social and race analysis. As Sleeter (1993) states,

“While I believe whites are educable, I have gained appreciation for the strength of our resistance to change” (p. 168).

#### **4.2.4. Ignorance and Denial as Resistance**

Participants describe seeing both ignorance and denial when addressing gaps in students’ knowledge: “I’ve seen so many students say, “You know, I had no idea this had happened” - talking for example about residential schools or something like that” (W-3). The participant explains that resistance can occur when students have the opportunity to learn but then “pretend it’s not there and then thus to deny it, to deny other people’s experiences” (W-3).

Denial and/or ignorance are at the heart of some forms of resistance. Of course students have gaps in knowledge. Resistance occurs when there is an opportunity to learn but the student is not willing/refuses to participate in this learning. This should not be confused with participants who are grappling with the content or curriculum and are experiencing a process of transformative learning. When resistance is rooted in ignorance and then reinforced by denial, it can be very difficult for educators to manage and challenge. The following participant explains how this unfolds:

You know, I heard at the Truth and Reconciliation people saying that ‘it couldn’t have been that bad’, so that’s a form of denial that I hear that, you know, I hear that quite a bit. It’s like when somebody says, “well, my experience was different” and they tell you what their experience is. It’s the inability to understand or appreciate that not everybody is like you. So its denial, it’s as simple as that, I think. (W-1)

Regan (2010) has written about Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada as a “national journey of remembering the history and legacy of Indian residential schools in the hope of repairing the damaged relationship between Indigenous people and Canadians” (p. 6). As part of the work in repairing this relationship, she suggests that non-Indigenous people could begin by asking themselves the following questions:

How is it that we know nothing of this history? What does the persistence of such invisibility in the face of the living presence of survivors tell us about our relationship with Indigenous peoples? What does our historical amnesia reveal about our continuing complicity in denying, erasing, and forgetting this part of our own history as colonizers while pathologizing the

colonized? How will Canadians who have so selectively forgotten this “sad chapter in our history” now undertake to remember it? (Regan, 2010, p. 6)

These questions orient us to the scope and depth of the challenge in addressing the basic issues that form the foundation of the relationships between settlers and Indigenous people. The reality is that the gaps in knowledge are vast and when people have the opportunity to address their ignorance and bias, sometimes they chose not to engage. This is avoidance is resistance.

#### **4.2.5. Privileged Resistance**

The following participant shares her analysis about students reconciling their new learning (e.g., colonial history; residential schools) with the desire to rationalize their privilege:

For some people the denial is about knowing and repressing something that they do know because it's too awful for them to consider that these stories are true. Or it's too awful for them to consider how privileged they've been. So, in order to maintain that sense of privilege people have to think that they worked really hard for what they got and that therefore other people didn't work hard; otherwise, they would be where they are. I think there's a very strong sense of denying the privilege part, you know, denying there's been entitlements that weren't necessarily deserved. There has to be that element there. Because people do think they're meritorious, they're smarter than other people, they deserve to be paid way more money or they deserve more you know, that they're better looking. There's all of those constellation of things and that other people are sour grapes because they're not as smart, they didn't work as hard, or that you know they're lazy, all of that stuff, so there's a way in which very privileged people are denying their own privilege. They just think that, you know, they're just better than other people. They were born better and they've got higher IQs and all that kind of narrative, too. (W-1)

Okun (2010) suggests that privileged resistance is the “enactment of defensiveness and denial on the part of those sitting in positions of privilege to any acknowledgement of that privilege and the oppression that creates it” (p. 34). She goes on to say that:

“Manifesting for the most part as defensiveness (the “no, I'm not” denials of a young white woman), privileged resistance is, in one form or another, denial based on fear. Fear is what we feel, denial is what we do, and defensiveness is how we do it” (p. 34).

Okun's analysis of the complexity of resistance is shared by the participants.

Another participant shares her perspectives on challenging students and the resistance that results:

I think the risk is that, you know, there's always this feeling of how much do I poke the bear before the bear is going to - not to say it's necessarily always an outcome when you poke the bear too much - but what is that person, maybe connected to what you're saying, what is the white person going to do with those feelings of discomfort? Or you know 'why are you making me feel this way?', 'I feel unsafe'. All of these things and the resistance that comes out often to that, right, to being challenged at a deep level. (W-2)

This participant raises an important point about 'poking the bear'. To me, this phrase means that as an educator I have identified the comment, opinion, question, or statement they have made as problematic or a 'teachable moment' and I am intentionally challenging them. It is likely that I would be asking the student to pause and reflect, and then examine what may be informing it. Part of this work would be providing accurate information (usually the counter narrative to racist myths and anti-Indigenous narratives), fully appreciating that 'poking the bear' of ignorance is not a simple formula that can be universally implemented or be predictable. As the same participant shares below, there can be unexpected and harmful results when students are challenged at a deep level about their core beliefs:

Is that resistance going to leak out on their colleagues who are Indigenous, on fellow students in the class who are Indigenous, on their Indigenous professors, on Indigenous person they are sitting next to on the bus, you know, like there's that leakage I think is a risk. I'm not saying it should stop us from poking the bear but I think it's always in the back of my mind in terms of what is the fallout for Indigenous people. Because we know that when we start to turn the volume up, right, on these issues, it's Indigenous people who bear the risk. (W-2)

#### **4.2.6. Silence and Resistance**

Resistance can manifest in many forms and the participant below describes her experience with resistance as something that manifests as silence in the classroom: "It's uncomfortable. You could see the silence. Normally in classes I can get a lot of discussion happening but around Aboriginal topics, it's hard" (I-4). This same participant goes on to say:

Yeah that's all I can think is the silence, people speaking to me afterwards, embarrassment. It's the same sort of embarrassment that I see when someone talks about statistics in an inappropriate or in an incorrect way. It's just the lack of knowledge but it's a greater discomfort than that. Squirming in their seats it's like a squirm that happens and I haven't heard any outward 'ugh's or sighs but you can kind of hear maybe a little bit of a low-grade groan occasionally. I haven't really seen any visible eye rolling but it's this kind of thing where students do not want to talk about it, in general.

In his work, *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence*, Sue (2015) writes about the complex function of silence within these contexts:

For White Americans, the greatest obstacle to honest racial discourse is to make the invisible visible: how silence allows them to maintain a false belief in their own racial innocence, avoid personal blame for the oppression of others, and dodge responsibility to combat racism and oppression. Race talk threatens to unmask unpleasant and unflattering secrets about their roles in the perpetuation of oppression. Avoiding racial dialogues seems to have basic functions related to denial. The denial of color is really a denial of differences. The denial of differences is really a denial of power and privilege. The denial of power and privilege is really a denial of personal benefits that accrue to Whites by virtue of racial inequalities. The denial that they profit from racism is really a denial of responsibility for their racism. Lastly, the denial of racism is really a denial of the necessity to take action against racism. (p. 34)

While Sue speaks specifically about White Americans, we can, with some modification, consider this as a scaffolding of denial in the context of Canadians as well. In order to apply additional value of this analysis to the Canadian setting (and in reality it should be added to the American setting), what needs to be frontloaded is the colonial context and the ongoing oppression of the Indigenous people by settlers. I found that there is agreement that talking about race and racism is hard. However talking about colonialism and the privileging of White people and all others at the expense of Indigenous people is much harder. As one participant shares, "the racism is more violent and virulent because it's making the colonizer take a look at their own position" (FG W-3). Another participant states, the resistance is not just about discussing racism, it is also about the fundamental issues relating to White supremacist ideology:

I think the denial is tied, and maybe both of you were getting at this [gesturing to other participants in the focus group], is the denial is tied to that ideology. Because if I am going to start to see Indigenous specific racism and call it colonial violence, past and ongoing, then I have to really re-think a lot of how I see myself. How I've understood

my family's history, how I understand the way that I walk through the world today. All of those things. (FG W-1)

The following participant also discusses White supremacist ideology and describes the challenge of doing this work:

I find that particularly challenging doing any kind of anti-racism work in Canada and any kind of acknowledgements of specifically Indigenous rights, Indigenous history, like Indigenous violence against Indigenous people because of this White supremacist ideology that really allows that denial, allows the silencing, allows the numbing. (FG R-1)

As we see here, resistance and silence are complex and go beyond a student simply feeling 'uncomfortable' and therefore choosing not to speak in class or to engage in discussions. The issue is much deeper than that and as discussed in earlier chapters, educators are also implicated in the silence. As Sue (2015) points out:

In the face of a difficult dialogue on race, many facilitators remain silent as heated race talk occurs between participants. In classrooms, for example they allow the students to take over the conversation, and they exhibit not only behavioral but emotional passivity in their own reactions. They offer little if any guidance to students about the conflicting conversations and make few attempts to bridge the differences being discussed. (p. 231)

Obviously this passive behaviour demonstrated by the facilitators only compounds the issue.

Participants discussed this behaviour and viewed educator silence as problematic, not isolated, and as damaging to the students. As one participant shared, "Most of the faculty doesn't really address the issues. There are only a few classes where they do. So those students don't even have to bump up against it. It's not even talked about, it is just a footnote" (I-3).

One participant found that many educators avoid and/or evade addressing issues of anti-Indigenous racism or difficult topics related to this. Another participant shares the concern about the potential impact of this avoidance:

The thing I think is another huge issue - the damage that happens when instructors don't address it. The silence is the big response. Right and I think that's so damaging because silence is accepting that the student who said that [has the opinion that] matters more. (I-1)

So what are the implications of not ignoring the silence that occurs in classrooms? Cote-Meek (2014) found that when a professor fails to address racism in the classroom, the burden for addressing the racism may fall to Indigenous people (Indigenous professors and students). She provides a scenario that will resonate with many educators:

The burden of responding to racism in the classroom is initially laid upon the Aboriginal professor. However when the professor does not hear, see or respond to the racism that is operating, the Aboriginal student feels placed in the difficult position of having to respond. Clearly this student is literally left to her own resources to respond to her classmates who look to her for some sort of response. If she responds and names the racism inherent in the assumptions being made, she is at risk of being attacked by her peers. If she does not respond, she fulfills pre-existing racialized constructions that Aboriginal people are unintelligent. (p. 102)

This situation is a dilemma. If the student addresses it, there is a problem and if she doesn't address it there is still a problem. I have included this example because 'silence' is a powerful form of resistance and there are consequences to 'doing nothing'. As Cote-Meek describes above, Indigenous students will often take on the risk of addressing anti-Indigenous racism when educators choose not to engage.

#### **4.2.7. Emotionality and Fragility**

There is also an emotional component to resistance. Participants described the prevalence of emotion in the classroom when Indigenous topics are presented. As the following participant describes:

So I don't think it's always okay to be nice or it's possible to be nice. Because I don't think we can do this work without shaking people up and people have to get uncomfortable. They have to squirm because the reality is squirm-worthy. I don't know how we cannot really talk about the issues without getting uncomfortable about it. And if we disassociate from feeling that discomfort, how can we then build any empathy or compassion for what has happened and what is continuing to happen and will go on happening, unless we feel something about it. (FG R-1)

This participant acknowledges not only the difficulty inherent in managing race-based discussions but also that emotion is paramount. The following participant shares her perspective about emotion and risk:

Look, bringing emotion into the classroom is not necessarily acceptable either. It's supposed to be objective, rational, keep your feelings out of here. So it is a risk. So you just have to decide whether this is where you ought to be if you want to make the work you do be meaningful in a way that touches your heart. Or if you want to teach the sanitized White stuff, you're not taking any risks. (FG W-1)

These participants are keenly aware that emotions in the classroom can disrupt and/or derail the conversation.

For example, DiAngelo (2011) named one of the dynamics of challenging White students in race-based interactions as 'White Fragility'. She notes that "even a minimum amount of challenge to White positionality is intolerable and triggers a range of defensive moves and displays of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviours such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 55).

Many of my Indigenous colleagues would agree that it is a common dynamic and that when the "minimum amount of challenge to White positionality" is extended beyond 'White' to 'settler' positionality (and colonial context), the results, or 'defensive moves and displays of emotions' is similar to those identified by DiAngelo and others (Okun, 2010; Goodman, 2012). I say 'similar' because it is not exactly the same and participants brought this issue forward. While DiAngelo (2011) uses the term White Fragility, I would extend it to settler fragility. The latter encompasses our colonial context and reflects more accurately the systemic issues that shape the discourse of anti-Indigenous racism.

Recognizing settler fragility allows us to bring both White and racialized settlers into this dialogue. Regardless of these different standpoints, all settlers have the potential to display similar emotions that become a focus for the educator in the classroom. Expressions of emotion can hijack or disrupt the learning.

Consider the following interaction a participant shared, in which a White facilitator was co-facilitating an interactive, experiential activity with an interracial group.

And there's a White man in the 'acceptance' group and he puts up his hand and he says, "Before I report back, I just need to say that I'm really uncomfortable with the... what the 'repulsion' group has just said". And I need to say there's Indigenous people in the 'repulsion' group. So, part of the report back from the 'repulsion' group was a Métis man who shared. He said, "These are part of my lived experience". He said, "What I'm sharing here are things that have

been said to me and told to me, and violence I've seen." So that's part of the context. Anyways, later on a White man in the room says, "I gotta say this. I'm really uncomfortable. I don't think we need to name the racist comments explicitly. I think we can just say, "There were racist comments made. I don't think we need to name it." And you could see some indignance. You could see he was indignant, right. And he was troubled by violence. (W-2)

This exercise was about bringing anti-Indigenous attitudes out into the open; the exchange that followed was about the emotional 'fragility' of a settler. If we consider the scenario above, it appears that the White male may be attempting to control and restrict the scope and focus of the discussion. While we don't know his intentions, or whether he was attempting to control, he is nevertheless reacting to the activity. Let's take another look at part of what he says: "I'm really uncomfortable. I don't think we need to name the racist comments explicitly. I think we can just say, "There were racist comments made." I don't think we need to name it." (W-2). This is a very good example of the dynamics described above by DiAngelo and Sensoy (2012) as the White man is suggesting that because of the way he feels (discomfort), the other participants should only reference the racism, not explicitly name the experiences – out of deference to his specific need for comfort. The participant shares her analysis of the incident:

But the function of what he just said, the impact of what he just said could shut down the whole room, could shut down the conversation. And what we have seen is that often when one White person says, "I'm uncomfortable", other White people will join in and say, "Yeah, no. I think it's totally inappropriate for us to name the racist comments". And so it shuts down, it silences the conversation about racism. (W-2)

As the participant notes above, the risks to indulging this White man are that it will 'shut down' and silence important dialogue about anti-Indigenous racism.

#### **4.2.8. Rhetoric of Classroom Safety**

The concept of classroom 'safety' has been growing in popularity and has become common vernacular amongst many educators. I titled this section the 'Rhetoric of Classroom Safety' because while the term safety is often used, there is often a lack of understanding of what it actually means. In other words, the word safety is being applied to classroom contexts where dialogues occur that can be heated, controversial, provocative, emotional, or even just new learning. Most educators who work with issues

such as these would be familiar with the rhetoric of classroom safety because this was considered to be one of the important conceptual frameworks used to proactively manage discomfort and unpredictable classroom interactions.

Participants in this study spoke about classrooms and the idea of safe spaces. As one participant shares, the starting place for her is the very idea that a classroom has ever been a safe place: “Well I start with the idea that classrooms are not safe spaces and they never have been for most of the students in them. At least, since we’ve started letting most people in to them which is you know maybe what fifty-some years?” (W-1).

These comments are troubling the idea that classrooms have historically been an emotionally safe place for many students. She goes on to say:

So they’re not safe places so that’s sort of a given and so you can pay attention somewhat, you don’t want people hurting themselves physically but they’re just not safe places. So it’s always a risk if you’re going to be teaching anything that’s controversial and teaching anti-colonial education or Indigenous education values. You know, bringing that into the classroom is just risky business and so if you want to, well you can’t contain it really, if you want to get to the heart of it. (W-1)

The participant is making a critical point here about the specific content that can lead to ‘risky business’. She notes that ‘anything that’s controversial’ such as anti-colonial education or Indigenous values can generate risk. What is the risk? The risk is resistance.

Leonardo & Porter (2010) would concur with this assessment and suggest further that critical race pedagogy approaches are “inherently risky, uncomfortable, and fundamentally unsafe, particularly for whites” (p. 139). They acknowledge that the same pedagogies that directly “tackle racial power will be most uncomfortable for those who benefit from that power” (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 140).

One of the tools I learned early in my teaching career was the importance of the development of ‘ground rules’ or ‘classroom guidelines’ or ‘agreements’ in order to facilitate classroom safety. The purpose was to co-create an environment where people would, for example, agree to abide by the rules, support the learning of others, not monopolize, show respect, and so on. Often the very first suggestion that would come out from someone in the class as they co-created this list of rules would be for the class

to be a 'safe place'. At that time in my career I had not interrogated that concept in any depth; I just knew that the term 'safe space' seemed like a progressive idea at the time. Similar to Ray (2010), "the practice of engaged pedagogy became especially critical for me as I sought to create a *safe space* in the classroom not only for my students but for myself" (p.79).

Quaye (2012) writes about the strategies that educators use to facilitate race-based discussions and found in his research that:

Although ground rules were a pedagogical practice used by participants with students, they realized that the mere creation of these rules was insufficient- that the daily usage and interpretation of these agreements was the more important and challenging matter. (p. 553)

After experiencing several situations in which the class was anything but the 'safe' image I had been promised, I came around to interrogating not only the practice and usefulness of ground rules, but the very idea of safety. I began to notice that when certain issues arose that would predictably generate emotional responses (and tears), concern for feelings would become paramount and the attention to this would eventually interfere with continuation of the learning. Time would be taken from the curriculum "to process" the feelings, sometimes to the extent that we would have to abandon the lesson plans in order to support the emotionally affected student(s). I learned that for some, the desire to be safe might actually be the desire to avoid discussions that address the roots of racism (especially colonialism and the consequential privileging of settlers) and the manifestations of anti-Indigenous racism in particular.

I began to take a second look at the idea of classroom safety and ask myself some hard questions. For example, I had not considered whom the safety would benefit. What was safety in the service of? For whom? What did safety even mean? Emotionally safe? Physically safe? How do you create safety? Who does it? What does it look like? What does it mean to be unsafe? Who would be unsafe? Why? What material or ideas are unsafe? All of these questions are pertinent to the concept of classroom safety and allow for an appropriate interrogation of the very idea.

The issue of 'safe space' has been tackled by a number of scholars (see Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Matias, 2016; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012; Wagner, 2005) with a pedagogically critical lens. This lens critiques the meaning of safe spaces and whom the

construction of safe space dialogues is intended to actually benefit. What this means is that while on the surface the concept of a 'safe classroom space' seems appealing; however once we start to interrogate the idea of safety in depth, the concept begins to unravel.

Matias (2016) addresses the concept of safety within the paradigm of colonialism and suggests that the discourse around the need for a 'safe' learning environment is designed to "construct a reality whereby its sense of safety is predicated upon the violence toward and lack of safety for others" (p. 166). She uses the childhood fable of the Emperor's New Clothes to illustrate the power of what she calls "the colonial white mind" (p. 166) and she writes:

Like the Emperor with his new clothes, the villagers are made to feel unsafe and understand there will be impending violence if they so dare to speak the truth, a process that forces their complicity in comforting the Emperor's mindset. Therefore, this notion of safety, much like the notion of freedom of speech so essential to the American identity, is mainly about the protection of comforts of the white colonial mind instead of promoting that which (e.g., free speech) combats oppressive ideals. (p. 166)

As we will see, participants spoke about the tremendous courage it takes to speak up to the Emperor and say things that others do not want to hear, and that those who do speak up do so at their own peril.

Matias (2016) describes the pursuit of classroom safety as a function to divert attention from topics of Whiteness and race to focus on "how to make one person feel better" (p. 169). One participant shares an experience that she had with a White woman in her class:

A White woman said in a [names university] class she says with a really judgmental tone "Well, would you (this is after doing the history exercise) she says "Well, would you do this with Aboriginal youth?" as though it would be damaging and wrong to educate Aboriginal youth about their history. And so of course I said, 'Yes I would with proper context of youth, you know, working with youth". But she went on to imply that I was being irresponsible and she was quite clear, like, she was quite overt in her statements that you know "I'm not so sure that would be a very responsible thing to do", and "Wouldn't you be causing harm?" And these questions were said in a tone. That was the other part of it, it wasn't just the questions it was the tone of the questions. And then she began to cry. Which made it look like I hurt her. So this was another bait, right, I hurt her. So, I did not take that

bait and I just asked if somebody would support her, but we're moving on. In different words but, you know, basically that's what I did. We moved on. (I-2)

The Indigenous educator did nothing but stand her ground as she was entitled to do. The White woman may have been revealing her own discomfort with the learning (the historical timeline) and was accusing the Indigenous educator of potentially bringing harm to Indigenous youth if she used the historical timeline with them. DiAngelo and Sensoy (2012) argue that this dynamic occurs when Whites feel challenged by the race-based discussion and then characterize the classroom as 'unsafe', thus shutting down the voices of people who have something meaningful to share (p. 3).

What happened here is interesting. A White woman, troubled by what she is learning, is now schooling an Indigenous educator on how Indigenous youth should be educated about their own history. When the Indigenous educator disagrees with her, the White woman then cries. This dynamic is a superb example of what DiAngelo (2011) calls "racial arrogance" and explains it as follows:

Because most whites have not been trained to think complexly about racism in schools or mainstream discourse, and because it benefits white dominance not to do so, we have a very limited understanding of racism. Yet dominance leads to racial arrogance, and in this racial arrogance, whites have no compunction about debating the knowledge of people who have thought complexly about race. Whites generally feel free to dismiss these informed perspectives rather than have the humility to acknowledge that they are unfamiliar, reflect on them further, or seek more information. (p. 61)

Challenging settlers, White students in particular, can lead to some predictable dynamics, including racial arrogance – and the example shared above illustrates this.

In reflecting on what I heard from the participants and what has been written about this topic, I wonder should we even be endeavouring to create a so-called "safe space" that functions to shut down critical discourse. The reality is that creating classroom environments where safety is not troubled is problematic. Numerous critical scholars suggest that safety should actually be a questionable goal for educators. As Leonardo & Porter (2010) conclude:

We want to suggest that the reason why safe-space discussions partly break down in practice, if not at least in theory, is that they assume that, by virtue of formal and procedural guidelines, safety has been designated

for both white people and people of color. However, the term 'safety' acts as a misnomer because it often means that white individuals can be made to feel safe. Thus, a space of safety is circumvented, and instead a space of oppressive color-blindness is established. It is a managed health-care version of anti-racism, an insurance against 'looking racist'. (p. 147)

As a participant shares,

It's never possible to be totally safe in a classroom - when you have these competing discourses. There can be anger on the part of the people making these really disturbing charges but there can also be a lot of anger on the part of people who feel like they're being targeted. (W-1)

#### **4.2.9. Function of Resistance**

All of the participants in this study had important insights to share about their experience with anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. Their perspectives ranged from characterizing resistance as a 'minefield', and also as a welcome opportunity to teach and learn. Participants spoke about the challenge in addressing overt anti-Indigenous racism and their frustration with students who, when having the opportunity to learn, activate resistance behaviours and attitudes in order to cope with their feelings of discomfort. This discomfort is connected to new information, or learning troubling and contradictory information about history. Resistance can emerge when curricula directly confront and address the myths and racist stereotyping of Indigenous people. One of the most significant sites of resistance occurs when content about privilege, White privilege, or settler privilege is provided.

Resistance is problematic for educators teaching Indigenous-related curricula for many reasons. Resistance thus acts to disrupt the discourse and the interrogation of racism at the classroom level. It stops the discussion, the analysis, and the examination of systemic issues. For example, educators can be distracted from the curriculum as they are forced to address the expressions of resistance. In this way, educator efforts are more directed toward managing feelings of discomfort that settlers display rather than on the learning needed.

### **4.3. The Impact of anti-Indigenous Racism and Resistance on the Educator**

As mentioned, many of the participants in this study shared compelling experiences that impacted them in sometimes profound ways. The most powerful moments for me in this research study have been the dialogue with participants about the ways that racism impacts them. As I made sense of the experiences of each participant, I followed an iterative process – first looking at their experiences and insights as individuals, and then comparing these experiences to those of other members of their racialized group (Indigenous, racialized, or White). Finally I looked at the data from all participants taken together – analyzing their experiences and insights as educators. This approach was helpful up to a point but ultimately I was faced with the evidence that participants had more in common with other members of their racial group than they did with other participants.

For those of us who are racialized as Indigenous or as people of colour, we often bring our racial standpoint forward and all of what that means to the work. For those who are White, they bring the privilege and perspective of their racial standpoint to this work. For this reason, I have chosen to write about the issues initially in the context of their racial group. Each of the racial groups brings different histories and realities to the work. It is most clearly evident in the nature of the impact that anti-Indigenous racism had upon them as educators.

Almost without exception, the three racial groups of participants (Indigenous, racialized, and White) in this study spoke about the way that teaching and engaging with racism, including anti-Indigenous racism, connected to them on emotional, physical, and professional levels. Participants shared examples of microaggressions, of experiencing backlash from students, and their insights about the role of colleagues and institutions in perpetuating anti-Indigenous racism. This discussion is followed by themes that draw from the three groups of educators: Indigenous, racialized, and White. This section closes with a discussion of the impact of Microaggressions, Microinsults and Microinvalidations.

### 4.3.1. Indigenous Educators

A participant describes the impact of challenges to her identity:

So I think my own development, my own personal development as an Indigenous person, my own relationship to my identity, because man I got triggered in a way. I can still get triggered on anything but is the trigger like this big or is it huge? You know, so when somebody was questioning my identity, whether I was a valid Indigenous person, oh my God, wow. I would just crumble inside and I don't know how I got through. I don't know what I did with that. (I-1)

Indigenous participants spoke about being Indigenous-identified in a racist culture, and how they are targeted by students, colleagues, and institutions for racial profiling, differential treatment and racism. They described the reality of being Indigenous in the educational milieu and their experiences of being challenged about the authenticity of their identity and their qualifications as educators.

Indigenous participants also spoke of the cumulative impact of the continual scrutiny of the instructor's Indigenous identity. To be Indigenous and at the same time trying to manage anti-Indigenous racism takes a professional and personal emotional toll. As another participant shared:

... just the exhaustion of the scrutinizing is about who we are as people. So, we walk in the room in a role as an educator, facilitator, teacher, whatever. But we also walk in the room as an Indigenous person and so we're potentially attacked on both counts. Whereas the non-Indigenous person is seen in the role as the teacher or whatever, and there's all sorts of resistance that can happen for teachers in general but it's not about who they are as a person, it's not about their value as a person or their worth as a human being. (I-2)

She describes the questions and comments she has encountered:

So, from an Indigenous perspective, the dynamics are a myriad of 'Well, are you valid as an educator?', 'Are you Indigenous enough?' 'Oh, you grew up in the city and not on reserve. Oh well then you know, do you really know...', 'Why aren't you teaching about culture, does that mean maybe you're not really Indigenous enough?', 'How does that impact the curriculum that you are presenting?' 'Maybe you're just angry'; 'Oh and you're mixed, oh, well then so, maybe we should have a real Indigenous person in the room'. Just an enormous amount of forms of personal targeting that the White educator does not [experience]. In fact, the White educator is - probably people are breathing a sigh of relief when all those other dynamics of shutting

down the conversation take place so it's the Indigenous facilitator [who] is to blame for bringing forward the agenda. (I-2)

The questions and comments illustrate some of the common and also complex colonial narratives that target Indigenous people. These narratives ('angry', 'not a real Indigenous person') relate to what are actually colonially constructed criteria for determining whether or not an Indigenous educator is credible. These questions and comments ultimately serve to undermine the credibility of an Indigenous educator. These specific anti-Indigenous narratives are in stark contrast to the positioning of White educators. As Harlow (2003) observed, White professors typically do not have to anticipate being challenged about their racial phenotype (p. 353). When juxtaposing her reality with that of a White educator, the participant sees that as an Indigenous educator, she is targeted and shoulders a burden of colonial assumptions, prejudices, and anti-Indigenous racism.

The issues with Indigenous identity were prominent among all of the Indigenous educators interviewed. It was a lightning rod for them - attracting attention, leading to intrusive questions. The following participant describes her own experience of being questioned about her Indigenous ancestry:

[They] want to make me something else – less First Nations. It's an in-body kind of experience ...more subtle because again I don't present as First Nations. I would be introduced and say "oh" you know the subject of identity, "where are you from?" or whatever, and I would say, "Well I'm First Nations, my mom...blah, blah, blah". "Oh I would have guessed you as Greek or Italian" and just again in those conversations thinking, feeling somehow that I don't count. That I, you know being First Nations they want to make me something other than First Nations. And again feeling that somewhere in my gut that because I'm First Nations, why do you want to put me in a different category? (I-1)

Another layer of complexity is added to this participant's experiences because she does not appear to have the physical characteristics that are widely associated with Indigeneity such as skin colour, facial characteristics, hair colour and texture, and body type - Indigenous phenotype. When she is being told she could be "Greek or Italian", rather than Indigenous, she is really being told that because of her phenotype, her cultural identification and connection that she has to her ancestry, lines of descent, and race are tenuous.

This participant's experience is essentially an example of the ongoing litany of efforts by settlers to assimilate Indigenous people into a "Canadian" identity. Assimilation is not a new dynamic and Indigenous people have always resisted efforts by settlers to make invisible Indigenous people's histories and attempts to disconnect us from our cultures, identity, and especially the land.

In an American study "Extending the Bounds of Race and Racism: Indigenous Women and the Persistence of the Black-White Paradigm of Race", Castagno (2005) investigates the way that in the United States, Indigenous women are constructed as either 'racialized Others' or as 'White Others' by 'non-Native' students (p. 447-8). Castagno calls this either a 'blackening' or a 'whitening' construction of Indigenous identity based on markers. Markers are related to verbal cues (what one has shared about oneself) and physical cues (e.g., phenotype, and stereotypes such as wearing certain jewellery or having long hair). Castagno concludes that non-Indigenous students in particular will racialize Indigenous people as either White or as the racialized 'Other' based on "the racial identity of those around them" (p. 448). Either way, this is problematic for the Indigenous person.

The appetite for settlers to construct and dismiss Indigenous identity is something that has political, social, and racist motivations. In other words, the example above shared by the Indigenous participant is *not about her* per se; rather what happened to her is more about the colonial ideology driving the interaction and context. However, understanding this is little consolation to the Indigenous person being questioned, challenged, and demeaned by both settlers and other Indigenous people. Scholar Bonita Lawrence (2004) articulates this issue in terms of the larger context of colonization:

The mixed-race people who can pass as white, and who decide that they do not want to participate in the obliteration of their Native heritage, are thus constantly forced to declare themselves as Native, regardless of their appearance. In doing this, they are bucking the tide of common-sense racial classification, one of the foundational aspects of a white supremacist society. All of these individuals face the reality that they cannot meet the expectations of Canadian society with respect to Indian appearance. Furthermore, they have to negotiate their identities within the Native community, where entirely different sets of rules apply, and where some individuals reject them, others welcome them wholeheartedly, and others zealously police the boundaries of Indianness, carefully noting transgressions. As a result, it is not uncommon for light-skinned urban

Native people to negotiate multiple experiences of acceptance and denial of their Nativeness in a single day. (p. 178)

One participant described the following experience in terms of its emotional and visceral impact.

I remember this one fellow. He was an educator and we were interviewing for a project. This is like the first year maybe I was at [names University] and he came in. And we were interviewing him about the project and I self-identified and he's like 'oh' and it was interesting because I was the only First Nations person on the panel with non-Indigenous [people] but this First Nations person said to me "Oh, did you grow up on reserve?" And I said 'No'. "Oh" and then I just felt so dismissed by this and I felt embarrassed with my other colleagues. It took me a while to process, but it was just a feeling that I just felt it right in my gut and my chest. That I felt like I was punched, you know, like 'whoa, what was that?' That doesn't happen often, but I felt hurt and I was like 'what's that about?' and then again, so it takes me a while to walk away, figure out what that's about, and process in my head, talk to other people. And that's that feeling of being kind of hit in the gut. It's a real feeling like you've been punched in the gut and maybe that's why I always say you feel it in your gut. (I-1)

This Indigenous educator was subjected to enhanced scrutiny for her level of "authenticity" through the question about where she might have grown up. The implication here is that if the Indigenous person has not grown up on a reserve, then she may not be "Indigenous enough" (although it is unclear what this actually means). This participant goes on to explain that the question "did you grow up with your culture, do you know your language?" (I-1) is encoded and what the person is really saying is "And then if you don't, then you're not Indigenous" (I- 1). Given this participant's experience, are there certain questions that are just unacceptable to ask an Indigenous person? Does it make a difference if the question comes from an Indigenous or a non-Indigenous person? Is it possible to ask this question without offence? Why is this question provocative? What are some of the implications of this question?

Lawrence (2004), in her work "Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood, has taken on the challenge of articulating what are very complex and sensitive issues related to Indigenous identity. She provides an explanation about the sensitivity for the question this participant was asked "Oh, did you grow up on reserve?" regarding why the question is so provocative. She identifies several important issues related to Indigenous identity:

Aboriginal peoples' racial identities are fraught with complexities hinging on legal definitions of Indianness, cultural knowledge, and connection to Indigenous land base. In everyday terms, however, Nativeness also depends on how you are defined by others-which, in the white society, depends to a phenomenal extent on how you look. (p. 173)

As well:

On the other hand, because of the extent to which the Indian Act has tied Nativeness to Indian status, whether an individual even identifies as *being* mixed-blood is highly dependent on whether they are a status Indian and whether they come from a reserve. (p. 12)

Lawrence (2004) goes on to say that navigating what she calls "mixed blood" identity is complicated and that the context for understanding challenges to identity is important:

In speaking of urban mixed-blood Native identity, what can never be forgotten is the context in which such identity issues are being articulated – within states whose claims to the land depend on the ongoing obliteration of Indigenous presence. It is therefore important to take into consideration some of the potential strengths and weaknesses, for urban and First Nations or tribal communities, when urban individuals of native heritage make choices that take seriously their Indigenous heritage. In a sense, when urban mixed-bloods begin to take their Native heritage seriously, what is really meant is that they are taking cultural genocide seriously. (p. 12)

It is essential to know that identity for Indigenous people can be a complex issue. As we saw in the participant's story above, asking questions that could be interpreted as encrypted with bias will not be positively received. A long history of interference, even aggression was used to impede the ability of Indigenous people to develop and maintain their Indigenous identity. So it should come as no surprise when an Indigenous person takes exception to being challenged about an identity that they may have fought to find, claim, and embrace.

One participant shared her experience of the violence of racism in the context of being Indigenous-identified:

And the person that I asked, "Should I come out before I come up for tenure" said to me, "I don't think you should because I think that the basis of it may not bode well for you". I said, "Do you think that people might look negatively on me because I have Aboriginal heritage and they might read my CV differently?" And she said, "Yeah, I think so. I wouldn't do it." So, I was unpacking that, I don't even know how

to unpack it myself yet but I know it's there. I like the title of your [speaking to me, Cheryl] project "The Elephant in the Room". It's an elephant in the university. (I-4)

In this situation, the participant acknowledges that she has not publicly self-identified as Indigenous at her university. Imagine how it would feel to be told that it would not be in your best interest to self-identify as Indigenous? What would be the impact of this realization – that your peers and the institution are so racist that you would likely be unsuccessful in your application for tenure? That it is disadvantageous to be Indigenous in this space? What does it feel like to know that in order to succeed, one needs to deny their ancestry (if they can), and to embrace their ability to 'pass for White'? The impact for anyone who has experienced this level of anti-Indigenous violence is considerable.

In their study of racialized and Indigenous faculty at Canadian universities, James & Chapman-Nyaho (2017) found that there is a "culture of whiteness" that "operated within the university to manage and protect its reputation, and in so doing, for some universities, to maintain their competitive edge, and for others, to outperform their competitors" (p. 94). These authors contend that, "Racial diversity is considered as something to be avoided since it would not only compromise its "academic standard" but would also project an image of the university with which its largely White alumni might not be able to identify" (p. 96).

In addition to the culture of Whiteness, these authors point to a "culture of homogenization" (p. 96), to the insistence that faculty strives to be "as centric as possible- not to be too extreme" (p. 97), as well as to a benevolent concern for the welfare of racialized educators:

...in the case of a racialized applicant, you will sometimes hear the comment "I don't think this person would feel comfortable here. There aren't many people in his or her field so they would be isolated". Or, 'students may not understand his accent'." (James & Chapman-Nyaho, 2017, p. 97)

One of the participants in James & Chapman-Nyaho's (2017) study offered this perspective:

It is important to recognize, said one African male respondent at a mid-sized university, "that the biggest worry is not the individual rabidly racist person. The biggest problem is inertia. It is a historically racist system and so you don't have to do any bad thing for racism to perpetuate itself. All

you have to do is nothing. That is the problem with colour-blindness – the idea that we can just not pay attention to race and then the problem goes away.” (p. 98)

The colleague who recommended to her colleague that she not ‘come out’ as Indigenous, was probably not someone who is “rabidly racist”. However what the colleague did do was share her insider knowledge that the university environment is racially hostile to Indigenous people.

The Indigenous participants in my study all spoke of the impact of working in a racially hostile environment and the toll it takes on them. One participant describes the way she understands the complex dynamic of being Indigenous and at the same time helping settlers confront their racism towards Indigenous people:

Whereas, Indigenous people it's a twisted thing, it's because that dynamic of that negative view of us is in the room while we are unpacking it. I just don't know how I do this work sometimes. Because I'm really, really conscious that that is what's going on. You are unpacking something that you are being targeted by all the time. So it's a flippy experience. (I-2)

She compares the complexity of teaching about racism as an Indigenous educator to teaching about sexism as a woman:

It would be like a woman unpacking sexism with a group of men. How many women are going to do that? Not too many, right, not too many are going to do that. Unless she has a male facilitator, right, a really strong male facilitator. So, our personal lives are right there in the room and all that it's connected to. (I-2)

Another participant shared, “They don't want to go there and they barely swallow it down and they hate us for it” (I-3). As another participant stated:

I'm still kind of blindsided up at [names university] you know. Thank goodness not as often but I still get things where I think and I'll walk away thinking, 'why do I feel shitty, why do I feel shitty, what?' Because it will be again, it's that subtle [remark]. I always say kind of political correctness has been the worst thing that's ever happened. All that stuff has gone underground, we found new ways. And academics, they're really good at it. At you know making it all sound so lofty but really they're putting you in your place, whatever that place they think they're putting you in. (I-1)

The impact of racism as well as the costs of addressing it are not the same for Indigenous, racialized, or White participants. An Indigenous participant explains the

difference: “It’s just not the same. They can walk away at the end of the day. They don’t live it. It hasn’t been about who they are as a person; it’s been about what they’ve brought forward” (I-2). She has observed that when it comes to experiences of anti-Indigenous racism, Indigenous people are not just bystanders. As the participant states, for non-Indigenous people, the issues are not “about who they are”. For Indigenous people, Indigenous issues, including anti-Indigenous racism, are about who we are as people.

I guess the major challenge there is the question that gets asked by the Indigenous person in the room is, ‘What is this going to cost me? What is it going to cost me to speak up here? And then the other thing I think of there is what Emma LaRocque said around, “How am I going to make this sound good enough for you to feel good about yourself so you’re not going to get too rattled?” And it’s an enormous pressure and an enormous responsibility. (I-2)

There are consequences to carrying this load.

#### **4.3.2. Racialized Educators**

All of the non-Indigenous racialized educators spoke about their racial standpoint, their histories with racism, and how they see this as providing insight into anti-Indigenous racism. The context for their analysis is a deep understanding of the reality of racism and the way that racism is different for them than it is for Indigenous people. Clearly these experiences with racism have not been left in the past; rather their experiences and their analysis of these experiences are still with them.

Racialized participants spoke about their own personal histories with racism and how they have experienced racial violence. They spoke about the impact of their witnessing Indigenous people being targeted with anti-Indigenous violence, and how those experiences have shaped not only the way they view anti-Indigenous racism but also the ways in which they may choose to engage or not to engage with situations. As one racialized participant shared:

So I have one haunting experience that kind stuck with me. I was a newcomer, so you know, immigrant. And I came into Grade 11 and my brother and I, we were the only coloured people in a way, or visible minority, Punjabi Indian people in the school. And it just so happened, which we didn’t know at that time being very ignorant, two Aboriginal Indigenous boys started at the school same year. Which we

didn't understand all that dynamics. But what happened was, and I guess they had come from somewhere up north, isolated community into [names city], this is back in the seventies. So, we all four would get bullied and picked on a lot. And get called racist terms all the time and so it was really hard. The first year was really hard. Because constantly all day long being bullied and called names. And one instance that has always stuck with me is that myself and we were waiting for a bus. So this school bus used to come by because it is a bit of an isolated area where the school was. So, these two boys and myself got on the bus and maybe we misunderstood but the bus used to take a different route and this time it took a different route. So one of the boys began to question the bus driver. Well, he [the bus driver] just went at him. Swearing and a redneck, and this and that. Calling him and just went at this poor guy and I was scared and sat very quietly, huddled...confused as to what was going on. And so then the bus driver stopped at the next stop kind of thing and just dropped us all off and the two guys walked one way and I walked off there. It's always stuck with me. (R-3)

As she reflects on this experience, this participant recalls the degree of racist violence the bus driver directed towards the Indigenous boys and the impression that witnessing this anti-Indigenous racism left on her:

I guess first time kind of having that exposure to how the Indigenous population is or was treated there because he just went on and on, to swearing and 'fucking' and redneck 'red Indians' this and that and you know really just didn't stop for a long, for quite a while. So yeah it was my first time to see it that way and then just I guess realizing that they felt very out of it, too, in terms of school in terms of engaged. Nobody really spoke to them and same with us. We were kind of these misfits in the school. (R-3)

Even though this incident happened in the 1970s, this participant still reflects on the incident and questions her actions at the time:

That experience of the way he, this bus driver, treated these two young men and maybe I should have spoken up, too, or stood up or done something because I didn't. I just stayed quiet, was really scared and just kind of left it at that. And then I think at the end of the year, they went back, and I'm not sure who or what, where to but one of the sad pieces from that year I remember is that they always just stayed together, alone, and my brother and I would always stay together, alone. So at lunchtime when lunch would happen my brother and I would meet and we would eat alone. And then these two guys would meet and eat alone and with my brother they had some bond or relationship, because then they would sometimes chat but we were the, very much the four that stood out in this school and it was really, really tough year. (R-3)

Another racialized participant shared his experiences with racism including anti-Indigenous racism in the community:

I'll sort of mention that growing up, you know, lot of racism. So growing up it would be the sort of thing, you walk down the street and somebody come up and hitting you. Things being thrown through a window at home, right. Like whole family would be sitting there and all of a sudden, smash, a rock comes through the window. And I remember my brother got robbed at knifepoint by a child at school. And he knew who he was but when my father called the cops, cops showed up and they were quite angry and said, "We're sick and tired of having to come out here. If we do again, we're going to arrest someone." So, my father said, "You know, if anything happens don't phone the police", right. So formative years were characterized by racism and as a result of that I developed a pretty acute sense of justice. (R-2)

The racist violence that targeted his family also targeted an Indigenous family living close to him:

So, I kind of got connected with First Nations issues when I was young. We had our house here and then across the street there was a First Nations family and about three doors down. So when those rocks came flying through our window, they usually went through those windows too. So we set up a thing where, you know, we would call each other and everyone would come running out and sort of attempt to protect each other. So, I was kind of very aware of those issues young. (R-2)

As this participant explains, these shared experiences of racism connected him to First Nations issues. He clearly articulates the development of his sense of (in) justice through racist experiences:

Then in school when we were doing reports and so on I always read about those sorts of things. Like I said, a real acute sense of justice and I would I would sort of do more research if I was being roughed up at school which happened quite frequently, right. It would be kind of a group of kids coming at me so I would kind of pick the smallest one and try and do some damage before I went down, right. When that stuff was happening I usually left the school and we had a library right next door, so I went there and I picked up some books on the American civil rights movement and so on and started reading. So I'd be skipping class but reading like crazy. I just sort of developed, I don't know, philosophies and beliefs and if I see something happening I don't feel is right, I have to do something about it, right. So, I think it's all of that tied together. (R-2)

Is there an emotional toll that these participants carry? What emerged through the interviews was that these racialized educators have spent considerable time unpacking anti-Indigenous racism. Two participants in particular shared experiences from their youth that left deep impressions on them. These experiences and their analysis about them have shaped the way they understand and connect to anti-Indigenous racism.

In reflecting on the interviews with racialized participants, I was struck that talking about racism provoked deeper reflection. This reflection is tied to their personal histories with racial violence. It also affected how they relate their experiences to the experiences of Indigenous people.

### **4.3.3. White Educators**

White participants spoke about their enhanced awareness of being racially privileged inside educational institutions and having an elevated (protected) status with students. From this place of privilege, they were able to challenge racism and White supremacy in ways that Indigenous and racialized educators cannot. Additionally, these White educators recognized the prevalence of anti-Indigenous racism and expressed their concern for the welfare of the Indigenous colleagues with whom they work, and for Indigenous students in their classes as they navigate and challenge anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. The following participant is an anti-racism educator in health care and shares how anti-Indigenous racism shows up in her work context:

It shows up in lots of different ways. We hear about Indigenous people who are turned away from the ER because they're assumed to be drunk when they are having a heart attack or in diabetic shock. We also hear about Indigenous people who, you know, have an obvious health issue but are intoxicated and so therefore not given care for the other issues. And we know that if it was a White man who came in terrible pain from a broken arm and was intoxicated, he would still get help for his broken arm. When it's an Indigenous person who is also in terrible pain with a broken arm and intoxicated, they're not given that care. (W-2)

The analysis expressed here allows the participant to see racism as effecting Indigenous facilitators and compares the challenge of this work to teaching about sexism as a woman.

It's impacting people's health today. It's impacting Indigenous people's well-being. It impacts Indigenous facilitators' position in the room and it impacts ...ability is not the right word. It impacts Indigenous facilitators. This violence. You know, I think of myself as a White person and say I'm doing a workshop on sexism and somebody makes a sexist...with all men...and just to put it in a different context ...and somebody makes a sexist comment about women. And that's something I'm going to take personally because I'm a woman. That's something that impacts me. So, it's not parallel at all with colonization because I don't see sexism as the same thing but for me as a White woman, that is where I go when I think about impact. (W-2)

This White educator who facilitates with an Indigenous educator expresses concern about the impact on her colleague because she sees "violent statements that are made in a room about Indigenous people that wouldn't be made about other groups" (W-2). When she discussed her reactions to this, she shared, "For me, it's like panic, when I hear an overt racist comment" (W-2). She goes on to say:

It's like a dart; it's like a bullet, right. It's directed towards Indigenous people in the room. Without any understanding of how this is unacceptable and inappropriate and violent. So the impact for me is panic, like "Oh shit, what do I do? What's my role?" You know and it's also a bit of anger. Like, I get angry. I want to, you know, I want to put that person in their place. I want to tell them to leave the room. I want to shame them. That's my, you know, response inside is to want to shame this person, put them in their place. I get quite angry. (W-2)

This White participant co-facilitated the workshop discussed earlier where the male participants stated that "Aboriginal people smell". She shared how she makes sense of the violence she witnesses in the classroom to the context of colonial history:

When I'm talking about violence, I'm talking about impact. I'm talking about not just the incident that is happening right now but I'm talking about how the violence is connected to a long chain of history that goes back to deep beliefs about Indigenous people. And how a comment like "Indigenous people smell" is a re-enactment of colonial violence that we've seen for the last five hundred years. So, it's not a one-off and so that's why I think it's important to name it 'violence' because it's connected to this long legacy of violence. It's a continuation of that and it also has an impact for Indigenous people right now, in the room. Right now today. We often talk about colonization as in the past and we need to understand that it's ongoing today. (W-2)

This particular participant was candid about what she sees as some of the roots of the anti-Indigenous racism she observes and the impact on her:

The struggle for us is there's a level of de-humanization that for us as non-Indigenous people we have internalized about Indigenous people. That it is hard for us to feel human feelings toward Indigenous people, so when there's a racist comment that's made, it somehow gets missed. It somehow gets dropped. And that is so deeply troubling, to me. (W-2)

She also shared that this work (Indigenous anti-racism) requires her to consider her own place and location relative to the oppression of Indigenous people. For example, she provided many examples of the challenges that both White students and racialized students have in confronting and then learning about colonial history. Through these stories, she reveals her own analysis, her process of learning, and where she situates herself politically and pedagogically:

My experience is that privilege, the conversation about White privilege is often triggering for White people. New for most White people but it's not often new or the concept is not often new for racialized people. Maybe for some obvious reasons but the conversation about privilege is one that brings all non-Indigenous people in and I think for racialized people, there can be resistance to that. Because Canada has been framed as a nation, you know, of these myths about discovery um that all non-Indigenous people have learned and internalized. And so for us, for non-Indigenous people and White people to consider that we're not legitimately here, we don't have entitlement to the land, I think is very unsettling for people and often people will go to the place of, "Well, does that mean I need to go home, then?" You know, I think it brings up fear for people. Like, "What does it mean that I'm on Indigenous land? I'm not legitimately here. I live here, I make a living here, I enjoy you know all the benefits of being in Canada at the expense of Indigenous people." And I think that is deeply troubling for some people. When they get it, it can be deeply troubling and some non-Indigenous ...or settlers want to know what that means. You know, "Do I need to go home?" and "I don't have a home to go back to". For many, you know, racialized people who may have left situations of oppression it can hit a, you know, a core place of survival. A core place of fear. So, I think that's, you know, an issue. We're not saying that you need to go home. We're saying you need to understand the relationship and the responsibilities we have as settlers in this relationship. We try to address this in the trainings. (W-2)

This participant poses many questions that reflect a process of unlearning, then learning new concepts. As she frames issues, it is clear where she has understanding of the challenges to the learning process for settlers like herself. She explains why she thinks that this learning process in the context of anti-Indigenous racism is so difficult:

And I think especially for White people we haven't built up a sense of racial stress and are often afraid of making waves or looking like a race traitor. You know, engaging in conflict this is what strikes me anyway about my own personal reflection and what I see in other White people is that these concerns about how I'm going to be seen or creating waves or being seen as a race traitor. These are the things that trump our humanity. If I didn't have those...if I could get over those feelings, I would see this is my philosophy anyway. (W-2)

Numerous scholars have tackled the issues of learning about racism for White people (See Matias, 2016; Goodman, 2011; Marx, 2006; Carr & Lund, 2007). One of the gaps in this literature is that very little has been written about the learning for White people in relation to their standpoint as settlers. I have addressed this issue throughout this dissertation and contend that one of the signatures of settler blindness is when non-Indigenous scholars discuss racism in depth and exclude the context of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism. As the participant in the quotation above so aptly points out, Whites have not developed a sense of "racial stress" and this impacts their ability to manage race-based discussions. She also mentions that Whites can be "afraid of making waves" or "looking like a race traitor". All of these issues that she raises speak to the complexity of addressing racism for White people. Some of this concern may be masking some of the issues that have also been raised by Indigenous educators. For example, would the fear of "making waves" be fear of the consequences for the White educator of challenging students? The concern about student complaints is real for all educators, so this is not a surprise. However "looking like a race traitor" was an issue only raised by White educators.

DiAngelo (2011) discusses aspects of these dynamics in the context of Whiteness and White Fragility. She suggests that White people "live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress" (p. 55) and one of the effects of this is a lowered ability to manage and deal with situations that challenge racial comfort. When Whites experience situations in which race-related issues are centred and direct, the resistance that emerges can "reinforce the pressure on facilitators to avoid directly addressing racism" (p. 55).

Several scholars have addressed this resistance (see Fox, 2009; Matias, 2016; Sue, 2015) and while a decolonizing lens and context has not always been applied to their work, some of their analysis has relevance here. As one participant shared:

So I would say there's a lot of emotion in classrooms when you're teaching issues around racism and especially there seems to be a lot of blaming. We saw it in the Truth and Reconciliation, you know, people that just, you know that, 'get over it', you know 'that happened in the past'. There's also that "I didn't do it; that was you know some White people in the past, that wasn't me". There's a lot of that kind of stuff, too, so people carrying around with their shame and their guilt and not wanting to explore and examine that and understand, so they'll project it back on the population of people who are the individual that makes it easier for them. (W-1)

As revealed here, the resistance that manifests as "get over it" and "that happened in the past" are two popular discourses rooted in colonial history and the legacy of denial, blaming the victim, and the rationalizing of the violence of colonial policies. The additional comment, "I didn't do it; that was you know some White people in the past, that wasn't me" is a classic example of a desire to personally disengage from the issues and also to provide distance between the oppression of Indigenous people and their personal association with the current privileging of all settlers.

These examples highlight the complexity of resistance and the benefit of deconstructing what is perceived as resistance. For example, we need to acknowledge that not all silence is resistance and not all expressions of emotion (such as guilt and shame) are to be avoided. The following participant shares her perspective about the possible roots to feelings of shame and guilt for settlers:

I think that the notion that it's about the land, I think we know here, right. We're, you know, in this work, right. We know it's about the land. But I think that for a lot of people out there I don't know that I would say it's about the land for people. For a lot of people. I would say, this is just new for me having this thought here in this group, I think if people think it's about the land, then some part of them is recognizing that there was a people here a legitimate people, right. And that maybe there's a little bit of healthy shame or healthy guilt, because guilt and shame are not necessarily unhealthy, in my opinion. It depends, right, it depends on the context. Maybe 'shame' is more the word I meant there, healthy shame. So it implies that if people feel threatened that there's a little notion that you could probably work with around their own shame but I don't think a lot of people even feel that. (FG I-2)

#### 4.3.4. The Impact of Microaggressions, Microinsults, and Microinvalidations

Participants discussed experiences of racism in the classroom that ranged from the blatant to the more subtle. Both blatant and subtle racism have an impact. The latter form of racism benefits from examination here. As one participant describes:

Within the academy the big challenge is that I always say that racism is subtle but pervasive. Not just the academy but in institutions, right, that structural racism is the harder one to address, the subtle, right? I mean the Archie Bunkers of the world are easy to address, right, but it's that subtle pieces. Words are easy to address, right, but it's that subtle piece. Because then what often comes back if you try to bring that, flush that out a bit and bring it to the more tangible way to discuss it, you know, you're often seen that your perception is skewed. You're being too sensitive or whatever, and I think as Indigenous people we know when we are being oppressed. (I-1)

What is important to take away from this is that all subsets of racism cause substantial emotional, physical, spiritual stress, and distress. As Dei, Karumanchery, Karumanchery-Luik (2005) explain:

Racialized subjects need not be told which incidents are racist to recognize and internalize them. Whether or not we have words to frame an incident as racist, the experiences speak to oppression and we live through our violation/violability in the moment. (Dei, Karumanchery, Karumanchery-Luik, 2005, p. 130)

In his research, Sue (2015) explains 'racial microaggressions' as "the everyday slights, insults, indignities and invalidations delivered toward people of color because of their visible racial-ethnic minority characteristics" (p. 7). He found three primary themes related to the impact or *emotional load* that racialized people assume when faced with racial microaggressions:

First, many people of color report being *incensed* when they felt their integrity was being assailed. Microaggression themes that dealt with criminality, lower intelligence, and being a perpetual foreigner or treated as a second class citizen (lesser human being) brought on feelings of anger, frustration, annoyance, and sometimes rage. In most cases being treated as inferior or a subhuman being was insulting and offensive. Second, *anxiety* and outright fear of the personal consequences for raising issues of bias and unfairness were always on the minds of targets. In many cases, people of color described enduring humiliation in silence for fear of retaliation from those with authority and power. Third, many describe an *emotional exhaustion* of having to constantly deal with a

never-ending onslaught of microaggressions and being placed in a no-win, damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don't situation. (p. 127)

One of the participants was particularly candid about her own anger and the levels of ignorance displayed by the students: "I would say in the beginning I think they just were resistant to me because I was angry and the ignorance just pissed me right off and it was really hard to contain myself" (I-3). She went on to say: "I had no idea how to deal with the anger, the resistance, the ignorance, the unconsciousness, the unwillingness" (I-3). This participant's anger exemplifies what Sue refers to as being *incensed*.

The second theme Sue (2015) raises is related to "anxiety and personal fear of consequences for raising issues of bias and unfairness" (p. 127). These responses are interesting because often educators will share their own personal narratives, histories, and experiences for the benefit of others' learning. The following detailed account from a participant captures the elements that Sue (2015) is bringing forward:

It was a week, it was week-long, and there was this one woman, social worker, older, you know, been in practice for a long time. And we were challenging her a bit, the content was challenging her on her approach. Not directly but she kept talking about, "Well, you know I would take, you know, the little boy to the Band office and, you know, nobody would show up to visit him. You know, I did that month after month and nobody would come". So problematizing that rather than "Well maybe, well you know, after ten times, you might want to stop bringing the little boy to that". And kind of challenging her on 'What kind of relationships were you forming besides just going to the band office, right. Like, who did you know? Who were you able to talk to?' and just also looking "Well you know you bringing the thing is the person of power, what that meant into a community. There's shame on their part, this little boy's in care." You know just trying to problem solve all this stuff. And anyway so everything she blamed, she kind of threw at the community.

We would challenge, try to draw that bigger. Anyway, by Wednesday she was totally kind of not participating in the conversation anymore. And I was aware that it was happening. And this was learning for me because I think I just kind of ignored it. I think, now I would have pulled her aside and said "You know I've noticed that you've..." just to try to keep the conversation going.

Anyway, what happened then on the Friday we ended with a talking circle and she just attacked me in the talking circle and said that I did more damage because I created, enhanced the stereotypes of Indigenous people and her belief of all the positive things she thought was worse because I brought yet more stereotypes to Indigenous

people. She attacked me personally, said things about my grandfather that I share and it was hard. And I sat there right, because in a talking circle, right, I'm sitting there and just trying to be respectful and listen to her. And then she went on for probably 15 minutes and then I just, when she said something about my grandfather, I just lost it, then I just, I started to cry.

And then, you know, I had a co-instructor with me and we de-briefed that thing forever and she felt bad because she didn't come in. And anyway I don't even really remember, it's a bit of a blur from there. Like we, I think we were both so stunned, right. Everybody in the circle I think felt bad. They were trying to, you know, figure out where to look, what to do. So she got her power back at the end of the week, right. She left feeling victory in her, that her assumptions were right.  
(I-1)

This quotation reveals the additional risks and potential consequences that exist for educators who challenge bias and racism by using their own personal stories. Moreover this situation also exemplifies the way that settlers may respond to being challenged about their professional practice by an Indigenous educator. In this scenario, the Indigenous educator questioned the bias and racism of the social worker. The consequence was that the Indigenous educator was punished.

What we are left to consider is that the White social worker is able to use the rules of this circle to her own advantage. In such circles, speaking is often governed by strict protocols such as only one person can speak at a time, speaks with respect, and without interruption. Within this tradition the social worker was able to express herself and “attack” the Indigenous educator for about 15 minutes. The rule that one should be respectful was also violated and this diatribe left a tremendous (and lasting) emotional impact on the Indigenous educator. As well, it had an impact on the other participants as they “didn't know where to look or what to do”.

The third theme Sue (2015) describes is related to *emotional exhaustion*. This theme refers (again) to the “never ending onslaught of microaggressions” (p. 127). The following exemplifies this experience:

I'm exhausted at the end, just exhausted. So I feel like I have to work a lot to...if there's an educational goal but there's also the goal around minimizing how much I'm being scrutinized. It's a combination of the two, so a White person doesn't have to do all this part, they just have to focus on the educational stuff. You know, I mean that's a general statement there might be still dynamics that take place, I'm sure there are, you know, for White people who are strong allies if

they are naming hard things they might also get resistance but it's not the same. (I-2)

This participant is talking about the cumulative effect of managing the scrutiny that comes from the colonial perspective about them as an Indigenous body. She is also talking about the additional task of managing the resistance in the room that is related to the content-curriculum that she is delivering. This additional burden has an added impact, as the following participant shares:

So it's just all those layers of exposing yourself, making yourself vulnerable and sometimes it takes me days to recover from that. And sometimes I get into it and it's, you know, we have great conversations and people are learning through that story and they're asking questions and they're getting those, "So they had a right to say that your mom was no longer ...?" "Well, why?" and then we you know and it's good dialogue and it's great. But then I walk away and it brings up stuff for me. (I-1)

This chapter has described the tremendous challenges confronting educators in this study. Indigenous, racialized and White educators acknowledged the relentless nature of challenges before them including the emotional load of racial micro-aggressions, the anxiety and fear of consequences for addressing bias and anti-Indigenous racism, and the emotional labour and exhaustion involved in this work.

In the following chapters, I present the knowledge, self-awareness, and skills that helped the participants navigate these challenges.

## Chapter 5.

# Core Competency of Educators - Knowledge

### 5.1. Introduction

In my experience as an educator, I am unsettled by the seemingly insatiable appetite of my students and colleagues to hear the 'happy stories' about Indigenous issues. I have presented incidents of anti-Indigenous racism and have had students put their hand up and say things such as, "This is all terrible, but what about the positive examples?" Another observation I have made throughout my career is what I call the 'rush to solutions', which looks like a tendency to resist or leap over the 'unhappy stories' to get to the solutions -- 'the tip sheet'. Students have said to me, "This all seems so negative; shouldn't you provide some solutions?" My standard responses have been to ask these same people -- "what is the benefit of considering solutions until we have a foundational understanding of the issue or problem?"

I work closely with an Elder, Gerry Oleman, and he frames this dynamic in the following way: "We can't say goodbye to a problem until at first we have said hello." (Oleman, San'yas Program, 2015). For me, this dissertation is my way of saying 'hello' to the problem of anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. Along with the participants in my study, I have focused directly on the problems of racism and resistance. I acknowledge that I have not presented the happy stories given the incidents of colonial violence and racism described in the previous chapter. Here, I turn to considering some solutions in relation to this context of anti-Indigenous racism.

One of the motivations I had for undertaking this study was to gather what participants had learned about the reality of dealing with anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. I wanted to hear about how they responded to racism and resistance - their approaches that were effective as well as those that were not.

All of the participants were generous in sharing their personal insights, ideas, and strategies. Many of the participants shared that they thought the topic of this dissertation was interesting and provocative. Several of them commented that they wished they had

had the opportunity to discuss and to learn about these issues before they were teaching. They also had practical suggestions for how that learning could take place. Many participants hope to be able to take away strategies from this study that will be useful to them and ultimately helpful to their students.

I acknowledge that the participants have diverse perspectives on how to respond to anti-Indigenous racism and that there was not a unified voice or consensus about some issues. The participants differ in racial standpoints, their experience with managing anti-Indigenous racism, and also their levels of confidence about how to address racism in the classroom. While participants voiced a range of ideas in the interviews, there were consistent themes that arose both within and across racial groups in the study. The presentation of the findings below reflects this consistency. In those instances in which the perspectives are divergent, I indicate this and handle the findings accordingly.

## **5.2. Overview**

The present chapter and the two that follow describe how educators address anti-Indigenous racism. The findings are presented in terms of the core areas of knowledge, self-awareness, and skills. I chose to use these categories because they provide the space to ask and answer the critical questions that get to the heart of addressing anti-Indigenous racism. What is the information I need to know and the knowledge I need to have? What do I need to do to enhance my self-awareness? What are the soft and hard skills I need to develop? These topics help organize the key ideas participants shared.

Of course, the areas of knowledge, self-awareness, and skills are not entirely discrete. Rather, they intersect and overlap with each other. For example, consider the approach of inter-racial facilitation described by one of the participants. The approach actually requires enhancement in all three areas in order to be effective. It assumes foundational knowledge about facilitation models and their application with Indigenous, racialized, and White participants in the context of anti-Indigenous racism. Relevant self-awareness means personal learning about one's own racial identity, racial privilege, and their impact on the dynamics between racialized and Indigenous people in a mixed-race class. The skills include strategies and techniques that enable two educators to move participants through complex dialogue effectively in sometimes hostile environments --

something that is not easy to do. Hence, interracial facilitation is much more than having facilitators with different racial standpoints guide students through learning points in a curriculum. It requires competence in foundational knowledge, enhanced self-awareness, and a comprehensive skill set.

Although my findings speak to the interconnections between knowledge, self-awareness, and skills, for the purposes of clarity in presentation I will discuss each of these areas of competence separately. This chapter focuses on the knowledge educators find useful in addressing racism and resistance. The material on self-awareness and skills is presented in subsequent chapters.

### **5.3. Discourses of “Culture versus anti-Racism”: “It’s magical thinking”**

Discourses of ‘Culture versus anti-Racism’ takes up a controversial, sometimes even a divisive area related to the pedagogy and/or theoretical positioning of educators. The issue of different pedagogical orientations has been discussed in previous chapters, and in this section we hear from the participants.

One of the current issues in Indigenous-related education (including anti-racism; Indigenous cultural safety; equity; diversity; and/or multiculturalism training) is the differing theory brought forward by stakeholders (including educators and policy makers) as the recommended pedagogical foundation for addressing the inequities Indigenous people experience. Participants in my study spoke about the complex socio-political context that they work within and the tension between two specific methodologies: the cultural difference approach versus a critical, Indigenous-informed anti-racism approach. The cultural difference approach centres the locus of learning on the experiences of Indigenous people, focusing on ‘the other’. In this view, issues and problems that Indigenous people face are seen to be rooted in cultural differences rather than broad structural violence, racism, Settler privilege, and the history and current reality of colonial oppression. Supporters of this perspective advance workshops, learning events, and courses to teach settlers information about the diverse nations and histories, worldviews, and sometimes even cultural teachings. One of the premises of this approach is that by providing information about the ‘other’, the Settler will be able to move away from the anti-Indigenous racist narratives that inform their attitudes and behaviours.

In contrast, the critical anti-racist approach does not focus on learning about culture as a means to eliminate racism. Rather, this approach strives to address the structural issues, including analysis of power and the interrogation of racism and discrimination, which provides the context for the socio-political realities of Indigenous people. As discussed in earlier chapters, these are two very different perspectives on how to address the gaps in knowledge, levels of self-awareness, and development of skills necessary to work more effectively and respectfully with Indigenous people.

These differing approaches emerged in the interviews and as one participant shares:

I've actually never thought of that before, because it's illogical, people think that a cultural program is going to minimize racism. They think that a cultural program targeted towards Indigenous people is going to somehow mitigate racism that takes place in a hospital or a university. It's really magical thinking, it's an illusion. (I-2)

This participant, an Indigenous educator, has an informed perspective that has developed with experience. As a result, she is critical of education that focuses only on the teaching of cultural knowledge as an intervention for anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination. She suggests that this discourse - teaching about culture as an intervention - may be part of a larger agenda that some educators have, which is to avoid addressing structural issues:

So some of the dynamics are - the educators themselves are shutting the conversation down, making it about culture, deflecting, talking about social justice and diversity and inclusion and 'we can't exclude' and that whole paradigm to flatten the conversation. People seem very afraid to bring a big spotlight and, I think, don't even understand why there needs to be a big spotlight. They don't, I think, understand how that issue is actually connected to all of our social justice, not just Indigenous peoples. I don't think people get that. They don't see how Indigenous people are scapegoated. (I-2)

This participant is not saying there is no validity to sharing cultural knowledge. She is, however, troubling the idea and motivations for teaching only about culture when it is:

Used as a way to talk about cultural difference as opposed to talking about racism. I think there is use for it. I do think there is validity in it but I think that there is a danger in its silencing talking about systemic racism, yet again. It's a more fancy academic way of talking about culture, Indigenous, putting the lens on culture rather than putting it on systemic racism. (I-2)

Schick & St. Denis (2005) tackle this issue and suggest that “without acknowledging racism and race privilege in curricula practices, the effects of colonization continue” (p. 296). When the focus of curricula is on ‘the cultural other’, the settlers can be detached spectators in the spectacle of colonial violence. As a participant commented:

There’s a lot of trend in the last 5 years or so around Indigenous knowledge which is completely valid, that’s a road we want to go down. How it’s interpreted - I’m critical of how it’s interpreted. My concern is that it’s silencing discussions around colonization, oppression, marginalization, racism and that it’s another extension of cultural rhetoric about cultural difference. (I-2)

Schick & St. Denis (2005) share this participant’s concern and also critique a curriculum that does not apply a critical race analysis:

Through celebration and song, and with no need to mention racial differences, discourses of multiculturalism make their way into acceptable curricular practice. That racism in Canada often escapes scrutiny is one factor that makes anti-racist analysis a challenge in popular discourse, in the law, and in educational programs. In addition to outright denial or designation discussion of racism as taboo, racism is often understood as something that took place primarily in the past or is associated with specific or unique examples. (p. 304)

Schick & St. Denis (2005) are troubling the discourse of multiculturalism here. However in my experience, this challenge to ongoing colonialism and curricula practice needs to be expanded to include all approaches that posit the following:

- that colonialism is a thing of the past;
- that racism is something that happens as isolated incidents (and perpetrated by ‘bad people’) rather than a manifestation of structural violence;
- that approaches such as diversity, anti-oppression, equity, inclusion, and other pedagogy that present Indigenous issues as secondary, or are included as just another ‘marginalized or vulnerable population’; or
- that exclude, trivialize, or tokenize the context of colonialism in their analysis of racism; or
- that focus on White privilege and White supremacy rather than Settler privilege; and

- that fail to frontload colonialism as the ideology that is responsible for the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people.

In one sense, the counter to each of these points allows for continuation of the status quo. Each point reflects a significant subject that is worthy of interrogation. For example, the bullet that speaks to “approaches such as diversity, anti-oppression, equity, inclusion, and other pedagogy that present Indigenous issues as secondary, or are included as just another ‘marginalized or vulnerable population’” is current in many organizational change agendas. In my experience there is strong organizational resistance to centering Indigenous issues in initiatives as though there is a risk to the organization in doing so. Initiatives that strive to address inequities such as diversity, anti-oppression, equity, and inclusion are more appealing for a number of reasons. By avoiding an Indigenous focus, the organization can simplify interventions that address knowledge gaps and skill development. This simplification flattens differences between people to a ‘tip sheet’. I have seen this manifest as ‘cultural practices to be aware of’ and while this may be important in some contexts, it does not address the structural issues that lead to systemic racism and discrimination.

Scholar Verna St. Denis (2017) also critiqued the cultural learning approach or, “Culturally Responsive Education” at its core pedagogy. In a national webinar titled “Critical Race Theory and its Implications for Indigenous Cultural Safety” (2017), St. Denis explains that “embedded within each approach are assumptions about what the problem is, who has the problem and where the problem is located” (St. Denis, 2017). For example, St. Denis summarizes and troubles the role of educators (Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people) in each of the approaches. Within the culturally responsive approach, St. Denis suggests that Indigenous people become “knowers; larger than their oppressors; people with tradition, social relations, custom, coherent society” (St. Denis, 2017). Within this paradigm, non-Indigenous people become “voyeurs, spectators & consumers; not implicated and not responsible in on-going inequality” (St. Denis, 2017). These two positions together do not allow for the needed interrogation of systemic issues that oppress and discriminate against Indigenous people.

The anti-racist education approach is different from the culturally responsive approach in important ways. For Indigenous people, this approach means that we are “affected by systems of oppression”; and “recognize Aboriginal people as varied by

class, gender, language, religion, cultural group, etc.” (St. Denis, 2017). Along with this view, non-Indigenous people are positioned as “oppressors & colonizers” and “required to be honest and responsible” (St. Denis, 2017). St. Denis closes this presentation by asking some key questions:

- Which approach is more common?
- If you are an Indigenous person, which approach might you prefer?
- If you are a non-Indigenous person, which approach might you prefer? (St. Denis, 2017)

Here St. Denis makes transparent that educational pedagogy is important, indeed critical. The theoretical lens we use has tremendous implications for the quality of the instruction and learning outcomes. The cultural responsiveness approach has deep roots in virtually all sectors (universities, government, professional development, justice, child welfare, education, and health). However, addressing the structural issues that marginalize and discriminate against Indigenous people requires moving beyond surface information, to an examination of the root causes of structural oppression (McGibbon & Etowa, 2009; Razack, 2015; Henry & Tator, 2010; RCAPP, 1996).

Scholar bell hooks (1992) troubles another manifestation of educational pedagogy that may be gaining traction:

Many unlearning racism workshops focus on helping white individuals to see that they too are wounded by racism and as a consequence have something to gain from participating in anti-racist struggle. While in some ways true, a construction of political solidarity that is rooted in a narrative of shared victimization not only acts to recenter whites, it risks obscuring the particular ways racist domination impacts on the lives of marginalized groups. Implicit in the assumption that even those who are privileged via racist hierarchy suffer is the notion that it is only when those in power get in touch with how they too are victimized will they rebel against structures of domination. The truth is that many folks benefit greatly from dominating others and are not suffering a wound that is in any way similar to the condition of the exploited and oppressed. (p. 13)

What is the purpose of this approach? How is this approach in the service of the work of anti-racism? hooks (1992) answers these questions by saying that “Anti-racist work that tries to get these individuals to see themselves as “victimized” by racism in the hopes that this will act as an intervention is a misguided strategy” (p. 13). Although the spirit of this approach may be appealing -- to get ‘buy in’ from White people by helping them to

see themselves as victims, there may be an element of self-interest in interrogating racism. However, the truth, as hooks has stated, is that Whites benefit from the “structures of domination” (p. 13) that oppress Indigenous people and others, and that asking Whites to become engaged with racism by having them consider how they, too, have suffered from racist structures, seems misleading.

#### **5.4. Risking Anti-Racism: “Maybe I’ll be fired this time”**

I have had the opportunity to critique policies on diversity, anti-oppression, equity, cultural safety, and others in the context of my work. I can say with confidence that there is an enormous appetite for education that focuses on Indigenous people or that focuses on culture rather than anti-racism. In addition, teaching anti-racism involves risk to the educator. Participants also spoke about this, and one participant shared an experience she had while teaching at a university:

The one place where I felt that my experience was different was when I was an instructor at [a university] and an instructor in the [university program]. There, I have a considerable amount of power that I use and even though at [this university] they did not want an anti-racism lens - I didn't say 'yes' or 'no', I just thought 'Well, I'm just going to do it and then we'll see what the evaluations say'. And they were all really good but, the person who was in charge of getting this course passed said “We didn't really want any anti-racism stuff in there. There seems to have been some slippage” [laughs]. She was trying to be so careful because I knew she was afraid of pissing me off, so she was kind of stereotyping what response she was going to get from me and I just said 'Well, maybe you could think of it as decolonization" and when I said that word it, it somehow connected to something for her. And she said 'Oh, okay' and she didn't challenge me anymore and I've been doing that course for four years and every time I do it I think “maybe I'll be fired this time.” (I-2)

Her comment “maybe I’ll be fired this time” is something I have heard from Indigenous colleagues, as well as several anti-racist educators, both Indigenous and White, who are doing critical anti-racist work. This participant fully understands that teaching anti-racism pedagogy and practice brings risk. In spite of this, she continues to teach in a way that she knows the university may not support. The commitment to this kind of work is about destabilizing pedagogy and practice that is in the service of the status quo.

Another participant discusses the organizational context of a university and how the latter shapes the way educational pedagogy is or is not supported:

University administrators are afraid of controversy and they would see it as controversy. "What if these students, you know, tell their parents, and what if their parents you know do this?" I think it has to do with universities are into managing instead of understanding that these are educational institutions. That's the kind of stuff that we do is that we are trying to educate people and especially pre-service school teachers that are going to be out there teaching. We don't know who they are going to have in their classroom; they need to be able to consider that their students are not all the same and that they need to pay attention to the pedagogy in the classroom and the classroom dynamics so they are not privileging one group of students over others. (W-1)

Resistance to anti-racism curriculum is not unusual. For example, it is not uncommon today to hear questions in the educational milieu such as "Isn't it 'reverse racism' when we have to take a course only about Indigenous people?" Or "Doesn't specialized training just reinforce the special privileges that Indigenous people have?" These questions reveal some of the primary discourses that have been discussed earlier; the myths of colour-blindness and reverse racism, and a colonial narrative that perpetuates a discourse of 'special privileges'. The function of these two questions is to resist; the rationale for the resistance is to avoid discomfort and to maintain the status quo.

## **5.5. Understanding of the Learning Process**

As discussed in Chapter 3: Literature Review, transformational learning theory has some value to the issue of pedagogical responses to anti-Indigenous racism. Mezirow & Taylor (2009) write about what they call the core components that frame a transformative approach to teaching. The early work in transformative learning theory identified core components that included "individual experience, critical reflection, and dialogue" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 4). The authors explain that as the study of transformative learning evolved, other core elements have emerged as equally significant and include a holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice (p. 4).

It is important to note that these elements have an interdependent relationship; they do not stand alone. For example, without individual experience, there is little or nothing to engage in critical reflection. Similarly, developing an authentic practice is significant for fostering trusting relationships between learners and teacher, which often provides the safe environment for learners to engage in critical reflection, ultimately allowing transformative learning to take place.

As discussed earlier, transformative learning theory has some application to the analysis in this research in that it shows a structured process that “frame[s] a transformative approach to teaching” (p. 4). The reality is that the work of addressing anti-Indigenous racism is not a tidy fit with the core elements laid out by Mezirow (2009). Addressing this specific racism is more challenging because deconstructing the ‘core elements’ related to anti-Indigenous racism is a messy, emotional, conflict-ridden, and pedagogically demanding process -- for both the learner and the educator. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the topic of colonization and anti-Indigenous racism has been largely left out of the theoretical framing of mainstream educational theory and pedagogy (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith 2008; Lawrence & Dua, 2005). As discussed in earlier chapters, the consequences to this neglect and exclusion are significant.

In their analysis of theoretical orientations, Mezirow & Taylor (2009) talk about the utility of a second framework:

The second framework of theoretical orientations, espoused, for example, by Paulo Freire, Elizabeth Tisdell, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, and Mary Alfred, sees fostering transformative learning as being as much about social change as personal transformation, where individual and social transformation are inherently linked. Critical reflection in this orientation is more about ideological critique, where learners develop an awareness of power and greater agency (political consciousness) to transform society and their own reality. All that being said, how these elements are interpreted in and engaged in the classroom is therefore significantly shaped by the theoretical orientation of the educator. (Taylor, 2008 in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 5)

The notion here that transformative learning is as much about social change as it is about personal transformation is germane to this study. Many of the participants in this study spoke explicitly about the larger social agenda related to anti-Indigenous racism; their understanding of the roots of Indigenous racism and how it is perpetuated; as well as how they see their role and responsibilities vis a vis this larger political and social agenda.

### **5.5.1. Learning Process**

Participants in this study also spoke about their understanding of a developmental learning process for students, and that it is significant. The process of transformational learning related to Indigenous related curriculum is predictable, and

educators in my study spoke about this. My colleagues and I have developed a model of learning (San'yas ICS Program 2010-18) that reflects the trajectory of learning related to our work (unlearning; learning; resistance; integration-engagement; praxis). Each of the stages is briefly described below using experiences from the participants as well as examples from the literature. As with any developmental model, the stages are not discrete, and people would move back and forth. However it is likely that any movement would be triggered by an important event.

### **5.5.2. Unlearning**

This learning process begins with awareness that students (as well as colleagues) often have a low level of basic knowledge of history, especially the history of colonialism and the legacy of anti-Indigenous racism. The gap in knowledge means that students and educators will spend time and energy addressing the gaps in their learning and in particular addressing the robust myths and racist ideology that students (and colleagues) possess. As discussed in the previous section, the prevalent anti-Indigenous attitudes and stereotypes are related to the larger ideology of colonial narratives. These myths e.g., terra nullius; that Indigenous people are a conquered nation; that they are uncivilized, less than human; meritocracy; White victimization; reverse racism; and so on -- need to be surfaced and addressed. Addressing these myths can be a difficult process of unlearning for students because some of these colonial myths have become part of their core beliefs. These are not only core beliefs about Indigenous people, but also about themselves -- their identity as a Canadian.

Wang & Olson (2009) suggest that “unlearning involves the capacity to step out of oneself, to look at the self from a distance in a new light” (p. xiv). Unlearning is also a process that is complex as it will potentially activate other issues. The following participant demonstrates the complexity of unlearning:

For some people the denial is about knowing and repressing something that they do know because it's too awful for them to consider that these stories are true. Or it's too awful for them to consider how privileged they've been, so in order to maintain that sense of privilege people have to think that they worked really hard for what they got and that therefore other people didn't work hard; otherwise, they would be where they are. I think there's a very strong sense of denying the privilege part, you know, denying there's been entitlements that weren't necessarily deserved. There has to be that

element there because people do think they're meritorious, they're smarter than other people, they deserve to be paid way more money, or they deserve more, you know that they're better looking. There's all of those constellation of things and that other people are sour grapes because they're not as smart, they didn't work as hard, or that you know they're lazy, all of that stuff, so there's a way in which very privileged people are denying their own privilege. They just think that you know they're just better than other people. They were born better and they've got higher IQs and, you know, all that kind of narrative, too. (W-1)

Leading a process of unlearning for students requires that educators be able to integrate their own knowledge with an understanding of the predictable dynamics that come along with it. Emotionality, defensiveness, argumentation, denial are only a few of the reactions that will also need to be managed. As the quotation above illuminates, unlearning the myths people have been taught requires appreciating the density of these issues as well as the energy an educator will need to expend in order to support a student's unlearning process.

### **5.5.3. Learning**

The next phase of this transformative learning process is in providing the counter narratives to the colonial and popular discourses about Indigenous people. For many learners, this will be the first time they have been exposed to a decolonized perspective of history. This learning stage is critical. The following participant speaks about the level of ignorance that she faces in her classes:

Well it just amazes me that people didn't know about residential schools, didn't know some of the history around colonization and the way Indigenous people were treated and when I do my work, because my work I do specifically speak to Indigenous issues you know, I am constantly, you know, sort of surprised when people say "I never knew". And people that grew up in sort of small rural towns where there were reservations right next door to them and they were actually going to school often with Indigenous kids and just had no awareness of what those students' reality was. (R-1)

The implications of ignorance are significant. If students or educators do not have a basic level of knowledge about key features of colonialism (such as the *Indian Act*, Residential Schools, Indian Hospitals, the Reserve system, the theft of land and resources, the implications of living on unceded territory, and so on) they will have little context for understanding the socio-economic inequities that Indigenous people

experience. In other words, if one is ignorant about the context for Indigenous realities (such as high suicide rates, poverty, child apprehension rates, high incarceration rates) then the likelihood that this ignorance will help to construct an uninformed perspective is high. Consider the learning process for students that the participant below is revealing:

So we'll have students who, you know, they'll come in saying, "Oh, why do First Nations people get all this stuff and want more", right? And then once they start to understand the history and sort of where we're at in Canada right now, it really impacts them. A number of them are very upset because they feel that, you know, they should have been taught more in school or their parents maybe made comments to them about First Nations people so they feel guilt and so on, right. (R-2)

Learning about the violence of colonial policies can be illuminating for most people and, like unlearning, often triggers emotions and other reactions. One participant suggested that:

I think that's one of the challenges is that even in the education realm the learning of content won't come until the relationship is there so how do we be in the relationship, how do we be as educators with our students so that there's trust to then go on this journey of learning. (R-1)

#### **5.5.4. Resistance**

The process of learning and unlearning is onerous for the educator and the learner and is the context for expressions of resistance. As one participant shares:

I think its common [resistance]. I don't think it's like that one case where the person wanted to keep the dialogue going, I don't think that's common. But I think in every, probably in every session I have ever facilitated there's the one person, raising the flag of "yeah... yeah ...yeah." (I-1)

Addressing denial (of colonial history, of racism, of privilege), ignorance, and racism was identified as a challenge by all of the participants. Introducing topics related to colonial history and its legacy (including and especially anti-Indigenous racism) can be challenging for learners. Some may engage in forms of resistance (this topic was covered extensively in Chapter 4) to manage their cognitive dissonance. One of the issues that can emerge was described by this participant who previously worked in a professional training development organization:

We ran into a lot of disrespectful sort of dialogue there, you know, and essentially we were challenging people's practice and maybe the practice they'd been doing for twenty years and that would bring things up. (R-2)

This same participant shared that in his perspective, resistance was "a natural part of the process" (R-2). In the context of practice (in this case Indigenous child welfare practice), imagine having practiced for 20 years and then being confronted with the reality that their practice may not be in the best interest of Indigenous children or communities. As the participant said, "that would bring things up". In my experience the challenge of coming to terms with and reconciling past practice with Indigenous people is not exclusive to professionals who work in child welfare practice, but is consistent with those who work in education, health care, and justice. As one participant shares:

So I think that's what's really challenging for anybody is to sit in the pain, the discomfort, the guilt. (R-1)

As discussed in earlier chapters, one of the ways people manage this discomfort is to engage in resistance. Engaging in resistance is unlikely to be a conscious act for most people. As the participant describes below, a variety of complicated issues are proliferating for learners, often at the same time:

I guess the opposite of that which can be challenging, I mean less so for me but I certainly was at the beginning, is the progressive liberal. "I'm good, I'm, you know, you can't tell me because I'm out there doing all this stuff" and the progressive liberal learner who doesn't want to be told that, actually, they are still part of the racist and homophobic and, you know, oppressive society and that they are actually, you know, sometimes actually contributing to it consciously or unconsciously. So, yeah, that can be hard when people are really constantly coming back with comments that are well-intentioned but they don't see the impacts. (R-1)

As noted here, understanding and accepting that resistance is a part of a critical learning process is important for educators.

### **5.5.5. Integration-Engagement**

What is 'integration'? In the context of a learning process, integration is a space in which learners connect what they have learned with their reality -- often their work or university context. They are likely to be asking themselves questions that relate to making meaning from their unlearning and learning. How do I do this? What does this all

mean for me and my work? What does this mean about my previous work? At this stage learners will also have wrestled with aspects of resistance to the new content and are looking for ways to make their learning concrete, practical, and useful. The following participant expresses the way this can manifest:

It was that and I don't know, you know, Cheryl [speaking to me] what that is and if you'll hear more about this, it's this I don't know if it's passive aggressive, it's this weaving back and forth with some of these conversations. When you're in those heated conversations, well people will be, 'Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, no I hear you. I understand what you're saying". And then it's the yeah-but's but sometimes it's not the yeah/buts so blatantly "Okay you're saying this but you know I really think that", you know. So they're agreeing with you, but they're not 100% agreeing with you, right. And it's not about agreeing with you, that's the wrong word to use. It's about there's still a closedness. So it's that, in my perception it's that person hearing you but not hearing what you're saying -hearing the context and the content that you're hearing but not integrating it beyond the words. And I don't know if that makes any sense but taking maybe their responsibility on in that. (I-1)

The 'yeah-but's' the participant is talking about here are not necessarily all about resistance. Rather the learner may be processing new learning and unlearning, and this is part of a critical response that needs to occur prior to 'ownership'. Most people do not glibly accept new information without applying some sort of critical analysis. Integration is that process -- making sense of what one has learned, letting go of myths, the ability to replace racist myths and colonial narratives with decolonizing counter narratives and lastly, looking for ways to make all of this learning useful. When this process occurs, individuals are more likely to take 'ownership' of their learning. This stage is both reflective and action-oriented.

### **5.5.6. Praxis**

Praxis in the context of transformative learning is sometimes understood as an existential act "which engages the whole person of the learner" (Willis, 2012). Willis goes on to say that "From this perspective, such learning involves significant personal change and is identified by learners themselves as transformative" (p. 216) and further, "is a form of knowing and learning" (p. 218).

There is an implicit suggestion that transformative thinking, feeling, and imagining leads to new knowledge and ways of being in the world and

takes on yet another dimension when put into action in the context of embodied life with others. (Willis, 2012, p. 218)

In my study, participants did not explicitly speak about this feature of a learning process. None of the questions keyed in on this aspect of learning and it would be an interesting topic for further study and analysis. In my own experience, praxis is a goal and something one works toward over time, and is not necessarily a stage, per se. The following participant shares her thinking about an issue -- privilege -- and demonstrates the considerable reflection, including self-reflection that is necessary for praxis:

I think that one of the specifics that makes it challenging for educators is as non-Indigenous people working through the feelings that show up for them; for example, guilt. I think whenever someone has privilege, what can trap us in our privilege is guilt. You know, and we can get really defensive about it and "but it isn't me, that was history" but the reality is that we all receive benefit as a result of that, right, and I think that's really hard for people, anybody, not just educators but I think it's that human piece around acknowledging our privilege and the benefits we've got as a result of that. And if we can't do that work it's very hard for us to then sit in a classroom and really speak about these issues from an authentic place with students. Particularly students who also have privilege because, you know, if you feel guilty about it and you're denying it you're not going to really speak to it and that's what a system of oppression is so if yeah, if we don't know our place in these systems, and how we perpetuate the systems, and how we benefit from the systems, etc. we can't speak to them. So I think that's one of the biggest challenges for educators. (R-1)

Even though the participant is talking about educators and students in general and places where non-Indigenous people can become "trapped", she is also talking about herself. In order to be able to manifest this level of understanding about students, one is first required to engage in self-reflective work. As this participant so clearly articulates, "if we don't know our place in these systems, and how we perpetuate the systems, and how we benefit from the systems, etc., we can't speak to them".

Praxis embodies transformative learning in terms of developing new frameworks to think, feel, understand, empathize, and analyze. As O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor (2002) state:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender;

our body awareneses, our visions of alternative approaches to living;  
and our sense of possibilities for social justice and pace and personal joy.  
(p. 11)

The authors in this quotation are speaking to a necessary shifting in consciousness. Some would say, and I would agree, that is what is required in order to shift the current colonial paradigm that continues to privilege settlers at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

The reality is that for some people, as the participant discussed earlier, learning about Indigenous issues is not going to come easily, if at all. Regardless of the energy an educator puts into teaching, some people will resist learning. This participant shares how she contextualizes these students:

It's not always successful, some of them are just -they're coming from a different place and my feeling about education always is that learning is not going to be confined by that, you know, four-month period that I have them, that they might not get it. Hopefully they'll get it, you know, sometime in the future, they might not ever get it. So that's the nature of the kind of racism that we experience. (W-1)

## **5.6. Colonial-Informed Lens: "It's Chug day!"**

Consider the following exchange between two students that was overheard by an Indigenous student, and then reported to the instructor:

I heard a report from an Aboriginal student at the university, (we had shut the university last September for Truth and Reconciliation Day). That was the event that was at the PNE. The prof, said, "Class will not happen next Wednesday. I'll see you in two weeks." An Aboriginal student overheard one student to the other student, "How come we don't have class next week?" And the other student said, "It's chug day." (I-4)

In my own view, the comment made by the student, "It's chug day", is saturated with colonial violence, contempt, and anti-Indigenous racism. For those who don't know what the word means, for Indigenous people it can be the equivalent of being called the 'n-word' as a Black person. For Indigenous people reading this, and possibly others, it could likely take their breath away; it certainly did mine. I grew up knowing that this was a vile insult directed at my people and I have been hyper-vigilant of settlers using this word my whole life. To see this derogatory and pejorative term used so cavalierly is deeply concerning and offending.

As we reflect on the exchange above, we need to ask ourselves some questions. What would I need to know to understand this comment? What does the word really mean? What is the colonial context for the term and the intention for its use? What does the use of the word mean, in this context? What does it say about the student who said it? Is this a racial microaggression? Is this an act of hate? Was it used to intentionally be provocative? Does that matter? How is it that the student feels she can make this comment with impunity? And finally, what would I or any other educator need to know to support these students, including and especially the Indigenous student who was exposed to the violence?

The fact that an Indigenous student overheard this racist violence is an added dimension to the incident. In a study examining the impact of racial name calling, researchers found that while the White population focuses on particular episodes, racialized participants in their study “experienced a constant battering, each episode like a punch in a life-long fight” (Varma-Joshi, Baker & Tanaka, 2004, p. 204). These authors go on to say that “participants were wounded by the pain of racial slurs, as well as their perception of authority figures’ response -- or lack thereof -- to the incidents” (p. 204). This analysis is both a learning and a reminder for us that racist incidents are not abstract or theoretical -- they are and should be understood as painful, as emotionally and spiritually wounding, and potentially traumatic for the people who are targeted (see the work of Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005, Cote-Meek, 2014; La Rocque, 2010; Tator & Henry, 2010).

The Indigenous participant who shared this incident also asked some of the questions above and her analysis is that the use of the racist term may have simply been common communication for youth:

You know a lot of these people they’re younger, that racism is part of their vernacular, right. So that’s a shortcut way of saying rather...you know someone could say, “Oh, didn’t you know this university has been very respectful and has actually shut the university for the day. That’s so respectful and appropriate and I’m hoping that I can actually participate in some of the Truth and Reconciliation events”. But, instead of saying that, the student said, “It’s chug day”. So they see it as a day off and not something important to participate in historic, to participate in. (I-4)

I would suggest that the use of the racist term, while possibly reflecting a vernacular as the participant suggests, is not necessarily a ‘short cut’ way of explaining why class was

being cancelled. There may be a lot more to this. For example, the student who used the racist language did so intentionally. She may be using it out of ignorance and she has used the racist term in a cavalier fashion. However, we also need to acknowledge that she may also be using it to express her contempt and racist beliefs about Indigenous people.

Interrogating the example above provides us with an opportunity to consider the elements of a colonial-informed lens. An interesting question to consider might be ‘what would an ‘uninformed’ lens look like’? An uninformed lens means that I would likely not have the knowledgeable foundation to critically assess the comment “it’s chug day” in the context of colonial history and ongoing Settler violence. As a consequence I would likely interpret the comment possibly as simply an expression of disrespect – or maybe even insulting (if I knew what the word meant). An uninformed lens means that as an educator, I am likely to avoid or evade discussions of anti-Indigenous racism or be ‘*untroubled*’ about the blatant racism that emerges from students and refrain from intervening.

## 5.7. Colonial Context

Time and again participants spoke about the importance of the context for anti-Indigenous racism in all its different forms and manifestations. Consider the following quotation from a participant:

What are they going to do about those issues? Well, they would deny land claims settlements and they do, and they can’t deny the reality of a White settler past, I mean the history is there. I don’t know what they do about that information but I guess what they would say is they come from a superior culture and so, therefore, it’s about being smarter, being better, being faster. You know all of that stuff it’s like that. It’s like that White supremacist kind of narrative that goes around. What do they do about it; well they deny all of that too though they can’t. (W-2)

This same participant shares her approach in addressing ignorance of Indigenous history and reality.

I mean all you have to do is look at census, look at things like the *Indian Act*, like all of those things. That’s all you would need to do. Look at how many Royal Commission reports that we’ve had, that’s all you would need to do is go back and read some of those documents.

If people do that, they can't deny it and so, to still deny it is pretty heavy load. Like, it's a pretty heavy load to be carrying around, it's like how do you walk around and deny all that documentation, all of that information. Go out and visit a reserve if, you think everybody is getting free handouts from the Canadian government. Go out and look at a reserve and look at water supply; how many reserves have fresh water supply. How many reserves have towns with, a big thriving economy and everybody's got a job, it's you do those things and you can't hang on to the denial but they do and so there's some pretty unhealthy people walking around, with that kind of denial going on. I don't know how you could maintain that sense that you're better than other people when you've had so much privilege accruing to allow you to be wherever you happen to be in your life. (W-2)

What is the colonial context? It is understanding that ideologies of colonialism, including racial hierarchies, are the basis for racist stereotyping and imagery, and structural discrimination that targets Indigenous people (Loomba, 2008). Having knowledge about Canada's history of colonization is both critical and foundational. Yet the reality is that most adults in Canada know very little about colonialism. This was discussed in the focus group. As one participant stated:

Just a couple of thoughts on that note is the word 'colonization' is often new. It's like brand-new for so many people, you know. I'm sure, you know, many of you have seen that. I'll say, 'How, how many of you have used this word before?' And few people put their hand up and it's really striking to me, that part, and then a whole learning curve, the whole learning curve that happens around that it's not about the past, that it's a current process is the 'next part'. (FG I-2)

Participants in the focus group discussed the complexities related to colonialism including ignorance and awareness. The differences in standpoints emerged in dialogue related to Settler's awareness of and connections to colonialism. A racialized participant shared the following:

Indigenous history, colonization, what you know the whole history of this land is connected to how I got to be here. So I can't do anything about the injustice I experienced or other immigrants experienced until we start at the starting place, which is Indigenous issues and Indigenous rights and colonial history and the violence to Indigenous people. That's just so for me it's a no-brainer, that's the starting place for all the healing for everybody. So, for me that's the benefit is the only way I can see forward is doing this work. And the risk of not doing it is far greater. (FG R-1)

For this participant, she clearly connects the importance of the context of colonialism for her own personal history of migration -- as she says this history is “connected to how I got to be here”.

Participants in the focus group dialogue discussed how awareness of these personal connections to colonial history can emerge in their work. Two participants engaged in this dialogue, one racialized and one White, and they did not have a congruent perspective on how coming from a colonized space (as a settler to Canada) leads to a foundation for enhanced understanding or not. A racialized participant spoke about strategies she uses to connect new settler groups with their histories of colonization and the reality of being on colonized land in Canada:

I've done quite a bit with immigrant groups and what I find that going back to a strategy that works specifically with immigrant groups is actually going back to their own histories of colonization in their own countries of origin and making the connections and that is a very powerful way of then helping them understand the impact of what's happened here and then connect. (FG R-1)

However a White participant shared a different perspective:

I can see that can also be a barrier too, I have found. Like just participants who've gone through our training, who come from a context of colonization, who take that global view. And I understand that global view of colonization, the way that colonization has played out and is playing out and the connections between Indigenous peoples globally, that movement. I get where that's coming from. But I also see how a people coming out of a colonial context, sometimes there can be a barrier to getting from that global view to 'okay I'm on Indigenous territory in Canada'. So as someone coming out of the colonial context into this context, what does this mean for me now in this relationship? (FG W-3)

This participant spoke about people taking a “global view” of colonization and how that may interfere in some way for them to see that colonization is current and grounded on the very land they are standing. The on-going exchange between the two participants was interesting and may reflect the differences in the way they each enter the conversation, articulate their different perspectives, and close the dialogue:

R-1: Yeah, I mean, that's not been my experience and maybe it's because of where I facilitate but...

W-2: yeah, yeah

R-1: I haven't had that resistance or, I mean, people, it connects [snaps fingers] as soon as they understand the impact. Because they know why they are all over the world and they're a diaspora and that as a direct result of the colonial experience from their own country.

W-2: I guess what I've seen, to get more concrete, is people saying, 'Oh yeah, I know exactly what the experience of Indigenous people is like because I come out of a situation of colonization'.

R-1: Yeah, that's not what I'm saying. So maybe what I'm saying is that through connecting to their story and understanding their own pain of a colonial history, they are then open to hearing what has colonization been like for Indigenous people, how are we perpetuating, how is it still going on here.

W-2: Yeah

R-1: That's the point.

W-2: Yeah, I think it can kind of go both ways. (FG)

So when we talk about being "colonial-informed", a sophistication of analysis develops with education and experience. The participants in this study brought forward issues that reveal a spectrum of knowledge, from unawareness to sophistication. A colonial-informed lens would mean that one has a foundation of knowledge about colonialism upon which to grow more enhanced learning. A wealth of literature can inform educators about the historic framework of colonialism and how the socio-political realities of Indigenous people have been shaped as a consequence (i.e. *Indian Act*; Indian residential school system; history of child welfare; justice; and education). Understanding the colonial context enables the educator to understand, trouble, and place a comment such as "its chug day" and other anti-Indigenous racist expressions, into this historic framework.

## **5.8. Racism and anti-Indigenous Racism**

Participants were asked a number of questions including, "What is your understanding of anti-Indigenous racism?" and "How is it different than other racism?" Participants were enthusiastic about this discussion area. They distinguished between racism that targets racialized people, and the racism that targets Indigenous people. The following participant conveys her understanding of how anti-Indigenous racism manifests:

In real terms in the media I see Indigenous people experiencing a very specific kind of racism, to the point that CBC [Canadians Broadcasting Corporation] had to remove comments about Indigenous people around articles. I've never seen that happen around any other group. The hatred that comes out is palpable. (FG I-2)

The participant is not saying that CBC is racist. She is noting that the responses by listeners and views are racist. Other participants joined this conversation and agreed that anti-Indigenous racism has a colonial context and is linked to systemic processes:

So I think you see that in the media. You see that played out constantly and there isn't this bigger awareness that this is about a systemic structural colonial process, you know, which we've all been thrown into it and we all have a role and a place in it and this is perpetuating it, to allow the violence to continue, with Indigenous people suffering the most. (FG R-1)

Another participant, drawing on the ideas shared about systemic colonial processes, offered her perspective about the differences in the way that racism targets Indigenous people and racialized people:

And I think it's become normalized in the fabric of Canada right [I don't] mean to be glib in saying 'fabric' but I think it permeates everything. Like you were saying, [names participant], it's systemic. And I think that when I take racism you know from the systemic structural and use an interpersonal example as an expression of what happens on the macro scale I think of so many examples that I have heard where comments are made. Really painful, offensive, violent comments are made and there's no recognition of that violence from non-Indigenous people in that space, or in that room, in that setting. And when, and I'm not saying all the time, but I think if a racist comment were to be made about another racialized group there may be some recognition. It's more likely that there would be some recognition. Someone would likely step in and say, 'hey, you know, what are you saying?'. Someone would challenge it. Somebody would name that that's not okay. So, I think violence is where I come back to when we talk about Indigenous specific racism. Violence to the point that it's become normal, normal for non-Indigenous people. Not thought of as racism, not thought of as violence. (FG W-2)

This participant highlights one of the distinguishing features of anti-Indigenous racism -- that, "Really painful, offensive, violent comments are made and there's no recognition of that violence from non-Indigenous people". She explains that in her experience, this racial violence targeting Indigenous people is well tolerated, even normalized, when racist comments about any other racial group would be addressed and would not be tolerated.

Having a colonial-informed lens means being able to move beyond a generic race-based analysis of racism (e.g., “a lot of people besides Indigenous people experience racism”), to one that foregrounds colonial history and the legacy of anti-Indigenous racism. More to the point, this analysis means that one applies theoretical knowledge of the foundations for anti-Indigenous racism and stereotyping. As several participants shared, the foundational knowledge that students and others possess about this topic area -- anti-Indigenous racism -- is very low:

Can I just say that in the first place I think it's recognition that there is such a thing and it seems to me that often what I experience in my classes is denial and so not recognition that there is such a thing as Indigenous specific racism. There's just this kind of wide-spread denial. And recognition I think is really a very important word. I teach in the area of equity studies at [names university] and recognition is just such a big starting place because so many people are not even there. So I just want to sort of preface before we talk about Indigenous specific racism and I guess, in a sense, you have to know what it is you're looking at and that's the recognition piece that has to happen. And I know in my teaching so often that's not even there, you know, there's just not that very kind of basic understanding. (W-1)

The ability to recognize a situation as racist is one thing; as the participants share, recognizing anti-Indigenous racism is something else. Why is anti-Indigenous racism difficult for some people to recognize or acknowledge? One participant explained what she sees as a possible rationale for a lack of recognition of Indigenous specific racism:

I don't know if this helps and it's just me thinking out aloud and maybe it's over simplification but there's something around Indigenous specific is the settlers coming and not wanting to acknowledge, see, recognize Indigenous people. I mean, blatantly just they don't want them to be there so they're going to do everything they can to get rid of them. And that's the colonial process whereas other forms of racism are people coming into now what the colonizers deem as theirs and it's the threat to what is theirs. (R-1)

This participant is speaking about two different issues here. First, she is pointing to the colonial context and colonizers' intentions regarding Indigenous people: “they're going to do everything they can to get rid of them”. Second, the participant refers to the experiences of other people who are also targets for racism by colonizers, and the motivation for this specific racism is that these groups of people threaten “what the colonizers deem as theirs and it's the threat to what is theirs”. She is suggesting that

settler racist ideology has two different trajectories: one that targets Indigenous people and the other that targets racialized people:

Yeah, I think it gets really tricky and in recognizing the racism that other racialized people experience but making the distinction to the experience that Indigenous people have of violence. And I'm not saying that racialized people don't experience violence, racial violence, but the fact that Indigenous specific racism is the fabric of Canada, right, it's the foundation of Canada's nation building. (FG W-2)

## 5.9. Indigenous vs Racialized Racism: "It can get bumpy"

This topic had many directional arcs including candid discussion about the implications of racism for racialized settler Canadians when distinctions are made about racism. An interesting idea that one participant had was about the interconnections between the racism that targets Indigenous people and that which targets racialized people:

And something I haven't really unpacked a whole lot but I wonder if it's also related to if we acknowledge that Indigenous people experience racism, you know, that's specific and different then does that somehow undermine or discount the racism that racialized people experience. You know what I mean, does that make sense? The comparison piece instead of saying they both exist but Indigenous specific racism is different. I think that's where, I wonder if that's where it can get bumpy. (W-2)

What is the 'bumpy' part of acknowledging that Indigenous people experience a particular brand of racism? Participants suggested that for racialized people, when it comes to anti-Indigenous racism, the issue becomes complex. For example, the following participant articulates what may be at the heart of reticence for some racialized people to become involved in taking up anti-Indigenous racism:

So, for example, you know, one of the reasons newcomers don't speak out is, what if their citizenship is revoked and taken away? Which is you know that we saw that with Bill C3, so whereas with Indigenous people it's, they're just completely annihilated. I mean, culturally, physically, everything, right, and it's the settlers, the original settlers, the colonizers' view is just, 'they're an inconvenience, [and] we don't want them there' and that is what the racism is about. (FG R-1)

This powerful comment reflects the power that racism has on communities – that intervening can potentially lead to backlash and threaten their citizenship. Another participant agreed, suggesting that:

I want to acknowledge that I think it can be tricky for racialized people on many levels to intervene when there's maybe more risk for a racialized person to intervene in a situation where an Indigenous person is experiencing violence. Like, I don't think it's always that way but I think that could be a dynamic. (FG W-2)

This dialogue about racism and how anti-Indigenous racism is different was powerful, important, and necessary. To convey the ways anti-Indigenous racism is different than the racism that targets people of colour, it is necessary to expose the socio-political landscape in which racism functions. It also needs to be said that the tensions alluded to here -- between the experiences of racism for Indigenous people and the experiences of racism that target settlers of colour -- have historical roots. As one participant explains, this issue is complex:

I'd like to come back on that because I think that it's complex. For sure there are racialized people who want to also be in denial and because they don't want to see their complicity. But I think that particularly with newcomers and racialized Canadians the pressure to assimilate, the same forces that have been used on Indigenous people are also used in a different way and not as violent as have been used on Indigenous people, but the same forces are there. That's the structural, the systemic and so, to challenge that is hard. (R-1)

She goes on to say that:

The concern I have is that it's very easy to point the finger and yes, absolutely as a racialized settler, we are complicit. I am complicit, I know that. But I think that because racism also impact us, how we navigate that has to be slightly different than white Canadians. (FG R-1)

Lawrence and Dua (2005) are two educators who address these complex issues -- the tensions between racialized people and Indigenous people -- in the context of decolonizing antiracism analysis. They argue that Indigenous people are marginalized and excluded within antiracist discourse at the same time that "Canadian history is replete with white settler racism against immigrants of color" (p. 133). The authors go on to say:

These practices of exclusion and segregation reflect the contradictory ways in which peoples of color are situated within the nation-state. Marginalized by a white settler nationalist project, as citizens they are nonetheless invited to take part in ongoing colonialism. The relationship of people of color to Indigeneity is thus complex. (p. 133)

There is an obvious complexity to the relationships between racialized, White, and Indigenous people. Knowing that there is complexity is only a starting place and needs to be supported by learning, at the minimum, about the histories of immigration. Building on this, it is important to learn and understand the way racialized settlers of colour can be drawn into the ideology of White supremacy. As well, it is important to understand that racialized students and colleagues have a context for not engaging in the racist violence that Indigenous people will experience. As one participant explains, these issues are part of the larger conversation related to Indigenous rights discourse:

I think that as a country if we don't start to address some of these issues we, you know, we're going to have more challenging times. I think that the Indigenous one in particular I think we have to address because I think one of the biggest fears of the non-Indigenous community is that somehow if we recognize Indigenous rights and Indigenous sovereignty that we're going to be treated the way that we have treated Indigenous people. (R-1)

Given the context discussed above, it becomes clearer that knowledge about racism needs to be nurtured and continually examined with a critical lens. As a participant shared:

Because the three men spent the entire time telling us that the issue of racism in Canada was 'Oh, this lateral violence of racialized people against each other and against Indigenous people'. And it allowed us to not even look at what was happening, particularly with white Canadians. And the government actually said that. At this conference they said the problem with racism in Canada is the fighting between immigrant groups and racialized groups. (FG R-1)

The quotation above demonstrates that without applying a critical lens, issues of race and racism are vulnerable and at risk of interpretations that are essentially racist.

## **5.10. Colonial Narratives and Counter Narratives**

Participants in this study had considerable familiarity and experience with the way that stereotypes of Indigenous people manifested in their classrooms. During the focus group, the participants engaged in a discussion where they spoke about the stereotypes and other pejorative terms that manifested in their classrooms. These stereotypes included hearing beliefs and opinions that Indigenous people are subjugated; are not really human; less than human; alcoholics; lazy; no longer here; entitled; savage; stupid; unintelligent; angry, violent, criminals; freeloaders; feminized;

men are emasculated; warriors; that women are sexualized; Pocahontas; squaws; and a violent hatred of [Indigenous] women (FG). All of these stereotypes are reflective of common anti-Indigenous narratives that have been historically taught to and sustained by colonizers and settlers.

Over time anti-Indigenous stereotyping has become a part of the popular Canadian narrative about Indigenous people (Henry & Tator, 2010; LaRocque, 2010). As the following participant shares:

It's embedded in a group identity and for me it goes back to that sense of colonization, or being subjugated, colonized. It's actually the default idea of a particular group identity within a whiteness imaginary. (FG W-1)

This participant is specifically locating stereotyping within a 'whiteness imaginary' and colonial context. But what is a 'whiteness imaginary'? Another participant expresses this as part of the ideology of white supremacy and the way that Canadians, including racialized people, are socialized and groomed into developing an anti-Indigenous mindset:

And I think that there's lots of ways that White supremacy gets taught. That White people teach racialized people who are, who can be, who are not necessarily but can be newer to Canada. In those cases often White people teaching racialized people about the racist narratives toward Indigenous people. And when newer immigrants ask, 'So, you know, what's going on with those Indigenous people?' You know, there's "oh, don't worry, you know, they're just drunks" or, you know, the stuff gets taught and passed on. And I think that the attraction. I'm just going to put this out there -the attraction for racialized immigrants is that if they also stay silent and in denial, buy into that denial, then they also don't have to look at the complicit piece that we talked about earlier. (FG - W-2)

The topic of the experiences of racism that non-Indigenous people experience generated spirited dialogue amongst the participants and was part of a complex discussion amongst the focus group participants about anti-Indigenous racism.

Having an understanding that stereotypes are robust and are deeply embedded within Canadian consciousness is important. It is also important to understand how anti-Indigenous stereotyping has been constructed and how colonial ideology has been implicated. As one participant shared, one of the problems with stereotyping is that:

You know and part of that I would say is that the stereotype is actually seen as truth and fact. So people feel that it's okay to say totally racist stereotypical things which aren't facts, as if they were truths and facts. Which is why it goes unchallenged, I think. (FG R-1)

According to Jackson (2011), people who stereotype others possess elements of unawareness:

*Implicit stereotyping* occurs when people form impressions of others that they think are based on the facts (the people's behavior or characteristics) when in fact the interpretation of these facts is influenced by stereotypes. The term *implicit* suggests that people are unaware of the way in which stereotypes occur outside of conscious awareness. This process is in contrast to *explicit stereotyping*, which occurs when people are aware of the factors that guide their impressions (e.g., when people believe that stereotypes are accurate and relevant to interpretations of individuals. (p. 121)

Both implicit and explicit stereotyping are challenging for educators to address. The literature and also social media are abundant with examples of the way stereotypes are racist and dangerous (See LaRocque, 2010; Tator & Henry, 2010; Payne, 2001 – in Jackson). Jackson (2011), who writes about the psychology of prejudice, analyzed the way that stereotyping is constructed, the type of person who is most likely to stereotype, and under which conditions stereotyping is likely to be activated. For educators, this is both interesting and helpful. Jackson (2005) found that "Situations in which people react reflectively or are distracted, tired, or unmotivated are more vulnerable to the effects of stereotyping" (p. 123). She goes on to say that:

More recently, attention has turned to the biological factors that might influence whether people are able to avoid engaging in stereotyping. This research has shown that, in a variety of ways, when people's physical and cognitive resources are taxed, they are more inclined to stereotype others, presumably because they lack the resources to detract and inhibit implicit stereotyping processes. (p. 123)

Jackson's sums up her research by saying that "taken together, such findings suggest that stereotyping is a sort of lazy process that emerges when people lack the resources to process information carefully" (p. 123). Be that as it may, this laziness has enormous implications when racist stereotyping emerges. As one participant shares, stereotyping can be dangerous and deadly in the workplace:

We hear about the alcohol gene. We hear about Indigenous women just pushing their babies out, so like, not feeling pain. As if

Indigenous people didn't have the same responses to pain or experience of pain as other human beings. I think this 'not fully human' piece can also show up in a lack of empathy, a lack of compassion. We hear about Indigenous people who are turned away from the ER because they're assumed to be drunk when they are having a heart attack or in diabetic shock. (W-2)

The stereotypes named here, 'don't feel pain', and 'assumption about being intoxicated', 'just push their babies out', are directly implicated to the history of colonization and the dehumanizing of Indigenous people. Another participant shared an experience about a colleague:

I had a student come out of a course, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Canadian literature course, and she was so upset – an Indigenous student, - who was so upset because the prof never addressed the use of the word 'savages' in this text. A 19<sup>th</sup> century text, right. And I mean I knew the prof and I knew that, you know, but she didn't know that she had to address that. That she had to specifically bring it up and say, "Wow, [laughs] look at this." And, you know, and talk about it because if she didn't address it, it's like tacit approval of it, right. (W-3)

This lack of awareness of the professor above is concerning. The example also demonstrates that despite any good intentions on the professor's part, she is still responsible for the harm to the Indigenous student. Additionally this professor has been complicit in reinforcing of negative and racist stereotypes *by doing nothing*.

Multiple participants shared examples of comments from students that were based on stereotypes, and one of the question we are faced with here is 'what would an educator need to know to address this?' Fortunately several scholars have deliberated on aspects of this question (See Cote-Meek, 2014; Tator & Henry, 2010; LaRocque, 2010; Sue, 2009; Montgomery, 2005, 2007; Jackson, 2011). Placing stereotyping into the context of colonial ideology can be a helpful way to unpack racist comments. There are many manifestations of stereotypes, and understanding how they are connected to their colonial roots is critical. The following participant describes the stereotyping she was taught about Indigenous people:

That they're lazy or that they're all have addiction or can be violent, don't trust them, shouldn't be anywhere near them', right. Some of those 'they're not equal in power to us, so yes you can be you know demeaning to them or put them down', and whether it's verbally or non-verbally I would say I would have witnessed that over time. Or

brushing them off us – ‘this is how they all are’, or ‘this is, don’t have to bother’. ‘There’s no point in doing it’. (R-3)

These negative stereotypes are directly linked to historic racist colonial beliefs. Addressing each one of the examples in the quotation could easily be overwhelming. These narratives are informed by the meta context of colonial ideology. The participant below speaks about some of the common narratives related to colonial ideology:

So, you know the narratives that we often talk about- the denial of colonization, the denial of racism that shows up in so many different ways. You know, it shows up in the multiculturalism, this myth of multiculturalism in Canada. It shows up in the idea of meritocracy – that everybody...everybody can make it if they just try hard enough. Which, you know, denies the inequities, the social inequities that are a result of colonization and a result of racism that colonization and racism that are ongoing. Really blatant one is people will say, “The past is in the past” and that’s you know, kind of straight forward in terms of, you know, it’s an outright denial that colonization is ongoing. Sometimes people will focus on colonial impacts instead of understanding that colonization is an active current process today. There’s so many I mean, so the denial of colonization, not fully human is another one that shows up in many different ways. (W-2)

Henry & Tator (2010) provide a frame of reference that can be used to deconstruct comments like the ones provided above through the “Discourses of Democratic Racism” (p. 10-17). According to these authors:

These frames of reference are a largely unacknowledged set of beliefs, assumptions, feelings, stories, and quasi-memories that underlie, sustain, and inform perceptions, thoughts, and actions. Democratic racist as racist discourse begins in the families that nurture us, the communities that socialize us, the schools and universities that educate us, the media that communicates ideas and images to us, and the popular culture that entertains us. (p. 10)

One of the values of their framework is the ability to take a stereotype, e.g., “Indigenous people are all alcoholics”, and chart a path that provides an explanation for where the colonial stereotype comes from. The narratives that Henry and Tator (2010) outline are extensive and include the discourses of denial; political correctness; colour-blindness; equal opportunity; “blaming the victim”; White victimization; reverse racism; binary polarization; moral panic; law and order; multiculturalism; tolerance; accommodation; sensitivity; harmony and diversity; liberal values; and neoliberalism and neoliberal racism ( pp. 10-17). In addition to this list, the authors identify specific discourses that characterize relations between Indigenous people and Canadian society:

This overview of the relations that have evolved between Indigenous peoples and White society over the last four hundred years also highlights some of the discursive forms of democratic racism that have been, and continue to be, expressed to justify the experiences and continued ill-treatment of Indigenous peoples. (p. 116)

## **5.11. Conclusion**

This chapter addresses the vast array of issues identified by participants as important foundational knowledge educators should have. Themes that evolved as critical to educators included an understanding of their educational pedagogy and clarity about whether they are teaching about Indigenous culture or are troubling anti-Indigenous racism, and structural discrimination. Participants expressed a diversity of perspectives that reflected their racial standpoint and experience. Related to pedagogy, participants discussed the learning process that is activated with regard to anti-Indigenous racism curriculum (learning, unlearning, resistance, integration and praxis).

Another significant theme brought forward by participants was related to the importance of having a colonial-informed lens. The elements of this colonial-informed lens included knowledge of the colonial context, of racism and anti-Indigenous racism, and an understanding and ability to apply analysis of colonial narratives and counter narratives. Clearly the area of knowledge is a core competency for educators addressing anti-Indigenous racism. In the following chapter I turn to the topic of self-awareness.

## Chapter 6.

### Educator Competencies - Self-Awareness

#### 6.1. Introduction

Self-awareness is the second key pillar of educator competencies. In analyzing the interview transcripts, I identified two prominent themes important for participants and their ability to work in the context of anti-Indigenous racism: triggers/provocation in the classroom and racial identity. Several participants spoke about the link between doing self-work and the ability to facilitate learning with students:

So it's hard for the educator if they haven't done that work themselves but then to also have the skill set to facilitate that in others. I mean it's not just an education process it's somewhat therapeutic, it's a counselling process dealing with people's feelings and I think educators feel overwhelmed by the number of competencies they need to have to have this kind of a dialogue. (R-1)

Participants in this study were candid about how challenging it can be to deal with anti-Indigenous racism in their classrooms. Addressing ignorance, hostility, denial, and resistance requires not only increased levels of knowledge, but also enhanced self-awareness. What are the important components of self-awareness for educators? According to Sue (2015),

First and foremost, teachers, trainers, and facilitators must understand themselves as racial/cultural beings by making the invisible visible. Unless they are well grounded and comfortable about who they are, a lack of insight and awareness only perpetuates ignorance in the students or participants they hope to help. They cannot be effective facilitators unless they are aware of their own worldview-their values, biases, prejudices, and assumptions about human behaviour. (p. 235)

For some people, developing one's 'self-awareness' would be considered peripheral and incidental to their work. Others understand that self-awareness is critical to the ability to support complex dialogue about race and racism. Several of the participants shared the following perspective:

I really think that there should be workshops, you know, I think that people have to do some work around their own racism, so they have to do their own work around looking at your own self-identifications and understanding how that's relational and how to resist some of that stuff. It's not always possible, but I would like to see workshops where anybody teaching had to do some unpacking of their own racial identity and all of the ways in which they are, you know, intersected by those oppressive kinds of social relations. And that would certainly help, just sitting in a workshop space with other people where you had to go through and look at your own identity and try to unpack it, like that unpacking that knapsack kind of thing I think that would be a really useful kind of teaching tool. (W-1)

This participant is transparent about the gaps in her ability to address anti-Indigenous racism and, as others shared, she had concrete ideas about how these gaps could be addressed in her professional context. Several participants mentioned that they would benefit from specific training to enhance knowledge, self-awareness and skill deficits.

## 6.2. Triggers & Being Triggered

The participants spoke candidly about the *triggers* in their work that affected them personally. They described incidents where they had immediate reactions to comments and questions from students and also from colleagues -- reactions that were *triggered* by these comments and questions. Hardiman & Jackson (2007) describe the process of triggering:

Triggers are words or phrases that stimulate an emotional response because they tap into anger or pain about oppression issues. The term trigger denotes an instantaneous response to stimuli without accompanying conscious thought. Typically, triggers convey, consciously or unconsciously a stereotypical perception or an acceptance of the status quo. (p. 55)

Triggering has two components: a stimulus (the comment) and a response (the reaction). The participants described this dynamic – their responses were immediate, and sometimes intense. There was not necessarily a lag time between the comment and their reaction. Recall in Chapter 4 the participant who felt like she was “punched in the gut” when she was asked if she grew up on reserve. This is a good example of the immediacy of the response to being triggered.

The following participant shares a personal example of being triggered:

So I think my own development, my own personal development as an Indigenous person, my own relationship to my identity, because man I got triggered in a way. I can still get triggered on anything, but is the trigger like this big or is it huge? [Uses hands to show sizes]. You know, so when somebody was questioning my identity, whether I was a valid Indigenous person...oh my God, wow. I would just crumble inside and I don't know how I got through. I don't know what I did with that. (I-2)

This participant reveals her own self-awareness about an issue that triggers her personally -- challenges to her identity as an Indigenous person. I discuss the significance of identity later in this chapter.

Goodman (2011) describes triggers for educators as follows:

Most of us can think of words or behaviors that push our buttons-that make our stomachs tighten, our fists clench, our hairs stand up. There may be things that make us freeze and feel paralyzed. I call these triggers. Some common triggers are, "You're being too sensitive", "Those people...", "They all look alike to me", "Why do they have to be so obvious?", "She asked for it", as well as eye rolling and other body language. Triggers can cause us to lose our composure, our clarity, and our ability to respond appropriately. (Goodman, 2011, p. 183)

Goodman's message helps validate the experiences some of the participants describe.

### **6.3. The Internal Dialog**

Participants also described the thoughts and questions that went through their minds in response to race-based incidents. A lot of internal processing occurs in these moments. Sue (2015) suggests that people of colour (and I would also insert Indigenous people here) "often report an internal dialogue on whether or not to speak at the moment of a potentially racist occurrence" (p. 126). Some of the questions that are likely to come up as part of this internal dialogue include:

Did what I think happen, really happen? Was this a deliberate slight or an unintentional one? Is it worth raising an issue or should I just let it go? If I point out the microaggression, how do I prove it? What are the consequences or most likely outcome? Will I be seen as a troublemaker? (Sue, 2015, p. 126)

This internal dialogue can sometimes be extensive and may become part of a routine response for educators who experience racism as well as for Indigenous-allied people who work in support of addressing racism in any setting. Recall this example:

I can remember people saying...like somebody putting their hand up in the back of the room and just saying "Why don't they just get a job?" And I remember just standing there and it's just like, feeling completely resigned and just going, 'oh my god, you know like really! Are we having this conversation, you know like. I mean I didn't say those words but I'm sure everybody was just...and then, you know, just plow over that and into whatever we're going to do next but you know I'm sure that my voice probably reflected that I was pissed off. (I-3)

This is an example of this internal dialogue. She has obviously had this question before.

The participant is reacting to the question on many levels:

- she recognized the comment,
- she had an internal dialog about it that she did not share with the class,
- she had an emotional reaction, and
- the emotion was visible to the class.

Despite the emotion of feeling "pissed off", this participant describes how she maintained her focus on the curriculum and carried on. Her internal dialogue about the incident helped prevent her from being triggered.

## 6.4. Baiting/Provocation

Participants also described situations in which they felt they were being *provoked* or *baited* by students. The provocation may or may not be intentional but nevertheless the educator may feel they are being pulled into a potential conflict and/or trap. For example, consider the following incident:

This fellow saying 'Aboriginal people smell' and then, when, to me with my White co-facilitator present but saying the comment to me. I felt that was complete bait, total bait, to rattle me, to get me off guard and so when I asked him to clarify did I understand him correctly "is this what you said?" and I repeated it back, and he just looked at me dead straight in the eye and said "Yes, that is what I said". You know I didn't realize how much that was bait in that moment because I was, you know, feeling it more. I think I did realize it was bait but I didn't realize to what degree until I removed myself from that situation and we debriefed. So that would be an example of baiting. (I-2)

Baiting is an example of anti-Indigenous racism and has both covert and overt components to it. The statement "Aboriginal people smell" is overtly racist. The covert

aspect of this is the interaction between the educator and the participant. The participant speaks about feeling 'baited' by the student in order to 'rattle me, to get me off guard'.

In the above example we see that the participant has some awareness of being baited. This awareness sets the experience apart from simply being triggered. Because of this, the participant was able to choose to avoid taking 'the bait'. This kind of awareness is very helpful.

## **6.5. Personal Triggers Self-Assessment**

Becoming aware of words and actions that trigger reactions or provoke internal dialogue is helpful for educators. Therefore having a personal inventory of triggers is essential for all groups, Indigenous, racialized and White. Questions that are worth considering include challenges to identity and could include questions, comments, and insinuations that imply that I "am not Indigenous enough". These are challenges to my credibility to address issues of race and race-related content. What about a student who says or insinuates that I am biased? Or that I am seen as angry? Or that I am seen as a traitor to my people? What about certain questions or rhetoric that comes up that I know will paralyze me? What content area is likely to get my full attention? Or have me on guard and ready? What do I do when I know I am being triggered? How am I triggered when I witness my colleagues or students targeted with racist violence in the classroom?

As an Indigenous anti-racist educator, I have personal experience with being provoked, baited, and triggered. I developed self-awareness about these areas because I had to. I had the good fortune to learn early in my career that I would need to address the 'tender' or sensitive places within me, so that I would no longer be hurt, wounded by, or over react to the experiences of racism.

Having said that, I was recently (indirectly) accused by another Indigenous person of being 'colonized' because of the approach I use in my work -- applying a critical anti-racist lens to teach about anti-Indigenous stereotyping. I was immediately aware that at one time, this accusation would have been triggering for me, even painful and paralyzing. However on this day, I felt only disappointment and sadness about the extent of work we still have to do. So triggered, no, but was I hurt, no. Was I reactive? No as well. Was it challenging? Yes.

A participant shares her reflection on this aspect of self-awareness:

And that's probably another whole other reflection exercise I can do on my own so I think having more guidance around my own identity and how that's going to play out in these spaces would have been probably super, super helpful. Because I probably didn't have to go through half the pain I did, if I had been prepared in safe learning spaces, with peers, other Indigenous people. But you know, how many Indigenous people were there when I started doing this work? Like, next to none that I knew of and I seem to have a gift for standing up in front of a group of people and saying 'Okay let's jump into something'. I seem to kind of like doing that and it seems to work so I felt this pull to keep doing it and probably some of it is to work some of my own stuff out but I don't think it's been at the cost of anybody, that's where I would draw the line. I don't think it's been at the cost of anyone other than me because I do think it's come at a cost, absolutely. (I-2)

### **6.5.1. Triggering Racism & Resistance/What triggers our students?**

The participants spoke about the impact of their work on them personally and the forces that trigger them. Clearly the educator's self-awareness of this is critically important. In addition becoming aware of what triggers students in the classroom is also important. As an educator I need to understand that students are also triggered and that has an impact on the classroom.

As described in Chapter 4 several topics and issues can trigger students' including:

- reference to and/or challenges to ideologies of race, racism, and antiracism (Castagno, 2008; Fox, 2009; Goodman, 2011; Okun, 2010; Sue, Torino; Capodilupo, Rivera & Lin, 2009);
- learning about the history, and the legacy of colonization (Cote-Meek, 2014; Hill, Kim & Williams, 2010; LaRocque, 2010; St. Denis, 2011);
- engagement with the topics of White identity, White privilege/domination, and White supremacy in general (Carr & Lund, 2007; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Young, 1998); and
- making transparent the reality of inequities, racial violence, and the costs of racism to Indigenous people and racialized others (Castagno, 2008; Leonardo, 2004; Maybee, 2009).

These are weighty issues. In my years of experience I have addressed Indigenous-related content that has triggered my students. I can be caught off guard by the student's resistance including how they are triggered by the content. This dynamic can become

mutually reinforcing, negative, destructive, and explosive. I have witnessed this chain reaction in others and have participated in this as well and all of this underscores the necessity of educators to do personal inventories of that which triggers them.

## **6.6. Racial Identity**

The theme of educator racial identity came through as important for all participants in this study. During the focus group, participants spoke with candour about the importance of their racial standpoint. Awareness of one's racial standpoint and identity is critical for educators and includes implications for different racial standpoints and the awareness of how one's own racial identity influences classroom dynamics. Some of the implications related to racial standpoints were discussed in Chapter 4. This section addresses the issues about racial identity that relate to self-awareness, and its implications for facilitating understanding and dialogue about anti-Indigenous racism.

Helms (1990) defines racial identity as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). My interest is on the implications of self-awareness related to having a racial identity. Exploring one's personal racial identity development is as important for oneself as it is for understanding that there is a developmental process in place for people who are racially different than me. This fundamental level of self-awareness is necessary to understand and contextualize attitudes and behaviours in the classroom.

There are many reasons why educators and students today are unfamiliar with language or concepts that are explicitly racialized, such as 'racial identity development'. For example talking about race and racism is still considered a taboo subject in Canada (Tator & Henry, 2010). As well, many people ascribe to what is called a 'colour blind' stance, which is the idea that someone does not notice someone else's race. The colour blind stance is still a popular discourse that allows for the evasion and avoiding of discussion and analysis related to racial inequities and racism. The following participant explains the way that unawareness of differences can manifest:

Well, just being in a classroom that's mixed and students are saying "we", "we", "we" and meaning Euro Canadians, right. And I'm just kind of, "Okay, look at your 'we' here. Who is this 'we'?" right. I

mean, that's the toughest one to try to [address] because it's hard for people to shift the pronouns in that way. (W-3)

According to Sue (2015), three aspects about racial identity are important to consider:

- a) Understanding oneself as a racial/cultural being inevitably goes hand in hand with how well grounded and secure one will be in the racial dialogue. Self-protection of self-esteem will be minimized resulting in low defensive reactions.
- b) Awareness of differences in worldviews of participants will allow for empathic understanding and help facilitators deconstruct worldview differences. They are thus able to help trainees more realistically understand the differences in racial identities.
- c) Awareness of one's racial identity will allow facilitators to anticipate how their own race will impact racial dialogues and take effective educational actions to facilitate a difficult dialogue. (p. 235)

For all educators, lack of awareness of racial identity (of theirs and their students) is a reality that adds to the challenge (and burden) of teaching topics that result in the issues of stereotyping, colonialism, and/or anti-Indigenous racism. The participant below is acknowledging the relevance of race in the classroom.

Racial dynamics - we need to be aware of the racial dynamics in the room. How Whiteness shows up differently than the dynamics for racialized, non-White racialized people in the room. (W-2)

The participant acknowledges the racial dynamics in the room and educators need to be aware of this. She also points out that there are different processes going on for different people, based on their racial standpoint.

Sue (2015) also mentions that talking about racism can elevate feelings of anxiety, discomfort, and fear. Given all of these dynamics, it is no wonder that educators (and students) lack the language, frameworks, or foundation to support race-based dialogue.

### 6.6.1. Implications of Racial Identity for Indigenous Educators

The implications of racial identity for Indigenous educators are complex. As one participant explains, students may engage in anti-Indigenous racism from the moment an Indigenous educator self-identifies or is identified as Indigenous.

It's amazing. We're not in the room. Not even our pictures are on the online. Like, like nobody even sees us but just saying, "My name is [says her name] and I'm an Indigenous person". All peoples' stuff can happen, it starts to be engaged. We don't have to even show up at a workshop. When it's in person. Just people knowing that we're coming, it starts getting engaged and then when we walk in the room I can see that people are already engaging on the topic, just by us arriving. (FG I-2)

When the participant says "...it starts to be engaged" she may be referring to reactions that students have to her Indigenous identity including their racism and resistance. This participant's experience suggests that at least for Indigenous educators, the reality of their racial identity dominates over the content and focus of the curriculum.

Other issues related to Indigenous identity emerge in relation to the bias students may have toward White educators. As a White participant describes:

I think for me it's been a learning curve of really understanding that when I say something, it often is accepted in these conversations about racism, about Indigenous specific racism. In facilitating learners' process there's a lot less backlash and pushback that I receive, as a White educator, than Indigenous colleagues. Like, when we're both in the same room together facilitating a live learning experience, it's very striking. The violence that Indigenous educators get thrown is very striking to me, compared to what might come at me or how participants, learners respond to me. If I say something, if I make a bold statement, I know it's going to land differently on the room than if an Indigenous colleague says the same thing. Because the students see me as more legitimate, you know, educated, they make certain assumptions about me. (FG W-2)

This participant racializes the classroom dynamics and also applies a colonial-informed lens to the interactions between her, as a White educator, and an Indigenous educator. The White participant demonstrates an enhanced awareness of the way Whiteness and White supremacy emerges as violence toward Indigenous educators. Other assumptions that participants shared in the focus group about White educators are that they are perceived as "unbiased", "legitimate", "educated", "objective", and "not angry" (FG p. 21-22). This White participant pointed out another interesting racialized dynamic:

I'm not seen as angry, where an Indigenous educator might be seen as angry. Even if I'm passionate about something, even if I'm, you know showing my indignation towards violence; the students are likely to accept that. They may even be inspired by that. An Indigenous educator shows any signs of being passionate about an issue, that's interpreted as anger. (FG W-2)

This example shows the way assumptions about race can change course based on whether one is White or Indigenous.

As a counter narrative to the privileges and pro-White bias extended to White facilitators, one Indigenous participant responded with the following:

The amount of control that I need to have over myself in an in-person environment is just exhausting. Particularly in those moments when there is a violent statement made, and especially if it's made to me. Because of that edge of 'I'm a human being and I'm a facilitator here', so okay so how do I navigate that and, you know, try not to feed into the stereotype of 'the angry Indigenous person' yet name the violence also all at the same time. So, that is very tricky. What you just said about, you know, how you're seen if you are in- you show indignation [names White FG participant], I've been thinking about that, about the privilege of being nice. (FG I-2)

As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, Indigenous educators face multiple issues in relation to their identity, including backlash (Henry, 2012). The fact that an educator has an Indigenous identity matters – it makes a difference. For those Indigenous educators who are able to 'pass' as White or who are just assumed to be White, they also have a burden of stereotypes and racist violence. One example was shared by the Indigenous participant coming up for tenure and who was encouraged not to self-identify. Henry (2012) undertook a study of Indigenous faculty at Canadian universities and found that:

One of the most difficult decisions that many Indigenous people, including, of course, faculty living and working in Canada, have to make is whether to reveal their ethnic identity. The phenomenon known as "passing" is also very well known in Indigenous circles. The Metis, who are defined in terms of their genetic mixture, are a prime example but many persons do not look phenotypically Indigenous and can therefore choose not to reveal that identity. (p. 112)

It needs to be said that it is not only Metis people but also First Nations and Inuit people who would experience issues related to passing (see Lawrence, 2004 for more information about the nuances of Indigenous identity and the colonial and racist

regulation of it). Obviously the issue of identity can be very personal. As well, this issue needs to be contextualized to the violence of colonial history and the possibility that it may not be “safe” (concern for self-protection) for someone to “out” themselves in racially hostile environments. In other words, the fact that an individual has not self-identified as Indigenous when they in fact are, is not a reflection of them as much as it is about the environment in which they find themselves. In my professional experience, I have noted that as the environment (including classrooms and board rooms) becomes less anti-Indigenous and less racially hostile, the more likely it is that Indigenous people will begin to self-identify in the workplace.

### **6.6.2. Implications of Racial Identity for Racialized Educators**

As discussed previously, racialized settlers are uniquely positioned within the context of anti-Indigenous racism. Dua (2005), who describes herself as a racialized settler from India, writes about her identity awareness in the context of ongoing colonization in Canada:

My approach in this article, as someone committed to antiracist feminist struggles, is to examine my complicity in the ongoing project of colonization. My complicity is complex. First, as an inhabitant of Canada, I live in and own land that has been appropriated from Aboriginal peoples. As a citizen of Canada, I have rights and privileges that are denied to Aboriginal peoples collectively, and that are deployed to deny Aboriginal rights to self-government. Second, as someone involved in antiracist and progressive struggles, I wonder about the ways in which the bodies of knowledge that I have worked to build have been framed so as to contribute to the active colonization of Aboriginal peoples. I need to read, write, teach, and be politically active differently. (p. 123)

Dua captures the complexity of her identity as a settler who has rights and privileges denied to Indigenous people. All of the racialized participants in this study spoke about their own standpoint and the fact that they, like Indigenous people, experience racism. These issues are further complicated by how racialized educators may be perceived in the classroom. For example, a racialized, non-Indigenous educator will be perceived as having more authority and credibility than Indigenous educators. This is not to imply that racialized educators do not have challenges, because they do. As the following racialized participant shares:

Coming back to that because I never really answered the question around my racial identity as you know I kind of heard both of what [names White participant] and [names indigenous participant] were saying and I'm sort of in the middle. Because I can be dismissed because "oh, just...you're just a person of colour", "you're a woman of colour", "you have the racial chip on your shoulder, of course you're going to say this, you know whether it's about Indigenous people or racialized people and immigrants you just have an axe to bear because you, you know...". So, I get dismissed. But at the same time I can also be seen as 'wow, if you as someone who experiences racism and have come to Canada but you call yourself a settler, what does that mean?' So it can shake things up because, you know, the potential for me to be a bridge or a translator for settlers is huge because if I can identify as a settler and with my history and our history as settlers and the process of Indigenous people, what does that mean and how does that then further the conversation? (FG R-1)

This participant self-identifies as a person of colour, and because she is neither White nor Indigenous, sees herself as 'in the middle' and 'get[s] dismissed'. On the other hand she acknowledges that when she identifies as a Settler, she can not only challenge assumptions about who settlers are (e.g., typically understood as White Western Europeans), but she can also be a 'bridge' or 'translator' for other settlers.

### **6.6.3. Implications of Racial Identity for White Educators**

Consider the following quotation as an introduction to the implications of racial identity for White educators:

Well, I think when White people are first learning that we have a race; there can be concerns that being a White person is being a bad person. And I think that there's something to that, there's something that needs to be looked at around that. Because as White people we do have power and privilege and we have been responsible for violence and we are responsible for maintaining the systems. And so I can understand, for myself personally, this feeling of, "Oh, being White, naming myself as White equals being a bad person". And so again it's individualizing, it's not understanding that these are systemic issues. I think White people can get tripped up in that. And the funny thing is that the fact that I'm White is obvious to all racialized people. (W-2)

Some questions that could be asked relate to racial identity awareness and our role as educators, not to mention the students. For example, if I have never considered that I have a race, or that I have benefited from White and especially Settler privilege, what does that mean for me as an educator? What might this lack of self-awareness mean for

students? How would this lack of awareness leak into the curriculum I teach? Or, how does it inform the way that I can competently respond to racist incidents in my classroom?

I have had the experience of teaching classes and used language such as “White people” and “racialized people” and then witnessed shock, fear, and even confusion on the faces of the students. I have had White students tell me they have never thought about having a race and they have expressed discomfort with this concept. This lack of self-awareness is not only the purview of students but also of educators. As one participant suggests:

People don't seem to know, they don't have a history they don't have the history of colonial or White settler relations in Canada or elsewhere, they so they don't know. So they're coming from a place of ignorance. (W-1)

Exploring racial identity of educators has some important implications especially for White educators. Sue (2015) states, for White people, “the level of White racial identity awareness was predictive of racism” (p. 189). Sue continues to explain, when Whites have a low awareness of their racial identity, they are more likely to:

- exhibit increased levels of racism,
- deny the racial reality of people of color,
- profess a color-blind approach to racial interactions, and
- find race talk uncomfortable, anxiety provoking, and threatening. (p. 189)

Clearly this list provides important considerations for White educators.

Frankly this lack of awareness as a problem extends beyond educators. For example, consider a social worker who is directly responsible for keeping Indigenous children in care connected to their culture, family, and community. If I have never considered the value of racial identity, or don't appreciate the reality and significance of my own racial identity, then how is it possible I can meaningfully support an Indigenous child to develop or maintain theirs? In an educational context, if I as a settler do not understand that I am a settler, then how is it possible that I could appreciate the reality of colonial history and the subsequent positioning of Indigenous people as inferior? How

will I support classroom discussion when issues of entitlement to the land emerge? How will I intervene when racial microaggressions come out?

## **6.7. Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the importance of self-awareness for educators in relation to anti-Indigenous racism. I described two prominent themes: triggers/provocation in the classroom and the implications of racial identity. Clearly these two areas are related; recall the quotation toward the beginning when the Indigenous educator speaks about the triggering potential for challenges to her own racial identity. It is evident that it is important for all educators, Indigenous and otherwise, to come to terms with the meaning of their racial standpoint for their work, for their students, and for their colleagues.

## Chapter 7.

# Skills - Supporting the Learning and Unsettling the Resistance

### 7.1. Introduction

The final area of core competencies for educators is that of skill development. Skills involve the practical application of knowledge and self-awareness as the next step. As discussed earlier, the three core competencies are not discrete but rather overlap each other in important ways. Skill is the final area to be discussed because it builds on knowledge and self-awareness.

The question, “What do you do about anti-Indigenous racism?” specifically asked for the participants’ experiences and insights into the action and reflection component of transformative learning. All of the participants in this study were enthusiastic about contributing to this topic and sharing the strategies that have worked for them, as well as those that do not work. They have diverse experiences and have created their own theories and understandings of the attitudes and behaviours they see in their classes. Based on these theories, the participants have developed approaches and skills to support their educational goals.

While it is important to talk about effective facilitation skills and strategies, it is also essential to acknowledge what is ineffective. Participants in my study were candid about their own experiences and insights – several provided examples in which they did nothing, when they were triggered, and when they chose to ‘walk away’ from the discussion. The following participant reflects on the process of gaining experience and learning from mistakes:

Like, teaching: You can read all kinds of stuff about teaching but until you actually have to work in a classroom there’s a lot of learning that happens there for the teacher. Like the way you start out, you know, alters over time. You definitely learn, oftentimes from really bad experiences, that you didn’t want to do that again, or you need to do that quite differently. But there is a skill to it, it’s not just some people are really good at it, it’s that you become skilled and it would be nice if there was a way in which we were given some of those tips

and skills and practice with a group of other teachers or you know whatever the level of teaching is. (W-1)

According to Sue (2015), ineffective strategies are likely to be more widespread when educators have not developed a “good sense of who they are as racial/cultural beings” (p. 230). He found that there were five responses by educators that were particularly problematic in the face of race talk: doing nothing; sidetracking the conversation; appeasing the participants; terminating the discussion; and becoming defensive (p. 213-234). He suggests that additionally:

These responses by teachers/facilitators have been identified by participants as highly ineffective in race talk, and may result in greater misunderstanding among racial groups, hardening of biased racial beliefs, increased anger and tension toward one another, and lost opportunities to increase awareness and understanding (teachable moments). (p. 230)

This chapter describes several skills educators use to support learning and address resistance in the classroom. The findings are grouped into three primary areas: *Facilitation Skills*; *Supporting the Learning Process*; and *Putting the Paddle Down*. The *Facilitation Skills* section covers aspects of interracial facilitation and some implications of racial standpoint for educators. *Supporting the Learning Process* includes strategies for addressing anti-Indigenous racism and resistance in the classroom. Finally, *Putting the Paddle Down* speaks to the taboo of disengaging with resistant students.

## **7.2. Facilitation Skills: “Get the fuck in here and say something!”**

Participants said that facilitation skills, including co-facilitation, inter-racial facilitation, and their own racial standpoints, are important for educators in addressing anti-Indigenous racism. At the centre of this is the educator’s consciousness of race. While race is socially constructed, racism is not. Addressing anti-Indigenous attitudes, beliefs, ideology, stereotyping, and racism require specific knowledge and enhanced self-awareness. Effective facilitation means the educator uses both knowledge and self-awareness as a way to engage, guide, teach, and support moving learners through sometimes unfamiliar, challenging, and emotionally charged content, all of which requires skill.

### 7.3. Co-Facilitation

Some of the participants spoke about the value of co-facilitation, which means having two educators teaching or leading a course, workshop, or other learning event. The participant below speaks about the effectiveness of this approach with two White facilitators:

So, White facilitator with another White facilitator can be effective in that often one person is kind of holding the space in the room, listening to what's going on and the other person can be strategizing how to respond to that situation and observing the dynamics in the room in that way. And speak to our White experience. And name 'whiteness' and use ourselves as a model and example to non-Indigenous people in the room. (W-2)

One approach used in anti-racism work is a race-based caucus. Here, the learners all belong to the same racial group. The intention in race-based caucus work is to create a space where the racial homogeneity allows participants to speak freely about race issues in ways they may not be able to if the group had multiple races present.

### 7.4. Interracial Facilitation

Interracial facilitation is different than co-facilitation and means that the facilitators are of two different races. The possible combinations are: one White and one Indigenous facilitator; one Indigenous and one racialized facilitator; or one racialized and one White facilitator. The intention of interracial facilitation is to represent different standpoints and perspectives. It also allows for modeling of behaviour and the opportunity to collaborate, problem solve, and address race-based issues strategically.

For example, the following White participant speaks about her interracial facilitation with an Indigenous colleague:

And then cross-racial facilitation. So when as a White facilitator when I am working with an Indigenous facilitator, we can also use ourselves strategically. So when facilitating cross-racially, a cross-racial team you know, there will be statements that I will address strategically as a White facilitator. You know, when a White person talks about reverse racism, for example, that's something I will address. An Indigenous facilitator, you know, may jump in and address other kinds of issues. Especially if an Indigenous person is bringing in their own experience to the conversation it may be more appropriate for an Indigenous

facilitator to respond. Or a White facilitator, as well, but sometimes first an Indigenous facilitator. (W-2)

## 7.5. Racial Standpoint

The participant above is talking about the specific and different roles that she and her co-facilitator take up based on their race and the implications of their racial standpoint. Implicit in the participant's comments is also the issue of power. Specifically, White people embody this power, both as students and as educators. I know well from my own experience that as an Indigenous person I can only take a discussion about some race-based topics so far. In spite of being well educated and well-grounded in theory and practice, I know that White (and sometimes racialized) people may not accept certain perspectives or teachings from me because I am Indigenous. Particularly sensitive areas include, for example, discussions of the privileges for all settlers that accrue from the historical and ongoing theft of land and resources; discussion of rights-based discourse; and challenging of certain myths (e.g. such as reverse racism; meritocracy).

I also know from experience that students are more likely to accept teaching and challenges related to their Whiteness and their privilege (including settler privilege) from a White educator. The background and context for this reality were addressed in detail in Chapter Four. Knowing that White learners will accept certain teaching from a White educator simply means that being intentional about 'who does what content' and 'who handles what resistance' in an interracial co-facilitated course is being strategic. As the following participant shares:

Having not to do this work alone. I would never facilitate on my own. And sometimes that's with an ally, like a non-Indigenous person, I think that's a lovely model. Because again if you are talking about something and say the non-Indigenous people in the room are taking issue with it and they want to just de-compartmentalize an Indigenous thing. You know because I'm Indigenous that's easy to do but if the non-Indigenous instructor is in the room saying the same thing from their experience, from their value set, I think that's helpful. And I think non-Indigenous people can be role models for those people's learning. I think that model works really well. (I-1)

Both the White and the Indigenous participants acknowledge the importance of racial standpoint. The interracial facilitation model also acknowledges the power in the room

and minimizes the potential for White students to target Indigenous facilitators with violence.

## 7.6. Signalling

Participants described their skill at communicating with co-facilitators in order to bring their voice into the room. A White participant shares some of the strategies she uses with her Indigenous co-facilitator:

I think collaborating with your co-facilitator. You know, one of the strategies that we learned early on is, 'Do you have anything to add?'. Which means, "Get the fuck in here and say something!" You know, asking other people in the room, "What do other people think of that?" If it's appropriate. Sometimes you don't want to do that because you can open up a snowball of resistance. (W-2)

This participant is being honest in her sharing that race-based dialogue is challenging and that educators do not always have something to say in response to a question or comment. She and her co-facilitator have developed a code for this circumstance and when she says "Do you have anything to add?" she is also saying she needs support from her co-facilitator to manage the dialogue. This coded language is evidence of planning and strategizing that can be practical, as well as opening up new and shared space for ongoing dialogue.

A different example of using a signal is seen in the following excerpt. Here, the educator's approach is to try non-verbal signals to encourage students to speak up in the classroom:

I really try hard in the beginning of a workshop to get to know who is in the room, who is probably a bit of an ally because I'll just gently look over, I won't overdo it but once in a while I'll kind of look over and just then look away and see if they look at me and sometimes people will jump in and I don't have to. And that is gold because then I can truly, truly just stand back and facilitate a conversation among peers rather than be more directive of the conversation. But that requires um more time, you know, if you have more time with a group then you can do that. (I-2)

## 7.7. Strategies to Address Resistance

There was no question that all participants in this study have thought about anti-Indigenous racism and considered the way it manifests in their classrooms and their work environments. This section addresses these issues. Several themes were identified from analysis of the data collected during the individual interviews and the focus group. The findings are presented in the following topic areas:

- Being Prepared -- Being Strategic
- Responding When Things are Heating Up
- Troubling the anti-Indigenous Narratives

### 7.7.1. Being Prepared -- Being Strategic

Addressing Indigenous focused topics can and often will generate complicated dialogues. Many of the strategies that participants discussed involved thinking proactively and being prepared. One of the Indigenous participants described it this way:

As an educator I think if you're going to facilitate these kinds of racial dialogues, Indigenous specific, you need to be 'prepared'. And as much as you can. I talk many times about being blind-sided. But I think for me that's been my teaching- is being prepared as much as I can be. (I-1)

Preparation means being proactive about the types of issues that will predictably arise. The following participant talks about this and reflects on the insight she developed through experience to prepare herself:

You know, at times, it's an ongoing learning process but I think the scripts have really helped me. Having the language to intervene, finding the language, [and] being prepared to address issues that are going to come up in the room. I think strategizing beforehand, especially Indigenous facilitators and White facilitators. I think that's been really key. And consulting throughout the workshop or throughout the class. I think things I've been unaware of, I think there's been times where I've been unaware of my place. You know, that this is my job, that this is my job to jump in here and address this comment. (W-2)

Preparation is important not only for educators but for students as noted here:

Preparing the students and preparing myself for dealing with issues that might bring up sensitive stuff or might bring up assumptions or attitudes that have been learned and stuff like that. (W-3)

### 7.7.2. Setting Up Expectations and Frontloading Content

Strategies for preparing students are seen in how participants set up expectations and frontload content in their classrooms. The reality is that the process of guiding students and learners through race-based dialogue is complex. The participant here shares her strategy for setting up expectations for the students:

I mean, what I'm realizing is that I don't do as much with first year courses because I don't know why, because often I assume that the students, everything is so new to them, anyway. They're not going to, like, "What - you want norms, what do you mean?" right. I'll do that more often with upper level courses and stuff but you know, I set out very clear norms in my course policies about, you know, not interrupting or distracting people, not packing up to leave ten minutes before the class. If you're going to, if you need to leave early, just let me know. You know, all those kinds of things, right, but then sometimes in some courses, I'll say, "Okay, we're going to be talking about some pretty, some pretty tough stuff. We're going to be reading some texts that are...so, let's talk about what all of us need, what would we like, and then, you know, we'll put those up on the board and say, "Okay, here's our contract" kind of thing. (W-3)

The quotation above highlights what some educators refer to as *frontloading*. Frontloading content refers to the work, both in facilitation and in preparing the curriculum, in order to create a strong context for the learning. It means explaining the 'why' of the curriculum topic. This is critically important when the content is related to race and racism.

Frontloading material about anti-Indigenous racism involves several steps:

- Setting a context for the learning (answering the question 'why' are we learning about this?);
- Preparing students for potential impact of their learning (anticipating their responses); and
- Scaffolding the learning (enabling students to see the development of the ideology of anti-Indigenous racism).

The following participant shares the way she sets up her expectations for the class and frontloads her material:

There's a lot of heat in the classroom sometimes. Heat in terms of the emotions and I don't see the classroom as a place where you baby people. I say 'okay this is a university classroom, we're here to learn things that we maybe didn't know before and some of them are going to be shocking and surprising, but that's the nature of learning. Some of them you already know and so it's always just 'stay open to understanding that the world may be quite different from what you experienced and what you would like it to be.'" (W-1)

In my experience, frontloading content about anti-Indigenous racism is critical. One key learning for me relates to the sequencing of curriculum and how addressing issues related to identity, especially settler identity needs to be nested within a strong context – the socio, political, and historical context. For example, in my work as a curriculum designer, I found it necessary to adjust the traditional sequencing of curriculum pillars of self-awareness, followed by knowledge, and lastly skills, to knowledge, *then* self-awareness, and skills. This shift was in response to the high level of resistance, denial, and hostility in the courses that emerged when curriculum began with learning about and examining self-awareness. By moving self-awareness (curriculum that addresses race, Settler/White privilege and so on) from the starting place to the middle of the curriculum, participants seem to be better positioned to emotionally and cognitively “handle” examining their own history, their racial identity and roles in the ongoing colonial enterprise. This example demonstrates frontloading to support complex curriculum goals.

### **7.7.3. Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

Participants described the importance of acknowledging traditional Indigenous territory as part of an educational strategy. As one participant explains:

Actually even just starting, observing protocol and acknowledging territory and land right from the get-go, when you start with people. That's something most people don't do and that can make a big difference to creating safety in the room for Indigenous students and acknowledging right, most people don't do that. (R-1)

Observing protocols as described above is considered by many Indigenous people and others to be respectful and to ground everyone present into place and space – a reminder that they are on Indigenous territory. As one participant asks:

How do they understand their sense of place when they're on Musqueam territory studying? In a place [on] these unceded lands. How do we help them to understand what that really means? (I-3)

Another participant addresses these very questions purposefully in acknowledging Indigenous territory and explains it this way:

So, it's the pro-active things I guess that I try to do to actually bring the story into the room along with all the other stories. I mean I guess the big thing for me because my work is around social justice and anti-oppression and to me especially in Canada we can't start that conversation without starting with our history. Which is the first contact with Indigenous people and starting from there and Indigenous people are often invisible in anti-oppression work so I just try to make it very visible constantly. (R-1)

There is a spectrum of ways that territorial land is recognized and acknowledged within classrooms. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) developed a Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples and Traditional Territory (2017). They provide suggestions about the appropriate use of and reasons for an acknowledgement:

Acknowledging territory shows recognition of and respect for Aboriginal Peoples. It is recognition of their presence both in the past and the present. Recognition and respect are essential elements of establishing healthy, reciprocal relations. These relationships are key to reconciliation, a process to which CAUT is committed. (CAUT, 2017, p.4)

This guide also speaks to the larger context in which an acknowledgement of territory exists:

While acknowledging territory is very welcome, it is only a small part of cultivating strong relationships with the First Peoples of Canada. Acknowledging territory and First Peoples should take place with the larger context of genuine and ongoing work to forge real understanding, and to challenge the legacies of colonialism. Territorial acknowledgements should not be a *pro forma* statement made before getting on with the "real business" of the meeting; they must be understood as a vital *part* of the business. (CAUT, 2017, p. 4)

The reality is that acknowledging the traditional territory, especially when the acknowledgement is prefaced with 'unceded', can be a trigger for some people. This is because many people are not informed about treaties, or the impact of the lack of treaties (e.g., unceded territories, especially in British Columbia). As one of the participants states, acknowledging the territory is a powerful opportunity to connect with the very meaning of being on Indigenous land.

#### 7.7.4. Using a Learning Circle

A learning circle is a structure sometimes used in a class to facilitate dialogue, equal sharing, and promote a respectful environment. In an Indigenous context, this format is sometimes referred to as a “talking circle”. A talking circle involves people sitting in a circle, where each person has the opportunity to take an uninterrupted turn in discussing the topic. Talking circles, while not a new idea for Indigenous people, are newly being accepted as a research technique (Hanohano, 2001; Martin, 2001). They are based upon the ideal of respect for participants in the circle (Archibald and Haig-Brown, 1996) where everyone has an equal chance to speak and be heard. Discussion typically follows a controlled format where each participant has an opportunity to talk in turn about the topic brought to the circle (Wilson, 2008, p. 41).

Two of the participants, both Indigenous, use the circle format:

I use the circle in the classroom, and I had to really think about ‘well why am I going to continue to use this tradition’ and I continue the tradition not because it’s just some First Nations-y thing to do but I continue the tradition because I believe that everybody does have something to bring. Everybody has some knowledge and some wisdom and some experience that they can offer up to the group. (I-3)

This participant goes on to say that she “believe [s] that it does create a teaching and learning environment and it does create a process which is much more collaborative like; the class was done in a collaborative way” (I-3).

Early in my teaching career I co-facilitated circles and have witnessed the way they have been useful as well as the ways that the format could be abused. In my experience, circles can be especially useful for processing emotionally laden issues. However, the circle is not necessarily a structure that can support the interaction needed when challenging issues with critical facilitation. This is because some rules dictate that only one person can speak at a time, and only in sequence. Recall the incident shared early on about the Indigenous facilitator being targeted by the White social worker. This incident shows how the format of the circle can be used by people in inappropriate ways.

### **7.7.5. Using Curriculum Strategically**

Several participants spoke about their intentional use of curriculum to facilitate learning and understanding. The following quote demonstrates this:

I think in classroom teaching one of the things that has to happen first of all is that people have to have the kind of readings or videos or whatever they are using to teach with. They have to be inclusive because otherwise you won't have any kind of dialogue emerging. You can't just say 'you know this is about racism' and then not have some content to back it up so that has to be there in the first place. (W-1)

Texts are an important tool for educators. Using strategically selected texts can provide an opportunity to generate engagement on multiple levels. The following participant talked about this:

I offered a course last year, and it was on reading and empathy, on literature and empathy and we looked specifically at course texts that are trying to create empathy and increase people's understandings of those that are 'othered' in our communities. And so it was really, really an interesting course. It was very exciting. I think working, talking about empathy, talking about, trying to see for a moment through others' eyes can be helpful. Yeah, those are things that I think can be, have been successful. Sometimes, like I said, just letting the text do it because I'm choosing the texts, I'm choosing texts that will. (W-3)

### **7.7.6. Using Case Studies**

Incorporating tools such as case studies can provide useful content. A participant speaks about the potential usefulness of case scenarios and suggests ways that these tools could be used:

I'm in a faculty of nursing so some sort of -here are a number of different case studies or scenarios that could be looked at from different ways and how would that be looked at from, I don't know, a theoretical perspective? How would it be looked at from a leadership perspective? How would it be looked at from a teaching perspective? How would it be looked at from an acute care or seniors care? Giving faculty a set of resources that could then be tailored for specific classroom environments would be useful. (I-4)

In my experience case studies are not uncommon and can be very important tools to teach about issues. However, sometimes, the case study examples themselves are problematic because they can actually reinforce both anti-Indigenous stereotyping

and racism. This happens when case studies provide scenarios about Indigenous people that reflect common racist stereotypes.

### 7.7.7. Responding When Things Are Heating Up

Most educators who have experienced or witnessed anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom recognize the signs when 'things are heating up'. The following situation is interesting because it illustrates the type of comment made by a student that could easily go 'sideways'.

Because usually it's those personal stories that come up for people and they want to take that one example they have and let everyone know. And whether it's a negative or sometimes it's a positive- like sometime in the examples that you hear is, "Well, you know in my community there was never any racism you know we all got along and it was blah ...blah... blah". You know, my take is always to challenge that. You know, I'm getting more comfortable at challenging that in a good way and saying 'That's great, that's wonderful that exists' and not saying you're full of crap but saying "But you know, it's been my experience for your one story of a positive situation there's ten others that aren't." And then talk, back that up, with that we wouldn't be in this conversation now if that was the case. So, what do we do with those other 90% of the situation? And then again taking it to a bigger context -so it's out of that personal little thing that happened. And then I invite other people into the conversation too. (I-1)

Comments that have the potential to 'go sideways' mean that there is risk. If the educator does not address it, there is a problem. If the educator decides to address the comment, there is risk that the student will be defensive, resistant, and/or feel embarrassed. Challenging comments like this that are based on a student's own experience or made with a lot of confidence can be especially difficult for the educator.

This participant explains how she de-contextualizes challenging comments:

And also, if somebody does make stupid comments or inappropriate comments, you know, not shaming people and acknowledging that there might be someone else in the room who is thinking what they're thinking and that's generally the case. But you have had the bravery to put it out there. I'll bet you it's here somewhere or it's at your family dinner table or it's at your workplace. (I-2)

This participant shares what she thinks may be going on in multiple levels during the interaction. She thinks it is important not to shame people for making "stupid comments or inappropriate comments"; that it is likely the student also speaks for others in the

room; and that it takes 'bravery' to speak about issues (that may be considered inappropriate).

### **7.7.8. Applying a Systemic Lens**

Participants spoke about the value of applying a systemic lens to manage the integration of content, which essentially means contextualizing the concern or issue to the larger, bigger picture. As the following participant explains:

And it's also a constant balance, when things erupt in the room or somebody says something, how to make it a learning point without that person feeling shame. They might still feel shame no matter how careful we are, but how to make it a learning point externally from them? Where they are right now in a bigger picture that everybody's in -that we're all in this. (I-2)

This participant describes the process of externalizing the problem, which is moving the context from a focus on the individual (individualizing) to placing the issue into a larger systemic context (externalizing). This approach can be particularly useful when learners are personalizing the issue – something that can increase the potential for feeling blamed and shamed. However, this does not always work. In the following quotation, the participant shares her analysis about an interaction between a doctor and an Indigenous patient:

After a three-hour workshop yesterday one of the last comments is about an Indigenous man that this doctor engaged with [for the] first time and this Indigenous man apparently had 'quite an attitude' and put his feet up on the chair in the doctor's office. And this doctor, after three hours of education, maintained that this was a problem. That the man was a problem, rather than being able to ask himself, which his colleagues did, which was good, "Why do you think this man is presenting like this?" What do you think is going on for him? Very simple question but he did not want to see this person as ... my perception is that he didn't want to see this person as being affected by the system because it meant he had a responsibility beyond just, you know, writing a prescription or checking his heart rate or all of those things. I don't think people want to take responsibility for their role in maintaining the structure. (I-2)

This participant's questions: "Why do you think this man is presenting like this?" and "What do you think is going on for him?" reveal her skill in moving the 'problem' from personal to locating it within a context. Obviously, the doctor was resistant to

contextualizing the Indigenous man's behaviour and this demonstrates the challenges in trying to help people move their attitudes and behaviours.

### 7.7.9. Clarifying and Reframing

Some other core skills of effective facilitation are the ability to pause, clarify, and reframe comments and questions. These skills are especially useful for comments that may be received as hostile, ignorant, and/or racist. When this type of comment is made, the first step for an educator can be to pause and then to seek clarification. The following participant explains how she does this:

So, other tools that have been really beneficial have been pausing...pausing. 'Wow, really, wow. Wow, let's just think about what you said there. Isn't that interesting?' [Laughs]. (I-2)

Clarifying and reframing are helpful skills for educators in confronting ignorance and anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. Consider the following request for clarification:

I think, for me the first thing is to check understanding, right. To check - did you mean, are you saying this? Like, to check, because sometimes people's words just come out awkwardly. So, checking understanding. And then, I mean, I think that acknowledging and I feel like here I'm talking more theoretically than what I'm actually capable of doing [laughs] but acknowledging that feeling. Like, that's you know, "that's not uncommon", that attitude or that's, you know, that's so that a person doesn't feel attacked or blamed or something, right. So, to acknowledge it and then to try to work to educate, to talk about whether it's talking about how we learn attitudes from a young age unconsciously and using myself. I think using myself as an example has been successful because it shows it's a non-authoritarian way to do it, right. And it shows that we are all in a process of learning stuff, you know, and it shows, I don't know, vulnerability is really powerful in a classroom, I think, if you know. And it's transparency to an extreme [laughs] in a way, right. (W-3)

In this quotation, the participant is making transparent her personal pedagogy of teaching. One of the first steps for her is acknowledging the process, the feelings, and affirming the student's comment as "that's not uncommon" as a strategy that would potentially minimize awkwardness and defensiveness. Normalizing the comment is a strategic action for the educator and can answer questions about the intent behind a question or comment. As one participant describes it:

Asking people, "You know, can you tell me more about that?" "I'm not sure I understand." Reframing what people say, "It sounds like you're trying to say...maybe you're getting at this issue." (W-2)

Reframing is slightly different from clarifying and refers to guiding the student into a non-racist and non-hostile way of asking the question. Reframing could look like, "Carol, this is a really loaded question and I think it is worthwhile unpacking it. I am wondering what the issues are related to Indigenous people and employment? Let's all brainstorm a list."

Reframing can open up other options for dialogue and role modeling appropriate language and ways of addressing ignorance. Consider the following example of reframing:

So then, guiding, you know, depending on what the issue is. If it's a misreading or a, you know, an assumption based on lack of knowledge, on ignorance, then providing context is helpful, right. Looking at the words on the page is helpful. Providing, yeah, providing context, providing alternate perspectives or soliciting alternate perspective on something I think is helpful. (W-3)

Another example of reframing is demonstrated by the participant quoted below:

I think one of the things I think is effective is challenging this notion of 'safety'. So, instead of setting up a classroom guidelines, etc. as 'safety' - reframing that for non-Indigenous people as a 'critical discomfort'. That discomfort needs to be part of the process and will be part of the process. And that there's a difference between 'safety' and 'discomfort' - making that distinction for people. (W-2)

This participant reveals how she has reframed the concept of 'safety' to a discourse of 'critical discomfort'. The skill here is one of moving beyond the surface to scrutinize the less obvious concerns and motivations. This same participant reveals the depth and high level of sophistication in her analysis. She goes on to explain:

That to talk about racism, to explore our responses to it, to do self-reflection doesn't make non-Indigenous people unsafe, or it doesn't make White people unsafe. It may make non-Indigenous people unsafe when their personal experiences come in, in some ways, but if we're talking about Indigenous specific racism I don't see how a racialized person would necessarily feel unsafe. They may feel uncomfortable and White people often feel uncomfortable. So, making that distinction I think upfront is really helpful. (W-2)

This is an interesting quotation and reflects the White participants' efforts to understand the impact of different racial standpoints on feelings of 'safety' in the classroom. It is

important to note that non-Indigenous racialized people may not only feel “uncomfortable” around the topic of racism, including anti-Indigenous racism, but may also characterize their feelings as “unsafe”. Critical discomfort can come up whenever there is discussion of colonial violence and systemic racism because when we talk about these issues, we are also talking about how all settlers (White and racialized) benefit at the expense of Indigenous people. In my experience these topics will always generate feelings, whether it be defensiveness, discomfort, fear, or even anger.

### **7.7.10. Re-focusing**

An interesting point of clarification was raised by a participant related to the tendency for students (and in my experience educators and professionals) to drift off the topic of Indigenous-focused discussions and take it somewhere else. Whether this is intentional or not is not the issue. The issue is that the educator needs to be able to understand the context for the dialogue to drift and initiate a course correction. As the participant describes below:

I think for example, in a workshop where the conversation about Indigenous cultural safety ends up being about other groups. People want to talk about other groups. What about other groups? I think that's my job is to stand in and bring it back to Indigenous cultural safety. Because it's addressing the kind of settler privilege in the room. And I think that's my job. I think my job is also to address overt racist statements in the room, you know, and I think the situation in [names the city] was a big learning for me. Understanding how I could do that differently. How I could have responded differently in that situation. Just more different things I could have done, right. (W-2)

The tendency to shift focus is an interesting and predictable dynamic in the classroom. Sometimes a student will deliberately take the dialogue off topic and this is often referred to as ‘hijacking’. This behaviour is a form of resistance and the value of viewing the behaviour in this way means that an educator can bring the topic back to the discussion at hand for the class. Hijacking discussions by students can be a significant drain on the energy of the educator and take time away from addressing what they are there to learn.

### 7.7.11. Troubling the anti-Indigenous Narratives

As discussed in previous chapters, racist and colonial narratives about Indigenous people are widespread. These narratives are well known to most Canadians and emerge, both directly and indirectly, in educational classrooms (Dua & Lawrence, 2000; St. Denis, 2011, 2017; Henry & Tator, 2010; Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010; Cote-Meek, 2015). The racist narratives (discussed in Chapter 4) are challenging to deal with and the participants in this study spoke to this:

There's so many myths about First Nations ...about whether or not they pay taxes and, you know, really ignorant information out there and so I think educators don't really address it because they usually don't even know that they are just as ignorant as their students. ( R-1)

Narratives reflecting ignorance and racist ideology are robust in the classroom. Responding to these issues can be a sequence of approaches:

Let's think of one specific experience. So when people have said things in workshops, I deal with it in a couple of ways. One, because it's a facilitation kind of mode that I'm in, I try and incorporate other people to bring it so it doesn't become a power struggle between me and the person but I will address... like so if they make a comment about you know something around a piece of misinformation like taxes, I'll actually address that. When people say something like 'Why don't they get over it?' - that's a common one 'Why don't they get over it?' I will go back to you know I'll bring in information around historical trauma, generational you know impacts, multigenerational impacts around oppression and then I'll talk about other communities and groups. (R-1)

The comment here, "Why don't they get over it?" is a powerful narrative that is rooted in colonial history and the desire of many settlers for Indigenous people to 'just move on'. A participant troubles this concept:

I mean you know we don't really say to Jewish people "get over the holocaust that was, you know, 50 years ago plus" and we acknowledge that regardless of whether someone was actually in a concentration camp we recognize that the impact of the genocide on the Jewish people has been passed on and it's a trauma that people still carry even when they weren't in the in the concentration camps. They were born much later and haven't had direct experience but they experience it through the family and through the culture and the community. And so I use that as an example and say 'well, why would we think that of one group and not recognize that it's psychologically, emotionally, physically it's the same process regardless which community you come

from, right. Trauma is trauma and oppression is oppression and we all carry that. So that is one of the ways I might address the 'why don't they get over it' comment, right.' (R- NA)

Participants spoke of the importance of understanding the context for the expression of racist narratives. The ideology of anti-Indigenous racism is historical but emerges in current attitudes and behaviours. As I have discussed, the denial of colonial history, the denial of anti-Indigenous racism, and the litany of anti-Indigenous stereotyping are extensive, and addressing these creates additional challenges for educators.

If I said 'well, you know all I've ever seen is Indigenous people who have an alcohol problem or who live in a very unclean way on reserve or something if somebody is from the North". So to unpack that, right away there's 'no that's not right, you are damaged because this is what I see and so because this is what I see it must be true". And so it requires then going: Why do you see that? Why do you think you've been exposed to that? Where, you know, all the learning points about how we learn stereotypes and prejudice. And when it starts to poke at people a little, then various other ways start to shut the conversation down. 'Oh we don't have time to talk about all of this stuff' 'Oh, are you sure you're not exaggerating?' 'Are you sure that's not just your experience?' Just a whole variety of comments that deflect away from their responsibility. (I-2)

Many of my colleagues explain this pattern of response as the 'Whack-a-Mole'. The Whack-a-Mole tag refers to the carnival game where a mole figure pokes its head out from a hole on a table. The game player has a large hammer and has the goal of hitting as many moles as they can. When the person hits the mole, it retreats down the hole, and another mole immediately pokes its head out from another spot on the table. In the context of teaching about colonial narratives, the Whack-a-Mole operates similarly. When a colonial narrative is expressed; the educator provides a teaching -- the counter narrative -- and the student engages in multiple 'yeah, but...' examples to which the educator will also need to respond. In the classroom context this can take a lot of energy to manage as this behaviour is a manifestation of resistance.

Replacing the colonial narratives with counter narratives is a necessary part of addressing anti-Indigenous racism. One of the disconcerting discourses emerging in discussions about Residential Schools is the view that these schools were beneficial. The following participant demonstrates this skill:

I remember one person accused (colleague) and me of not considering the positive effects of residential schools, right. And my comment was, "Well, I guess the positive would be they shut them down, right. And can you think of a positive?" (R-2)

What is important to note here is the way the participant addresses the issue directly and not only disagrees with the student but also challenges her to defend her comment (that there may have been positive effects of Residential Schools). This example of a colonial narrative requires troubling the comment, taking a position, and teaching.

The scope of anti-Indigenous stereotyping and racist discourses is significant and educators need to have a bank of knowledge to draw from in order to respond. The following quotation illustrates the way this educator addresses stereotypes using counter narratives:

I had something interesting come up the other day when we were talking about what I call the Aboriginal child welfare. And we'd gone through the Sixties and Millennium Scoop and so then I talked about how things are done differently. Some of the delegated agencies and I shared some examples. And somebody says, "Well, you know, you're talking about communities that are already functioning quite well. And you know you're not referring to communities where things don't go well." And I said, "That's not true". First of all, we went through a discussion about what it means you know. Community. It would be like saying "things don't go well in Victoria", right. You can't just label an entire community because of something you've read in the paper, something that hasn't gone well. (R-2)

The use of counter narratives addresses the comment or question in a way that requires people to examine their assumptions. This educator directly confronted the student by saying "That's not true" and then provided an example of how that comment, "Well, you know, you're talking about communities that are already functioning quite well. And you know you're not referring to communities where things don't go well", wouldn't usually be said about entire communities. However, this level of essentialism and generalization about Indigenous people and communities is common. The quote above demonstrates using the counter narratives to address the essentializing, the ignorance, and also shifts the dialogue.

One of the strategies for educators facing this situation is to ask questions that can undermine some of the confidence that students have about their knowledge. The following questions can all lead to constructive dialogue that explores the root of the assumptions:

- What might be the assumptions embedded in this question or statement?
- Is this true?
- Is it true all the time?
- How is this comment or question rooted in colonial narratives? Or anti-Indigenous ideology?

Consider how the following participant responds to anti-indigenous rhetoric:

I've had some people ask questions like, "Well, I don't get it. With all the poverty and all these problems, why don't First Nations people just move in to the city? Things would go so much better, right". Which is kind of interesting because then that gives a chance for dialogue about people determining how they're going to live their lives but it also allows me to share some examples of when I was working for Aboriginal organizations and looking for apartments and so on. And the moment I mentioned where I was working, immediately the apartment was no longer vacant. I would get a friend to call up and they could go see it, right. So, there's a lot of racism out there and I know a lot of young kids that I kind of grew up with when I was doing the work and their big dream was to go to Victoria or Vancouver and when they got there, they ran into brick walls as far as finding apartments, just jobs, everything. There's a lot of racism, and overt racism still today, you know. People think it's in the past and lot of those kids ended up back in their community and upset and for some of the sort of one of the communities had a rash of suicide attempts and I remember going and visiting and spending some time because those were the kids I saw growing up and they had all these dreams and they found that their dreams didn't fit in with people's attitudes, right. So, I use examples and information and things like that, and people essentially get it when you start talking in that way. And you know I don't shy away from using examples, right. I think if you're going to go through the heart to the mind you pretty well have to, right. (R-2)

This participant demonstrates multiple strategies to enhance understanding of the reality of racism here, including sharing his own experiences. Racialized participants spoke about using themselves to leverage a counter narrative regarding the assumptions being made about Indigenous people:

I think that if I, as a new immigrant, can understand and recognize I'm part of a settler colonial history that having that conversation with people who have been here much longer but don't recognize that history is, you know, that there's a bridge. I'm a person that can bridge and start some of that dialogue with people who haven't had to think about it ever. (R-1)

One of the dominant colonial narratives, “get over it”, has added dimensions when it comes from individuals who may be both racialized and who have emigrated from a country that was also colonized:

And a lot of the sort of immigrants, they were doing a lot of recruiting abroad and people that were from different countries would come up and I remember one in particular, a Filipino woman, she said, “We were treated really badly. The Americans harmed us so much. They called us, you know, she mentioned a few nicknames and so on. But she says, “We got past that. Why isn’t that happening here?” And that allows for a discussion of: Well, that’s all in the past but colonization is ongoing process. There’s still the Indian Act, there’s still racism, there’s still poverty, there’s still unresolved treaties. All of that stuff is still going on. So colonization, you know, the examples you gave in the past, that’s been dealt with and there’s been some reconciliation has occurred but here in Canada it’s still going on, right. So that seems to kind of make sense and people get it from there, right. (R-2)

This participant provides the counter narrative to the Filipino woman by explaining the different contexts for colonial experiences. The situation above speaks to the importance of skills to counter the prevalent anti-Indigenous discourses. Clearly, analysis and skill are required to respond effectively. All of the strategies participants described are potentially helpful to educators and make visible that addressing anti-Indigenous racism requires diverse skills and means doing things differently. The following section describes how participants navigate situations in which their skills and efforts may not be enough to touch some students -- especially those who are entrenched in anti-Indigenous racism.

## **7.8. Putting the Paddle Down: “there’s some people you just can’t change”**

One of the Elders from whom I take direction and support speaks about the concept of “putting the paddle down.” He likens our work as educators to that of being paddlers in a canoe, on a teaching journey. At some point on the journey, some paddlers can become tired or disheartened, and will need to leave the canoe for the benefit of themselves and for others in the canoe. I think of this metaphor often and apply it not only to educators, but also to learners. Paddling (teaching) is a lot of effort and the reality is that sometimes the effort does not move the canoe. People can also put up so much resistance to learning that they will not allow the canoe to move or to move them. Most educators who have done critical anti-racism work will relate to this experience.

Questions we often ask ourselves are about how much effort we should further expend on a student who is resistant? At what point do we 'cut our losses'? How much time should we allocate to resistance when there are students in the room who are open to learning? What happens for the students who are open to learning when all of our time is now being taken up by resistance from one or two students?

In my own work I have the responsibility of directing teams of facilitators teaching about anti-Indigenous racism in a variety of contexts. In the early part of the program (it is 10 years old) the focus of our work was almost 100% on the people who were resistant. We were concerned that these learners would harm Indigenous people (which they were) and we believed it was our responsibility as educators to change them. After some time it became clear to me that the learners who were most resistant to learning, who were the people taking up most of the energy of the educators, were not showing evidence of learning or a change in their attitudes or behaviours. I made the decision that as a program we would shift our focus from the resisters to the other learners. These learners were the ones who were open to learning, who knew they had knowledge gaps and were interested in addressing them, and who may have been wrestling with content but did not spend more energy wrestling than they did trying to push through issues. This shift to the focus on the open learner was a good one for our program, for our educators, and for the learners. Shifting the focus does not mean we ignore participants who are resistant to learning; it just means that we have realistic expectations of certain resistant learners and make informed decisions based on this.

Several participants in the study spoke about resistance and when it was time to "put the paddle down". The following participant speaks about his experience and analysis about this issue:

And then I think it's just there's always some people with views that can't be changed, right. And particularly people that have been in the field. They're older, they've been practicing for, you know, 20 - 30 years, and they have views which they developed that might be intolerant and changing those views isn't going to really happen, right. I've kind of discovered over the years when we talk about racism and those sorts of things there's some people you just can't change. They have their views and I don't waste my time on them. I focus on the ones that can and then you reach a critical mass when the majority of people sort of understand then those issues start to shift and that small group, they sort of fall by the wayside anyways, right. (R-2)

The “focus on the ones that can” as opposed to the “people you just can’t change” is a choice that an educator makes. The decision not to continue to engage is not taken lightly and came to this participant after considerable analysis and experience. There are many reasons educators direct energy toward resisters, including concern that they hijack issues and take up a lot of space in a classroom; because they create a toxic learning environment; and that they are or may be hurting people (colleagues, clients, patients). This interesting topic area is not often acknowledged by educators. What happens when we recognize that we do not want to work with certain students who are resistant? How much effort is enough? At what point does an educator decide that investing more energy is not in their own best interest or that of the class? As this participant shares:

So I just kind of developed an opinion some people you can talk to and they’ll engage in dialogue. You can make a difference. Others, you know, there’s that hatred part, that I just don’t bother with because there’s no use, right. And I’ve always taken that approach. (R-2)

Another participant shares her personal experience of dealing with resistance from students: “I just had no idea how to deal with the anger, the resistance, the ignorance, the unconsciousness, the unwillingness” (I-3). This participant no longer educates at the university and she shares the reason for this:

I mean, you know I just have to keep digging deeper in my own spirit and figure out ‘okay what do I really need’ and you know what do I really need here’ and you know, I like [author] bell hooks. bell hooks says ‘you know it’s not my job to educate these people and they would like me to spend all my time educating them because that would keep me from my purpose and my people’. You know my purpose is to help my people. I’m not going to waste a whole lot time trying to educate these people and you kind of get to a point where, you know, at what point do you just kind of let go, you know, and just go ‘okay, whatever. I’m just going to do what I need to do for my people”, you know. (I-3)

This is what my Elder says is “putting the paddle down.” This participant metaphorically steps out of that particular canoe and into a different one. Again, these decisions are not made lightly and her story reveals the challenges in this work and the thoughtfulness that goes into leaving the canoe.

Over the years, I have made a conscious decision in my own work to shift my priority from putting all of the energy into the resistor, to focusing on the other end of the

spectrum, the learners who show promise of and willingness to change. In my experience at first this was challenging. However when I considered the significant energy that goes into working with resisters it became clear that the use of my time and energy would be better directed towards learners who are open and genuinely interested in working in a better way with Indigenous people. It takes knowledge, self-awareness, and skill to unsettle resistance and anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom -- and also to recognize when it's time to put the paddle down.

## Chapter 8.

### In Conclusion

The intent of this dissertation was to examine the manifestations of anti-Indigenous racism and resistance in educational contexts. During the individual interviews and focus group, participants spoke about what they think is important to know, their experiences of self-awareness, and the skills that are necessary to address anti-Indigenous racism in the classroom. They shared a tremendous amount of material; their contributions were significant, humbling, and at times disturbing. Numerous themes were identified in my analyses and were presented in Chapters 4 through 7. I endeavoured to have the voices of all the participants -- Indigenous, White, and Racialized -- come forward in clear and respectful ways. I hope that I have done them justice.

For me, conducting this research and writing this thesis has been a taxing and consuming process, in part because of the scope and depth of the subject matter. Although I recognized that this topic was important, I had no understanding of how personal it would be for me as well as for the participants in the study. These participants shared deeply personal experiences, showed vulnerabilities, and reflected on their skills (as well as their lack of skills).

I learned from the participants how this work has affected them -- their experiences had a profound impact on me as well. I knew and expected that Indigenous educators would share experiences that would be powerful and painful. However I did not fully realize the extent to which other educators-- White and Racialized -- would also be impacted.

All of the participants are disturbed by the anti-Indigenous racism they witness in other individuals, in the institutions they work in, and in society as a whole. They have thought about the implications of anti-Indigenous racism on Indigenous people and are concerned about the impact of racism on Indigenous students (and others) in the classroom. I heard the participants speak about the passion they have for their work and that they do this work because they are compelled to do so. They have commitments to

social justice, to using themselves to bridge between people, and they are prepared to take risks to help move student's learning along the continuum. The reality is that doing anti-racism work, addressing anti-Indigenous racism, and applying a critical race lens are difficult.

## 8.1. Epilogue – Final thoughts

As I reflect on what I have learned through this research project I think about the experience I shared in the *Prologue* to this dissertation. I return to it here:

*I am sitting in the boardroom listening to my co-facilitator, Tally, introduce the 5-day training we are going to deliver. She sits down and it is my turn.*

*I notice I am a little bit nervous. We haven't done this together before and the 25 people in the room are staring at us. Not all the stares seem all that friendly. Whatever. I get up and start to speak. I am on a roll.*

*"I really hope that over this week we will get to know each other and I also hope that we can begin to have those 'courageous conversations' that we don't get to have about these issues."*

*Out of the blue, a voice came from the back of the room.*

*"That's great! I always wanted to know why all the Indians are drunks!"*

*Oh my god. Did he just say that? Out loud? I hear Amber whisper "Oh my god Cheryl!" behind me. I look down the room to where the young man is sitting. He has his feet up on the table and is leaning back in his chair. I want to go down there and push him over. So I start walking down toward him.*

*What am I going to say? Maybe someone else will say something? Oh no! What if somebody else says something?*

*I see that half the room is Indigenous women and they are staring at me. One of the women has her mouth open and her eyes are HUGE. One of the women says quietly to the woman beside her "Wow, here we go already" or something like that. Huh?*

*What does that mean? After that there is silence. Everything seems like it is slow motion. Why are they all looking at me?*

*I don't know what to do. I think about the agenda for a moment. My heart is pounding and my face feels really hot. I have memorized the Instructors Notes in the curriculum and I know for a fact that there is nothing in there about this kind of thing. What have I got myself into? Does this happen to everyone? How come we didn't have an in-service about this? Why did I*

*say that thing about courageous conversations? What a stupid thing to say.*

*I keep walking slowly and finally arrive at the young man. He is grinning at me and I am aware that I want to wipe that smug smile right off his face.*

*I am able to mumble “Ummmm...well that is a very good question and I ummm...will make sure you have an opportunity to ...ahh ...learn about that over the next week.”*

*I turn away and slowly walk back to the front of the room. I feel every single eye drilling into the back of my head. I am not sure how I am going to get through the next few minutes to the break, never mind get through the next 5 days.*

I have reflected on this particular experience countless times over my career and have been very critical of myself—both of what I did and especially of what I did not do in the moment. I now see how little I knew at the time about the depth and violence of anti-Indigenous racism in the educational context. That experience and countless others provided motivation for me to take personal responsibility for my own learning and actions and the reality is that ‘once I knew better, I did better’. Over time, I have also developed some empathy and compassion for myself.

This dissertation began with a Prologue – it is the scenario that provided context for me to examine anti-Indigenous racism and resistance to learning. In the following, I revisit the scenario with concrete steps that would be undertaken based on learning from this research and my own experiences. These points highlight some of the preparation that I would now undertake were I to relive this incident at this time:

- Interracial Co-Facilitation
- Groundwork
- Setting the Context for Learning
- Frontloading Emotional Reactions
- Being Prepared
- Responding to Expressions of anti-Indigenous Microaggressions and Racism

### **8.1.1. Interracial Co-Facilitation**

If I had the chance to change the racial composition of the educators in this classroom, I would ask for a White co-facilitator. In the original scenario, both of the facilitators are Indigenous women; which has numerous implications. For the students who are White and others who are non-Indigenous, the likelihood that anti-Indigenous stereotypes will be activated is high. These stereotypes include perceptions of Indigenous educators as unqualified, biased, angry, less intelligent, and so on. For the educators, challenging White students about racist comments and beliefs is more effectively done by a White facilitator. If this challenging is done by an Indigenous facilitator, the potential consequences are that this educator will experience backlash, more resistance, and activation of negative racist stereotypes. Interracial facilitation is a strategic response to the reality of race-based resistance.

### **8.1.2. Groundwork**

I would make an effort to find out 'who is in the room' prior to the class, workshop, or presentation. If possible I will circulate in the room before the start of the class and introduce myself. I will do my best to learn the names of the students; maybe ask them where they work or come from. The purpose is to gain some information about my audience and to help me connect to individuals on a personal level.

### **8.1.3. Setting the Context for Learning**

Instead of stating: *"I really hope that over this week we will get to know each other and I also hope that we can begin to have those 'courageous conversations' that we don't get to have about these issues,"* I would provide an overview of the content that will be covered and then spend a few moments setting a context for this learning. I will begin by acknowledging that everyone in the room enters this learning space from a different place. I would go on to explain that some people will have deep knowledge and even lived experiences of the topics we are going to discuss. I would then acknowledge that some of the students may have very little knowledge of these topics and further that those who never have engaged in dialogues related to our shared colonial history or anti-Indigenous racism will have a lowered self-awareness of the dynamics that can arise in the midst of this learning. I would let them know that this means that there is a

spectrum of experiences and knowledge that people bring to this learning space and this diversity will impact the learning environment.

I would lead a discussion about the dynamics that sometimes arise when there is a lowered awareness of colonization and the impact of anti-Indigenous racism. I would ask that everyone pay attention to the way they ask and frame questions, and that while this is a public learning space we need to recognize that our learning should not be at the expense of others. I would likely explain what I mean as follows: “Learning in public means taking risks, and sometimes we are unaware of the impact of what we say. For example, if I am struggling with understanding why some Indigenous people seem to be over-represented in the legal system, I am not going to say something like, “Do Indigenous people have a propensity for crime?” I would frame this curiosity as, “What might be some reasons that Indigenous youth are over-represented in the legal system?”

#### **8.1.4. Frontloading Emotional Reactions**

Depending on the depth of the topic area, it may be necessary to talk about emotional responses. The purpose of doing this would be to acknowledge that there may be emotional labour involved when one is learning about issues that are related to colonial history and its legacy. Responses may include confusion, anger, sadness, and fear. This discussion can lead to generating ideas about healthy ways to manage these emotions and also ways to support each other’s learning.

#### **8.1.5. Being Prepared**

In learning environments in which anti-Indigenous microaggressions and racism are likely to emerge, there is no substitute for being well prepared. As an educator, I would take responsibility for the learning that is necessary to address my own knowledge gaps. My goal would be to know that I can address the expressions of racism with confidence and those students and colleagues who are Indigenous will not be harmed as a result of my own incompetence.

*I see that half the room is Indigenous women and they are staring at me. One of the women has her mouth open and her eyes are HUGE. One of*

*the women says quietly to the woman beside her "Wow, here we go already" or something like that. Huh?*

*What does that mean? After that there is silence. Everything seems like it is slow motion. Why are they all looking at me?*

The scenario described above has multiple layers of complexity. There is complexity related to the racial diversity of the classroom, to the racist comment made by the student, to the consequences of the lack of front loading and general preparing of the students for the content area, and so on. In order to be able to answer the question, "Why are they all looking at me?", I will need to understand that I have the responsibility and the knowledge, self-awareness and skills to manage expressions of anti-Indigenous racism. This means that I would undertake an assessment of my own awareness of the issues and ability to address manifestations of resistance and racism. I would ask for feedback from my colleagues who have shown competency about this issue and also from my students. Based on my own self-assessment and feedback I will undertake actions to enhance my own competencies.

### **8.1.6. Responding to Expressions of anti-Indigenous Microaggressions and Racism**

In response to "*That's great! I always wanted to know why all the Indians are drunks!*" I would pause and say "That is a powerful comment" and write it up on the flip chart. I would then say "Let's have a look at this. So, everyone, let's deconstruct this comment. I know that stuff is coming up for me so I am wondering what might be coming up for you?" I would then move to the flip chart and start to document the comments.

## **8.2. My Own Journey**

Part of my own learning in beginning to understand the spectacle of anti-Indigenous racism in an educational context has been that it is necessary to take risks. In order to grow and nurture my learning, I made the decision to be open, to be transparent about my own professional and personal development. It would be disingenuous to say that I have perfected all of this. I have not. I am a human being and on a good day I believe I can model all of what I hope to represent. On a 'bad' day, I have to be self-aware that I am not at my best and that I will need to be cautious about my thoughts and actions.

Being transparent about my own professional and personal development has meant that I had to learn to be comfortable with vulnerability, to learn in public, and honour the challenges in this process. I had to accept that when I put forward my Indigenous voice I need to be more prepared than others, and to accept that my work will be more scrutinized and held to a higher standard. I also had to grow ‘thick skin’ and be able to contextualize the predictable backlash, contempt, and disrespect that also come with challenging anti-Indigenous racism. I am still in this process of learning and growing and know it will never end.

Certainly I am changed from doing this study. I have a much deeper appreciation for the complexity of anti-Indigenous racism. Originally, I was hoping that my research would produce a concise suite of tools to address racism and resistance. I heard clearly that the participants were also hoping this would happen. While the findings suggest many helpful ideas and strategies, they do not fit easily into a tidy check list for educators. What I have provided is some sound theory that can help to inform the ways we can engage in this work. If we do not develop a personal pedagogy that is informed by this work, I believe we are at risk of harming not only Indigenous students but also each other and ourselves.

As my friend and Elder Gerry Oleman has often said:

*We cannot say goodbye to a problem until we have at first said ‘hello!’*

(Oleman, San’yas Elder, 2018).

This is my way of saying hello.

**Gilakas’la**

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# Appendix A. Invitation to Participate in Study

## Invitation to Participate in Study Educators, Instructors, Professors, Trainers

**Title of Study:** Teaching about Race and Racism: Managing the Indigenous Elephant in the Classroom

**Principal Investigator:** Cheryl Ward, Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

**Senior Supervisor:** Dr. Dolores van der Wey, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

**Goal:** Learning environments are often sites where Indigenous-specific issues and discourse emerges in ways that undermine the cultural safety of Indigenous learners, educators and others. The purpose of this study is to explore the requirements for facilitating a culturally safe learning environment when addressing Indigenous-specific content. To participate in this study, you will need to be, or have been an adult educator who has experience managing these dynamics.

**Benefits of the Study:** This study will inform the knowledge, self-awareness and skills needed to increase cultural safety of students and educators when dealing with narratives related to Indigenous people. This study will inform a teaching video which will be available to universities for professional development.

**Procedures:** You will participate in an in-person interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. You will be given the interview questions two weeks ahead of the scheduled interview. There will be an opportunity to participate in a 90 minutes focus group following the semi-structured interviews. You may withdraw at any time.

**Confidentiality:** All data will be kept confidential and the identity of the participants will not be recorded in the dissertation. Data will be stored on a mini-hard drive for 2 years and kept in a locked cabinet. While participants will be encouraged not to discuss the content of the focus group to people outside the group, we will not be able to control what participants do with the information that is discussed.

**Risks:** There are no risks associated with this study and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

If you are willing to participate in this project, and or would like to talk about this opportunity, please email me at [crward@sfu.ca](mailto:crward@sfu.ca) or phone me at xxx-xxx-xxxx. I will be completing this project under the direction and supervision of Dr. Dolores van der Wey, [dolores\\_vanderwey@sfu.ca](mailto:dolores_vanderwey@sfu.ca) (xxx-xxx-xxxx), Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University 8888 University Drive, Burnaby BC, Canada V5A 1S6.

Gilakasla'

Cheryl Ward MSW RSW EdD (abd)

## Appendix B. Consent Form

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION



8888 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: 604-773-7809

Application number: 2014s0038  
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University  
8888 University Drive, Burnaby BC, Canada V5A 1S6

### Consent Form

#### Teaching about Race and Racism: Managing the Indigenous Elephant in the Classroom

The University and those conducting this research study subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort and safety of participants. This research has received ethics approval and is being conducted under permission of the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board. The Board's chief concern is for the health, safety and psychological well-being of research participants.

**Principal Investigator:** Cheryl Ward, Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

**Senior Supervisor:** Dr. Dolores van der Wey, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

**Goal:** Learning environments are often sites where Indigenous-specific issues and discourse emerge in ways that undermine the cultural safety of Indigenous learners, educators and others. The purpose of this doctoral study is to explore the requirements for facilitating a culturally safe learning environment when addressing Indigenous-specific content. To participate in this study, you will need to be, or have been an adult educator who has experience managing these dynamics.

**Benefits of the Study:** This study will help elicit the knowledge, self-awareness and skills needed to increase cultural safety of students and educators when dealing with narratives related to Indigenous people.

**Procedures:** You will participate in an in-person semi-structured interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. You will be given the interview questions two weeks ahead of the scheduled interview. There will also be an opportunity to participate in a focus group following the interview. The focus group will discuss the themes that emerge from the semi-structured interviews, the duration of which will be approximately 90 minutes and will be held at a location convenient to the participants. You may withdraw at any time and if you decide to withdraw, the audio recording will be erased and the notes shredded.

**Confidentiality:** Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be released without your consent unless required by law. While participants will be encouraged not to discuss the content of the focus group to people outside the group, we will not be able to control what participants do with the information that is discussed. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. All data will be kept on a computer USB and stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

**Organizational Permission:** Permission to conduct this research study from your work setting (including university and/or colleges and/or training institutions) has not been obtained. There are no risks of your participation without the organization's consent.

**Risks:** There are no risks associated with this study and you can withdraw at any time.

**Consent for Future Use of the Data:** There may be opportunity to use this data to inform curriculum that would address issues that arise in the adult education environment. Your consent would be necessary for this data to be used and you can indicate your consent or withhold your consent in the section below.

**Comments and questions** can be addressed to either the Senior Supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey, Professor, Faculty of Education; email [dvanderw@sfu.ca](mailto:dvanderw@sfu.ca), phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or me, Cheryl Ward - Email: [crward@sfu.ca](mailto:crward@sfu.ca) or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

All concerns or complaints can be sent to Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [jtoward@sfu.ca](mailto:jtoward@sfu.ca) or (1) xxx-xxx-xxxx.

By signing this form below, you confirm that you:

1. Understand what is required based on the above information
2. Understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time
3. Understand the provisions for confidentiality
4. Provide consent for potential future use of the data \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

I self-identify as:

White

Indigenous

Non-Indigenous racialized

## Appendix C. Interview Guide

Application number: 2014s0038  
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University  
8888 University Drive, Burnaby BC, Canada V5A 1S6

### Teaching about Race and Racism: Managing the Indigenous Elephant in the Classroom

Cheryl Ward, Principal Investigator (PI)  
Dr. Dolores van der Wey, Associate Professor, Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Education

#### Introduction

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview is intended to gather information about your experiences in classrooms where Indigenous content and issues have emerged. I will ask you a series of questions that are designed to elicit not only your experiences, but to encourage you to share thoughts and ideas about these experiences.

#### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do educators address or not address resistance discourse related to Indigenous-specific issues?

Question probes as appropriate:

- How would you describe your experience of these types of discussions? (E.g., straight forward or challenging?)
- Have you experienced or witnessed the expression of Indigenous-specific racism in the educational environment? If so, generally speaking, how would you describe this experience?
- What are the key elements of this dialogue?
- Are there incidents that stand out for you as particularly challenging or straight forward? (Describe)
- Are you able to share an experience? Can you think of others?
- When you think about these situations, are there any commonalities? Recurring themes?

2. What are the characteristics of an Indigenous-specific racial dialogue that make the dialogue challenging for educators?

Question probes as appropriate:

- Are there predictable issues that surface in dialogues about Indigenous issues?
- What do you find straight forward to deal with and what do you find challenging?

3. If you have experienced this in your practice, what intervention strategies have proved

successful and unsuccessful in facilitating challenging dialogues on Indigenous-specific racism?

Question probes as appropriate:

- Are there situations that stand out for you as ones where you feel you handled a challenging discussion or incident well? Can you tell me how you handled it? If challenging, have you given thought since that time as to how you might have handled it?
- What do you think would have better prepared you for facilitating these situations? (Was there knowledge missing, skills that were needed, things you were unaware of?)
- Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share on this subject?

### **Focus Group**

Individuals who have participated in the semi-structured interviews will be invited to participate in a focus group. The focus group size will depend on participant availability and geographic location and the time frame will be approximately 90 minutes.

### **Goals**

Questions for the focus group will be developed around the themes that emerge from the individual interviews. The goals of the focus group will be to open space for discussion of share experiences and to deepen the discussion related to the themes that have presented during the semi-structured interviews.

### **Focus Group Questions:**

1. (a) What are the characteristics of Indigenous-specific racism?  
(b) How is it different than other racism?
2. (a) How do you think the racial standpoint of an educator surfaces in this?  
(b) What are the risks and the benefits in tackling Indigenous-specific racism?
3. What do you do about it?
  - (a) Strategies
  - (b) What works? What doesn't work?

## Appendix D. Resource Sheet for VIU Participants

Application number: 2014s0038  
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University  
8888 University Drive, Burnaby BC, Canada V5A 1S6

Thank you so much for your participation in this research study. If you find that you would like to follow up for support following your interview or the focus group, here is a list of people who are aware of this research study and are available to speak with you. As well, here is the contact information to VIHA mental health services as well as the VIU Employee Assistance Program.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Warm regards,

Cheryl

Cheryl Ward - Email: [crward@sfu.ca](mailto:crward@sfu.ca) or phone me at xxx-xxx-xxxx

### RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT:

1. (Name), MSW (XXX-XXX-XXXX)
2. (Name), Elder (XXX-XXX-XXXX)  
(Elder's [email address](#))
3. Vancouver Island Mental Health Services  
Access/Crisis Services (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
24 Hour Crisis Line: 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx
4. Vancouver Island University: Human Resources (xxx-xxx-xxxx)  
Employee Assistance Program  
<https://www2.viu.ca/HumanResources/NEFAP.asp>