INDIGENOUS TEACHERS: NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY AND CHANGE

by

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Bachelor of Arts Simon Fraser University 1994

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2005

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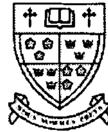

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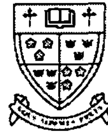

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ABSTRACT

This study explores personal and professional identities of nine Indigenous teachers in the lower mainland of British Columbia. It examines their views of "who they are" and the impacts of family, community and educational experiences.

A narrative inquiry approach, employing in-depth interviewing and open-ended questions, was used to initiate collaborative and dialogical relationships with participants. These methods draw on the principles of research as praxis that encourage people to develop deeper understanding of their situations through self-reflection.

Great diversity among teachers was apparent, nevertheess, several common themes, relating to marginalization and a passionate commitment to change, emerged. These themes are: 1) The impact of official discourses of identity, 2) Bi-racial identities, 3) experiences with racism in the community, in teacher education and in the workplace, 4) devaluing of Indigenous programs and curricula, 5) being an educator not only for children but an educator for colleagues, 6) competition among the oppressed, and 7) obligation to other Indigenous teachers and school workers, as well as an obligation to their communities.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Greg Canning, and to my children, Patrick and Aurelia, and my grandparents and parents Diane Stewart and Chester Stewart, and to all Indigenous teachers in the Province of British Columbia. Remember to "Stay Calm, Be Brave and Watch for the Signs."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish thank all the teachers who participated in this study and shared their stories with me. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my senior supervisor, Dr. June Beynon for her guidance and support, and encouragement and patience throughout this study. My thanks to Dr. Kelleen Toohey for her guidance and support as well as openness to continually challenge. I wish thank the women from TARG (Teacher Action Research Group) and welcoming me into the group and the sisters from Women Giving Birth to Change, for their personal support and encouragement. Dr. Michael Ling and the late Dr. Ellen Gee both who supported me in this thesis.

I wish to acknowledge Cecelia Kalaw and Sandy Berman for their passion and creative invaluable assistance in working with me on the transcripts. Dr. Michael Warsh's assistance in the writing process and use of home as a refuge to write and process is greatly appreciated.

I also wish to express gratitude to the Nisga'a Git Gingolix education program for their support and encouragement to continue to the finish.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Background

Teachers of Indigenous ancestry have encountered a number of obstacles and barriers to their participation in Canadian society. This is clearly a direct result of the Canadian government's position to "protect, civilize and assimilate" Indigenous people (Tobias, 1976, p. 39). The identity of Indigenous teachers is the fundamental issue for me in this research. Like Lave and Wenger (1991), I "conceive of identities as long term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice"(p.53). From this perspective, identities are not fixed. In fact, Hall (1992) suggests identity is not singular or static; rather, he indicates that acknowledgement of history, language and culture all contribute to the contextual background and on-going process of identity construction. Further, our identities are constructed in interaction with others and diverse facets of those experiences are called into play in different contexts. Gender, race, class and sexuality play out in different ways depending on the social context.

This thesis will explore a number of issues around Indigenous teachers' life-trajectories in terms of family, community, schooling, and the workplace. In a broad sense, I want to explore how teachers' identities are negotiated. How do they see themselves "placed, positioned, and situated" (Hall, 1996, p. 257) in the

contexts in which they work? What are the social interactions and relationships that contribute to educators feeling unwelcomed, unwanted, undervalued; or welcomed, wanted and valued? The role that Indigenous educators play in schools, as well as issues they have around self-identity, are important to me as an Indigenous educator myself. I am interested in discovering what processes, both positive and negative, Indigenous teachers go through in public school systems. What identities are recreated? What identities are born? How do Indigenous teachers interpret and understand what they experience? I also want to explore Indigenous teachers' life experiences in the school system, from individual, social, systemic, cultural and political perspectives. In what ways do the teachers of Indigenous ancestry understand themselves to be connected to, or disconnected from the social, cultural and political events in which they participate by virtue of their work as teachers? What do they experience in the school system that keeps them involved?

Purpose

Little has been written about Indigenous teachers in general and even less about Indigenous teachers in British Columbia. Moreover, little has been written about Indigenous teachers' evolving sense of identities, or about the importance of this topic to efforts aimed at expanding the number of Indigenous teachers in the public schools. The purpose of this study is to document, analyze and interpret identity issues of Indigenous public school teachers who work in urban and suburban schools in B.C. (British Columbia). This study is my attempt to

understand better one facet of Indigenous education in Canada, that is, how perspectives of Indigenous teachers on issues of identity can, in the long run, contribute to constructing better opportunities and experiences for future Indigenous educators.

My Identity – Researcher's Locations

Who am I? My Nisga'a name is Galxa'guii biik sook, a name selected for me by my family, which translates to Robin Flying Through. I am the child of Diane and Chester Stewart, and I am a sister to six siblings. I was born and raised in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. I am Ganada (frog/raven clan) from the house of Ksim Xsaan. My house chiefs are Ax dii wil luugooda who is the late Bertie Mckay and is replaced by Wallace Clarke, Gal ksa t'ipxat who is Robert Stewart, and Oscar Mercer. I am wife/partner/spouse to Lou bite mimk, Greg Canning and he is from the Laxsgiik (eagle clan). I am the mother of Patrick and Aurelia. In addition to being a mother, I am viewed by my nation as an Urban Nisga'a and one who is pursuing a formal education, and a teacher. I am proud to be an Indigenous woman. I participate in a living culture, Nisga'a epistemology, and I have a place I belong. Whether living in the city or the Nass Valley, my sense of belonging is within me. As I reclaim and make voice I must remember I live in many worlds and occupy different identities. I appear to be constantly negotiating worlds, adjusting to the different worlds in which I participate. I have not always felt good about my identity as an Aboriginal First Nations, Urban Indian, Indigenous or Nisga'a. The denial has caused me great

shame guilt and anger. Over the years I have reclaimed my Indigenous identity and embraced it. While others of Aboriginal ancestry have made similar journeys, our trajectories are nevertheless unique and individual.

My long journey into and through the education system is central to the construction of my identity. As an adult I have always worked with youth in some capacity: as a childcare worker, street youth worker and a manager of a group home. On April 15, 1994, I officially finished my undergraduate degree and with resume in one hand and degree in the other, I made several calls to the Vancouver School Board. The Director of Student Services interviewed me and wanted to hire me on the spot.

In 1994 I began working full-time as a First Nations School Support Worker (FNSSW) in an elementary school where 40 of its 650 students were of Aboriginal ancestry. My experiences in these early years of employment in the education system were significant to my growing professional identity as an Indigenous teacher. The first year I was on the job my administrator praised and advised me to keep up a high profile, as not everyone on staff understood the position and he felt they could become resentful. As I attended School Based Team meetings and interacted with other education professionals, I was introduced to a new terminology that applied to my students: "numbered", "lettered", "speech and language delays", "low, moderate and mild mentally disabled", "behaviour disordered", social workers, foster care, and neglect, and students to be referred for testing, speech and language services, and counselling. I was troubled that these labels were being used primarily in order

for students to qualify for Ministry of Education designated funds. My concerns were reinforced by countless reports and studies acknowledging the despair and hopelessness Aboriginal people felt toward the education system, including their feelings about the high student drop out rates and the lack of cultural programs or services for Aboriginal students.

After four years of work in and out of the classroom my administrator and family suggested I apply to a teacher education program. I became a certified teacher and returned to my old position as a FNSSW, but soon realized I wanted to be in the classroom. I resigned from the support worker job and signed on as an employee-on-call (substitute teacher). My motivation to become a teacher related to both my desire for more education and to be more powerfully positioned as schools initiate changes beneficial for First Nations students.

I applied for a number of job postings in the mainstream system, but really I wanted to be a teacher in a First Nations Program. The joy I felt imagining this was electrifying – to be a teacher in a First Nations program, a place to start a revolution by busting stereotypes. I had just completed a teacher education program that reinforced that the 'sky is the limit' and after all, I came to teaching for political reasons. An educational revolution had to be rekindled. I was so full of hope; hope that dared to tell the truth with grace and respect for all peoples.

Before enrolling in the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University I dreamed about working in a program that was run by and filled with Aboriginal people. While I now had acquired the tools to take me into a place over which teachers had control, the reality of looking for work was a great

disappointment. I phoned many people and finally landed an interview. I was hired, thrilled to be working for Aboriginal children in the public school system.

I had so many dreams and ideas about what was needed in order for our children to succeed. I was smiling all the time and so proud to be in a school, a home for our children and myself. I had my very own mailbox, a name on the door. But to my dismay, the name on the door was not my name. The fact was I did not have a real home in the school. I was expected to move to many rooms and the students would do the same. I should have recognized this as a sign of what was to come, but I navigated to the best of my ability. My past positive experience with administration and management and the general school board setting had not prepared me for the dark side of school district politics.

In this setting I forced myself to become more assertive and took up a place of conscience among my colleagues. As I watched and participated in School Based Team meetings, I took notes and started to ask questions. I noticed inconsistencies within the public school system's Aboriginal education policies and practices, and inconsistencies in myself. First, I did not participate well but my mother reminded me that a bystander stance is a form of complicity. I noticed that often our own women would or could not just support each other, but rather they all too often began to bully each other. I chose not to participate in negative gossip and the hoarding of knowledge. I believed in building bridges with all people and it was not healthy for me to participate with the "divide and conquer" mentality. For me, I came to work with children, not to deal with unhealthy people. Nevertheless, I realized that we were all there for the same

purpose and started to use this as my new 'mantra'. As I worked with the children I heard people's ideas on what the program should look like and who should be there. One of my colleagues at that time was a challenge: this individual often ridiculed me in front of the children and made negative predictions about the students and their future employment potential. I had a hard time telling this person to stop doing this even though in fact I was shocked by what happened. At first I thought this person would stop, but slowly I moved away from working there and more towards work with the Teachers' union.

How did we get to this state of affairs? The program for Aboriginal learners that I was working in looked good on paper, but in actuality there was a lack of solid support that I felt was 'killing us'. In trying to make sense of my own experiences with teaching in the public system, with my experiences of racism, both institutional and interpersonal as an Aboriginal teacher, I turned my attention to the research on these and similar issues, some of which are reported on in this thesis. I was interested in other Indigenous teachers' experiences teaching in public education systems: how do they see themselves within the system and how do they participate within the system? As a result of variety of particular moments in my career as a teacher, in my life as a parent of Aboriginal children in public schools, and as a member of my professional union these issues continued to be brought to the forefront of my attention.

Many of the kinds of problems I experienced with the program described above I also encountered elsewhere in my professional life. For example, at the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2000

there was an employment equity policy for Aboriginal teachers adopted; however, it is not monitored or evaluated afterwards and it is not apparent whether it is having any positive effects. During this annual AGM a number of our colleagues spoke against this employment equity policy because most were concerned that the teachers being hired would not be qualified.

In addition, teachers over and over again tell that they know a great deal about all cultures, that they are well educated in other cultural practices, and as a result they know how to make provisions for a 'safe class'. And they say that because they have this knowledge, they could not possibly be racist. But my experience tells me something different.

In my work with a BCTF task force that had been dealing with employment equity, inclusive schools, and history and culture, I met many Indigenous teachers from all over BC. In our discussions we found that we shared experiences of racism and social and professional alienation from colleagues. Because Aboriginal political movements in the province (primarily the Nisga'a treaty process) were affecting working conditions for all Indigenous teachers, we often felt vulnerable and defensive as our non-Native colleagues began to use us as a sounding board to make sense of the political events around them.

I had hoped that in my move from a support staff position (First Nations Schools Support Worker) to a professional position as teacher would mean that I would have more status and more validity, and that my opinions would be taken more seriously. I was disappointed that these things did not happen when I became a teacher. I was confused and felt I had little support, so I looked for

another way to cope. I have immense spiritual, social, and cultural pain within my desire to learn and be a good student and to be a 'good Indian'.

With this as my background I came to graduate school. I came to become an academic, to learn the academic culture, to find the tools used by the academy to create educational realities consistent with First Nations experience. I wanted to walk and speak with the confidence of an insider and not compromise my voice. I applied to a Masters in Education at SFU in hopes that I would find academics who share my passion for social change and are committed to living social action pedagogy. In graduate school I have met people whose varied life experiences I find refreshing. I have shared with others, read and written and learned a great deal and in fact, I fear if I had not enrolled in the Masters Program to begin with I might have quit teaching. I find the psychological and spiritual effects of racism in public education are a heavy weight to bear.

Because my objectives in graduate school included my making sense of my own experiences as an Indigenous teacher in the public school dealing with racism, (institutional and interpersonal), I decided to direct my attention to others in the similar circumstances to see what I might learn from them and what might in turn might be useful to other Indigenous teachers. Hence, this thesis is about Indigenous teachers' experience of teaching in the public education system with a focus on how these teachers see themselves and how they participate within the system.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 1, I give background information on myself and briefly note the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 examines the literature I found pertinent to the study. In Chapter 3, I present and discuss the methods of research I employed in undertaking the study. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the data and Chapter 5 provides my reflections, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 explores the literature used in the thesis. The historical and current situation regarding how education has suppressed Indigenous people's languages and cultures is followed by a review of oppression theories, sociocultural theory about identity and libratory pedagogical theory. These suggest how oppressive systems might be deconstructed using education as a powerful tool.

History

The term 'segregation' has a long and negative history both in the United States and in Canada as well (Fleras and Elliot, 1992 and Sefa Dei, 1996). Historically, the policies and practices of segregation were used to disenfranchise and isolate individuals and groups who were not 'white' or of European ancestry. These excluded individuals and groups not only included African, but Hispanic, Asian and South-Asian, and Indigenous peoples too. This experience was imposed on large populations in general, and of course had deep impact on children of these communities in particular.

Sefa Dei (1996) presents an argument that mainstream school systems have continuously devalued the collective memories of minority students as members of historically oppressed groups. The goals of schooling for colonized populations served the needs of the colonizer, not the colonized (Perley, 1993).

A number of highly damaging policies and harmful educational practices were directed at Indigenous people. Education was seen as the major vehicle used to commit cultural genocide on Indigenous peoples in Canada, the legacy of which is still with us all (Perley, 1988). In both United States and Canada, Aboriginal children were segregated from society and taken from their families to be educated in Residential schools (Chrisjohn and Young 1997). Indian Residential School experiences had devastating effects on Indigenous culture. The Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1877 wrote, "Education is the primary principle in the civilization and advancement of the Indian Race" (Quoted in Ashworth, p.117 1990). This assumption that the "Indian Race" was not civilized has had continuing negative effects.

In an 1881 Department of Indian and Northern Affairs document Sir John A. MacDonald was more specific with regard to his government's intentions with Indigenous education.

> The Indian youth, to enable him to cope successfully with his brother of white origin, must be dissociated from the prejudicial influences by which he is surrounded on the reserve of his band. And the necessity for the establishment more generally of institutions, whereat Indian children, besides being instructed in the usual branches of education, will be lodged, clothed, kept separate from home influences, taught trades and instructed in agriculture, is becoming every year more apparent (Quoted in Ashworth, 1990, p 117).

The policy that was adopted by the Federal Government, in co-operation with the churches, sought to 'civilize' and isolate Indigenous children from their communities. Comments like the one above demonstrate the dominant group's perception of its own superiority.

In dissociating Indian children from their communities and keeping them separate from familial influences, the government, on behalf of the people of Canada, launched a full frontal attack on Indian culture. One aspect of the attack was in the form of residential schools, the primary means of educating Indigenous children.

Indigenous languages were identified as the primary means of expressing and transmitting culture and so they too came under attack (Haig- Brown, 1988, p. 27). By 1895 the Department of Indian Affairs and the residential schools adopted an "English only" policy under the presumption that Indigenous children would be "permanently disabled" if they did not learn English (Ashworth, 1990, p 118).

From the first day Indigenous children entered residential school they were not permitted to speak their Native languages - the consequences for disobedience were severe. Punishments included humiliation, neglect, head shaving, and physical abuse (Haig-Brown, 1988, p 82). Older children who had already had exposure to the residential school were not even permitted to explain to the newly arrived, the younger ones, what was expected of them. As a result, what these children heard on arrival was incomprehensible to them. There was no transition time provided for these students to adjust to the new system before having to start learning a new language. Personal testimonies of children's experiences can be found in Celia Haig-Brown's *Resistance and Renewal* (1988). One woman, Martha, recalled these scenes.

> I was punished quite a bit because I spoke my language ...I was put in a corner and punished and sometimes, I was just given bread and water...or they'd try to embarrass us and they'd put us in front of the whole class. (p. 82)

As a result of much of the punishment received, parents who had already gone through the residential system began to speak in English to their pre-residential school children in the hopes that their own children would avoid some of the negative experiences associated with residential schools. This played an important role in the demise of many of the Indigenous languages in British Columbia (Wyatt, 1979).

Those who tried to reclaim their Indigenous language soon discovered that it is no easy task. Many were not successful at it, but for those who were, it took a number of years to feel comfortable with it. Leo, interviewed by Haig-Brown, commented:

> You know something funny about speaking your own language. When I first come out of school, I was embarrassed to speak my language in front of white people.... Now I speak Shuswap any place and any time...but it took about three or four years...to get away from the embarrassment of speaking it on the street.... They just about brainwashed us out of it (Haig-Brown, p 120).

Testimonies such as Leo's, give a picture of how disempowering education can be when it rejects a minority's culture and language. For years Leo, and many others like him, were convinced that their language was inferior.

Despite either the government or the missionaries' attempts to assimilate Indigenous children by using force, they were not always successful. For the children of residential schools using their forbidden Indigenous language was just

one of the many ways they resisted cultural and linguistic genocide (Haig-Brown, 1988).

Beginning in the late 1950s, the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs began a policy of integrating Indigenous children into the provincial education systems across Canada. It was during this period that an amendment was made to the Indian Act for the "special status" of Indigenous people and the promotion of their integration. This idea of Integration was said to be different from assimilation; it was to allow Indigenous people to retain their languages and cultures (Perley, 1993). However, the federal and provincial governments negotiated agreements without Indigenous people at the table. The transfer of Indigenous youth from federally funded schools to Provincial schools was initiated without the consent of Indigenous people. Similarly, the transfer of funds that accompanied this shift of responsibility required no signatures of the affected Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples' input into schools that were said to be promoting their integration was virtually non-existent (Perley, 1993). Moreover, provincial schools made no provisions for the integration of Indigenous languages and cultures

The Residential school period destabilized Indigenous families and their social and cultural health and well-being. The Residential school period led a number of Indigenous nations to call into question provisions for the education of Indigenous children. Indigenous nations of Canada wanted a system that honoured Indigenous languages and cultures. Indigenous nations wanted their

children to have pride in their cultures and to be educated in their traditional teachings (Kirkness and Bowman (1992).

Kirkness and Bowman (1992) summarize the influential policy statement of the 1973 National Indian Brotherhood 'Indian Control of Indian Education' (The Red Paper), a document that is held up by Indigenous leaders today to remind the Ministry of Education, BC College of Teachers, BC Teachers' Federation, and BC School Trustees Association of their responsibility to address the needs of Indigenous learners. Within the text of the document, Kirkness and Bowman (1992) note that parents are acknowledged as advocates for their children in receiving an education with a strong sense of their own cultural identity. Local control and parental involvement are called for, as are Cultural survival schools and instruction in Indigenous languages.

Now, some thirty years since the Red Paper's publication, Indigenous people are still struggling to make the schools inclusive of Indigenous culture and language (Armstrong, 2005). One attempt in this direction is to increase the number of Indigenous teachers. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation says, "We need more Indigenous teachers". BCTF statistics indicate there are 324 Indigenous teachers out of a total of 42,000 teachers in the province. To reach some kind of parity in representation, there should be around 2000 Indigenous teachers employed in the public school system (BCTF Task Force Recommendations, 1999).

Identity

In the context of the oppressive role that education has played in the lives and cultures of Indigenous people, sociocultural theories on identity provide us with suggestions on how Indigenous people might reconstruct these oppressive systems; however, there is in fact little examination in the theoretical literature on identity issues of Indigenous teachers per se. In looking for guidance on issues of Indigenous identity we have to look elsewhere. Hall (1992) defines identity as not fixed or finished, but as forever in process. He observes that while common historical experiences contribute to points of similarity, there are also unique life experiences that have implications for individual identity construction. In The House that Race Built, Hall (1998) writes:

> Symbolic lines are being drawn...and power uses differences as a way of marking off who does and who does not belong...The future belongs to those who are ready to take in a bit of the other, as well as being what they themselves are. After all, it is because their history and ours is so deeply and profoundly and inextricably intertwined that racism exists (p. 298).

Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte and Cain (1998) bring attention to Bakhtin's notions of the moment-by-moment negotiation individuals engage in during the process of making sense of what is happening in their lives. As they say, "if we are alive then we are engaged in answering what is directed to us" (p.279). Individuals actively respond to change and the positioning of others and the social system, and throughout this process identities form and reform.

Similar to other teachers, Indigenous teachers also have been and will continue to be engaged in the process of forming and reforming their identities.

Holland, et al. (1998) stress the active participation of individuals in forming their identities. "Identities that concern us are ones that trace our participation, especially our agency, in socially produced, culturally constructed activities"(p.40).

The politics of social positioning and the spaces of authoring (agency) are all relevant to identity construction. Again, Holland, et al. note, "Identities are our way of figuring the interfaces among these dimensions of collective life; our way of naming the places where society organizes; the pivots of our worlds" (p. 287). Holland et al. (1998) assert we "are constructed between socially related positions and we are strongly affected by the position we are cast into within interactions" (p.188). They argue, "what we call identities remain dependent upon social relations and material conditions. If these relations and material conditions change, they must be 'answered', and old 'answers' about who one is may be undone" (p.189). Yet in the answering, people exercise agency.

The findings of the interviews from the present research will be organized by using what Holland et al. define as the contexts of identity, "figured worlds", which they define as, "recognized fields or frames of social life, family, community, schooling and workplace" (p 7). In each of these figured worlds, issues of 'positionality', space and creativity are salient. Holland et al. specify in this regard that position relates to power, status, and rank, as well as to space and creative possibilities for authoring. These possibilities are relevant in the interviewees' discussions about what changes in school they see as helpful and important. The participants in this study are, again as Holland et al. note,

"arranging their identifiable social discourse/practices that are one's resources in order to craft a response in a time and space defined by others" (p. 272). I will highlight these points in the data analysis (Chapter 4) and then bring these to the forefront again in the final interpretation in Chapter 5.

Bakhtin (1981) also refers extensively to what he calls, "positionality, which he says, "is linked to power, status, rank and space" (p.272). He notes, "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others"(p. 294). Bakhtin also addresses ideological environments. Similar to Holland et al.'s figured worlds; Bakhtin sees sites as places of ideological becoming. The "authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of the father, of adults and of teachers,) that do not know internal persuasiveness (p342)." The authoritative discourses are enforced by the world around us. "In the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by not authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code" Bakhtin p (342). The struggle between the authoritative discourses and the internally persuasive discourse creates tensions.

The tensions in the process of "the ideological becoming of a human being . . . is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (341). The process is the struggle to assimilate two distinct types of discourse. These struggles are apparent in the narratives of teachers interviewed in the present

research as they are situated in mainstream educational systems and struggle to "author" their own sense of who they are.

Oppression Theory

Smith (1990) argues that while there are different kinds of oppression with diverse impacts on identity, she also sees many similarities in what members of oppressed groups experience and suggests sharing common enemies could be a major reason for coming together to fight oppression. In Bakhtin and Holland et al.'s use of the term, authoritative discourses of oppression have implications for identity construction. Smith is critical of single-issue struggles and calls on all oppressed groups to address injustice everywhere. Moraga (1983), however, points to the danger of failing to acknowledge the specificity of oppressions. Unless there is a commitment to naming the "isms" within each person, in her view, no authentic connection among oppressed groups can take place. In other words, for her, identity is a key issue and obliterating it as relevant in coalition work undermines possibilities for consolidated group action.

Takagi (1998) points out the tensions between sameness and difference that haunt identity politics. She cites a number of ways that, for example, being gay is not like being Asian, one of which is the relative invisibility of sexual identity compared to racial identity. While both can be socially constructed, the former contains the quality of voluntarism that is not possible for a person of Asian heritage. One has the option to present oneself as "gay" or "lesbian", or alterNatively, attempt to "pass", or to stay in "the closet," that is, to hide one's

sexual preference. However, these same options are not available to most racial minorities in face-to face interaction with others (p. 455). In addition she points out that the worlds of Asian and gay Americans are experienced as separate places, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Despite any problems associated with Takagi's analysis of identity politics, especially as it pertains to what constitutes voluntarism, her work is instructive as consideration is given to several of the interviewees experiences with their own identify and Bill C31, authoritative Canadian Federal discourse on the differences between being status versus being non-status.

Strategies that fail to examine how exploitation takes shape in different forms often leads to battles over which forms of oppression produce the greatest suffering (hooks, 2000). Challenges to oppressive attitudes and the resistance with which they are met are responsible for many of the problems arising in coalitions (Bunch, 1990). Unless there is a willingness to change such oppressive attitudes and behaviours, coalition building will be seriously impeded. Coalition building is a critical component in constructing better opportunities and experiences for future Indigenous educators precisely because oppression is experienced by individuals but it must be addressed and overcome collectively.

Khayatt (1994) points out that rigid definitions of race and ethnicity do not account for the fluidity of oppression because they mask differences in class and location and fail to respect individual identities or take into account differences in lived experiences. Gender as a category, she argues, when considered a basis for discrimination, without accounting for class and race conceals distinct levels

of oppression within the larger category. "Unless the boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect to make visible the various nuances of each category, the usefulness of each becomes lost in a hierarchicalization of oppression" (p.10). Isolating each characteristic in an attempt to make it visible without taking the whole framework into consideration renders invisible the factors that combine to produce a situation of oppression and discrimination. The result is a piling up of one kind of oppression on another to show the extent of discrimination, or a debate as to which form of oppression, race, gender, class, or sexual orientation is most significant. Gender, race, class and sexuality must be considered together in order to convey the dynamics of oppression without denying the distinctiveness of each individual's experiences. This concept is crucial to this research, not only as it pertains to the analysis of the data as collected, but to the questions and the interview and data-collection process itself. It requires a more expansive and far-reaching interview protocol along with demands for a greater synthesis of such far-reaching data.

Moreover, individual differences also make categorizing a complex process. Lorde (1984) points out how white women's focus on their oppression as women ignores other significant differences, e.g. class, race, sexual orientation and warns that ignoring the diversity of oppressions presents the most serious threat to mobilizations of collective power of minority women, indeed to any mobilization of collective power. Lorde also cautions black women not to ignore or misname difference. Citing black women's perceptions of black lesbians as a threat to black nationhood, she points out how this leads to the

silencing and exclusion of black lesbians. Lorde emphasizes that it is not the differences themselves that separate, but the reluctance to recognize those differences and deal with the distortions that have resulted from ignoring and misnaming them (pp.114-123).

A further challenge to issues of identity relates to the relationship between privilege and oppression. The contention that privilege can and does coexist with oppression, and that being a victim of one form of discrimination is no guarantee against victimizing someone else on a different basis, brings to the surface some of the complex and problematic dynamics affecting those educating and organizing for change (Cole, 1986).

The idea that difference justifies domination is deeply embedded in society and is defended as natural. When power hierarchies are accepted as inevitable, people can be manipulated to fear that those who are different are a threat to their position and their survival. Traditionally feminists have challenged the "naturalness of male supremacy," but have also been presumed to question other areas of domination (Bunch, 1990, p. 50). This has been a reoccurring theme in hiring practices for Indigenous teachers and relationships between Indigenous educators. Those officially and legally defined as Indigenous and or those who speak an Indigenous language often claim privilege over other Indigenous individuals in job qualifications

The above literature, although focusing primarily on women, is significant first because there is not similar literature on Indigenous people and the oppressions they experience. But more so, it is significant because it identifies

and supports the analysis of tensions between the interpersonal and professional relationships for the Indigenous teachers: male, female or transgender. These oppression theories which consider implications of oppression for minority individual action in general set the stage for consideration of the dynamics of action and oppression for one particular group, namely Indigenous people, in particular, Indigenous teachers.

Possibilities for Liberatory Education

> While progressive, middle class white liberals claim to have the best interest of all children [in mind], their inability or refusal to recognize the unique needs and values of minority cultures prevents these children from succeeding in the educational system. (Delpit, 1988, p. 37)

A variety of education theorists and researchers (Casey 1993, Ladson-Billings 1995, Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1992 have inquired into how teachers of minority ancestries might help construct educational processes that more successfully engage learners of diverse ancestries. Others like hooks (1994) and Freire (1981) suggest that pedagogy that liberates requires that educators must be cognizant of their own positions of power and privilege in order to bring learners into the process of power sharing. Much has been written about the experiences of African-American and African- Canadian teachers (Casey, 1993; Foster, 1992; Henry, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These particular studies illustrate how minority teachers act as agents for social change and try to transform the educational settings they work in to counter the effects of racism, poverty and institutional barriers in the way of the children.

Casey (1993) examines the oral histories of four African American teachers who have worked with a high proportion of African American students. She argues that these teachers use their personal experiences with racism as key motivators. She notes: "Being a black teacher means raising the race, accepting personal responsibility for the well-being of one's people, and especially for the education of all black children" (Casey, 1993, p.153).

Henry (1992) addressed the political activism, as well as the educational histories, of five African Canadian female teachers who worked in the same school. The school population was well over 75% African Canadian. Henry observed and interviewed the women for over a one-year period. Their common experiences with sexism and racism were manifested in their desire to help their students be successful.

Ladson-Billings (1995) examined the lives of eight female teachers, five Blacks and three Whites. The teachers teach in one of the poorest school districts in the United States. This ethnographic research spanned three years. Ladson-Billings engaged in weekly interviews and videotaping. A number of common beliefs were uncovered: 1) It is necessary to give back to the community by teaching; 2) teaching is more than technical skill, and 3) every child can succeed. The study also illuminated the fact that these teachers committed to collective community success versus individual competitive success. The Black teachers were also very committed to the cause to empower the Black students to succeed in the White world.

Foster (1992) employed open-ended life histories to explore the experiences of twelve female and four male African American teachers. She maintains that these teachers acted as advocates for their African American students. Foster believes that "teaching African American students successfully consists of engaging these students in dialogues that continually question and change the status quo" (p. 197).

Benham (1997) explored the practice of three ethnic minority administrators. Benham analysed the experience and practices of an African American, Cuban American and South Asian administrator. She discerned that all three women experienced racism, and that they felt marginalized in the education system. For these women, hardship informed their view that educator advocacy was necessary to improve lives of minority students.

While the research studies document the importance of minority teacher advocacy in bringing positive changes for minority students, Beynon, Toohey and Kishor (1992) examined the problem of under-representation of Chinese and South Asians in teacher education. "Family and cultural values" as well as "institutional discrimination" (p. 157) may be reasons for their low participation rates in teacher education. Beynon et al. found, "it is incumbent on faculties of education to take measures to aid in the increased involvement of minority students at all levels" (p. 161). It appears that institutional advocacy is essential in bringing more minorities into positions where they can in turn work for change.

There is little written about Indigenous teachers. Much of what is written is about the teaching of Indigenous children and Indigenous schooling, but not specifically about Indigenous teachers.

Indigenous people have made great gains in providing documentation of what they see needs to happen in schools and the fact that they wish for more Indigenous teachers, but more needs to be written about what is happening to the Indigenous teachers once they leave teacher education and begin working in the public systems.

Despite the fact that there is very little written about Indigenous teachers in British Columbia, the work of the above researchers was useful in the analyses of key themes emerging from the narratives of the Indigenous teachers in this study. This analysis will be outlined in Chapter 5. These narratives demonstrate that language used by the Indigenous teachers in this study, is "populated" with the intentions of others. These teachers are constantly sifting through all aspects of their experiences and intentions, and the intentions of others, both past and present to, as Bakhtin says, "re- author their identities" (p.341).

Chapter 2 has reviewed literature that is specifically applicable to this study. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the methodology used in the research and examines the narrative inquiry approach to data gathering, as employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

Narrative Inquiry

This study employed a narrative inquiry approach to data gathering and used in-depth interviewing as its principal method. My intention was to establish collaborative and dialogical relationships with participants in order to explore issues of identity. I asked open-ended questions to assist participants in making sense of their personal experiences, reflecting on and telling their stories. I also drew on the principles of research as praxis, which encourages people to develop a deeper understanding of their situation through self-reflection (Lather, 1991). This method of self-reflection posits that understanding is implicit in actions, and can be surfaced, critiqued, and restructured through the process of self-reflection triggered by a research interview (Schon, 1983).

There is an assumption rooted in the narrative process that a researcher's own history and identity plays a significant part in constructing the participant's story. This assumption requires the researcher to ask her/himself in what way has s/he grown and shaped the research process. I took note of my reflections after the interviews and when listening to the transcripts and critiqued my interview style. I also made space in the introduction to this thesis to situate myself for the reader in the context of the issues I am researching.

I worked on the principle that narrative inquiry interviewing is a powerful tool to be used in research to understand others' stories (Van Manen 1997). The stories told are key to the exploration of who the narrator is and becomes. In telling, the narrator is involved in generating the value of certain events, relationships, or actions: of judging their worth. While narrated in a particular context and time, this story enables the researcher to gain insight into the value placed not just on isolated acts, but on whole sequences of events and episodes. Self-narration is overall a selective and an interpretative activity that can lead to greater understanding of self and context in the world. Without the meaning conferred by such a narrative exploration, there would only be a chronicle of events. Narratives, therefore, are not records of facts, of how things actually were, but our endeavours in meaning making which seek to make sense out of the chaotic mass of perceptions and experiences of a life (Van Manen 1997).

Meaning in the interview process is a partnership and is generated by the linkages the participant makes between aspects of her or his life and by the explicit linkages the researcher makes between the narrator's understanding and interpretation (Josselson and Lieblich 1995). Only by listening to what the participants tell of their experiences can the researcher enter into dialogue with their meaning system and this is the value of narrative forms of investigation.

This dialogical element distinguishes narrative work from other kinds of qualitative research such as observation as it has greater potential to develop collaborative modes of engagement in which a measure of control is given to the subject. Exposing one's self to another in the research process involves issues

of trust, truth telling, fairness, respect, commitment, and justice. Only through a process of clarifying, and negotiating can this process be assured. Narrative inquiry is a collaborative, shared, empathic re-creation and re-interpretation of experience. It is about both the individual story and the co-creation of a story between the researcher and the narrator (Chan, 2002).

Narrative inquiry is well suited to the ideological and lived experiences of Aboriginal/Indigenous educators. This approach provides opportunities to balance the story of the individual with the larger social, political, and economic contexts that frame it, which are reinforced or challenged by individuals' actions and responses. Maintaining this balance is also a challenge that Indigenous educators face when confronting their own participation and collusion in oppressive structures and relationships (Brookfield,1995). By striving for balance, narrative inquiry provides an opportunity for the research participants to reflect personally on this challenge.

The method of identifying interviewees is "Snowball Sampling"; a technique used to overcome problems associated with sampling concealed or unknown populations (Spreen, 1992). Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in that it does not involve random selection of a known-population in the same way that probability sampling does. Although the possibility of non-representation in the sample is increased whenever using non-probability sampling techniques, it nonetheless can be useful when, according to Hendricks, Blanken and Adriaans (1992), the aim of a study is primarily explorative, qualitative and, descriptive, such as in this research. Snowball

sampling itself fits into a wider set of methodologies that Spreen (1992) has called link-tracing, or as Thomson (1997) says, methodologies "which seek to take advantage of social networks to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts" (p.248).

In the case of my research, although many of the Indigenous teachers in the province are identifiable through Teachers' Federation listings it appears that there is also a large number of Indigenous teachers who are not identified. Census Canada (2001) indicates that there are at least 600 self-identified Indigenous 'educators' in BC, yet the BCTF (2000) was only able to find 324 of these Indigenous educators. Moreover, because of Freedom of Information legislation it was impossible for me to access either the Census Canada list or BCTF list of known Indigenous educators, or for that matter any list except those of belonged to ABNET, an Aboriginal education issues list-serve housed by the Ministry of Education. Snowball sampling allowed me to contact Indigenous educators whose names were not available to me through formal means.

Developing an Interview Guide

I sent my questions to the Teacher Action Research Group (TARG), which is a research group I belong to for teachers who are engaging in transformative participatory research. I also gave the questions to other researchers in the field for their feedback, and answered the interview questions myself. This process allowed me to make adjustments to the order and wording of the questions and was therefore an important element in grounding me in the study.

Participants

Using "snowball sampling" (Berg, 1988) I recruited participants by word of mouth and through talking to other teachers I met in union functions and other professional development events. Indigenous teachers who heard of my research interest were instructed to contact me by phone or email. I decided not to interview Indigenous teachers who taught in band schools/on reserve because such interviews would detract from my primary interest, which is the relationship Indigenous teachers have with the public system. After a large number (6) of preliminary sample interviews I decided to limit the group to the nine teachers interviewed, primarily because I was beginning to see recurring themes in my preliminary discussions and had reached a point of data saturation. By no means do I claim that the 9 teachers represent the several hundred Indigenous teachers in the Province.

All nine teachers had experience teaching either at elementary or secondary schools in the Lower Mainland of BC. All nine participants, self-identified as Indigenous, six of whom were women; two were men, and one self-identified as transgender. Interviews were conducted between June 2002 and January 2003; they were held at the convenience of participants and took place in their homes, the researcher's home, or at the university. Participants ranged in age from early 20s to mid 50s.

I gave each participant an informed consent form and a brief description of my research topic. All participants provided written consent (Appendix B: Consent Letter). All interviews were audio taped, and transcribed verbatim:

interviews ranged in length from 90 minutes to 180 minutes. All participants were promised they would receive a copy of their interview transcript and each was mailed a copy. After sending them a copy of their interview, I contacted each individual by telephone or e-mail to ask for reflections or further comments. Participants were also offered the opportunity to review the thesis upon completion. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity; any identifying characteristics (including the districts in which they worked) were described in very general terms. Participation in my study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time.

Interviews were semi structured and open ended and focussed on identity and specifically their Indigenous identity, and how these identity issues were raised in various areas of their lives as teachers (See: Appendix A). I opted for individual rather than focus groups because group meetings are sometimes difficult to transcribe if people are talking simultaneously.

Other questions asked were about influences on their decision to be a teacher; their schooling experiences; teacher education programs (either mainstream or those specifically designed for Indigenous student teachers); ways that their Indigenous identity affected their work or working conditions; challenges they faced and their responses to them; their experiences with their students and families; their colleagues and other Indigenous teachers. Lastly, they were asked about their social supports.

As noted, in dialogue with me I asked them to identify events in their early years in family, community and school (residential, elementary and high school

as well as post secondary) and I asked them questions about how their identities figured in the work place. However, in retrospect I would have liked to have asked fewer but more specific questions with regard to students and increased the opportunity to probe deeper into some responses. Moreover, if I had more time I would like to have gone back after a few months to see if the teachers had any new thoughts on the themes and items discussed.

A professional was employed to transcribe the tape-recorded interviews. I reviewed transcripts and tapes simultaneously to become familiar with the data. I took notes, and began to develop preliminary themes. The principal analytical decision I had to make was whether to organize the data entirely by themes and subsume the voices of the interviewees or to maintain the coherence of the individual narratives and subsume the themes. I chose the latter. My focus is on identity and hence my priority was to try to retain the integrity of the individual narratives at the same time that I worked through a relatively consistent set of themes and issues. I also made the strategic decision to reorganize the narratives into a chronological sequence even though the interviews themselves moved forward and backward in time many times over in the course of our discussions. This decision to organize chronologically in sequence of social fields from childhood to the present was based on Holland et al.'s notions of figured worlds and how actors move in and out of these. The notion that we interact and improvisationally shape our identities in these worlds seemed especially appropriate to the focus on identity central to this research.

Analysis

In developing a structure of meaning of the narratives I identified a number of overlapping themes. On reviewing the transcripts, I identified additional themes and subtexts of the original themes. Reflection on the interview process and the transcripts enabled me to challenge my assumptions continually. I was constantly reminded of my own story throughout the interviews. As the researcher making connections, my interpretations distracted me. I met with other researchers to get feedback and reflection.

Ethical Considerations

I think the most significant ethical issue when dealing with people is the issue of interpretation and power. As researcher it is essential to acknowledge routinely your power and what you might do in interpreting peoples' stories and lives. You must consider insider/outsider issues in research. In my case, although I am an Indigenous woman, I still may occupy difficult positions vis-à-vis those I may be interviewing. James Banks (1998) and Patricia Collins (1998) talk about insider/outsider issues of race, as does a great deal of feminist research literature. Slim and Thompson (1995) have talked about listening and the nature of authentic listening; the link from listening at a number of levels to interpreting poses some stipulations; for example, both interpretation and analysis require listening at different levels. I have considered that in the interpretation certain aspects might be heard and highlighted by me because they are important to me, which is a dilemma for much qualitative research. I have to carefully consider

when I am selective. I have to be aware of my limitations and be willing to listen in different ways to different narrators.

Anderson and Jack (1991, pg.19) suggest listening to the person's "moral language;" i.e., their judgements or value statements about themselves and others. They talk about: meta-statements; i.e. pauses and stops in the interview, where the narrator may reflect on something just said. Sometimes the meta-statements reveal the narrator's self-awareness of issues or discrepancies in the story. Harrison and Lyon (1993) address this issue of interpretation by asking how we can "evaluate the authenticity and credibility of autobiographical texts, which have selective intentions at the outset" (p. 103). They go on to say that we must be alert "to the ethical obligations and intellectual requirements that have to be considered as part of any claim we make for autobiography" (p.104). Therefore, I need to frame my interpretation by being explicit about what may be perceived as my selective intentions, my "screens," and my views.

How I locate myself in the research and the impact that the study will have on me in the future are considerations of which I must be aware. Issues of objectivity, subjectivity, reflection and reflexivity are an important element of my location. As a researcher I am also involved, influenced and changed by the research. This integration may be difficult, but the acknowledgement of my experience will be an important part of the process and the interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

All nine participants in this study self-identified as Indigenous persons. They gave varied accounts of how they defined their Indigenous identity and its significance to them. First Nations people often identify themselves in relation to historical association with language, and specific geographic locations, and as well, with traditional names, families/clan memberships communities. Thus the Indigenous teachers in this study referred to a complex range of diverse associations that are facets of their identities. For all participants, their sense of identity was linked in part to their membership in a larger First Nations group, and in part to connections with particular family members, most notably their connections to parents and grandparents. Moreover, influences of gender, residential school attendance, alcoholism, and racism had some important implications for each of the participants.

I will begin the data description of the interviews with the nine Indigenous teachers by providing a table of key demographic data. Following the table, brief thumbnail identity descriptions of the interviewees are presented. These in turn are followed by tracing their life trajectories, that is, the sequence of social spaces in which they engaged over their lifetimes.

The account of their life-trajectories is presented in two major categories or social fields: 1) family, community and schooling including teacher education and 2) workplace and new educational models. The interviewees themselves did not necessarily or consistently follow this narrative sequence. Rather, they commonly went back and forth in time as they responded to questions. Much of the analytical work of this chapter consists of my own construction of these trajectories. I organized the data in this way because the literature, as reviewed previously in Chapter 2, suggests that how individuals understand their multi-faceted personal histories has compelling implications for how they work in new social fields. Organizing the data in this way makes it apparent that, in retrospect, the interviewees did not all fully address all aspects of the trajectory that I outlined. Were I to re-interview these individuals, I would invite them to speak more directly about these areas.

Also key to my analysis was the organization of the data from the dual perspectives of: 1) challenges to identity that were faced by each interviewee, and 2) the positive factors that each person considered supportive to their identity construction. The positive and supportive, as well as the difficult and the demoralizing are commonly intertwined themes heard throughout the participants' narratives. My analytical intention in separating out the positive and negative when addressing family, community and schooling issues was to set the stage for the final section: Models for change. This section looks at how visions for the future of Indigenous education, teacher education, and the mentoring of new Indigenous educators were informed, not only by interviewees' past positive

experiences, but also by the struggles with authoritative discourses in the figured worlds of community teacher education and workplace.

The Study Participants

Overview:

The participants' demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 4.1 below. Each has been assigned a pseudonym.

Table 4.1: Participants' Demographic Summary

Pseudonym	Birth Place	Years teaching	Pre-Service Teacher Education
Gina	Small northern coastal village	5 - 9	UBC – Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP)
Mona	Small northern interior town	5 - 9	UBC - NITEP
Linda	North coastal town	15 – 19	UBC – regular program
Brenda	Northern coastal village	10 – 14	SFU – on campus
Mariko	North coastal town	10 –14	UBC - NITEP
Santori	Interior town	5 - 9	UBC - NITEP
Keona	Town in the United States	20+	SFU – on campus
Damien	Northwest Territories	5 - 9	SFU – on campus
Calvin	Small Northern Interior town	5-9	UBC- regular program

Gina was born in a small coastal community and has also lived in numerous towns and cities throughout the province. Mona, Linda and Mariko were all born in small northern British Columbia communities, but each has lived in BC's Lower Mainland for most of their adult lives. Although Santori was also born in northern British Columbia, she was raised in the Lower Mainland and like Mona, Linda and Mariko, continues to live there. Brenda was born and raised in west-central British Columbia where she lived most of her life. Keona was born in an American Indian (U.S.) community and has lived all over North America, having resided in the greater Lower Mainland for past 35 years. Born in the Northwest Territories, Damien moved to the Vancouver area in his late adolescence and still lives there today. Calvin was born in a small northern community but lived in many different places throughout British Columbia during his life.

The Social Fields: Home, Family and Community/Schooling

Participants described both the positive and negative familial influences on their lives and on their identities, speaking of how these may have affected their decisions to become teachers, as well as how they presently teach and work in school environments. Interviewees were asked to describe the communities where they grew up, the community issues and events that influenced them, both positive and negative, and the implications these had for their identities. They spoke readily about the impact of schooling, both public and residential on their identity development.

Positive and negative influences of family, community and schooling on Indigenous Identity

Gina

Positive influences

Gina recalls that the long standing desire to be a teacher was core to her identity and was reinforced as a child when children in her community played school and she "taught" reading and writing. UBC's Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP), supported Aboriginal students in focusing on current issues facing Indigenous educators and this enabled her to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher. As a result of these associations, Gina feels her identity is directly connected to her Indigenous ancestry. "It is something I don't forget and it gives me the sense of self." When she introduces herself she always begins with her traditional names: her childhood name and an adult name. She then gives her English names.

Negative influences

Gina remembers enduring emotional abuse throughout her schooling and feels that it has taken her years to overcome. The authoritative discourse of a teacher who was "yelling at me, telling me that I will never amount to anything and that I was dumb and stupid," still resonates in her ears. Gina also has bad memories of teachers who were not good role models:

> I could see her right now in there and smell her and … I remember that it was scotch-mints mixed with something else, but as an adult I realize [d] what that 'with something else' was, and that it was liquor.

While Gina now feels that she has a place in the world and can use her voice as long as it is not done in hurtful ways, she also feels there are negative experiences in her community and in the figured world of mainstream schools that had undermined the development of her identity. "I've come from a place where I've been the person at the back of the classroom where I just wanted to be at the back and not be seen, not heard."

Mona

Positive influences

Mona says her identity is largely defined by who her family is and that her identity is deeply infused with cultural teachings. Mona's grandparents engaged in many traditional practices and immersed all their grandchildren in many of these practices. They raised her to be aware of the land and the relationship between the land, her ancestry, and her family. She particularly notes that her ability to speak her language is very important to her sense of Indigenous identity.

Negative influences

The influence of family on Mona's sense of identity was complex and filled with struggle among diverse discourses. Despite the validating impact of her grandparents' traditional ways on her sense of herself as an Aboriginal person, Mona also experienced other family members' ambivalence towards it. Mona described a shopping incident with her family where her grandmother spoke to her in their language and was subsequently scolded by Mona's mother, who stated, "Do not speak to her in our language. She will get an accent and people will make fun of her."

Mona sometimes felt shame for being an Indigenous person and believes this came directly from her parents' struggle, believing that they too have had to reject their own Indigenous identities. She explains how her parents juxtaposed Aboriginal culture with individual growth and success stating, "They didn't really push the culture because they wanted me to go to school and to go to university or college."

Mona said that she could think of only one fond memory of a primary school teacher. This teacher treated her like she liked her and not as a burden.

Linda

Positive influences

Linda's sense of – her "goal orientedness" in childhood – led her to think she would become a missionary, a nurse or teacher. She credits her goal orientation with giving her strength.

Like Gina, Linda viewed her teacher education experience at NITEP as important in validating her self-identity as an Indigenous person. NITEP activities were explicitly designed to address the development of positive self-identity for Aboriginal students because it was regarded as a crucial element in a successful transition from living in small predominantly Aboriginal communities to being part of the education profession. Linda credits NITEP's focus on team building and bonding with helping her deal with the struggle of being away from home. She feels NITEP was instrumental in her development and her positive sense of self as an Indigenous teacher.

Linda left NITEP and re-enrolled in the UBC regular teacher education program. She talked about the fact that once she got on to the UBC campus to attend the regular teacher education program, her "self-identity was no longer a focus." She said, "You were just a student, you were just a number in the classroom." She does not tell us why she left; perhaps the struggle was too much.

Linda proudly acknowledges her Indigenous identity, identifying herself by the two Nations to which she belongs – the Haida and the Tsimshian. While at the time of her interview, Linda had been teaching for over 20 years, she feels the ongoing struggle between authoritative First Nations discourses of what it means to be First Nations and mainstream authoritative discourses of this. Her struggles are apparent when she indicates that she is "still at the kindergarten level in terms of my traditional Aboriginal knowledge". The opportunity to broaden her Indigenous identity through greater traditional Aboriginal knowledge

came at the cost of living her life in an urban setting and learning instead "how to play the role of the teacher, ...how to play the role of a[n urban] citizen within the community":

Negative Influences

Negative experiences in Linda's her early education challenged her self-worth:

> Because the school system didn't feel that I was a mainstream student they placed me in a modified program. By Grade 9 they pulled us in and told us we were not going to be able to graduate and that we could only go up to Grade 10. We were told that if we wanted to pursue our education further we'd have to go to a vocational school.

This was not acceptable to her and so she consulted school counsellors for advice:

> I knew what they were there for and I knew what their job was, so I wanted to set up an appointment with my counsellor in Grade 9 and told her what my goals were and that I did plan on going to university, so I was switched from modified to academic, which is a huge jump.

Linda recognized how her experiences of being streamed into a modified program had a prolonged and negative impact on her self-identity, but she also described how through this experience, she learned to advocate for herself at a young age. The experience of courageously contradicting the mainstream authoritative school discourses and expressing her internally persuasive convictions have she believes, served her well ever since.

Brenda

Positive influences:

In contrast to Gina's and Linda's negative experiences of early schooling, Brenda recalled [the authoritative discourses] and credited teachers who told her she was important and that she was going to do well. As a child Brenda read a lot. She said this was an escape from her strict upbringing and one teacher gave her some Indigenous novels, "making it seem like it was okay to be a First Nations person."

Brenda felt the most accepted whenever her teachers rewarded her for her love of schooling. "They were nice to me because I was bright and I could keep up with the other kids". Role models were very important to her, 'because the more darker faces I saw in the school, you know, it made me feel really good." Another positive memory of caring teachers during her early intermediate school years involved one teacher's intervention when she began socializing with older girls. The teacher took her aside and said to her, "There is no reason you could not sit behind one of these teacher desks. And I thought wow, I could be a teacher."

In addition to these events when mainstream discourse included, rather than excluded her, Brenda also felt that getting a job and working in her community as the home-school coordinator validated her sense of being Indigenous and made her a community "role model": "I was a leader and that was a big change for me." It also prepared her for work in mainstream teacher

education: "...to be in a leadership role an Indigenous educator in a white situation like SFU was just, well, it just did wonders for my ego. I felt really good".

She recalled the divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in her community but seemed to get validation for being Indigenous from the latter group's efforts to be part of Aboriginal life. She described non-Indigenous people who came on reserve to work, their genuine efforts to fit into the community by attending cultural events and feasts, and the value they placed in Aboriginal ways. However, she also saw how after a few years, a pattern would emerge:

> These same people would gradually isolate themselves . . . (and) separate themselves from the whole [Aboriginal] community. This was happening because they're living on the reserve working with the Indians, being real tight, but then they're going to be shunned by the townspeople. They're not going to be accepted as part of the mainstream group and they would gradually move away from the [Aboriginal] community and hook up with the white people.

Her encounters with non-Indigenous people who found abhorrent divisions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals also gave Brenda a sense of having allies. She recalls a woman who "was having a really hard time dealing with the racism." She said:

> I noticed that when coming to town, you wouldn't even know there was a reserve here because it's not advertised anywhere . . . you look in the newspaper and there is no mention of the band . . . no mention of the First People, their views and insights and creative writing . . . there's two separate communities.

Such encounters shaped Brenda's identity, clarifying and reinforcing the reality of racial divisions and power differences between white and Indigenous people in her own community, and society at large.

Negative influences

As an adopted child, Brenda's complex family dynamics left her feeling alienated from her birth family, but never ashamed of her Indigenous identity. Her adoption by a family within the community did not protect her from regularly hearing negative remarks about her biological mother and particularly her mother's alcohol abuse, from her adopted family. These negative comments had a deep impact on her identity. She was never able to know who her father was, except that he was white.

Brenda recalls that the Indigenous community she was part of was segregated. This division was both inside the school and within the town – a division between the whites and the Indigenous. This segregation was mirrored in the school. There were divisions in classroom space, resources, expectations and success rates.

Despite having positive feelings of some non-Aboriginal people in her community, the racism and prejudice was something Brenda vividly recalled, "A bunch of white guys were driving by and they threw sandwiches at us. They said nothing but laughed and this was probably the first time I really knew what it was to be an Indian and to feel the sting of racism."

Similar to Linda, Brenda's experience of being streamed into non-academic options simply added to her sense of the huge racial divide, the secondary status of living on reserve, and the need/struggle to choose between the two worlds in order to survive:

> There was a real definition between who was Indian and who wasn't. There were white people there and there were Natives there and there was a real boundary because there was a road that divided the town. On one side of the town were the Indians, on the other side were the whites and all the businesses of course were on the white side of town. When we grew up we called it 'the white side of town' and even when we went to elementary school, most of the Indian kids were in the general classes and the white kids were in the academic classes so there was a division in terms of the classroom space and we all did different work. In school my brother and myself were always with the white kids. I competed with them academically, but at the same time being a Native I was very close to kids from my reserve.

Pride in being of Indigenous ancestry was undermined by how white schoolmates reacted to her biracial traits:

> Because my skin isn't as dark as a lot of Native peoples' is, and because my eyes are brown not black, lots of times people didn't know I was Indian and I can remember being in high school where I wouldn't let anyone know that I was Indian. And because I did well in school, the kids in school would make comments about how I could not possibly be Indian.

Like Linda, Brenda didn't put much value on attending a Native teacher education program because she didn't want to feel like she was going into an easier program. But Brenda was also a poor single parent who could not afford childcare on campus, who relied on friends and family to provide childcare during classes, and who used public transportation to drop off her baby and go to

school. Her choice to go into a mainstream teacher education program was a struggle that left her "friendless" and feeling isolated:

> I was not in the same situation that they were in. Most of the people in my classes were either on scholarships or they'd saved money and were able to pay for their education, or they were still living at home with their parents, and there weren't any single parents there like me, and there wasn't any other First Nations. They [the other students] weren't struggling. They weren't financially desperate so I didn't really feel an affinity with people there. If I had gone to [UBC] NITEP, I probably would have had more support in terms of having people to talk to about issues to do with homework and learning some more cultural things and just becoming more aware.

Brenda said that the mainstream program also gave her mixed messages about the value of Indigenous content in the curriculum, and her own Indigenous identity.

It was widely said they wanted Aboriginal education included in the teacher education program, but the Faculty Associate I was working with told me 'no' [after Brenda indicated her desire to infuse Aboriginal content into the curriculum], because I was supposed to be there and do the regular kind of classroom teaching that every other teacher in the province was doing and I couldn't specialize in First Nations.

The view of Aboriginal content as "optional" or supplementary and only of value to Aboriginal students also came from student colleagues who felt that not all teachers want to teach in a First Nations school so they didn't see that [Indigenous content, issues or curriculum] as relevant. Mainstream authoritative

discourses of success pre-empted her internally persuasive discourses about the importance of Indigenous approaches.

Mariko

Positive influences

Mariko identifies first as a mother, then as a wife, teacher, and finally by her First Nations ancestry believing “there are a lot of factors that define who I am.” Family and community were strong, positive influences on Mariko’s identity. Her role as one of the youngest in her family and her ability to access post-secondary schooling gave her a sense of being “privileged” within her family and community.

Despite efforts by her own family members to get her to accept traditional women’s roles, she was able to reject the expectations: “My father and stepfather watched my mother wait on her parents. I remember her trying to encourage me to do that with my partner so I responded with ‘he can get his own!’”

She spoke longingly about the delight of living in her own community, the sense of belonging it gave her, and how much her own identity was shaped, and is still directly tied to her sense of comfort in the discourses of her Indigenous community: “Where every time you walk in you know what people like to laugh at, you know what people like to say and how they like to say it or what the expectation is in a social situation. That’s familiar.”

She contrasts how she knows “exactly how to act, what to say, what to do” when she is with Aboriginal people, and how “everything is still so uncertain”, uncomfortable, when she is in a non-Indigenous community. Her unease with mainstream discourses means she has to think about what she is supposed to do or say. “It makes me look stupid or slow or something.”

The authoritative discourse of the church also played a big part in Mariko’s upbringing, and although she is not a regular church attendee today, she feels religion is an important part of her own identity. She remembered:

> No matter what community I went to, my mother would go to church, and you know, honour God in whichever church that was there and she taught me it’s not a matter of which God you honour, it’s the fact that you have faith and that’s what I took away from that.

Mariko’s experience of attending NITEP at UBC was, like Linda’s a positive influence in sensitizing her to the consequences of residential schooling, poverty, and despair on Indigenous people. Moreover, it also helped her reflect on her own life and “made me feel more whole as an Indigenous person.” Until then, Mariko had been relatively sheltered from the impact that alcohol, family violence and abuse had in her own community and her own extended family. Despite her impatience over the amount of time and energy spent on these issues in NITEP, Mariko said these discussions helped her to better understand what certain members of her own family and community had been through. Mariko had little to say about her family, schooling or community that was negative. She spoke about the fact that when she began there were very few

people of colour in the pre-service teacher education program she attended. She told of a gathering of pre-service teachers she once attended:

> I walked into the room and all of a sudden I became very frightened because there was not one person of colour in the room. That was when I realized just how I came from (worked in) a basically white school district. It was just all these white people in this room. I wondered, am I again the token? Why are they [the University] not hiring diverse faculty? It's the organization that fails to make that happen.

Santori

Positive influences

Santori believes that an upbringing "rooted" in Aboriginal culture - has made her "Indian-ness" a core part of her identity. Her Indigenous identity "comes with me no matter what" and this is linked to expressing her spirit, which she says "is always striving for greater enlightenment."

Santori's view of the NITEP program echoed Linda and Mariko's observations regarding the value of the program for identity development; the program gave her a sense of safety, strength and pride to go through the pre-service teacher education with many other Indigenous students.

Negative influences

Santori like Brenda described how racialized interactions with well-meaning non-Aboriginals influence her Indigenous identity:

> I grew up in a small town. I know how people are and I was always recognized because I was intelligent, because I was sociable and friendly, and so I guess I'll use the term 'white' people, they were always 'impressed' with me as this Indian who could, you know. I always felt patronized and felt like I had wildness spread out over me half the time they are sitting there shedding all of this pride upon you, letting you know that they think that you are something special because you are this Indian person who doesn't act that way. What does that say? They think they are complimenting you but really they are slapping you in the face as an Aboriginal person.

Despite its valuable role for supporting Indigenous pre-service teachers, Santori did find NITEP "extremely cliquey" and felt, in retrospect, that the mainstream teacher's education program at UBC may have been more beneficial:

> Not because of any shame or anything like that, but just the way other teachers perceive you. It is looked at as a program that is kind of diluted or modified, and it's not. You go to the same core courses that other teachers go through because you are integrated with them and so I was given just as much training. But the title NITEP, or any Native teacher program, or any Native program seems to have this illusion that is negative, not as credible.

Whether because of her NITEP credentials or her Indigenous ancestry, Santori felt that colleagues and parents sometimes assume that she is an expert on First Nations. She wryly commented that "doesn't happen that often anymore now that there is another First Nations resource teacher (in the school) and she wears that crown."

Keona

<u>Positive influences</u>

Keona, from the U.S. identifies herself as an Indigenous woman, a mother and partner, and as an educator and teacher-educator. Her identity was strongly influenced by her family, her Indigenous community, and by her residential schooling experiences. Her family constantly struggled with reconciling its own Indigenous traditions within the larger non-Indigenous community. Eventually her parents seized the opportunity to put her in an Indigenous residential school for gifted learners. She subsequently left the US as a young adult and spent the last 37 years in self-exile in Canada where she remains today. Here she found "strong Indigenous communities that accepted me and nurtured my Indigenous identity even further."

Keona's accounts of her own schooling were mixed but generally viewed as positive since she did well academically and entered university without difficulty. While she did well in school, Keona resented how her education was specifically designed to prepare Indigenous women for a life as a caregiver and domestic worker. Like Gina and Linda, she was told many times in school that her aspirations to be an artist or to be a teacher were both unrealistic goals for Indigenous women. Through her family's help she was able to reject what she saw as the pre-determined fate for an Indigenous woman as domestic labourers and pursue her own goals in post-secondary schooling. And later, by leaving her own community far behind, Keona was able to experience success in her chosen fields of endeavour.

Negative influences

Keona's recollections of "not fitting in" were associated with her appearance and also her personal aspirations. She described participating in cultural dance and how "my hair was not long and flowing like the stereotypical (Indigenous) girl. It was cut in a short bob so it could be washed easily. I just kind of never, kind of, fit right in there into those boxes." In elementary school, Keona's negative experiences included children in her school often calling her "nigger" and always wanting to be part of a friend group all the time because you're always on the outside." Keona felt that the mainstream society had appropriated and then commodified what they saw as the more desirable exotic elements of her First Nations ancestry and while the 'exotic' was valued, those aspects of her Indigenous traditions that were too "problematic to fit into modern times" were ridiculed and diminished. She talked about the negative impact of seeing non-Indigenous people playing the positive or desirable Indigenous roles in the mainstream media on her self-identity. Keona's identity was strongly influenced by her conscious rejection of American colonial attitudes and practices and its militaristic policies, especially those aimed at the Indigenous people in that country.

Keona's experience of SFU's 'regular' teacher education program mirrored Brenda's; particularly with regards to how Indigenous perspectives and discourses were positioned:

> Then, and often today in pre-service education, Indigenous perspectives are seen outside the curriculum and outside of 'real'

> teaching. Instead you learn what is the norm. So what's normal for them is okay. And so maybe they don't see issues around Indigenous perspectives as normal.

Damien

<u>Positive influences</u>

Damien, who grew up in the NWT, is non-status Cree-Métis. As a child, issues of identity were never discussed in his family so that he was completely unaware of his Indigenous roots for quite some time. Like Calvin, Damien felt "connected" to his Indigenous ancestry despite his mother never speaking of it (because his lineage was through his estranged father). He traces his ancestry to Gabriel Dumont, which is much more important to him than the fact that he is a non-status Native. While Damien feels secure with his Métis identity and believes that having a status card is not relevant to his identity because he knows his lineage without a card. It does bother him that he does not have "legitimate papers" to say he has status.

<u>Negative influences</u>

Damien said that his only sense of Indigenous identity within the community was always negative:

> I was born in a place where your Indigenous people are your epitome of what the stereotypes are - drunken Indian, freezing to

> death, public Catholic school with children 18 years in Grade 2, kids with runny noses walking around and un-kempt.

He rhetorically asked several times, out loud, "why, why does this bother me so much?"

While Damien has been very active politically and feels he had his share of political action protesting for Indigenous rights, he says other people's reactions to him are a constant source of stress.

> I get people coming for advice and admiring my work, yet I would still be thinking, they admire me but what are they talking about? I feel like a fraud for some reason, so I'm still looking for somebody to officially knight me an Indian. Throughout my experiences I have felt good about it (being Indigenous) and bad about it, but all of this has always been internal, for my own consumption alone.

Calvin

<u>Positive influences</u>

Calvin's struggles centred on perceptions of the mainstream and the First Nations communities the being Native is related to physical appearance. Calvin indicated that while he now identifies himself as First Nations, this has not always been part of his identity because as he says, he doesn't "look First Nations. Calvin noted that his sense of his First Nations' identity is linked to how he observed the natural world, which differed from others around him. He sees this as an Indigenous "way of being", a way of looking at the world inherited from his father and his grandfather's relationships with nature. His identity is clarified by "what I am not [Euro-Canadian] as opposed to the things that I am [First Nations]."

Calvin believes grappling with Indigenous identity is necessary on a daily basis - which Indigenous people have to constantly consider identity in order to make sense of their experiences in the community and to be able explain their experiences to others.

> I have to think about my identity because I have to think about how other people perceive me and how it affects how they are reacting to me, and how they are reacting to me affects what I do.

Negative influences

While Calvin was always somewhat aware of his Indigenous ancestry, throughout his early years there was no place for him to talk about this. He was raised as if they his family was Euro-Canadian. He feels as if he has now distanced himself from his immediate family, partially because his family seems to have "no need for connected-ness." He spoke about his trouble in the past linking his personal identity to his father's First Nations' community, indicating that when his father first moved to Vancouver he worked very hard at not being perceived as, or even looking like a First Nations person. Calvin's father chose not to "reinstate" his Indigenous rights as a result of Bill C31. Calvin's father rejected the official discourse of what constitutes Native identity and since he had rejected his personal connection with family he rejected this public discourse as well. It seems that Calvin's grandparents on his father's side did not approve of his marriage to a non-Native woman. This disapproval of the marriage had ongoing impacts on Calvin's own sense of connection to family.

Calvin says that his father felt abandoned by his family and as a result he has very little interest in reconnecting to them today. Moreover, alcohol abuse affected everyone in his father's family and community. He noted:

> It was rough, it was abusive, it was crude and every person who grew up in that community, I think, was hurt by it. It was a depressed community and there was nothing you could really say, you look at the community but cannot look back with any kind of nobility.

Calvin also spoke about the fact that his family saw his father as "too white to go to Residential School", but other members of his family did attend. The indirect effects of residential schooling on the community had a deep impact on Calvin's father and encouraged him to distance himself from his Indigenous heritage, all of which Calvin says had important implications for his own upbringing. Yet despite this, today Calvin is trying to reconnect with his father, his Indigenous heritage, and with his familial community.

His maternal grandmother "regarded me as her favourite, this little blue-eyed grandchild, first-born boy, blue eyes and blond hair," reinforcing his own observation of not looking Indigenous.

New Social Fields: Workplace and Models for Change

Workplace

In addition to asking participants to describe how family, community and schooling influenced their identities, participants were also asked to discuss how

their identities shaped and were shaped in their workplace, and what they envisioned for the future of Indigenous teachers. Whether experiences were positive or negative, the interviewees generally saw possibilities for themselves that incorporated on and built upon previously silenced discourses and suppressed aspects of their identities. They spoke passionately about how their professional identities had been challenged and reframed in the workplace. A prevalent theme was the sense of isolation and loneliness that participants felt over absence of Indigenous colleagues with whom they could interact on a regular basis. In getting a job being Indigenous was mainly positive. However no sooner did they have a job than many colleagues called into question their competency. A number of individuals framed this as a dilemma about whether they should down play their Indigenous ancestry and try to fit in or whether they should stand-up for themselves. A number recognized that advocating for themselves, voicing their internally persuasive discourse, was an integral part of advocating for their students. They longed for other Indigenous colleagues to whom they would not have to constantly "explain everything" and yet sometimes found themselves frustrated at having to suppress disagreements with these individuals in order to present a united front. Conversely, they found support from unexpected places: parents of other minority ancestries and a handful of white colleagues.

The data in this section on workplace is organized into five themes that emerge clearly from the narratives although not all participants commented on all

themes 1) getting a job, 2) colleagues and administration 3) educational programs, 4) parents and community, and 5) the students.

GINA:

Gina said of her positioning in the workplace" I sit at many tables." Her past role as a district support teacher shapes her perspectives about First Nations education, especially as it pertains to issues of accountability, funding, and curriculum.

Colleagues and Administrators:

Gina feels it necessary to work at educating her non-Indigenous colleagues, both teachers and support workers. But being sensitive to Indigenous people, Gina repeats what she has heard non-Indigenous teachers say: "Oh I'll make a button blanket and present it to school. We will have the ceremony and it will make the school look nice."

She is disturbed by her colleagues' insensitive assumptions and reminds them of whose territory they are on, and that they must get permission. She also was concerned about an administrator who asked her to remove head lice from a student not in her class. She felt "this clear violation doubles my workload and been asked to take care of a child in the school who is not in her classroom] would never have asked of a non Indigenous teacher."

Gina also struggles with one of the First Nations support workers at her school. Although Gina views her as "essentially Euro-centric", she nevertheless feels she has to stand behind this support-worker because she is Indigenous. As a classroom teacher, Gina plays an advocacy role for Indigenous parents: "When (Indigenous) parents, even those of children not in my classroom, come to me and tell me that their child is being bullied, I feel it is my job to do something about it."

One of her biggest frustrations is with those who say they teach Indigenous content, but do so with little sensitivity to the diversity of Indigenous peoples. She cites the example of teachers who only cover one Indian nation such as the Haida; the group featured in provincially authorized social studies texts. Gina states: "They teach as if all Indians, past and present are just like the Haida once were. How dumb. They wouldn't want me to teach as if all Europeans were Germans."

MONA:

Mona said: "All too often I get the students that the school system is all too willing to kick out. And usually they are Indigenous." She spoke of the pain she felt for the children the public system has and continues to fail. She spoke of her frustration with her work colleagues who are non-Indigenous and their overt disrespect for her and the students in her program. She also spoke about a new

administrator who was Indigenous and who clearly was not supporting her program.

LINDA:

When Linda got her first job she encountered the frequently identified problem of whether First Nations teacher education programs are bona fide:

> When I first started teaching, all Aboriginals, more or less, needed to be a super teacher. People were wondering if I graduated from NITEP, but I actually graduated from the regular UBC program and then when they found out it became, 'Oh, so you're a 'real' teacher.' I was very leery going into it [NITEP] in the first place because even then I knew about the systemic racism and people were questioning whether it was a valid program, people really questioned your integrity as a teacher and whether you were really qualified.

With one exception, Linda had the moral support of at least one other Indigenous person on staff. This helped her through early years of her career.

> We've [Indigenous people] been through so much emotionally, socially, culturally - we really are different! I felt that I had 100 years of experience in different ways compared to some other people (non-Indigenous teachers). I felt that they were really young and naïve.

Colleagues:

Linda also describes what she sees as racist attitudes and stereotypes about Indigenous people from other colleagues of colour - the multicultural workers in the school:

> (They) are hired based on their ethnicity and they carry with them...stereotypical perspectives of Indians...they see us at the front of the room and don't really believe we are Indians at all because their perspectives of Indians are with the feathers and the war paint.

Linda spoke with disdain about how she and another Indigenous teacher in her school, both of whom have been active in Indigenous education throughout the district and both of whom speak up during their staff meetings, see their Indigenous teacher colleagues as fitting into one of two categories. She said, "They either really try to fit into the mainstream or are the fence walkers where they play both the role of teacher in the public education system, but also try to incorporate Indigenous education and content within the curriculum areas." Linda did not elaborate which of these two types of Indigenous teachers she was but she identified a recurring conflict in discourses that others also illustrated: the struggle of taking on mainstream discourses and fitting in or taking an advocacy role and articulating discourses of resistance.

BRENDA:

Brenda described two main phases of her teaching career, first in a band-controlled school in her home community, and second in her present urban public setting. The separation between Indigenous and mainstream discourses was apparent in both settings and Brenda was conscious of the ways that authoritative mainstream discourses suppressed Indigenous voices.

Colleagues and Administrators:

Brenda noted that the teachers and principals, "were all white people from outside the community and I was the only one who was Native who was in that same league." She also noted that there was a clear division between the white teachers and Native paraprofessionals.

> [The staff room] was for the white teachers only. No Indians went into the staffroom. I wouldn't see any Indians in the staff room, and it was a First Nations school, so I found that really bizarre.

She often found herself in a position of having to "mediate between the white staff and the First Nations staff a lot, and because I was also on the education authority (Local School Board) it was really difficult"

Brenda felt that despite being in a First Nations school, Indigenous traditional teachings were not viewed as educationally relevant by the non-Indigenous staff. For example she said:

> The cultural teachers would take the children out to learn about preparing traditional foods. Or if an elder or community member died, the entire school shut down and no one went to school except for the white teachers. The white teachers just couldn't get it, they didn't understand that that was how we lived, that was our culture and that's just the way things are done and the school can and should accommodate.

In retrospect, Brenda believes that she neglected the importance of cultural education because "my role models were all the white people – I had an affinity with them because we were doing the same job." She regrets not

supporting the cultural programs more strongly because she wonders if the school would have been "a better place to work."

Teaching In an Urban School:

Programs

Brenda said that in many schools there is often difficulty in getting enough physical space for alternate programs. During a downsizing she had to move her program from "a mansion to a closet:"

> I let everyone know that it's not by choice that I'm there. I had to come here, I was forced to come here and I was forced to come here to save my program and I would appreciate, you know, a little more welcoming from the people who are here and I'm sorry if I got your space, but my program is as important as anybody else's.

Reflecting back she said:

> That was the key thing. Indigenous programs and Indigenous youth are just as important as anybody else and we shouldn't be the last consideration in schools. If I don't speak up for what I believe in, if I don't hold strong to my sense of being an ethical person then it would do something to my identity. I would feel like I was compromising something and I think, for me, it's really important as a woman and as a First Nations person - you have to speak out, you have to make your voice heard.

Colleagues and Administrators:

In the urban setting Brenda encountered new staff situations, which were daunting and alienating, for both new and seasoned teachers alike:

> I was new to the system and feeling a little bit less than . . . feeling a little inferior because I was coming into somebody else's space. I just felt like this small person there. So when I went to the first couple meetings I was sitting there and I was feeling really uncomfortable because they were doing things I just didn't think were right. Saying things about other teachers, etcetera, and making jokes about the (Indigenous) students. I couldn't help wondering what are they saying about my program and me when I am not in the room?

Indeed she found that even when she was in the room many staff spoke about her as if she wasn't there. A non-Indigenous staff member commented there were too many Indigenous people and not enough non-Indigenous people at a meeting between an Indigenous parent and school staff, and that this would lead to "more power to them [First Nations people] in making decisions." Brenda said they think: "[they] know best (about education for Indigenous youth), and if [we] just all come together they'll listen, but [they're] going to make the decision anyway, [they] just want [us] to be here so [they] can put it on paper."

She also found frustrating the never-ending struggle to articulate Indigenous discourses against the [ignorant] authority of normative discourse:

> When I work with non-First Nations people, [I] have to explain everything over and over again and you can't just talk without them interrupting and demanding an explanation or some detail on what [I] just said and that's extremely...I intentionally avoid talking with people who aren't going to understand because it is work. It's work...I just sit down and have a conversation I don't want to work.

In contrast Brenda feels that First Nations teachers', life experiences compels them to see themselves as more than teachers.

They share a commitment and feel an obligation to help all Aboriginal children that makes them more emotionally invested on the job. However, she also said:

> A lot of our First Nations support staff feels silenced because they don't feel they have the authority to say what they really mean. I see myself as not being a troublemaker, but I see myself as being a spokesperson, I like to say what's not being said.

With regards to First Nations support workers she noted:

> There's a natural knowing that goes on between because we all kind of know where we're coming from. We don't have to explain every single thing. You can say something and the other person just understands and nods knowingly. You can just sit and comfortably talk about issues, not explain everything in extreme detail. When it comes to First Nations history, the residential schools, disease, and alcoholism. They already know about it and it's just a relief

Parents and Community:

Brenda feels it is critical to extend her knowledge of Indigenous issues to educate non-Aboriginal families, especially immigrant families. She said: "These people are coming in from other countries all over the world and they don't know anything about First Nations and I think, 'What an opportunity!'

MARIKO:

Getting a Job:

Mariko talked about how her Indigenous identity was an important factor in getting her first job. She believed there was a push for districts to hire Indigenous teachers. She talked at length about the problem of not knowing as a young teacher who she was as an Indigenous person:

> I was this young Indigenous teacher walking in, green as anything and I remember thinking, okay, how do they expect me to behave? How do I fit in here? How do I belong here? I was going through this identity crisis because I wasn't quite sure how I was supposed to behave. I remember calling my parents and one time my father said I sounded really different. I asked how and he said you sound like a white woman.
>
> I realized that my ticket in the door was my Aboriginal-ness. And I always felt like I had to be the role model too. But I still had to prove to my district that I was a grown up; yet, I had already grown up in my community.

Once hired by the district she felt she had to assert herself and demand opportunities for regular teaching positions:

> I always share this with other Aboriginal teachers today that you've got to say what you want. You can't just sit there and take what they give you (like a support worker's job, for example). You have qualifications; you tell then that and tell them what you want. You have to assert yourself. For me, I kept saying to myself that I'm Indian and I know what it's to be an Indian. But I'm not just this urban Native chick coming off the street saying 'oh yeah, I'm Native and I know how to act white.' I used to always think when I first starting teaching, 'Am I being white?' Am I being like them?' When I first got my first job at this school. I was so confused then. I didn't know how I was supposed to behave because there were no other Aboriginal people in that school.

Referring to this first teaching job and her evolving sense of her identity Mariko said:

> My boss always called me 'the kid', you know and I think that was part of the appeal I had besides the fact that I was Aboriginal. In

> that sense I was unique. I was young, I was ready to do it and ready to show them that I had that kind of ambition, but in a positive sense, I think of myself as looking for the next opportunity.

Parents:

Mariko recalls an early incident with a parent of Chinese ancestry who when he found out that Mariko was Indigenous:

> [He] wanted to know where I came from so I told him 'I'm Native Indian' and he was shocked I was Native Indian and I was a teacher and I could see in his face his reaction to me saying that. And then he kind of recovered from that shock and then goes, 'Good for you. I'm really proud of you. There's not too many of you out there'. He was right, there weren't a lot of us.
>
> They asked me that I teach their child what it means to be an Indigenous person. That really confused me at first so I asked if they could elaborate on this. They said to me, "if you share who you are and how you honour (your culture), and we know that you do, then maybe he'll (their son) feel more open to his own culture."

These were memorable exceptions for her as well. Most parents mistook her as being Hawaiian, Filipina or Chinese but rarely did anyone think she was of local Indigenous ancestry. She also recalled when an East Indian family specifically asked her if she was of Indigenous heritage.

Colleagues and Administrators:

Like Brenda, Mariko feels she has to perform for her non-Native colleagues: "So, there is the expectation that we are role models in the

community and we are professional all the time, even when we are treated badly by our non-Indigenous colleagues."

However, on one occasion, when she revealed to a white colleagues that she felt uncertain and out of place about having to guess what others expected of her, her colleague responded, " "You know what? It's all in your mind. They don't expect anything of you. Just be yourself." Mariko feels this advice helped her relax, feel more confident about her approach to Indigenous education and, as a result, became a better teacher. "I was me. I went into my classroom and started to say to my classes on the first day who my traditional people are and tell them about my traditional territory."

Mariko also mentioned the invisibility of her Indigenous identity to her non-Indigenous colleagues, recalling one who attended her wedding. She said, "I always forget that you're Indigenous because you are just Mariko to us at school. But it's really nice to see that you're still able to participate (as an Indigenous person) and you accept that part of yourself."

In concluding her interview, Mariko spoke passionately about how her years of teaching and interactions with colleagues, students and parents have made issues of identity and its implications have become clearer to her and she says she is able to positively influence her school in numerous ways including ensuring appropriate materials written by Indigenous educators are purchased and being sensitized to the identity issues facing Indigenous students. This has a reciprocal effect in that this work has also made Mariko more aware of situations when she too has been in denial about her Indigenous heritage.

Mariko now hopes that her colleagues, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, would see her not only as an Indigenous person, but also as a competent professional educator as well:

> At first I hoped [colleagues would see] it was me being a teacher and being a mom - so many parts I had to be and they had to be congruent, they had to be a part of each other, they had to be inter-dependent of each other and that's not easy to do, especially when you're really young. I think that was hard for me at the beginning, maybe it did not have had to be as hard. I think I was avoiding it. Now I want them to see me as not only an Indigenous person, as a teacher, as a mom and as a member of the community – in all the parts.

<u>Students:</u>

Mariko feels strongly that she brings her Indigenous identity to her teaching and she believes this enriches the lives of her students by encouraging them to want to be part of their cultures too:

> I have to take responsibility for sharing myself as an Indigenous person with my students. When I talk about myself it is so important, probably even more important sometimes for some of those non-Indigenous kids, to hear what I have to say because really you are role modelling all the time. I could be a different person and just deny who I am and not even talk about that part of me with my students, but a different message will come to them. It doesn't really matter, if I don't talk about it and I don't acknowledge it, whether or not there's an Indigenous student in the class, I'm still perpetuating a message no matter if I talk about it or not. I'm always perpetuating my own identity to them, who I think I am. So the advice I give to the troubled Indigenous youth is: we're Indigenous people and this is the way we look at things. We have a certain worldview. We did, we do, and we need to encourage our kids that it's very important to acknowledge who they are and where they come from.

<u>SANTORI:</u>

Getting a job:

When Santori became a teacher and began her career, she recalls her gaining a new sense of belonging in mainstream society without sacrificing her Indigenous identity:

> At first it was just to feel as if people saw me as one of them. I'm not a separate entity. I can feel like I'm part of my culture *and* the actual mainstream. I know I will never really be mainstream, but to be at least able to walk with them is something that is refreshing and rejuvenating and simpler because everything else is always so different. And the fact that schools are so populated with First Nations students means I'm not even looked at (by the students) as this teacher who is Indigenous. I am just looked at as a teacher.

However, Santori believes that the majority of positions for new Indigenous teachers end up being as non-enrolling teachers (e.g. teaching in Indigenous Programs, as Aboriginal Support Workers, or as Special Education Teachers), and this she finds problematic. Being an enrolling teacher "is at a higher level of respect (in the teaching community) as compared to being non-enrolling:"

> When I moved into the enrolling classroom as a regular teacher it is like that whole image has been changed. I mean it is pretty clear that I'm Indigenous, but first and foremost and for the most part I am a teacher. There is a different level of respect.

In her experience, there was a credibility gap between being in a non-enrolling and enrolling position. About the latter role she states: "I have a voice that is heard and you don't just sit there and remain quiet the way I felt when I was non-enrolling."

Colleagues:

Santori says that the staffs she works with often assume certain things about her for no other reason then "because I am Indigenous." "I don't know. I just think that these people just assume that you are going to have all of the knowledge and all of the awareness of what it is to be First Nations and to be an educator."

Parents:

Santori reflected that on how she was perceived is not always in her hands. She spoke about a parent who felt it was very important for her child to have an Indigenous teacher:

> To be recognized as an Indigenous person was something that I didn't expect and I wasn't sure at first if I wanted to be perceived that way. I just wanted to be a teacher. But I guess if that is something that she thinks is going to be valuable or worthwhile for her child, then I'll let her have those thoughts and those feelings because it is her child.

KEONA:

Keona spoke extensively about her 20 plus years of involvement in teacher education at the university level and what she saw as a prolonged ignorance about Indigenous issues among teacher educators:

> What I am fascinated with is the lack of knowledge about Indigenous people within faculties of education in general. This is not something new; it has always been that way. The problem is so little is being done about it. The curriculum has not critically examined and it is Eurocentric.

<u>Colleagues:</u>

Keona lamented the fact that she has worked for years in virtual isolation from other Indigenous people in similar positions. At times she felt that many of the non-Indigenous people were providing only lip-service to her concerns for Indigenous issues. "In the end, if it were not for the larger Indigenous community and my relationships with other Indigenous educators throughout the province, then I don't think I would not have made it this long."

Although not of local Indigenous ancestry, Keona said her identity often comes in handy when she is working with BC teachers and curriculum - a curriculum that she feels has not been critically examined and is "Eurocentric" She feels she is always living somewhere in-between, not as a white person and not as a local Indigenous person, but is recognized as Indigenous nonetheless. She said that being the exotic "other" to everyone has served her well at times.

Similarly Keona feels frustrated with teachers who say that they are concerned about the low graduation rates for Indigenous children in their communities, but who don't appear to want to examine the reasons for it, and the role of the education system in this phenomenon:

> Why this is so has a lot to do with how predisposed we are [teachers in general]) to not interact and form relationships with First Nations kids and their families, and their communities in ways

> that will be inviting and give them a sense of care and belonging, and things like that. I am not sure even if the professors in faculties of education really care about that either because they see that as being political and somehow taking away from some other ways of attending to curriculum.

While she admits that progress has been made on including Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum and more attention is being paid to Indigenous issues in general, she feels the "the biggest challenge" she faces in her job is when student teachers take on the attitude: "Now that we've covered Indigenous issues, let's get on with it, let's get on with the real tasks ahead of us and let's get ready for our time in real classrooms. "

DAMIEN:

Getting a Job:

Damien said that it was never his motive to seek employment as an Indigenous teacher and he struggles with the significance of this:

> I did receive the job as an Indigenous teacher anyway, but I've had guilt complexes now and then because I don't have a piece of paper or card that says it is so, that I am Indigenous. I am taking this job position. Is this right that I'm doing this? Is somebody going to catch me or something like that? But how am I supposed to answer that? It's one thing to say I'm Indigenous, but you always have that self-doubt without the paper.

Colleagues:

Many of his colleagues were surprised when they found out about his Métis ancestry, remarking he didn't look [Indigenous/Aboriginal] or acts like it. He was somewhat surprised with the mixed responses he had among Indigenous educators in particular:

> I am now working with an Indigenous elder who does not respect me as an Indigenous person because I am Métis....and I have worked with some Indigenous teachers who complain a lot and do not look for ways to make changes, and this frustrates me.

Damien feels that they should be aware of Indigenous issues and on the forefront of changing public education.

CALVIN:

<u>Colleagues:</u>

Calvin says he feels good when he meets Indigenous teachers or staff members. Because of their similar discourses, he feels: "Immediately we have a connection. I don't have to explain much. We just understand each other." However, he also says: "First Nations workers are only perceived as being only part of separate or special programs." He feels that his mainstream teaching colleagues do not understand much about First Nations people at all.

> They are not able to change shoes and say 'Okay, if I was this person what would I be like?' It doesn't happen. I guess I can understand in a way because if we switch the perspective around, I don't understand either...within the community of [mainstream] teachers, it's the First Nations kids and the First Nations community that is the most difficult one for teachers to understand.

Programs:

Because of his commitment to his Indigenous ties, Calvin feels a responsibility to fight for Indigenous programs at work. He says he has difficulty getting non-Indigenous people to understand his perspectives on Indigenous programs in schools, commenting, "the only time I ever talk to any people who know what I am talking about happens to be First Nations people." He reiterated the dilemma of being Indigenous but not looking Indigenous. "First Nations people don't fit in (in school) at all unless you don't know they are in fact Indigenous after all."

Parents and Community:

Again, in referring to his non-Indigenous physical characteristics, Calvin said:

> The parents of the Indigenous children in my classes do not expect me to be Indigenous, but once they got to know me, they gain trust in me. For most parents, I don't think they expected to get that [an Indigenous teacher] when they talk to someone who has fair skin and blue eyes. The 'White' parents also are comfortable relating to me. The difference between First Nations' parents and 'white' parents is that the First Nations parents will look at me and make a decision that I am just another pale face whitey who is just going to blow them off, and they don't get that from me.

Calvin also spoke of the difficulties he saw with communications between school and Indigenous families and their communities:

> We are in a community where there is an actual deep sense of obligation and feeling that the community needs help . . . I don't like that term in a way, but that 's how it comes across. It's the community that needs help and there are people (non-Indigenous

> teachers) who are committed to helping that community, but they aren't people who understand it. They don't feel they are part of it.

Nevertheless, Calvin indicated that he too had communication difficulties with the Indigenous community:

> I think even the people [like myself] who teach in the First Nations programs don't feel part of the community. Not because they feel they are kept out, but because they don't know how they can fit in. They don't think they can fit in.

Challenges and Models for Change

Against the previous background of workplace experiences, the teachers also spoke extensively about their hopes as well as the challenges for Indigenous teachers in the future.

GINA:

Gina hoped that future Provincial curriculum would be more inclusive of Indigenous cultures. She expressed dismay that many teachers now use only easily available curriculum packages and she feels teachers are lazy about learning more about Indigenous peoples.

She also feels that Indigenous women are out in the frontlines working for social change and that Indigenous men seem to be taking their time joining in on the battle. She strongly believes that "Indigenous men are sick, not well, but hopefully one day there will be balance."

MONA:

Mona indicated her hopes for more Indigenous teachers in all areas of the educational system. She hopes for:

> All teachers, whether Indigenous or not, want to be able to do a good teaching job with all their Indigenous students, not just the ones that are most compliant.

LINDA:

Linda believes that unfortunately, a major challenge for change is that support for Indigenous teachers today is still largely 'on paper':

> They are just (BCTF) resolutions and a few different Provincial Specialists Associations, and the employment equity issue is just on paper and there are no practical steps to ensure different priorities in support of Indigenous teachers. We all support ourselves and do our networking in order to provide our own academic, curricular, professional, and moral support.

However, Linda feels this is not going to remain the status quo and sees a major role for First Nations teacher advocacy. She noted: "It is our responsibility that in the future we call on those other authorities (local and Provincial unions, Ministry, School Boards, etc.) to provide adequate and appropriate professional support to back up what's now on paper."

BRENDA

At a young age Brenda was in charge of her community's educational portfolio and as she says, she entered into teacher education with considerable

experience in the political aspects of education. Like Linda, she feels that the key to change will be with Indigenous teachers themselves, but the challenge is that they must be accepted and respected by their non-Indigenous colleagues:

> When you work in a band school you really are under a magnifying glass... because everybody is going to say that the band school is not up to the same standards as the public schools are. There I learned why First Nations teachers were so important. I leaned we needed adults who cared about what they do, every minute of the day. Today, First Nation teachers everywhere are role models of children, all children. They need to be respected, and there has to be an impression with the young people [need to see] that First Nations teachers are respected as much as anybody else.

In hindsight she wished that she had valued Indigenous values in education differently, and had valued language and culture more. Her stated hopes, dreams, and vision is that Indigenous children will be provided the space to experience education in the way that she did: "to be respected as a person and learner, have a sense of belonging, and have teachers take an interest" in their lives, but she would like these efforts to be with more emphasis on First Nations language and culture.

MARIKO:

Mariko sees the future for Indigenous teachers to be quite different from her own experiences. She sees a time when there are enough Indigenous role models and Indigenous teachers around so new teachers don't have to "become white" to work. She sees a time when Indigenous teachers will be considered for all positions, not just working with Indigenous youth in special settings. She says she now tells new Indigenous teachers: "be open, be open, that's a

challenge there, for not only myself but also for others who are Indigenous. We know that so much change has to take place".

Mariko said a major barrier to change is illustrated by her current frustrations with several of her non-Indigenous colleagues. Talking with Indigenous colleagues "about the challenges associated with getting people (non-Indigenous teachers) to listen to you" is helpful. But sometimes she also had problems with some Indigenous educators as well:

> Some Indigenous teachers' . . . methods of communicating our issues to people, aren't working, and they don't recognize that it's not working. If it doesn't work, change it! You just want to knock them on the head, try something new, and sometimes I get that way with Indigenous people in general. I go, 'come-on, that one doesn't work; let's try another one.

Mariko's suggestions to newly certified Indigenous teachers emphasizes the importance of finding people with a common discourse grounded in First Nations perspectives:

> It might sound racist, but I tell them to go find other Indigenous teachers and talk to them. You have to be selective and find someone who's willing to listen, who's willing to not necessarily criticize. There's the venting and that's expected and needed, and problem solving, but what are we going to do about it now?

Moreover, she wants them to know that they are going to make a difference and they just need to open themselves to it:

> I say to them that there might be someone around who won't be able to accept that and won't be able to appreciate who you are, but don't worry. I've run across people like that too, but more often than not the reality for me has been people are more open. I think having faith in people is so important because I think we create our own racism sometimes by anger and the resentment that we have.

> I always remember when I went to an Indigenous conference and an elder said 'our hate and our anger is affecting our young people,' and that just hit me hard.

One " major bit of advice" she gives to both pre-service and newly certified Indigenous teachers relates to supporting newcomers in their struggles. "The contributions we can make to educate First Nations students are to be ourselves and explore our own identities as Indigenous educators, not to be dictating or preaching things to them."

KEONA:

Keona has a strong sense of agency for social change in public education and teacher education. Through her work Keona has continued to strengthen her Indigenous identity, and this in turn has helped shape her vision for the future of Indigenous education:

> The challenge that we face is not to follow the mainstream fundamentalism; rather we can learn extensively from the structures established in the past that were used to socialize Indigenous children. In Indigenous communities, at a younger age, there is an expectation that everybody contribute, you were guided by folk who know, but your responsibility was also to hold that knowledge. We had a set of mechanisms that made that happen so that you would remember the knowledge, and we still continue to have that. In light of this I now think about communities under duress because of socio-economic pressures. I ask, how do you create sustainable communities? When I think about the ways in which all of us as Indigenous peoples survived- our people survived and sustained themselves – we had some really key principles about sustainability. The challenge is to value this knowledge and see that it has a place in the public education system outside of the family and community.

In this way, my expectation is if we had a whole bunch of us as Indigenous teachers in the school, we could actually incorporate some real ways of helping our communities to live in a good way.

Keona sees as another challenge the basic structuring of schooling in the Province.

Because schooling is not connected to the other parts of life, rather it's disconnected totally from other living beings and landscape and water. Taking place in school buildings, kids will not be able to see that they have control over making things change if we're not actually handling real problems and coming up with solutions that are constructed by kids themselves. I wonder then why we use the same models as the urban centre. Why not change your model of organizing schooling in the small communities so we'll get tiny little high schools. Why are they modelled after that industrial model?

Keona has a vision for something new. She would really like to see a situation where we have more Indigenous people in faculties teaching in teacher education. This is tied directly to Keona's wish to have an institute for youth that focuses on arts or athletics and that is fully sponsored by the university where she works.

In making reference to the roles that Indigenous teachers must take in their communities in order to bring about the change, she says that:

Indigenous teachers have to become political teachers, and have to be political beings. In my sphere, the men and women who are Indigenous and are educators are in some form also the activists. And they haven't been complacent with the status quo. I expect First Nations teachers to have that as their disposition - to examine and look at how we go about organizing schooling experiences that need examination in terms of acting on those principles of learning. I ask myself, how can you make schooling more relevant to folks who are disengaged and don't want to learn?

Keona talked about one particular challenge facing new Indigenous teachers:

> I advise them [new Indigenous teachers] to have a certain sense of resilience when you are in a staff meeting and dealing with your colleagues who are not Indigenous and have difficulties in why you may need to treat kids in ways that are a little different than others. You have to not slip into any kind of victim place here, but through modelling of respectful interactions show them the kind of knowledge that we bring is valuable, which may not always be seen as academic knowledge, but just knowledge about community and communicating. The tack we take can be quite different and then the ways we can weave in experiences will be different. We don't have to be like them (non-Indigenous teachers) to be good teachers.

She views her role in the workplace as a bridge that is connecting and informing her colleagues, particularly about Indigenous issues. In talking about her own personal workplace challenges to change, Keona spoke about her efforts in particular:

> Recently I had not met with as many blocks put up by others, or maybe I am getting more skilled at dealing with the blocks people put up against the idea of Indigenous education. It is my desire to have Indigenous teachers go to a political-space place and be more critical about the nature of what you're doing and being asked to do as a teacher. I also suppose it appears to some people as if I overly emphasize Indigenous issues and content and perspectives. I have a really strong belief because of having been with so many Indigenous colleagues who believe similarly to me. I believe everyone has some understanding of their teaching and has some particular ways for improving their teaching, not just for Indigenous youth, but these would be beneficial for all children. But more so, I believe that by teachers doing so they can connect with the Indigenous learners who do not feel welcome.
>
> It is often perceived that these youngsters make up too small a percentage compared to the other groups who are also neglected too. That is what people say we do when we focus on First Nations, but I don't see it that way because whenever you talk about

> Indigenous peoples it's always in relationship to others, not in an isolated way.
>
> I also find, with regards to the oral traditions of our peoples, that there are a lot of excellent strategies for everybody to learn from. This practice (oral traditions) is going on at feasts and gatherings and non-Indigenous people are not aware of this way of learning and its importance to youth and its potential as a teaching strategy.
>
> I ask myself, how do we look after the study of the ethno- sphere: knowledge about people, place, location, and the relationships to all living and non-living things. There's a whole notion of spirituality here, which of course schools don't touch, but in the real world, lots of groups have to be in a spiritual relationship with other beings. But I don't think most of us are educated that way in teacher education programs or teacher training. I think they could do more.

Keona sees a major barrier in the BCTF and questions the role of the BCTF in terms of what sort of work they are doing in the areas of quality teaching:

> Do they ever inspect and critique the curriculum they're using? It's ok to go through action research and everything, but are they examining it critically, [to do so] questions yourself, your values, what you care for and what you think is important?

SANTORI:

Santori stated that she felt, "We need to address the way First Nations teachers are perceived and the way Indigenous children are perceived, and I would do this by just doing what I can do the best, being a role model."

She calls upon facets of her identity as she sees appropriate in different social settings.

> I am very much a part of the ceremonies, very much a part of my culture. I have so much knowledge and history, that is, you know, luckily beyond my years, but I use it when it is time to use it, or the most part is with my own family with my own people. I don't necessarily bring a lot of it to other places. I don't share a lot of it because it is not the time or place. I share what is necessary.

Santori also remarked that she models for children her sense of security with herself, that she doesn't have to be a political animal, a stellar female in the world, or know everything about all Indigenous issues. She feels comfortable seeing herself as "politically odd:"

> I don't really have a strong grasp of a lot of the terminology and the actual definitions of what people use when they are just politically oriented. I think that everything about me is spiritually oriented and that defines a lot of my political views. I'm not passionate about First Nations land claims, but I feel passionate about children when it comes to their rights to be safe and educated, to be loved. I'm not a warrior when it comes to the battle, but I'm a warrior when it comes to feeling and that is where my strength is and that is where I feel more comfortable and more confident. My own identity, personally, is so influential in my whole life, the whole sphere of my life because I'm two spirited and I can't leave that at home.

DAMIEN:

Damien has been active politically and said that was extremely important for him "to be active and involved in the politics of Indigenous education and the treaty process."

Summary

The issues raised in this chapter remind us of what Bakhtin suggests: that individuals are always engaged in the activity of making sense of what is happening and that their identities are always forming and reforming in relation to historical experiences in diverse social settings.

The data tells the stories of nine Indigenous teachers in various stages of their careers. They spoke freely and passionately about influences on their identity - influences from family and community and influences from their schooling experiences and workplaces. They spoke of how their self-identity was impacted on by the racism and discrimination they each experienced in their communities, and later experienced in schools and in their workplaces. They talked of the inadequacies most had throughout most of their early schooling experiences, not only did they speak of themselves, but also they spoke for Indigenous people in general. Many talked of poverty, and of the long-term effects of residential schooling and other acts of a colonial mentality that Indigenous people faced by living either on or off of what can be construed as the North American versions of the 'Bantustan', that is by living on or off the reservations. They spoke of the effects of alcohol abuse and domestic violence and from all of these lengthy discussions there emerged a composite picture; one of pride and of anger, of commitment and of passion, and of collaboration and of concern.

Yet despite the scars of early identity development steeped in racism and discrimination, nine committed teachers emerged from these experiences. In

their school workplaces their identities continue to form and reform. Most all spoke of the loneliness and isolation of being the only Indigenous teacher in a school, of the countless conflicts with colleagues and administrators, of their relationships with parents and students, and of the difficult conditions they felt they worked in. From these discussions emerge another composite picture, this time of nine dedicated teachers standing up for Indigenous programs and giving their support for Indigenous youth in a less-than-caring system.

These nine also spoke at length about their visions of change for Indigenous education in the future, and about the challenges they faced to fulfilling their own visions. These visions were closely connected to their views that they need to further express their own voices and further advocate for First Nations, while at the same time that they felt they were expected to occupy normative positions in mainstream schools. This suggests that key to their challenges is, in Bakhtin's terms, the ongoing struggles between internally persuasive discourses of First Nations identity and advocacy and mainstream authoritative discourses of classroom, teachers education, and other workplaces. The normative authoritative discourses of being 'good' in the social setting of classroom, teacher education and the staff room almost always means that they could not articulate nor voice discourses of Indigenous identity.

Chapter 5, next, will conclude this thesis with a reflective discussion on the study, its recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE – REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

An analysis of interview data in the preceding chapters highlights the variety of identifications with family, community and ancestry. Several themes emerged: 1) The impact of official discourses of identity, 2) Bi-racial identities, 3) experiences with racism in the community, in teacher education and in the workplace, 4) devaluing of Indigenous programs and curricula, 5) being an educator not only for children but an educator for colleagues, 6) competition among the oppressed, and 7) obligation to other Indigenous teachers and school workers, as well as an obligation to their communities.

The data from the interviews do not document a singular sense of 'Indigenous identity'; rather, they show a variety of ways of identifying with family, community and ancestry. The discussions on identity demonstrate the impossibility of defining these teachers as part of a single homogeneous group. The participants' individual experiences confirm that Indigenous peoples are as a diverse grouping as any other and that each Indigenous person has a unique "story" or life-trajectory of their own.

Nonetheless, we can view their stories collectively, and when viewed collectively, the teachers' stories demonstrate common historical elements and recurring themes that do bind one narrative to another in a very special way; yet

each individual experiences and then interprets their experiences in their own distinctive manner.

1) Official discourses of identity:

Each of the individuals' families has endured the impacts of the Indian Act, or in one case its US equivalency. Historically legislated and externally constructed definitions of identity, such as those embedded in the Indian Act, had major implications on the identities of the Indigenous teachers in this study. These definitions have the potential of blocking the teachers' own opportunities for identity construction, personal and communal.

The Indian Act is the legal structure in Canada for the implementation of a comprehensive and long-standing political attempt at assimilating Indigenous peoples. While the impact of these policies affects all individuals interviewed, the specific impact varied greatly.

A number of the interviewees spoke about how their own issues of identity were related to the Indian Act and other official regulations. These authoritative discourses block opportunity for identity construction both personally and communally. As noted in chapter 4, Damien and Calvin spoke about their feelings of not being a 'legitimate Indian' without their status cards to say that they are real 'Indians'. The status card represents an authoritative discourse and both Damien and Calvin have been influenced by not having the status card.

In speaking about their work within the public school systems particularly, the participants often stated they felt that because of official discourses of

employment equity their identities could be used as a commodity to secure employment. It appears, perhaps, that Indigenous teachers are often hired into positions that are created and paid for out of money that is specifically targeted for the education of Indigenous students. While these teachers are qualified and have as much, if not more, formal education than their non-Indigenous colleagues, the result of these hiring practices means Indigenous teachers are commonly viewed as inferior within the "culture of the schools." The Indigenous teachers are more often than not socially and professionally marginalized as a result of how the system specifies their identities.

2) Bi-racial identities:

Both Damien and Calvin's mothers, as well as their extended families, did not speak of their Indigenous identity. Both of their mothers were non-Indigenous. Calvin was the first grandchild born looking white and he and his father "lived white lives." Brenda said that she was a "half-breed" and that she did not know her white father. Brenda grew up knowing her traditions and her people, but on the other hand she was always conscious of the fact that her adopted family or society never recognized her half-whiteness. This is a recurring theme where others (e.g. Santori) were given external validation for being unlike other "Indians" in their intelligence, or in Brenda's case in her appearance.

Each of the above three individuals, Calvin, Damien and Brenda) identified themselves as being of mixed heritage. Damien and Calvin's non-Indigenous mothers never spoke of their sons' Indigenous ancestries. Yet, each developed

over time a deep connection to their Indigenous ancestry and each has expressed identity conflicts as a result. Brenda had a somewhat different experience. Her Indigenous identity was not hidden nor was it a source of shame.

3) Racism:

Experiences of racism were an over-arching theme in the interviews, and these played out again and again, whether participants spoke about their communities, schooling and teacher education experiences, or their workplaces. Hall's (1998) notion that those in power use 'difference' as a way of drawing symbolic lines to mark off who do [es] and who do [es] not belong" (p. 298) is very relevant in this regard. It provides insights into participants' shared experiences with both overt and covert, individual and institutional acts of racism, be it in their childhood, community, schooling or work place.

Very few of the teachers in the research had positive memories of their early days in school. One teacher recalls name calling in residential school, especially because of her dark skin. Another reflects on the damage that residential schools have caused within Indigenous communities long after their closure.

Linda said that she had great aspirations for her life, but the school had different ones for her, ones that were more stereotypical, limiting and menial. Linda also spoke about her battle with the public school system to stay in

mainstream courses and out of the dead-end programs in which they wanted to put her in.

Some teachers expressed that often staff make comments that sound on the surface like a compliment, but they say in reality is a put down, such as "You don't act like an Indian." The teachers in this research spoke of the challenges they endured from their colleagues as to whether they are legitimate teachers and as to whether they are 'real Indians'.

Keona experienced individual racism in various forms, as did all the participants. It was felt and talked about by all the participants, some of whom were the primary target of racist taunts and some who stayed on the sidelines and watched racism against others take place. No one was left unaffected.

Institutional racism was also everywhere evident to all the participants, from the downplaying of Indigenous teacher education, to devaluing Indigenous school programs. Textbooks and learning materials devalued Indigenous contributions to Canadian or world progress, Indigenous peoples were portrayed as largely historical artefacts, and school pedagogy reflected largely Euro-Canadian learning styles. Each participant lived with the belittling and demeaning cultural racism that they viewed as rampant in the schools – from a Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy to the devaluing of most things Indigenous. Dominant systems marked off the spaces in which identity construction ought to take place. The spaces for Indigenous people were small and deemed inferior.

4) Devaluing Indigenous Programs and curricula:

Bakhtin's (1996) notions about authoritative and internally persuasive discourses help elucidate the identity struggles these teachers had with regards to the value of Indigenous educational programs, whether in teacher education or in K-12 programs. A number of participants spoke about their own alienation from curriculum and pedagogy. This alienation from Euro centric curriculum continued into their teaching careers.

In is interesting to note that positive identification with curriculum and pedagogical discourses was expressed by teachers who attended pre-service programs that had a high Indigenous content and in programs specifically designed for Indigenous teachers. In contrast, the Indigenous teachers who attended 'mainstream' pre-service programs made comments that they felt more like a number and that their identity in those settings was no longer seen an important component of their teacher education. Moreover, those in 'mainstream' programs noted that Indigenous content was marginalized at best, non-existent at worse. They said that teaching children was treated as if it were a generic activity and essentially all children learned in the same ways, regardless of their ethnic ties, or that ethnic ties were merely minor factors in the overall educational process. This was demoralizing for these Indigenous teachers as they thought about their own lives, and how important Indigenous discourse was to them in their own identity construction.

The participants spoke of a lack of programs for Indigenous youth in general, a lack of Indigenous content in the mainstream school programs, the

Eurocentric basis of the curriculum, and the misleading nature of what little Indigenous content there was.

Participants noted that people constantly questioned the validity of any teacher education program that had a focus on Indigenous education. However, one participant echoed this view and said that she did not put a lot of value on any Indigenous program herself, because there was a perception by outsiders that it was a easier program. She had internalized this negative authoritative mainstream discourse. In retrospect, this individual said she felt that if she had attended an Indigenous program she might have received more support than at the non-Indigenous teacher education program she did attend.

The Indigenous teachers who attended mainstream programs said that they felt isolated, there were no Indigenous people and no Indigenous content, and consequently these teachers experienced loneliness. In British Columbia, all core courses are the same for all teacher education. Nonetheless, the Indigenous teachers who attended Indigenous teacher education programs felt, in common, that others would perceive their program as not for 'real' teachers, that their program was watered down. Even the few participants who did not attend separate Indigenous teacher education programs felt that people look down on them, and assume that they did not graduate from mainstream teacher education programs.

5) Educators for all

One particular theme that participants spoke about was what had become a reality to them, that they were educators not only for Indigenous children but also for non-Indigenous colleagues and children as well. They said that being cultural knowledge-brokers was a responsibility they expected to take on, regardless of their own intensions. There were cases recounted when an Indigenous teacher had been called upon to speak to a parent of a child who was not in their own classroom, simply because the teacher and child were both of Indigenous ancestry. They also said that all too often questions were asked of them that extended beyond education to issues of land claims or items appearing in the newspapers, on television or radio. The teachers also spoke about how they pressured themselves, or were pressured by their colleagues, to be experts on Indigenous issues. They felt challenged by the dominant society discourse that all Indigenous people are the same, and that they all know and understand each other's traditions.

One of the participants resisted the pressures of the school that saw her as the one who knows about all Indigenous people. She felt that by taking on the role the cultural conscience and knowledge-broker of all things Indigenous, in her view, this relieved other teachers of their responsibilities to increase their own knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

6) <u>Systemic Pressures among the oppressed</u>

Cole (1986) indicates that we can't isolate each oppression in an attempt to make it more visible, and that we must take the whole framework into consideration or run the risk of rendering invisible all the factors that combine to produce oppression and discrimination. This tendency towards the isolation of an oppressed group was made apparent by the participants' comments about their interactions with multicultural workers. One participant observed that multicultural workers, themselves minorities, have very specific stereotypes about Indigenous people.

Some of the participants spoke about how working with other Indigenous people was at times a great benefit to building community in the workplace. However, some expressed that they had experienced problems working with other Indigenous employees. While this appeared to be problematic, they nonetheless felt reluctant to even voice this problematic reality in public, or even to the individual themselves, this for fear of being perceived as disloyal to their people. In this way Indigenous teachers suppress some of their own views as a conscious effort to counteract stereotypical perceptions in mainstream discourse.

7) Obligation to community

Ladson-Billings (1995), Wyatt-Beynon (1991), Foster (1992), Casey (1993), and Beynon, Toohey and Kishor (1992) all report on the fact that many of the teachers who have endured and experienced systemic racism wanted to be

in the classroom in order to make a difference in the lives of the children they are teaching.

These teachers felt a deep obligation to create a better learning environment than they had experienced and saw their participation as teachers in the public school system as a way of addressing these concerns. They saw that they had obligations in a number of areas: changing the system to be more Indigenous friendly, that is, to infuse Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy throughout the school grades and into teacher education; to combat individual and systemic racism head-on, whenever and wherever it was; an obligation to other Indigenous teachers and school workers to support them unfailingly, regardless of their actions. Their obligation to parents, sibling(s) families and their ancestral home is apparent and the women in particular are the initiators of healing their communities until the men get caught up. The Indigenous teachers become teachers to make a difference in the world for Indigenous students and non Indigenous students.

Recommendations

A vision for a reconstructed education

Recently I had two experiences when I felt a strong sense of belonging. The images I retain from these suggest for me a version of what an Indigenous education that supports positive identity construction might be like. I was at a Nisga'a convention in Git Greenville and I could feel the spirit of solidarity in spite of the long day of disappointment and disagreement with the political leadership

at the Nisga'a convention that many felt. The other occasion was when I learned how to 'smoke fish'. The smoking of fish is a long and time-consuming process and because of this many families do not practice this tradition today. I worked with a woman who had taught herself how to smoke fish, and is now known in the *Lisms* for making the best-smoked fish. When I am in the smokehouse I feel as if I belong. The time I spent in the smokehouse was and continues to be a place that is both peaceful and social. My teacher encouraged me with few words, but she did so more with actions and feelings, facial expression and nurturing gestures. I feel that she treated me as if I were a human being. I had an overwhelming flood of emotions come back to me when I was last in the smoke house: a memory of a feeling I had had when my mother was teaching us how to bake or letting us do a job unassisted. I remember jumping off the side of our boat with ice cream pail in one hand and knife in the other when all seven of us children were to harvest abalone. We all knew we had to contribute to the family and our parent supported our learning to do this by showing us and then by letting us learn from experiencing it. These stories are here to remind me of a way of learning that is not always practiced in the classroom.

I also believe that institutions can support a critical pedagogy (Freire 1993, Sefa Dei 1993, Sleeter and Montecinas1999) that fosters and supports anti-racist pedagogy. Educators from kindergarten to post secondary must make anti-racist/critical pedagogy a priority before any change is implemented. I believe that it is with the recognition, and understanding of where we are and how we arrived at this point in history that we will get to the place of full participation. In

Canada a primary issue to be accounted for is the residential school experience. We continue to burn out teachers and students in programs that replicate the suppression and obliteration of language and culture that was perpetuated in residential schools. No matter that the physical site is different, the outcomes and processes in public schools seem much the same.

The need for more Indigenous teachers

In the year 2002 the BCTF conducted a survey on racism. At the start of that school year Senior Staff Representatives who were updating member information also had the task of asking their members if they were of Indigenous Ancestry. The total number of Indigenous teachers who self identified in BC was 324 out of a total of 42,000 teachers in the province (BCTF, 2002). To date the BCTF does not know if this number is accurate. Because the survey was given only to teachers who self-declared as Indigenous and because of declining enrolment and layoffs the numbers of employed certified teachers today could be different. Nonetheless, the results from the survey are in keeping with a vital point raised by the participants in this research: that there needs to be a greater representation of Indigenous people in the teaching profession. If the teaching population reflected the demographics of the Indigenous school population in BC, there would be approximately 2000 teachers of Indigenous ancestry. Why the discrepancy? The variety of issues that were identified by the teachers interviewed for this research suggest just why there are so few.

Issues of an Employment Equity Program

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation has attempted to deal with the under-representation of Indigenous teachers through the adoption of an Employment Equity Policy (1999). However very little has been done to implement this authoritative discourse (BCTF Members Guide 2004). The 2004 bargaining proposal has an Employment Equity clause that has been debated at great length among the 42,000 teacher members of the BCTF. These debates are often heated and potentially volatile. The BCTF has created an Employment Equity Workshop for the members to provide some very basic understanding of the principles of Employment Equity. A prominent barrier has been that many of the employers (Ministry of Education, BC School Districts) are unwilling to ensure Indigenous teachers are hired first. Local school boards and unions also need to work on plans for retention of Indigenous teachers, but first they need to hire them. The BC Teachers' collective agreement is negotiated between the Employer and the BCTF Bargaining agent. The BCTF has in the last round of bargaining put forward Employment Equity language for hiring Indigenous teachers' and the language was dropped by our employer (bargaining agent). The collective agreement is an agreement between the BCTF members' and the Employers for public schools. Currently the BCTF members have put Employment Equity language for Indigenous teachers' to bargain and one can't help but wonder why our Employer has not put this language on the table?

A trend that appears to be happening [to hire more Indigenous teachers'] currently in some BC school districts is the laying off of First Nations School

Support workers and in their place hire teachers who are of Indigenous ancestry. While we want more Indigenous teachers and the retention for these teachers given more certainty, it should not happen “off the backs” of other workers. Compounding this particular strategy for hiring more Indigenous teachers is the fact that school districts and the Ministry of Education all too often hire teachers of Indigenous ancestry out of targeted educational monies. The problem here is that targeted monies are short-lived, sometimes referred to as soft-money that could easily disappear at a given moment. This means that the Indigenous teachers' tenure is relatively insecure. Furthermore, these new teachers are often hired into positions that are resource based or as non-enrolling teachers. Santori, for example, spoke about the authoritative discourse of belonging and the politics related to not only being any Indigenous teacher, but also how the politics of being a non-enrolling resource teacher is riddled with all sorts of stereotypes.

Indigenous education in BC: Where is it heading?

The drive for improving the delivery of educational services to Indigenous students is under a microscope by Indigenous people themselves, especially Indigenous teachers like those in this study who can see the day to day effects of past historical practices. The continuing "poor academic performance exhibited by Indigenous students today, reflects their colonized status in Canadian society," (Perley. 1993,p.125), and it also demonstrates how assimilationist policies and practices endure and continue to marginalize Indigenous learners.

From the testimony of the teachers interviewed in this study, integration of Indigenous students in public schools in British Columbia may in fact be just another way of segregating Indigenous students into vocational streams and special education classrooms. Instead of equity and success, the result of a policy of neo-segregation of Indigenous youth under the pluralist banner has been a lack of success in schooling for Indigenous youth - high dropout rates and, for many, an eventual life of poverty. Moreover, current Indigenous education policies, such as Enhancement Agreements (a tool that was set up to address the misuse of funding and eventually used as a tool to dialogue with Indigenous families,) have served to create further divisions between Indigenous families and public schools. By not allowing in some districts Local teacher unions to participate in the process. Both school districts and local and provincial teacher unions would benefit greatly from working together with Indigenous communities.

While educators and Indigenous communities agree the system has failed, and continues to fail Indigenous students and communities, it is time to move beyond the mainstream discourse with a primary focus on standardized testing and one form of schooling for all. As long as we who are participants, as employees, teachers of teachers, or teachers ourselves continue to avoid the much needed interrogation [by Indigenous teachers'] of standardized testing, we collude in the system which has failed to deliver on a promise of equity for all people in general, certainly for Indigenous youth in particular.

The current institutional response to the educational marginalization experienced by Indigenous youth historically is the creation of what, in my own and interviewees' experiences, constitutes separate "special education" programs for Indigenous youth. In the Vancouver School District, for example, Indigenous students are the leading consumers of Special Education services over any other single ethnic group (Ministry of Education, 1999-2004). Cameron McCarthy (1990) calls these "compensatory and remedial education", and argues: "These programs [are] largely designed to make up for the socio-cultural 'deficits' that presumably caused minority children to fail" (p.31). McCarthy (1990), and Delpit (1995), as well as other educators concerned with minority issues feel that these programs only serve to ensure the continual oppression of, among others, Indigenous students. In the end, Special Education programs only segregate the "problem youth" into their own classes for those whose culturally based learning characteristics are at odds with the essentially Euro-centric cultural biases of the curriculum and pedagogy, for those who have little or no parental involvement, and for those children from the social services group homes that have replaced residential and boarding homes (Perley 1993). Canadian schools have not effectively addressed issues of language, culture, disability or class and have sidelined the equitable participation of not only Indigenous people, but many others as well.

In 2001, the British Columbia Human Rights Commission announced their intention of having public forums in Indigenous communities "to open up the discussion on the delivery of educational services to Indigenous students." The

first (and only) meeting was held in Vancouver where it identified a number of issues concerning Indigenous children in the public education system. Primary among these concerns, echoed in the comments made by each participant in this study, were issues about: 1) denial of Indigenous history, 2) little to no communication between school and home, and 3) a bureaucratic system that appeared to alienate students' families from teachers and schools. After the first meeting, the newly elected Liberal Provincial government abruptly dissolved the commission and fired its chair. Nevertheless, the BC Human Rights Commission published a literature review and the responses from parents, community School district from the meeting. These outcomes explicitly expressed the desire of Indigenous parents and grandparents to have their children obtain a good education in the public schools. This often stated goal (1999-2002), given the history, is somewhat surprising. What is often heard from parents and grandparents are statements such as, "Get an education, and learn what they are learning. Know your enemy. We all have to live together."

Educators have a responsibility to create possibilities for critical reflection on the social, economic and cultural conditions in which education occurs. Freire (1998) maintains that education can never be neutral or indifferent. Teachers must take action to erase the conditions that have excluded or marginalized oppressed groups. For this to happen here, Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers alike will have to make coalitions to do the work that is necessary to unpack the racism that we have all inherited.

This thesis has illustrated that Indigenous teachers have a central role to play in this process. Their struggles with mainstream systems and discourses highlight that their identity processes are inextricably connected to the historical legacy of exclusion. At present they must individually struggle through these issues of identity. Opportunities for them to engage in dialogues with supportive peers, mainstream and minority, could be a critical component in helping them to articulate new educational discourses that will affirm rather than suppress their own and their students' Indigenous identities.

APPENDIX A – QUESTIONS USED IN THE INTERVIEW

Questions:

1. Tell me something about how you identify yourself?
2. How were issues of identity discussed in your: in your family, community and education; residential, elementary and high school, post secondary/teacher education.
3. Tell me something about why you became a teacher?
4. Did you choose a program specifically for Aboriginal/First Nations or did you go to a mainstream program? Why? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of your decision?
5. Tell me about your experience in Teacher education?
6. How does your Aboriginal/First Nations identity figure in your work?
7. How do issues of identity come up in work?
8. Are there any differences in working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff?
9. In your experience as a teacher have you noticed any differences re: how Aboriginal/First Nations parents respond to you as a teacher?
10. What contributions do you see Aboriginal or First Nations teachers making in Education?
11. Where do you see yourself in five years?
12. Is there anything else you would like to say that I might have missed with these questions?

APPENDIX B – CONSENT

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE
IN A RESEARCH PROJECT OR EXPERIMENT

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a copy of the information sheet describing this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project. A copy of this signed form will be given to you to keep.

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. Knowledge of your identity is not required. You will not be required to write your name or any other identifying information on the research materials. Materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. However, it is possible that, as a result of legal action, the researcher may be required to divulge information obtained in the course of this research to a court or other legal body.

Having been asked by Christine Stewart of the Faculty of Education of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, I have read and approved of the procedures specific in the research proposal. I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this study at any time. I have been informed that the research material will be held confidential by the Principal Investigator, and that I will have opportunities to delete or change any of my statements in the transcripts. I understand that I may address any questions or queries about this project to Christine Stewart, Principal Investigator, or to her supervisor, Dr. June Beynon.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the study with Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, (604) 291-3148.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Chris tine Stewart, Principal Investigator, (604) 320-1943

I agree to participate in one-to-one interviews, as described in the research proposal referred to above, during the time period June 1 2002 to June 2003 at Simon Fraser University of off campus.

Name (please type or print legibly): ____________________

Address: ____________________

Signature: ____________________

Witness: ____________________

Date: ____________________

The following information is to help you understand what the purpose of the research. My name and graduate supervisor. The research I am endeavoring to pursue deals with identity or Aboriginal Indigenous teachers in the Lower mainland urban areas. The interviews will take a minimum of one hour and maximum of two hours. The interviews will be transcribed and the transcripts will be made available for the participant/s to review. The identity of the participant will be given pseudonym names; no schools or districts will be identified. Because I am interviewing teachers who are not teaching on or in Band schools permission to interview band members is not necessary. Interviews will be conducted after school hours and therefore permission to interview participating teachers will not be needed. Thank you for agreeing to be a participant and for the above subject information. Please read the consent form and this will be used as your informed consent.

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