Reconciliation through métissage in higher education

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) and its Calls to Action for education, many universities are working to design culturally appropriate curricula and to "Indigenize" their policies. While the intention is to demonstrate reconciliation through institutional practices, rarely do these committees consider the university experiences of Indigenous, let alone Métis students. And rarely do these reconciliation plans veer away from a pan-Indigenous homogenizing approach to Indigenous content, subsuming Métis, and Inuit cultures into First Nations[1] as one monolithic category. This Ph.D. study focusses on how Métis peoples' knowledge, culture, and experience need to be explicitly addressed and discussed as reconciliation in higher education. The study investigates the question: *How have university courses and learning experiences impacted Métis peoples' understanding of their identities, the role of Métis-specific Knowledge, and perspectives on reconciliation in higher education?* The research follows a grounded theory approach of constant comparison within a métissage design where Métis storytelling is blended with autobiographical narratives and interview data. Twelve participants, all Métis people living in Ontario and involved in higher education, completed interviews or submitted written responses to semi-structured questions, either as students enrolled in a north-central university, as alumni working in education organizations, or as community members engaged in school systems.

The study's findings demonstrate that a Métis-specific wise-practices approach to including Métis content is mostly absent but greatly needed in higher education curriculum. Through the creation of a métissage-as-reconciliation framework, I argue that Métis perspectives woven into

[1] Using the Canadian Encyclopedia (2007) definitions, "First Nations" describes the Indigenous people in Canada. The "Inuit" or "Inuktitut" are Indigenous people who mainly inhabit northern regions of Canada. The term "Métis" is used to describe people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry. These are the three recognized Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

university courses is a critical step towards acknowledging the identities, history, and culture of Métis people while creating more equitable, diverse, and inclusive (EDI) practices for Métis and all students. If Canadian universities want to implement Indigenous initiatives and programs to advance reconciliation, then Métis perspectives must be included for any meaningful engagement, recognition, and retention of Métis learners. Métissage-as-reconciliation offers a curricular framework for representing Métis identity, respectfully including Métis-specific perspectives in course content, and understanding how decolonizing efforts can be attentive to the learning experiences of Métis people. Reconciliation through métissage can ensure a more robust institutional effort to address the TRC's Calls to Action and support the growing demographic of Métis students in Canadian universities.

Key words: Métis, reconciliation, higher education

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Dedicated to my Métis community.

May you always maintain your resistance

May you always seek strength in your culture

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study uses grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and auto-ethnography (Chang, 2008) to identify the experiences of Métis people in higher education and develop a conceptual framework of reconciliation specific to Métis students in university. Research on issues relevant to Métis education are also presented and evaluated to describe my work, specifically the new trend of Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses in Canadian higher education institutions, culturally relevant pedagogy, decolonizing education, and reconciliation in education. Prior to this study, the missing component of decolonial, culturally sustaining content in education specific to Métis people had not been addressed.

In this chapter, an introduction and overview of the study's rationale is provided, the context and background for the research is outlined, and the purpose and potential significance of the work is described. In particular, this chapter situates my theoretical orientation as a Métis researcher and introduces key concepts referenced throughout the dissertation such as "métissage" (Sealey & Lussier, 1975) and "reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a). The chapter concludes with a set of terms and definitions that guide readers through the key terminology. It is to be noted that the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation; however, when speaking of Métis legal rights as recognized by the Canadian Constitution, the word Aboriginal is mainly used.

About the Métis and Métis Learners

As one of the three constitutionally recognized Aboriginal Peoples, the Métis (those of mixed-cultures) live throughout many parts of Canada. According to the most recent Statistics

Canada report (2016), 1,673,785 Aboriginal (Indigenous) People lived in Canada in 2016, comprising 4.9% of the population. The most substantial increase in any of the Aboriginal groups that year was the Métis population, which accounted for 587,545 people. Ontario had the largest Métis population in Canada with one-fifth of the total Métis population (Statistics Canada, 2016). Among this population are Métis people who attended post-secondary institutions for further education and according to Statistics Canada (2015a); in 2011, 55% of the Métis had post-secondary qualifications; 16% had a trade certificate, 23% had a college diploma, 4% had a university certificate or diploma (vs. a bachelor's degree), and 12% had a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2015b).

Statistics Canada (2015b) also reports stated barriers to Indigenous students' post-secondary education including lack of confidence, a feeling of unpreparedness, time constraints, courses not meeting learning needs, and financial costs. However, the reports provide little specific information on Métis learners. In addition, there continues to be limited Métis content and perspectives in most Canadian university courses, especially in Indigenous studies curricula (Dorion & Prefontaine, n.d., p. 5). There remains a need for more content concerning the history and perspectives of Métis people within curriculum across all education systems (Kearns & Anuik, 2015).

Situating Myself Within the Research

As an adult, I can see how my oppressive experiences and mainstream classroom treatment was not supportive of my cultural identity as a Métis person: classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12, and through to higher education, can be harmful spaces where certain identities are privileged or acknowledged while others, such as the Métis, are oppressed or marginalized (Kumashiro, 2000). My curiosity as to why Métis history is still not taught, or

taught much continues to mystify me, specifically as universities move to mandated Indigenous Content Requirements. It is difficult for me to fathom how in 2020, we continue to struggle with "pedagogies of refusal" (Tuck & Yang, 2014) or "approach[es] that mask the power relationships about who comes to know whom in the creation of knowledge?" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 811).

I will never be able to return to my K-12 education to change the minds of my peers, teachers, or the education system where a colonial narrative or a colonized curriculum dictated the story of Canada as described by Donald (2009): "Colonial frontier logics have perpetrated curriculum in the form of stories of nation and nationality that children have been told in Canadian school for decades" (p. 23). Here, Donald (2012) refers to "colonial frontier logics" as "those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations, which serve to naturalize assumed divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation" (p. 92). For example, I know that I cannot change the Métis history and damaging narratives that focus on Louis Riel taking up resistance against the Canadian federal government. I have become determined instead to start the conversation on the strength, courage, and vital importance of Métis people and their contribution to Canada, to change the oppressive, tragic narratives of Métis history in higher education.

Voyageur and Calliou (2000) have noted that too often in literature and when referencing Indigenous Peoples, researchers tend to generalize all groups into one homogenous culture; however, it is inappropriate to subject these three distinct Aboriginal populations living in Canada to this stereotyping process because it does not recognize the diversity of distinct identities, cultures, and traditions (p. 104). I am Métis: as a Métis person, I am of mixed-blood and proud of my "mixed(ness) culture" (Gaudry, 2013, p. 66). Within the broader Métis nation

who reside throughout Canada, I am a citizen from a specific geographical area, and have a distinct language, values, traditions, and way of life. I do not have to choose one parent over another or one genealogical lineage, or one culture over the other. I use Donald's (2009) métissage approach–a blended or mixed worldview. I have a blended métissage worldview, which means that I draw upon two knowledge systems (European and Métis) that offer an enhanced mixed perspective and blended philosophical stance in my worldview and my epistemological approach to research.

Initially in the Ph.D. program, and as a mother to a First Nations child, I was compelled to examine the structure and content of early learning programs for healthy child development on the question of embedding Indigenous content into those programs. As a First Nations child, I could tell that the content my daughter brought home was not reflective of her culture or worldview. When my daughter started primary school, I began working at a local community college as an administrator of Indigenous studies focussing on Indigenous content integration into all programs. During this career phase, I met and spoke with instructors and gradually became more involved in curricular and program design within post-secondary[2] education, particularly the Indigenous content embedded in the college's School of Health and Community Services programs. I realized that the highly problematic curricular content, and specifically the severe lack of Indigenous perspectives and content, was a result of most post-secondary instructors not knowing enough about Indigenous history or how to integrate it effectively into their courses. It became increasingly clear that these instructors could not conceptualize how to move towards reconciliation: they lacked knowledge of Indigenous history and awareness of

[2] For this study, colleges and universities are included in the category of post-secondary education. The word "higher education" is used to reference the university.

Indigenous Knowledges (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) and were therefore unable to provide reconciliation-based education.

Statement of Purpose

Although the Métis and First Nations peoples have much in common, such as their dislocation from land, loss of language, inability to practice their culture and assimilation into mainstream Canada through education, there have always been fundamental differences that remain in place today (Frideres, 2008). For example, variations in constitutional, legal, and treaty rights among the different Indigenous groups of people living in Canada (Voyageur & Calliou, 2000) and a lack of understanding of Indigenous identity, including the differences in the cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis (Frideres, 2008). Thus, this research differs from research on First Nations students' ways of knowing, their historical and contemporary struggles for equal access to education, and their acts of resilience to improve the quality of and cultural safety in school. Rather, my research focusses specifically on the experiences of the Métis in higher education (university) versus post-secondary (which includes both university and college).

Given the lack of research concerning Métis students in higher education, this research is a study designed to contribute knowledge from the voices and experiences of the Métis people by honouring the Métis experience in higher education and by acknowledging the deep sense of connection the Métis have to their unique culture. The purpose of the research is to examine how university courses and learning experiences impact Métis peoples' understanding of the following: i) their identities, ii) the role of Métis-specific Knowledge, and iii) their perspectives on reconciliation in higher education.

Conceptualizing Reconciliation

Reconciliation became a key term through the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015c), which were created in response to the Indian Residential school legacy within Canadian history. Reconciliation means "coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people going forward" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 3). Several government documents have addressed reconciliation (They Came for the Children, 2012a; TRC Interim Report, 2012b, Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the TRC, 2015b, to name a few), and the primary focus of these documents is reconciliation with First Nations people. I acknowledge the documents of organizations and the federal government that reflect the residential school experience of the Métis (Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada, 2006; Forgotten: The Métis Residential School Experience, 2015); however, there remains a gap in addressing reconciliation within higher education specific to the needs of Métis people.

In parallel to my own observations and conversations at the college, Canada was engaging in a national dialogue about reconciliation. Thus, reconciliation concerning Métis students within higher education developed into my primary research interest. As I began to teach university courses related to Métis content, I wanted to explore Métis students' perspectives on reconciliation. Eshet (2015) has defined reconciliation as "the act of repairing a fractured or damaged relationship between two parties… between Indigenous Peoples and the descendants of Canada's European settlers through truth-seeking, education, and efforts to restore Indigenous autonomy and culture" (p. 228). I wanted to know more about Métis people's definitions of reconciliation. Furthermore, reconciliation with non-Indigenous instructors became

a more critical issue as I watched and listened to instructors' struggle to infuse mandated Indigenous content at the college level. The focus of my research then began to shift towards the idea of reconciliation in education, from the standpoint of a Métis person. As a Métis woman who has actively researched Métis history, I ensure that this perspective of blended worldviews, a "Two-Eyed Seeing" approach (Marshall, Marshall & Bartlett, 2015), creates space for mixed-cultured Indigenous students. Like the Métis sash, this would be a braiding of worldviews, history, and knowledge from a Métis western/Canadian perspective to understand, and in the future, infuse Métis content into curricula at the university level. I realized that my strengths as a culturally responsive administrator/curriculum designer was knowing my own Métis history, story, identity, and culture. I refocussed my doctoral research on exploring the potential for reconciliation through métissage within higher education.

Research Rationale and Problem Statement

Although much research has focussed on First Nations students' experiences within higher education in Canada (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991), research on Métis students' experiences is sparse (Chartrand, Logan & Daniels, 2006; Dion, 2012; Pace, 2011), and it thus constitutes a significant gap in the literature. Few researchers have explored Métis people's experiences in higher education. Dion (2012) has reviewed Métis content in education faculties in Ontario, while Kearns and Anuik (2015) have explored Métis curricular challenges and possibilities in the Ontario Ministry of Education's policies. The Métis scholars, Gaudry and Hancock (2012) have studied Métis pedagogy in post-secondary settings, including decolonizing Métis pedagogy that actively and directly honours the diversity of Métis experiences and perspectives. Yet, Gaudry and Hancock (2012) remind us that "the relationship of these [dominant] narratives with decolonizing Métis pedagogies is crucial yet somewhat occulted" (p.

9), meaning Métis pedagogies are hidden or do not exist within higher and mainstream education systems and there is no place for the Métis voice. The dominant narratives refer to those that "reproduce systems of power and privilege in schools and society" (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019, p. 378), and I suggest that these dominant narratives marginalize the narratives and experiences of Métis people. Therefore, the problem this research addresses is the lack of Métis perspectives in higher education. Moving reconciliation efforts forward in education must include Métis perspectives because all Canadians need to have the opportunity to learn Métis content and contribution as part of the overall narrative of Confederation.

Funding

Métis students continue to suffer the effects of their story and history constructed as non-existent or framed as rebels or villains living on the outskirts of a fair and good Canadian society, stereotyped as creating political unrest or threat to Canada's Confederation. These aspects of the Métis narrative have brought inequities for Métis people, especially inequities for those seeking higher education: "The Métis have been excluded from the post-secondary supports and services otherwise provided to First Nations and Inuit learners, thus limiting university access and achievement rates" (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2009).

Today, some First Nations students and eligible Inuit students are financially supported for college and university education costs such as tuition, books, travel support and living expenses through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program funded by the federal government. There are additional government-funded initiatives (e.g., Indspire, the University and College Entrance Preparation Program, Indigenous bursaries, the Post-Secondary Partnership Program, the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy) that support some First Nations and Inuit students' access to employment and training initiatives, and their

transition to higher education and post-secondary studies while attending secondary school (Government of Canada, 2018). In this way, most First Nations and Inuit students do not have the financial barriers to post-secondary education that Métis students experience.

Legal Rights for Post-Secondary Education

Historically, without legal rights and with limited funding opportunities for education, the Métis have remained marginalized and on the mainstream's periphery, like the "road allowance people," (Douaud, 1983, p. 75) as Canada's oppression of the Métis continues to derail many students and communities. The Métis are not part of the Indian Act, as it is for "status Indians," which means that Métis students do not have any legal treaty rights to education from federal government policies or legislation. Métis people are without treaty rights because they did not participate in treaty-making processes. Instead, they had a scrip process (certificates redeemable for land and money) used with the intent to extinguish Aboriginal title to land (Augustus, 2008). The dispossession of the Métis from the land through the scrip policy system and the subsequent forced surrender of any Métis property and identity further dislocated communities and fragmented Métis families (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018). The Métis further surrendered their legal identity as they did not understand the federal government's policy and process regarding scrip which in turn led to many Métis giving up their land rights; hence they forged their rights as Indigenous Peoples in Canada for which the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility (Library and Archives Canada, 2012). Today, through the Daniels Decision (Daniels v. Canada, 2016), the Métis have legal rights under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

Student Support Services in Higher Education

Métis students deserve the same opportunity for academic achievement as non-Indigenous students; they deserve to see themselves within the curriculum, participate in all educational processes, and influence institutional governance policies and practices. Higher education policies and curricula continue to ignore the significant differences between Métis, First Nations and Inuit histories and cultures (Frideres, 2008). Historically, the federal government-sanctioned messages that the Métis' role within society was not important and because the Métis were forced to identify as Indians or be assimilated as non-Indigenous people, it led to the Métis having no future in the eyes of the dominant Euro-Canadian society (Chartrand, Logan & Daniels, 2006). Universities have not been compelled to seek ways to support Métis students because Indigenous students are categorized into one group of Indigenous People versus recognizing the three distinct groups of Indigenous students (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis). A collective department of Indigenous student services that supports all Indigenous students leads to a one-sided approach especially in universities with high First Nations enrollment. The lack of equity, inclusion, and recognition of diversity among Canada's Indigenous Peoples persists within higher education systems and contributes to the ongoing and systemic ignorance of Métis-specific culture, history, ways of knowing, perspectives, and pedagogies in university curricula.

Métis Content in Higher Education

Furthermore, only a few government studies specifically address the need for Métis education (e.g., The Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate the Conditions of the Half-Breed Population of Alberta, 1936). However, there are a growing number of academics studying and theorizing the field and evolution of Métis research (Donald, 2012; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Gaudry & Leroux, 2017; Kearns & Anuik, 2015; Todd, 2016), including Métis

education (Dion, 2012; Kearns & Anuik, 2015; Pace, 2011; Poitras Pratt & Daniels, 2014). Most settler or Euro-western academic research has referred to a pan-Indigenous approach to examine or emphasize a need for Indigenous content infusion into the curriculum, and this has been raised by academics (Friesen, 2018; Gaudry 2016; Kuokkanen, 2016; McDonald 2016; Pidgeon, 2016; Tanchuk, Kruse, & McDonough, 2018). The main issue in Métis education is that there have been "generalizations often transferred from First Nations education to Métis education without any critical analysis of parallels and divergence" (Dorion & Yang, 2000, p. 176). The Métis culture differs from those of First Nations, and as such, each knowledge system should be considered separately when infusing curriculum concerning Indigenous content. My approach to avoid a pan-Indigenous infusion is to ensure that Métis-specific content and perspectives are included within the curriculum.

Significance of the Study

My Métis identity is deeply rooted in my childhood cultural experiences in a small Northwestern Ontario community, situated within the historic Treaty 3 area–the only treaty where the Métis are recognized as signatories. I am a Half-breed, born and raised, and I use the term "Half-breed" on purpose because although it is a term historically used by the federal government, for me, it is a term attached to my home located in Treaty 3. It is Treaty 3 where my connection to my community exists. And when tracing my historical genealogic in archival records, my family genealogy is specifically referenced by the term "Half-breed." Negative connotations and misunderstandings have been imposed upon Métis people, reflected in terms such as "colonized people[3]" or "Half-breeds[4]." I do not use the term "Half-breed" to perpetuate a

[3] The term, colonized people, refers to the takeover of Canada by a dominant number of European people which then displaced Indigenous peoples; the first and original inhabitants of this land, now referred to as the nation state of Canada.

derogatory stance against Métis people, but rather to demonstrate the living history that represents my mixed ancestry and family heritage. I am incredibly proud of my cultural background, and I use the term Half-breed purposefully to reclaim my family's cultural heritage. Taking pride and honouring my Métis culture's historical nature is important to my identity and grounds me to a specific place that represents my family's roots.

Maria Campbell (1978) reminds us that the Métis "do not mind when they are called Métis, Half-breeds, mixed bloods, Canadians, or Bois-Brûlé. They [the Métis] know who they are: "Ka tip aim soot chic"–the people who own themselves" (p. 46). I have parents with European (Norwegian) and Indigenous (Cree) ancestry and thus, I am a mixed, or Métis person. I both accept and honour the result of mixing these two cultures; however, I am comfortable using the word Métis as a more contemporary word to describe my identity.

As a mixed-cultured person, I position my cultural identity, worldview, and epistemology as *métissage* (Donald, 2012, p. 534), a living process of seamlessly blending two knowledge systems–European and Indigenous–through a historical continuity of Métis culture and people. Donald (2012) has referred to métissage as a "research sensibility focussed on decolonizing Aboriginal and Canadian relations" (p. 534). I do not locate myself within the dominant culture of Euro-western or mainstream settler-Canadian academia. Instead, I am a Métis doctoral student and first-generation learner, two pivotal experiences that define who I am as both a learner and a researcher. I intend to prioritize Métis history, narratives, and vital contributions in curriculum design so that all Canadian students understand Métis' perspectives in higher education settings. The significance of my study is that for the first time in academia Métis student experience and reconciliation efforts will be examined.

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[4] Half-breed is a historical term that was once commonly used in reference to people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, referring to the Métis as only half-European.

Conceptual Framework

Métissage

I am working from a métissage perspective (Donald, 2009; Lowan-Trudeau, 2015) in educational research that combines two epistemologies (Indigenous and Western) through an exploratory mixed-methods approach to create a conceptual framework that best meets my research needs. Donald's (2009) concept of métissage is reflective of this need as it "denote[s] cultural mixing or the hybridization of identities as a result of colonialism and transcultural influences" (p. 7). Donald use métissage to describe historical sites and objects through a blend of colonial and Indigenous narratives. Although I am not using historical sites or objects in this study, I am using the stories of Métis experiences as shared by my research participants that represent a mixed-culture worldview. Lowan-Trudeau (2015) used métissage as an approach that focusses on "methodological influences that explore contemporary peoples' lives, experiences and perspectives through a narrative approach," (p.19) and it is these works of Donald (2009) and Lowan-Trudeau (2015) that tie together the cultural mixing of worldviews of my research participants.

I will use the hybridization of Métis identity to explore education through a métissage conceptual framework, or mixed or blended worldview. As a distinct culture, I believe Métis students have not been given a voice to their specific worldview or cultural lens within the academy. Gaudry & Hancock (2012) described it as:

> Representation of Métis people in the dominant discourse are largely universalizing in character, as much now as in the past. These dominant narratives have serious

> implications for Métis self-understandings, as well as for the perspectives of the Métis community and its history by others. (p. 9)

If there is no change and there is continued resistance to Métis perspectives in higher education, the Métis will continue to carry the historical and cultural legacy as Canada's "forgotten people" and students will continue to be excluded from narratives in higher education.

Research Question and Goals

My research draws strength, connection, and experience from Métis students attending a north-central university. I inquired into the following research question: *How have university courses and learning experiences impacted Métis peoples' understandings of their cultural identities, the role of Métis-specific Knowledge in higher education curriculum and policies, and Métis perspectives on reconciliation in Canadian universities?* I then employed various data collection techniques to share Métis peoples' stories in higher education (specifically, within a university) using grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) inclusive of a constant comparison analysis throughout the data collection process. I interviewed 12 Métis women participants (n=12) who were enrolled in the Ontario university site at the time of the study (or had completed degrees from other universities) or who were presently employed within the education sector. I also incorporated my own experiences within higher education, having attended the same university site as most research participants. I drew upon my own K-12 school experiences and my professional work within higher education and incorporated this data set as an auto-ethnography (Chang, 2008) to include my experiences as a Métis person within education. Ultimately, this work contributes to understanding Métis peoples' experiences in higher education. I address my research to other educators who, like me, are challenged by the

lack of research in this area and strive to include the Métis story in higher education classrooms, thus enhancing the overall learning experiences of all students regarding Métis content.

This research is important to address reconciliation as a policy in higher education because it demonstrates how to implement the Calls to Action (2015c) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Specifically Calls 7 and 10 speak to educational and employment gaps and the introduction of legislation that would address a variety of principles related to funding, educational attainment levels, culturally appropriate curricula, language, and Indigenous parent engagement in education. Moreover, by collecting and re-storying, the Métis experience in higher education, my research addresses the significant knowledge gaps of Métis peoples' experiences, closing the academic attainment gap in Canadian universities for Métis learners (Government of Canada, 2020).

Summary

My research is aimed at developing a conceptual framework of reconciliation conducive to the needs of Métis people participating in higher education. To that end, this study focusses on Métis peoples' experience in higher education to reflect upon the unique culture of the Métis. A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowed for formulating theory grounded in the research participants' data. I co-constructed a new Métis narrative with my 12 participants and used auto-ethnography to include my story, which together brings comprehensive perspectives of métissage into the new curricular stream of Indigenous Content Requirement courses in Canadian universities addressing reconciliation. By highlighting my Métis participants' knowledge, I bring forward a new conceptual framework to define reconciliation from a Métis lens in higher education.

The dissertation comprises six chapters: Chapter One is an introduction to the study; Chapter Two is a comprehensive literature review on Métis education in Canada; Chapter Three discusses the research design and details of the methods; Chapter Four presents the results and the data collected on the research participants; Chapter Five provides an insight into my auto-ethnography and experiences in education as a Métis person; and Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by presenting the new conceptual framework and my final thoughts.

Acronyms

CSP – Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

EDI – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

FMNI – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis

ICR – Indigenous Content Requirement

IK – Indigenous Knowledge

GT – Grounded Theory

GTM – Grounded Theory Methods

MNO – Métis Nation of Ontario

PCK – Pedagogical Content Knowledge

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Terms of Reference

Aboriginal – "Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuit and/or those who reported Registered or Treaty Indian status, that is registered under the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who reported membership in a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada" (Statistics Canada, 2015a).

Colonization – "The process of assuming control of someone else's territory and applying one's own systems of law, government, and religion is called colonization. Indeed, prior to the 1800s, settling the land was not the first priority" (Facing History and Ourselves, 2020).

Decolonialization – "The purpose of decolonization is to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed" (Kovach, 2009, p. 85).

First Nations – "First Nations people are original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada, and were the first to encounter sustained European contact, settlement, and trade" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2007).

Indigenous – "In Canada, the term Indigenous peoples (or Aboriginal peoples) refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. These are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2007).

Inuit – "Inuktitut for 'the people' – are an Indigenous people, the majority of whom inhabit the northern regions of Canada" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2007).

Métis – "…used to describe those of mixed Indian and European ancestry, especially those with mixed French and Indian blood, while the term "half-breed" was used to describe those of mixed British and Indian blood" (Davies, 1980, p. 4).

Métissage – "A (blended) experience in academia where worlds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives merge" (Sealey & Lussier, 1975, p. 51).

Reconciliation – "The act of repairing a fractured or damaged relationship between two parties… between Indigenous Peoples and the descendants of Canada's European settlers through truth-seeking, education, and efforts to restore Indigenous autonomy and culture" (Eshet, 2015, p. 228).

*Please note that due to a lack of scholarship defining the terms First Nations, Inuit, and Métis that I chose to primarily use the Canadian Encyclopedia to describe these terms.

CHAPTER TWO

MÉTIS EDUCATION IN CANADA

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that examines how university courses and learning policies have impacted Métis peoples' understandings of their cultural identities, the portrayal and role of Métis-specific Knowledge in Canadian academe, as well as Métis scholars' perspectives on reconciliation. The purpose of this literature review is to: (a) understand the present state of Métis education (K-12, post-secondary, and university) in Canada; (b) explore relevant theories of decolonizing policies, pedagogies, and curriculum relevant to Métis education; and (c) examine how Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses in higher education could act as a systemic lever to shift towards an agenda for reconciliation that explicitly addresses Métis communities and content. The numerous research points reviewed in the literature – Métis education, Indigenous Content Requirements, and institutional policies and practices – are all necessary components to fully address reconciliation in higher education for Métis students.

Who are the Métis?

There are many current 'claims' used to describe who the Métis are in Canada. Many of the claims often have negative connotations, as the Métis have historically been considered those "often living on the perpetual margins and Canada's true periphery, the Métis in Canada inhabit a space that is neither fully Indian nor fully 'white'" (Logan, 2015, p. 436). Métis identity can be thought of in various ways-the political, the legal, and the cultural. To better understand the identity of Métis people, a consideration of the ways they may be referenced is crucial. Achieving this understanding is essential: the average Canadian is unaware of these competing

definitions, which creates further confusion of the explanations and descriptions of the Métis. Furthermore, the lack of understanding of Métis identity pan-Indigenizes Métis people into similar categories as other Indigenous People in Canada, or on a global Indigenous level, and does not respect the distinct culture of the Métis as a People. Therefore, the natural place to begin is an analysis of the various definitions related to the identity of the mixed-blooded people known in Canada as the Métis.

The Political Métis

The first major Métis communities were built in the Red River area of Manitoba, while others were later established in Saskatchewan, Alberta, around the Mackenzie River in British Columbia, around the Great Lakes in Ontario, parts of Quebec and up to the Northwest Territories (Canada's First People, n.d.). This is a glimpse into where the first Métis communities are formally recognized in Canada: people of mixed-blood are acknowledged throughout the world, but in Canada, they are referred to as the Métis. As described by the Métis National Council in its opening statement to the United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations in August 1984 in Geneva (Peterson & Brown, 1985):

> Written with a small 'm,' Métis is a racial term for anyone of mixed Indian and European ancestry. Written with a capital 'M,' Métis is a socio-cultural or political term for those originally of mixed ancestry who evolved into a distinct Indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region in Canada. (p. 6)

The term Métis was used to describe those of mixed Indian (today we use the word "Indigenous") and European ancestry, especially those with mixed French and Indian blood; in contrast, the word "Half-breed" described those of mixed British and Indian blood (Davies,

1980, p. 4). The use of the word Half-breed has typically been problematic as it is a form of "racialization [that] tends to depict Métis identity in terms of an essential "mixedness" primarily due to post-contact origins and obvious mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry" (Andersen, 2014, p. 623) without taking into enough consideration the socio-cultural-historical lineage and narrative of this term. There has been a lack of awareness and understanding about the Métis because they are not recognized for their distinct history, culture, language, and way of life within Canada.

Anderson (2014) explored Métis identity as "a form of difference that powerfully shapes Indigeneity in Canada. Many continue to hold up Métis hybridity as evidence of our not-quite-Aboriginal-ness" (p. 28). He further claimed that "Métis are classified as a hybrid–with all the denigrating connotations of the term–in ways that deny that which we seek most, an acknowledgment of our political legitimacy and authenticity as an Indigenous people" (p. 38). As a Métis person teaching within higher education, I argue that I can use the hybridization of identity to describe both my Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage further. I do not have to fall victim to negative political narratives and definitions of my culture. I can explain the concepts of Half-breed and hybridization of identity within higher education classrooms and help students understand both the negative historical underpinnings and Métis identity reclamation.

Politically, for First Nations people in Canada, Indian title is negotiated through treaties with the government, and the oppression faced by First Nations people is enforced through government legislation like the Indian Act (Anderson, 2014, p. 40). Most Canadians are unaware of the Métis scrip system, also established by the federal government as a way "to extinguish the Métis Aboriginal title to the land before a settlement could occur on the Prairies" (Dorion & Prefontaine, n.d., p. 2). In this system, each Métis person filled out an application for their

entitlement and was awarded a certificate redeemable for money or land, which ultimately led to grievances over land and political representation, leading to the Métis people to form a provisional government; the certificate became an incentive for negotiations between the government and the Métis (Augustus, 2008). This history is crucial in understanding Métis people in Canada as they have a unique story and relationship with both the land and the federal government.

Politically, most of the confusion on Métis identity "stems from the fact that the discourse around Métis identity is coloured by more than a century of colonial government categorization and academic studies that omit the collective existence of a Métis people" (Gaudry, 2016, p. 152). The goal is to have others understand that Métis people are a distinct Aboriginal People with legal constitutional rights living on this land now known as Canada. As stated by Gaudry (2016):

> The post-1885 period saw Métis identity increasingly redefined by Canadian policy-makers in a way that did not recognize the Métis as a people, but as racialized mixed-descent individuals. For over a hundred years, Canadian policy has defined Métis in a way that meets the needs of colonial management, rather than reflecting how Métis people understand themselves. (p. 158)

This political history is known; however, it is just one part of the story as the narrative is changing and contentious issues around Métis identity are further clarified by Métis nations and by Métis academics conducting research on identity.

The Legal Métis

There is much dispute within the Métis nation about who is Métis and who is not. A more contemporary definition of Métis references both the French word Métis derived from the Latin word mixtus, meaning "mixed," and the English expression of *Half-breed*, meaning mixed-blood of European and Indian people (Canada's First People, n.d.). The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), in their Statement of Prime Purpose (2015) defines Métis people as:

> The French word "Métis" expresses the idea of this mixture in the most satisfactory manner possible, and thus becomes a proper race name. Why should we care to what degree exactly of mixture we possess European blood and Indian blood? If we feel ever so little gratitude and filial love toward one or the other, do they not constrain us to say: "We are Métis!" (Louis Riel, 1995)

The MNO–along with various other provincial Métis Nations across Canada–claim that "the Métis Nation is a distinct nation among the Aboriginal peoples in Canada and as such our Aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982" (Métis Nation of Ontario, 2015). Gaudry and Leroux (2017) describe Métis people in the following way:

> The Métis people have been marginalized for some time within Canada's colonial management regime. Until recently, the Métis were confined to provincial jurisdiction and were often amalgamated with other unrecognized Indigenous people, such as non-status Indians, in Canada's legal framework. As a result, the Métis were typically regarded as mixed-descent people, not as a self-governing Indigenous nation that predates the formation of Canada. These colonial strategies, as well as the common belief that the Métis are already at least partly European, have made Métis identity more vulnerable to

> settler appropriation than that of other Indigenous peoples, and more easily re-conceptualized as an outcome of the white settler project. (p. 118)

Today in Ontario, the MNO (2020) shares their story of how the Métis' legal rights are addressed. These Métis rights, based on the 1993 case involving Steve Powley and his son Roddy Powley, recognized Métis traditional harvesting and hunting practices as their constitutional right. They present this test case from just outside Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, where the father and son killed a bull moose leaving a note: "harvesting my meat for winter," and they tagged their catch with their Métis card. Soon afterwards, they were charged by a Conservation Officer for hunting the moose without the proper licence, which contravened the unlawful possession of wild game according to Ontario's Game and Fish Act, 1980. With the financial and political help of the MNO and the Métis National Council, this incident became a test case in Ontario at both the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1998, the Powley's won their court battle as the judge ruled that they had the right under the Constitution Act, 1982, s. 35 (as Métis) to hunt. The charges were dismissed, but the Crown appealed the decision. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice confirmed the trial decision and dismissed the Crown's appeal in January 2000. In February 2001, earlier decisions were upheld by the Court of Appeal and confirmed the Powley's right to hunt as Aboriginal People. The Crown again appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. On September 23, 2003, in a concerted judgement, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the Powley's Métis right-protected by section 35-to hunt as Métis citizens of the Sault Ste. Marie community. This case test remains relevant to all Métis communities across the homeland (Canada). It is with this case that the Courts identified the need to develop a standardized way of identifying Métis rights-holders. In Ontario,

the process of claiming Métis identity now uses the Powley Test (Métis Nation of Ontario, 2020).

The Cultural Métis

Métis people are a distinct cultural group with "a unique culture, traditions, language (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness, and nationhood" (Métis National Council, n.d.). A part of my cultural identity is based on my acceptance by a Métis community and my citizenship in the larger Métis Nation of Ontario. I am a mixed-blooded, Half-breed woman from Treaty 3 lands; I am a direct descendant of both a Cree-Indian-blooded woman and a European Norwegian man; and I am the result of a genesis of new people, the Métis! I am a rights-bearing Métis person as my family meets the Powley Test as established in Ontario. My family was mobile and lived off the land in Métis settlements along the shores of the Hudson Bay. They then headed south to Fort William and Lac Seul, later settling in Fort Frances. We hunted, trapped, and fished; stories we shared as children were tended to; and we cared for our larger family. I have secure family connections and a shared collective history. I am a testament to my family's genealogy and Métis culture.

The Métis are a mixed-culture of people and want to be identified similarly to other Indigenous Peoples (the Anishinaabe or Mi'kmaq for example), in a way that is not only about their mixedness, but rather their *Métisness*, which is more about belonging to a broader Métis nation of people (Anderson, 2014; Gaudry & Leroux, 2017). Bringing Métis perspectives forward in post-secondary education is unknown territory; I believe that the average Canadian is unaware of the Métis, our ongoing contributions to Canadian society, and the uniqueness of our culture, language, and way of life; however, with support from our larger community, we can use our voice and share our collective stories within the broader Canadian society. The question to

ask then is, “How could the history of Métis people ever be integrated and taught to Canadians within the higher education system?”

The Métis, as a culture, are alive and living throughout Canada. Troubling myths about the Métis need to be clarified, as they do not accurately reflect the Métis identity: “Often aligned behind Louis Riel, one of Canada’s most recognizable historical figures, the Métis peoples’ histories and identities have become mythologized by others, much like the identity of this particular leader” (Logan, 2015, p. 437). There is an opportunity in higher education institutes now working to include Métis content in their courses; the Métis story can also be shared, and the Métis community can be engaged by assisting with sharing Métis perspectives.

When I reflect on my political, legal, and cultural identity, I think about all the history tied together in legal, political, and cultural definitions. I am fortunate to have a robust genealogical bloodline that encompasses all these definitions. Politically, I am a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario with legal Métis rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. I belong to the Rainy Lake/Rainy River, Lake of the Woods/Lac Seul and Treaty 3 Half-Breed Adhesion Harvesting Area. This area, identified through the MNO, is a historic Métis community in Ontario. Historic communities existed before the Crown gaining political and legal control over areas where people of mixed ancestry developed their way of life, customs, and identity separate from those of First Nations people (Métis Nation of Ontario, 2017). My father is my Métis bloodline link, in which my culture as a Métis person is deeply embedded, and Fort Frances is the historic community where my family lived, grew, and developed our traditional way of life for generations. My mother is a settler-Canadian from the area and whose parents have also resided in the Fort Frances area for generations following their arrival from Europe. With this deep, personal understanding of my family history and culture, I developed an

interwoven positionality of a blended worldview. It is here where I begin with the concept of *métissage*, (Donald, 2009) and utilize it to refer to the blend of my mixed-culture experience.

Métis Education in Canada

Before examining reconciliation within the education system in Canada, specifically with a métissage focus, we must delve into the historical experiences of Métis people in schools. The jurisdictional issues between federal and provincial governments have impacted Métis people: the Métis have not been recognized as constitutional rights-bearing Indigenous People because each level of government has been unwilling to claim administration for the Métis (Flanagan, 2017). As a result, there are no funding provisions for Métis students' education. The Legacy of Hope Foundation (2014) affirms this experience:

> Prior to the 1800s, few opportunities for formal European-based education were available for Métis children. Treaty provisions for education did not include these children who were considered "half-breeds" and not Indians. It was not until the Northwest Half-Breed Claims Royal Commission of 1885 that the federal government addressed the issue of Métis education. In the 1850's, the Catholic Church already had a strong presence in Métis society and had begun instructing Métis children in the Red River area of Manitoba. Despite these efforts, many Métis parents struggled to find schools that would accept their children and would often have to pay tuition for their education. (p. 9)

Métis Education Between 1855 and 1970

According to Prefontaine (n.d.), there was much political unrest in Canada in the western provinces between Métis people and the Canadian government during the 1800s, when the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to interfere with the Métis lifestyle through the fur- and free-

trader people. The infamous Métis battle at Seven Oaks in 1816, the Battle of Coulee/Fish Creek (April 24, 1885), the Battle of Batoche (May 1885), and the North-West Rebellion in 1885, to name a few, all involved Métis people fighting against the government for rights to land ownership, political representation, and education of children-provisions understood in conjunction with the Manitoba Act (1870) and the Dominion Lands Act (1879). As tensions continued to rise during this time, the Métis were displaced throughout western Canada as marginalization was also increasing. Throughout 1900-1960, the Métis retreated to forested areas, and as they "squatted on land along the approaches to road allowances" and settled in makeshift communities, gaining their infamous label as Road Allowance People (Douaud, 1983, p. 75). During this time, children did not have access to formal education as the Métis did not own any title to land, and as such, they did not pay taxes and their children were excluded from the education system.

A substandard of living and poverty lasted for Métis people well into the mid-20th century and those eligible were able to obtain some government assistance for living expenses; however, the Métis continued to struggle with poor health and unemployment (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018, p. 41). For the Métis children that could enter schools, many were teased and bullied due to their "customs, clothing, languages, and food" (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018, p. 41). The 1950s brought Métis activism as Métis people began to politically organize throughout the western provinces and into parts of Ontario for better living and social conditions, as well as the elimination of poverty (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018, p. 44). Education remained difficult for the Métis for generations thereafter: Maria Campbell (1978) explained that education was difficult for the Métis to obtain because schools were often located great distances from Métis homes, and there was a financial cost to attend.

Because of their deep connection to family and community, the Métis did not want their families separated and therefore homeschooled their children. Children were often told the history of settlement through stories at home: they acquired this knowledge through old legends and songs, while simultaneously establishing a sense of pride in Métis culture in the child(ren) (Campbell, 1978, p. 21).

Not only was physical distance a barrier for the Métis students to access schools, but the curriculum itself did not teach Canadian history effectively, nor was it representative of Métis peoples' experiences. Osborne (2003) presents a strong argument, stating that by the end of the 1990s, the teaching of Canadian history was debatable:

> It is a starting point was the assertion that Canadians did not know their history, as a result of the quality of citizenship and the future of Canada were endangered, and that this sorry state of affairs was due in large part to the schools' failure to teach Canadian history, or to teach enough of it, or to teach the right sort of history, or to teach it effectively. (p. 589)

This point on the determination of the curricular narrative in teaching Canadian history is further enhanced by Stewart's (2016) claim that: "to foster reconciliation through education there needs to be an ideological shift surrounding the way society understands the blended histories that makeup Canada's past." Consequently, it does not assist the reconciliatory effort when K-12 teachers and post-secondary instructors do not address both histories-Indigenous and Canadian-as interconnected in their course content. This historical narrative shift is necessary for the education of all Canadian students. Through critical reflection, instructors can analyze their values, biases, class, and experiences to better understand themselves and enhance their overall teaching practices.

The government enforced a racist lens, and an attempted assimilation to what they thought to be civilization, making it necessary to question the moral aspects of education's foundation concerning Métis and other Indigenous students in Canada: "Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan–their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed, and ignored by the education system" (Battiste, 2013, p. 23). This truth needs to be advanced before necessary changes to curriculum can be made to address Western dominant pedagogy: "To be an anti-racism educator is to be a theorist and practitioner for social change" (Dei, 1996, p. 26). As a Métis academic, I propose that social change in higher education is possible through a more "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1995), Métis-infused curriculum that would allow students to see themselves reflected in the content while honouring their unique cultural history. University instructors could reflect on their own biases toward Métis students, and the Métis community in general, as a starting place that would lead to new approaches to better support Métis education. Métis pedagogies could focus on Métis culture, which would empower Métis students who would otherwise remain on the periphery of the classroom or be viewed through a racist lens: "Educators who design culturally relevant learning environments are those who see students' culture as an asset to their success, not a detriment" (Milner, 2017, p. 10).

In Search of a Métis Pedagogy

Decolonizing the Métis Colonial Legacy in Education

According to Kovach (2009), *decolonization* means "to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed" (Kovach, 2009, p. 85). If instructors do not undertake decolonizing work, they will maintain a sense of inequity among their Métis students, maintain a

disconnect with their students, and create unsafe spaces that allow for discomfort and alienation-factors that are in direct conflict with the values mandated in Ontario's Equity and Inclusion Education Strategy (2009). Alfred (2015) also supported decolonization processes as "there is a whole school of Indigenous scholarship emerging around the theme of Indigenous resurgence, where a critical view of the decolonization process as it has been manifested in Canadian society is the main thrust" (p. 6). As an emerging Métis Indigenous scholar, I see myself asking questions and finding solutions to better address curriculum gaps in Métis Knowledge content; because of the work done by Métis scholars and educators, the next generation of learners will have a more accurate history of Métis people in Canada infused within their curriculum.

Non-Indigenous instructors must push through their discomfort to explore settler colonialism, because otherwise "the absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation" (p. 3). Tuck and Yang (2012) encouraged others to join them in their efforts to center the work of Indigenous thinkers as they analyze "settler colonialism within education and education research" (p. 3). They challenged the status quo "so settler colonial structuring and Indigenous critiques of that structuring are no longer rendered invisible," (p. 3) providing a voice and alternative narrative to Canada's history. The current design and delivery of curricula do not represent the inclusiveness or diversity required in higher education to represent Métis learners.

Furthermore, in their research on settler colonialism within curriculum and history in the United States, Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) described "the settler colonial curriculum project of replacement, which aims to vanish Indigenous peoples and replace them with settlers, who see themselves as the rightful claimants to the land, and indeed, as Indigenous" (p. 73). Their article aimed to "discuss how various interventions have tried to dislodge the aims of

replacement, including multiculturalism, critical race theory, and browning, but have been sidelined and re-appropriated in ways that re-inscribe settler colonialism and settler futurity" (p. 73). The legacy of settlers' lives, specifically in curriculum documents, is upheld because there is not enough protest against the dominant discourse; the curriculum is created through a settler colonial lens and settler epistemology. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) further explore the idea that: "when we locate settler colonialism as only the production of the past, we overlook how settler colonialism is configured in relation to a different temporal horizon: the future. To say that something is invested in someone else's futurity is not the same as saying it is invested in something's future" (p. 80).

I will extend this line of inquiry to suggest it is through Métis post-secondary education that we can emphasize a displacement of settler-colonialism and hold the government accountable to core values of human rights, equity, diversity, and inclusion of multicultural perspectives in education with the goal that students from across all socio-cultural-ethnic backgrounds will have higher levels of overall student achievement (Ontario's Equity and Inclusion Education Strategy, 2009).

Battiste (2013) reminds us that "Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Indigenous peoples throughout the world are feeling the tensions created by a Eurocentric education system that has taught them to distrust their Indigenous Knowledge systems, their elders' wisdom and their inner learning spirit" (p. 24). However, as noted by Gaudry and Hancock (2012), it is not too late for education to better understand Métis perspectives and build confidence to teach a métissage curriculum. As Gaudry and Hancock (2012) note:

> By venturing outside and into communities and into the bush that we can add the context of Métis life that are so difficult to communicate via scholarly writing and classroom

> experience. It is through the combination of direct experience and scholarly critique that we can begin to envision processes of decolonizing Métis pedagogies, and the knowledge to do this is found in the experience and knowledge passed down to us by our Elders and in response to the needs of our students and other members of our communities. (p. 19)

There are many more opportunities today than in the past to attend local Métis gatherings and cultural activities to learn to jig, engage with Métis Senators, or attend local Métis community council meetings. Many communities in Ontario have local Métis councils, post-secondary school Infinite Reach facilitators, museums, and libraries with Métis artifacts accessible to the public to learn the history and culture of Métis people. Infinite Reach facilitators are post-secondary Métis students attending Ontario colleges and universities where an agreement has been made between the university and the Métis Nation of Ontario for the facilitators to host events each semester, bringing awareness and education on Métis history and culture in post-secondary institutions. As Canadians, we all have a responsibility to know our history, and by exploring the Métis culture, instructors are better informed about Métis Knowledge, and, therefore, how to engage Métis students.

As educators, we cannot afford to sit idle. Regan (2010) refers to “unsettling pedagogy” (p. 15) as an approach used by educators who remain ignorant about Indigenous Peoples in Canada and continue to reproduce a curriculum of Indigenous erasure, avoidance, or mass ignorance. “Cultivating ignorance” (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010) has historically been at the foundation of Canadian education systems. Instructors who assume a “perfect stranger stance” (Higgins, Madden & Korteweg, 2015) are employing an avoidance strategy to disclaim any responsibility to teach or deal with Indigenous content. Most educators (kindergarten to grade twelve) have not been trained, as a professional duty or moral imperative, in Indigenous

history, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) or the vital ongoing Indigenous contributions to Canadian society, which would allow for engagement with Indigenous issues and unlearning their colonial identities (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019). Depending on the type of post-secondary course and the training of the professor, a similar argument is made concerning the lack of learning on Indigenous Knowledges. In line with the works of Regan (2010), Dion (2007), and McInnes (2016), there is a growing number of education scholars who are working to unsettle non-Indigenous instructors to have them commit to a professional practice that decolonizes education.

In 2012, Dion conducted a study on Métis content in Ontario Faculties of Education that resulted in several recommendations. One of the recommendations included providing students in schools of education "with opportunities to engage with Métis content in meaningful ways and opportunities to teach the content with experienced Métis educators as guides" (Dion, 2012, p. 7). In addition, she recommended increasing the number of identified scholars teaching within faculties of education (p. 7). While these recommendations are specific to Ontario universities with faculties of education, these principles could apply throughout post-secondary institutions in all programs, or, at a minimum, in institutions where there are Indigenous learning or studies programs. According to the Métis Education Report (2009), there is inherent value in educating people with Métis content:

> The importance of educating the non-Métis population about the Métis cannot be underestimated. It is imperative that all Canadians have the opportunity to learn about Métis culture, history, and aspirations. Broad-based development and application of learning materials, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches that reflect Métis culture, traditions and values is an undertaking that cannot be ignored. (p. 5)

Dion (2007) discussed the complexities of non-Indigenous decolonization; she demonstrates how "teachers claim the position of perfect stranger" in their relationships with Indigenous Peoples within their curriculum and classrooms. Dion acknowledged non-Indigenous instructors whose views and perspectives are rooted in Euro-Western epistemologies of knowing. She identified instructors that have had little-to-no interaction with Indigenous Peoples, cultures, or worldviews, and have not considered their curriculum or delivery when Indigenous students are present in classrooms (p. 331), stating that: "the perfect stranger position acts as a significant barrier to white teacher's engagement in Indigenous education reform" (Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2015, p. 252). Ignorance does not excuse educators from building relationships with their Indigenous students, nor does it exempt them from learning different worldviews or ways of knowing.

Battiste (2013) has referred to *cognitive imperialism* as "white-washing the mind as a result of forced assimilation, English education, Eurocentric humanities and sciences, and living in a Eurocentric context complete with media, books, laws, and values" (p. 26). By continuing to teach a "status quo" Eurocentric curriculum, even with minor modifications to include Métis or Indigenous Peoples, further perpetuates the western education system's reinforced belief that it is superior to Indigenous Knowledge. Most importantly, post-contact history lives in the dominant discourse engaged by instructors and students, and this not only perpetuates the disconnect between students and instructors, but also prevents instructors from having to face their attachment and implication in the relationship shared between settler-Canadians and Indigenous Peoples (Dion, 2007, p. 331). As Battiste (2013) explained: "In designing meaningful and honourable education for Indigenous people in the 21st century, the need for an adequate and relevant educational program that recognizes, first and foremost, cognitive imperialism and its

multiple strategies and replaces it with reconciliation through affirmation of the diverse heritages, consciousness, and languages of Aboriginal peoples" (p. 32/33). The question then becomes: "If instructors do not want to become a 'perfect stranger,' (Dion, 2007, p. 331) then what knowledge must settler-Canadian instructors acquire to give voice to Métis peoples and perspectives in the spirit of working toward reconciliation?"

Critical Pedagogies

In congruence with the critical pedagogy work of Giroux (1997), I argue that "students need to affirm their histories through the use of language, a set of practices, and subject matter that dignifies the cultural constructs and experiences that make up the tissue and texture of their daily lives" (p. 63). This is inclusive of Indigenous Canadian students and their unique ability to share cultural histories and experiences. Furthermore, "critical pedagogy self-consciously operates from a perspective in which teaching, and learning are committed to expanding rather than restricting the opportunities for students and others to be social, political, and economic agents," (p. 169) and in multi-cultural classrooms, this plays out through an enriched critical discourse. Scholars Tuhiwai Smith, Tuck, and Yang (2019) attest that Indigenous and decolonizing theories and perspectives need their own educational model or philosophical domain because they have special attributes, including settler colonialism and relationships, which are unlike all other models of education. Situating Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies as a stand-alone educational domain allows for more research and theory development outside of multiculturalism, critical race theory, and progressive education. Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies would allow Indigenous Peoples and worldviews to surface as contributing conversations in education and education research (p. 10).

The basis of having instructors transform their practice to integrate Indigenous perspectives, let alone Métis perspectives, is problematic because instructors are educated in Eurocentric ways. To analyze epistemic ignorance (Fricker, 2007; Kuokkanen, 2008; Spivak, 1999) as an act of injustice, I delve deeper into Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies and critical pedagogy–in critical race theory, multiculturalism, and progressive education. This deduction will uncover some sought-after answers as to the perceptions held by non-Indigenous and Indigenous instructors, students, and higher education policies, and practices that struggle with the inclusion of Métis content. As curriculum changes occur through reconciliation efforts, instructors will have more of an obligation-or will be mandated-to teach Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in courses such as the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses in higher education. Critical questions then arise around instructors' competency to teach Indigenous perspectives, specifically those who have previously studied Indigenous history/content in their teacher education programs. Additionally, there are concerns about the "cultural safety" (Papps & Ramsden, 1996) of students exposed to the material taught by non-Indigenous instructors who might not have the appropriate content knowledge and might mis-represent historical perspectives. Instructors need to critically reflect upon their teaching skills, knowledge, and thought processes to tackle novel and sensitive topics to students and instructors alike.

An approach to this integration that is gaining momentum is *Indigenization*, defined by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) as:

> A vision that locates indigenization on common ground between Indigenous and Canadian ideals, creating a new, broader consensus on debates such as what counts as knowledge, how should Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges be

> reconciled and what types of relationships academic institutions should have with Indigenous communities. (p. 219)

Gaudry and Lorenz's (2018) approach to education will require further research to understand how best to support non-Indigenous instructors with Indigenous content and to challenge the diversity, inclusivity, and equity of policies and processes within higher education in regard to reconciliation with Métis peoples. Like Regan (2010), I aim to explore the "pedagogical potential of truth-telling and reconciliation" (p. 11) specific to Métis content, which is under-researched in education. The exploration of the Métis story will create curriculum and pedagogical reform "as an effective means of transforming divisive histories and identities and shifting negative perceptions" (p. 11) of Métis perspectives, while allowing space for the Métis story.

Dion (2007) supports the need for critical reflection in education through the theory of critical pedagogy because it "offers a particular structure in support of advancing critical reflection on self and self in relationship with Others situated in a social-political-historical context" (p. 332). Dion claims that with critical pedagogy, it is clear there is a need for "an investigation of the extent to which belief systems have become internalized to the point that many teachers unsuspectingly rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to teaching without recognizing the inadequacy nor questioning the efforts of those discourses" (p. 332). One of the many questions I ask is: "Can we break down the dominant discourse to be more inclusive of Indigenous perspectives?"

Madjidi and Restoule (2008) also uses critical reflection to enhance teaching practices regarding Indigenous content. They note how Indigenous perspectives incorporated in teaching

practice will vary based on an instructor's interests and expertise, as well as the classroom and school context (p. 102). They argued that:

> Indigenous pedagogical methods present a valuable addition to the present systems of education in any teaching topic, not only when teaching Indigenous peoples. By incorporating observation, experience, introspection, and inquiry during the educational process, we will begin to create linkages from the experience of human beings and transmit them wholly to students in the classroom. (p. 101)

Instructors and students accept the oppressive power dynamics in the name of a neutral curriculum that is attempting to take politics out of education, but it would be prudent for students and instructors to question the hidden political assumptions and the colonial, racial, gender, and class biases that thrive in the education system (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 34). The neutral curriculum does not allow for students to draw upon their own conclusions on the subject matter taught in the classroom. If anything, in relation to Indigenous content, our schools reflect a null curriculum in the sense that Indigenous subject matter has not been, and often is not, taught; hence, educational reform is necessary. As Kincheloe (2008) suggested: "In the name of neutrality; therefore, students are taught to support the status quo. It is a highly complex task, but critical teachers believe we should resist this tyranny of alleged neutrality" (p. 35).

Further, Battiste (2013) argued that educational reform will:

> Acknowledge that Canadian schools teach a silent curriculum of Eurocentric knowledge that is not accommodating to other ways of knowing and learning. Schools that attempt to impose Eurocentric homogeneity by standardizing domesticated curricula are a problem,

> for they are often at a loss as to how to integrate local content into their prescribed, standardized curricular. (p. 66)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) supported *culturally relevant pedagogy*, a teaching approach that occurs when instructors have engaged cultural minority (Indigenous) students with culturally relevant content and methods in their learning. She notes culturally relevant pedagogy is composed of three criteria: academic success as experienced by students, cultural competence must be developed and maintained by students, and a critical consciousness must be developed by students to challenge the status quo. This engagement occurs once instructors have accommodated the values students bring to learning, their patterns of communication and behaviors, the sources of knowledge they see as a priority, and their histories of living and learning. Recognizing these elements allows the instructor to authentically engage students in their education. Taking into consideration a student's culture in the learning process and allowing students to maintain cultural integrity and achievement in school, demonstrates meaningful engagement of students by a culturally relevant instructor. If instructors continue to ignore the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, the student will display resistance and a continued lack of engagement (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160/161).

Similarly, Gay's theory of culturally responsive education (2010) considers how marginalized students of colour must be at the centre of teacher professional development programs and that the creation of teaching space must be focussed upon culturally relevant tenets. Gay highlights that many students, cultural minorities, and the mainstream will be interested in cultural diversity and social justice issues, and that teachers can improve their

teaching of diverse cultural backgrounds to ensure improved learning outcomes for all students (p. 216). Gay (2010) further described the role of teachers:

> Teachers in all educational levels should create, clarify, and articulate clearly defined beliefs about cultural diversity generally and in education specifically because personal beliefs drive instructional behaviors. If teachers have positive beliefs about ethnic and cultural diversity, they will act in accordance with them, and vice versa. Therefore, beliefs are critical components of culturally responsive teaching. (p. 216)

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogies laid the groundwork for the concept of *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2017; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). CSP has the goal of "supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). Although the work of Paris & Alim (2014) focussed on students of colour, their emphasis on identity and cultural practices is a "commitment to embracing youth culture's counterhegemonic potential while maintaining a clear-eyed critique of how youth culture can also reproduce system inequalities" (p. 85). They suggested that a culturally sustaining pedagogy:

> Seeks to perpetuate and foster–to sustain–linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change. CSP, then, links a focus on sustaining pluralism through education to challenges of social justice and change in ways that previous iterations of asset pedagogies do not. (p. 88)

CSP is crucial and relevant in education today, where voices of marginalized students are coming forward: “CSP exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Furthermore, CSP is critical in questions that “remain silent on issues of systemic racial and intersectional inequalities that continue to part of the fabric of schooling” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1).

CSP pedagogies play a role in decolonizing education and supporting Métis students and their lifeways, culture, and the perspectives that they bring into classrooms across the education system. Attendance of students of colour and Indigenous students, specifically Métis students in post-secondary education institutions, is on the rise. According to Statistics Canada (2020), the 1.9% increase in student enrollment at Canadian universities in 2017/2018 was due to large enrollment numbers of international students, particularly those from China and India. Students of colour and Indigenous students bring unique worldviews, perspectives, and culture into classrooms and interfere with the once predominantly white, middle- and upper-class student occupancy: “We can no longer assume that white, middle-class linguistic, literate, and cultural skills and ways of being that were considered the sole gatekeepers to the opportunity structure in the past will remain so as our society changes” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 89). This view is especially relevant concerning students’ diversity within higher education in Canada as institutions work towards equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives in both the recruitment and retention of new students and hiring senior leadership, faculty, and staff (Universities Canada, 2019).

Using culturally sustaining pedagogy is relevant for decolonizing Métis pedagogies, because many “Métis students are especially susceptible to being bombarded with uncontested

negative or misleading portrayals of their people and history" (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012, p. 7). Gaudry and Hancock worked to deconstruct crucial discourse, respecting Métis' experiences and searching for a pedagogy that "is premised on Métis understandings of ourselves, and one that invites Métis students to articulate more accurate and relevant self-understandings" (p. 8). They supported two goals of decolonizing Métis pedagogy: "a pedagogical consideration of methods that foster the intellectual skills and orientations necessary to analyze critically the colonial narratives of Métis-ness that confront students, and an exploration of Métis possibilities that are grounded in Métis experiences and relationships within and between communities" (p.8). I agree with the work of Gaudry and Hancock in that there are Métis narratives that "are embedded in an intellectual tradition of non-Métis scholars appropriating Métis history and Métis politics for their own purposes–to understand the impacts of the 'Riel Rebellions' on Canadian politics, without attempting to understand Métis history in and of itself" (p. 8). For these reasons, I believe that culturally sustaining pedagogies are both contemporary and relevant for decolonizing education, specifically in higher education for Métis pedagogies.

In Canada, Métis students may not consider themselves students of colour; however, there are critical pedagogical principles that intersect with the Métis experience from various forms of education including critical anti-racist education (St. Denis, 2007), multicultural education (Banks, 1993) and anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000). When teaching in a Canadian context, educators need to be aware that the Métis must be identified as a distinct group of Aboriginal People in Canada. The histories and perspectives of the Métis need to be included and distinguished from the pan-Indigenous perspectives in curriculum and pedagogy. Specific Métis perspectives are crucial for decolonizing higher education.

Infusing Métis Content into the Curriculum

Universities allow instructors (professors) the freedom to determine their course content, but the concept of mandated Indigenous Content Requirements are rather new in higher education. It is unclear what has been taught in university and because of this, I will focus on the kindergarten to grade 12 level as an example to discuss the infusion of Indigenous content into curriculum. Indigenizing teaching curriculum and integrating Indigenous perspectives have historically gone un-mandated by the government who are responsible for providing funding for education, establishing curriculum documents, and setting standards and guidelines on assessment and evaluation (Ministry of Education, 2019). Indigenous Peoples have recently settled for "token" pieces of Indigenous content randomly placed in specific grades and subject areas, but more needs to be done regarding teacher education programs. Dion (2012) describes teacher education as:

> An initial awareness of the need for Aboriginal Education within Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education, this awareness is not necessarily impacting practice. Course directors report that they often do not include Métis content in their courses due to their own lack of knowledge and understanding. The most pressing challenge confronting those working in the field is the dominant belief that Métis education is only relevant to teachers who intend to teach in communities where there is a significant population of Métis people. (p. 5)

There is a lack of research that includes Métis perspectives as part of multicultural education, which "incorporates the idea that all students–regardless of their gender and social class and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics–should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks, 1993). A review of the research and findings on the integration of First Nations' views in the curriculum is the initial place to explore Métis perspectives in the

curriculum. For example, York University began an infusion initiative in 2008 as part of their mainstream teacher education program to bring Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum. The goal of this project was to "provide a space to engage in learning of Aboriginal perspectives and pedagogies and to develop respectful relationships with Aboriginal People to assist teacher candidates in responding to the specific needs and interests of Aboriginal students in their classrooms while facilitating meaningful learning for all students" (Blimkie, Vetter, & Haig-Brown, 2014, p. 48). The teacher candidates created guiding principles for their teaching in culturally respective and meaningful ways. These included context, alternative perspectives, resources, diversity of history and teachings, opportunities of learning by not knowing, and the importance of infusing curriculum (p. 58). This work is essential to my Ph.D. research because I aim to create a product that mirrors this approach specific to Métis perspectives. Their infusion approach had an Aboriginal focus, and "at the core was the belief that understanding Canada's contemporary and historical relations with Aboriginal people [was] fundamental to creating respectful relationships that may lead to enhanced well-being and academic success for all students" (p. 48/49). I suggest a similar process in Chapter Six, which includes a Métis focus and so leads to better outcomes in higher education for Métis students. Macdougall (2017) stated why this is important:

> The prevalent belief among Canada and its citizens today is that Métis people have no history, culture, society, or language, but are instead a collection of individuals with Indian ancestry…the denial of Métis peoples' Indigeneity remains one of the most impactful social determinants of Métis health, well-being, and cultural safety. (p. 5)

In addition, Cannon (2012) explored educational pedagogical approaches that seek to build intercultural relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Cannon

believed that non-Indigenous people experience some degree of privilege derived from colonial relations, but for non-Indigenous people, they must conform their investments in what he calls "colonial dominance" to begin to make reparations which are part of the reconciliation process (p. 33). He indicated that all the change being worked towards is about troubling ourselves and teaching others to trouble the institutional normalcy of things (p. 23). He further suggests a range of strategies that can be used by educators to build those intercultural relationships and urges educators to consider their privilege and reflect on what it means to be an ally in Indigenous education (p. 22). He also suggested Canadian settler teachers participate, and be proactive, in Indigenous communities, which will help transform teacher education programs in Canada (p. 23).

Kanu (2005) analyzed mainly non-Indigenous secondary social studies teachers in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and found that many teachers believe Aboriginal Knowledge and perspectives in the school curriculum are crucial. Even still, her study found that differences existed in how the teachers understood and approached the integration of the material (p. 54/55). Kanu reported that, for the most part, the challenges experienced by teachers included: "teachers' lack of knowledge about Aboriginal cultures; lack of Aboriginal classroom resources; the racist attitudes of non-Aboriginal staff and students; school administrators' lukewarm support for integration; and incompatibility between school structures and some Aboriginal cultural values" (p. 57). When the teachers were asked about their perceptions on the meaning of integrating Aboriginal content, the majority believed that success was based on their professional effectiveness; Kanu described professional efficacy as "security in the professional knowledge base that teachers need to be able to implement the integration of Aboriginal cultural

perspectives into the curriculum" based on "initial teacher training and professional development opportunities" (p. 64).

Deer (2013) studied the integration of Aboriginal perspectives by second-year teacher candidates at a Canadian university. His findings were similar to Kanu (2005) in that gap existed in the teacher candidates' "knowledge about Aboriginal cultures; Aboriginal classroom resources; attitudes for non-Aboriginal teacher candidates and students; administrative support for integration; and compatibility between the institution and some Aboriginal cultural values" (p. 183). Overall, there was a great deal of "apprehension," that was likely due to the overabundance of Canadian media coverage that negatively portrayed Aboriginal People (p. 183); Aboriginal People were characterized by "marginalization, harsh living conditions, lack of opportunity, and emotionally-charged narratives of Aboriginal life that are put forth in relation to alleged government and societal mistreatment" (p. 205). Deer suggested that this apprehension is also a result of the teachers' view that they were disconnected from the cultural, ethical, and linguistic experience of Aboriginal People in Canada (p. 205).

Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) Courses

Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses are courses created or adapted by some universities to focus primarily on Indigenous histories, perspectives, and cultures. In the wake of the TRC's Calls to Action (2015c), that specifically address education, universities are seeking to enhance their curricula with crucial pieces of Indigenous content. For example, a group of undergraduate students at the University of Alberta are analyzing ICRs in universities across Canada and publishing a website that catalogues their research. The students argue in favour of the ICRs because they engage with comprehensive Indigenous Knowledge and history in Canada, disrupt colonial narratives, improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous

Canadians and provide knowledge on Indigenous history in the past, present, and future, as well as assist in resisting colonialism's attempt to homogenize Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. These students support the notion that decolonization must be a process that is valued in Canadian society and that ICRs can be a step towards this goal (University of Alberta, 2017).

Yet Gaudry (2016) warns that the progressive curriculum reform effort could be damaging if the requirement's implementation is inadequate. Universities should consider their capacity before jumping to provide ICR courses. Gaudry agrees that ICRs can be transformative for higher education but is concerned about the students who are forced to attend these courses and are therefore disinterested or event resentful of the mandatory ICR requirement. As a professor teaching Indigenous content himself, he anticipated that closed-minded or resistant non-Indigenous students could cause further damage to the course experience and Indigenous students. Through his experience, Gaudry described three key components that are effective and purposeful in the implementation of the ICR, including a well-articulated rationale; experts should teach ICR courses, and provide support to programs already engaged in this type of work. He also stressed that the content should be relevant to the students and not focus attention on Indigenous students and their experiences but should privilege the Indigenous experience and create safe spaces for Indigenous students to be heard and respected. According to Gaudry, we are in a crucial moment to realize the broader goals of reconciliation and restitution.

In Ontario, Lakehead University (2015) has committed to all undergraduate degrees containing a half-course equivalent (0.5 FCE) ICR that contains at least 50% Indigenous content or knowledge and requires at least 18 contact hours. The University's senate decided to mandate this ICR credit with representation from all academic departments, student affairs, the Aboriginal Governance Council, the Board of Governors, and the Lakehead University Student Union. The

Lakehead ICR is a result of consultation with internal and external groups during development of the University's 2013-2018 strategic and academic plans. Specific learner outcomes are associated with the Indigenous Content Requirement; for example, one outcome is to identify approaches to reconciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society. Lakehead has also encouraged its various academic departments to develop their own discipline-specific outcomes.

Both Lakehead University and the University of Winnipeg began to incorporate their ICRs in the 2016-2017 academic school year. Shortly after the ICR was enacted, various Indigenous students started to speak about their experiences with the content requirement. In a CBC radio interview (K. Tanner, personal communication, October 2, 2016), student Kayla Tanner shared that she believed her non-Indigenous professor was perpetuating stereotypes in the course she was taking. She understood her professor had positive intentions, but she did not think the course was well delivered. As an Indigenous student, she felt trapped and wanted to correct her professor every few minutes. She often felt overwhelmed by the class, and left the class crying and exhausted. She believed that non-Indigenous academics wrote much of the course content from a non-Indigenous worldview. In the same radio interview, a second student, Jenna Carew (J. Carew, October 2, 2016), stated that she believed the mandated ICR is positive. Still, she also believed that the ICR needed to be initiated appropriately with consultation. Shortly after the offering of the mandated ICR courses, Lakehead University hired an Indigenous curriculum specialist who began working with the faculty, specifically the non-Indigenous faculty, who were involved with teaching these courses.

Cultural Safety with Mandated Indigenous Content

Cultural safety in education began in New Zealand with nursing students in the early 1990s. Cultural safety is defined as “the effective nursing of a person/family from another culture by a nurse who has undertaken a process on their own cultural identity and recognizes the impact of the nurses’ culture on their own nursing practice” (Papps & Ramsden, 1996, p. 491). Although my concern is in the field of teacher education as opposed to nursing education, parallels can be drawn between Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructors regarding cultural safety when teaching mandated ICRs.

When exploring ICRs in higher education, it is essential to note that there are some students who are well versed in the culture and the history of Indigenous People, and there may or may not be the option for Indigenous students to opt-out of the requirement. A lack of choice has the potential to cause damage depending on who is instructing the ICR: if non-Indigenous instructors are delivering the ICR courses with minimal knowledge, the course may not be as effective for Indigenous students well versed in the culture and history of Indigenous People. Indigenous students may also embark upon a traumatic classroom experience if they are being told who they are or who they should be by a non-Indigenous person. Conversely, visibly Indigenous students, including Métis students, may be singled out or called upon inappropriately as a content expert by those teaching the content requirement without an effective knowledge base. In other words, there are no mechanisms in place to ensure there is no harm to Indigenous students when offering these mandated credits, and institutions need to be concerned about causing harm to students, as students may be claiming or re-claiming their identity. An institution needs to be mindful about creating confusion or doubt or providing false information as the mandated course content is being instructed. Thus, in my research, it was of particular interest to me to explore Métis content in the course options for students’ ICR requirement.

Institutional Policies and Practices

Along with ICR courses in universities that are aimed at providing learning on Indigenous histories, institutional policies and practices can also play a role in supporting students throughout their post-secondary studies. For Indigenous Peoples, including the Métis, "post-secondary education fuels the dreams and hopes of students," a statement "especially true of Indigenous students as they pursue their dreams and aspirations in this post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission landscape" (Indspire, 2018). Zinga (2018), a settler professor of Child and Youth Studies, analyzes how post-secondary institutions in Canada implement policies and directives targeting Indigenous students without fully understanding how to apply these initiatives. They reported that post-secondary institutions claim cultural inclusion with the result of merely window-dressing while maintaining the settler-colonial status quo. To move forward with reconciliation in higher education, institutions need to fully understand how structures, systems, and attitudes uphold colonialism and Eurocentrism.

Troian (2017) analyzes how universities and colleges currently imagine a reconciled education system into the future. She adds that Indigenous instructors and staff would better represent diverse cultures in universities and that an essential component of earning a degree or diploma is to view Indigenous Knowledge and learning as a visible part of that degree and to view the classroom as a relationship builder between Canadian and Indigenous peoples. These efforts could become necessary steps in shifting post-secondary education toward reconciliation.

Coté-Meek (2017a; 2017b), the former Vice-President-Academic of Indigenous Programs at Laurentian University, believes post-secondary institutions must provide a clear vision of how they will advance reconciliation. If there is no required plan of reconciliation explicitly linked to strategic, academic and research plans, then there is nothing to hold

universities accountable nor a tool to measure outcomes for the advancement of genuine reconciliation. Administrators also play a role in forging relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities, and this forging can be accomplished through the meaningful participation of Indigenous community partners. Advisory councils also act as a positive initial step to providing a forum for feedback and direction.

A deep commitment to change stems from relationships built on trust and respect. Stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples need to be dismantled, and broader systemic issues addressed, especially regarding how instructors, staff, and other learners interact with Indigenous Peoples. If administrations do not support reconciliation efforts, they are unlikely to happen. Tangible support for reconciliation must demonstrate real action with specific strategic initiatives in place, as well as create safe spaces for Indigenous Peoples on campuses and present opportunities for people to gather to learn about Indigenous Peoples with a focus on systemic inequities in institutions. Administrations also need to engage and lead by example in their active learning about Indigenous Peoples; Coté-Meek (2017b) has noted, for example, that not all post-secondary institutions have recognized the need to hire Indigenous education curriculum specialists to educate and support instructors with the pedagogical skills and knowledge that support reconciliation.

Barriers for Métis Students in Higher Education

Universities Canada (2020) has acknowledged that Indigenous Peoples face significant barriers in post-secondary education, and that fewer Indigenous People have a university degree compared to non-Indigenous Canadians. Universities Canada is committed to assisting Indigenous students with their academic pursuits, as education is essential to the reconciliation process. It has also committed to revitalizing Indigenous languages, ensuring Indigenous

representation on governance and leadership structures, and bringing Indigenous Knowledge and culture onto university campuses to advance reconciliation efforts. Universities Canada acknowledges that more needs to be done and is committed to working with governments to provide more assistance to Indigenous students to access and be successful in higher education.

Reported barriers in higher education include a lack of funding opportunities specific to Métis students, a lack of inclusivity in Indigenous student centres, the status of being a first-generation learner, mental health conditions, a lack of transportation, and lateral violence. Métis research participants have discussed the questioning of their identity by non-Indigenous peers, instructors, support staff, and faculty, which demonstrates the belief that they are not "Indigenous enough." According to Restoule et al. (2013), Indigenous students remain significantly underrepresented in post-secondary institutions in Canada despite the numbers of those who enroll in and complete programs. It is difficult for Indigenous students to access post-secondary education due to the barriers they face, including inadequate financial resources, poor academic preparation, a lack of self-confidence and motivation, the absence of role models with post-secondary education experience, a lack of understanding of Aboriginal cultures on campus, and racism on campuses (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2008; Holmes, 2006; Hudson, 2009; Malatest, 2004; Rae, 2005; Restoule & Smillie, 2008; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Contrary to Restoule et al. (2013), Ontario Universities' (2018) has claimed that "universities are proud of their diverse campuses, and they also know that diversity brings a responsibility to ensure there are culturally sensitive supports on campus and spaces where all students can gather and feel comfortable."

In 2019, a Canada Métis Nation Accord was created between the federal government and the Métis Nations of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. This

agreement concerns Métis students' enhanced participation in post-secondary institutions and emphasizes the need for new investments in funding through scholarships and bursaries (p. 108). Métis students face rejection when applying for financial assistance to post-secondary education (Paci, 2011; Métis National Council, 2004). The research participants in my study claimed that the support provided to Métis students – differs from the support provided to First Nations students: it has also been noted that "the combination of rising tuition and the fact that the majority of Métis income levels are lower than other Canadians has created severe impediments to Métis participation in post-secondary institutions" (Métis National Council, 2004, p. 9; Métis Education Report, 2009).

There is limited research on the specific barriers Métis post-secondary students face; however, the literature demonstrates that, collectively, Indigenous students face barriers in post-secondary institutions. These include a lack of prerequisite courses in high school, lower expectations of Indigenous students' success in high school, an absence of experienced role models within higher education, the necessity of relocating for post-secondary education and thus leaving community and responsibilities, and the stress of relocation (Restoule et al., 2013). In a study on Indigenous students in Ontario's transition to post-secondary education, Restoule et al. (2013) found that Indigenous youth could not see themselves represented in university promotional materials, and they wanted more information on funding, housing, food banks, and childcare, as well as vocational and training opportunities, before considering enrolment. The students also wanted information on cultural supports and events, academic support, and Elder access on campus (p. 6/7).

Defining Reconciliation in Métis Education

In addition to exploring institutional structures and systems embedded within a colonial mindset, studying the reconciliation process itself will aid in higher education transformation concerning the support of Métis students. At its core, reconciliation involves resolving past issues through apologies and reparation amendments to move forward as an improved relationship or partnership. Education's role in reconciliation through métissage allows for Métis perspectives to be presented in classrooms and for instructors to further understand and acknowledge Métis history. The Gabriel Dumont Institute (2009) has noted that:

> It is imperative that all Canadians have the opportunity to learn about Métis culture, history, and aspirations. Broad-based development and application of learning materials, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches that reflect Métis culture, traditions and values is an undertaking that cannot be ignored. (p. 5)

Reconciliation in education challenges past discourse and allows for Métis content to enter the curriculum. Donald explains that Indigenous métissage will "help with rereading, reframing, and reimagining the relationships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, and thus facilitate the decolonization process in educational contexts" (Donald, 2009, p. 5). This concept uses a "research sensibility that imagines curriculum and pedagogy together as a relational, inferential, and hermeneutic endeavour" (Donald, 2009, p. 5).

The "*Métisized"* (Gaudry, 2013) Canadian story and historical legacy of the Métis people must be present in education for future generations of students to acquire knowledge about this unique people and culture. Although some efforts occurred to include First Nations content in the curriculum, the Métis are a distinct culture of people, and specific content needs to be incorporated to addresses and reflect Métis identity adequately. Métis content needs to be included in all students' education; this will require reform across all education systems,

including post-secondary studies. Contemporary Métis people are actively engaged in Canadian society, continuing to live in their historical communities in Ontario. The Métis are active in multiple education systems, but the Métisness is absent in the curriculum of said systems.

In addition to the importance of opportunities for the professional development of faculty and instructors, I became committed to reconciliation policies and frameworks in higher education during my assessment of Canadian "willful ignorance" and the "self-serving and erroneous interpretations of key historical events [which] have been used to dispossess Aboriginal peoples for hundreds of years" (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010, p. 420). There are many interpretations of, and practices associated with, reconciliation, and Canada's process is unique in that it addresses Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and institutionalized racism, particularly with the TRC's Calls to Action (2015c). Education has historically made no significant references to Indigenous perspectives, histories, and cultures within the curriculum and, as such, has caused considerable harm. In this research, I analyze higher education policies as reconciliation to determine if repair exists that both acknowledges past errors and addresses inconsistencies and gaps in Métis Knowledge inclusion. Reconciliation, as a government process, must change institutional practices toward more equitable educational outcomes. Still, the TRC's Calls to Action (2015c) do not explicitly reference the history and oppression of Métis people: the Métis story, experience, and history persist as significant gaps in the report. Moving the reconciliation process forward through métissage into higher education will benefit all students because Canada has a Métis history. All Canadians deserve the opportunity to learn this history, the traditions, and the knowledge in the context of "global education and citizenship education" (Davies & Reid, 2005) and "social justice education" (Apple, 2011). My proposed conceptual framework will engage students in ways that allow them to share their stories and

attempt to create opportunities to include a métissage approach in higher education as reconciliation: "part of a praxis of reconcilia(c)tion, is our capacity to actively re-story our relations with the past, present, and future as Indigenous and settler Canadians" (Brant et al., 2017, p. 101). With such re-storying, similar mythical historical and Indigenous historical perspectives can challenge the ongoing authority of Euro-Canadian mythologies (the dominant narrative) (Donald, 2009, p. 5).

In the TRC's Calls to Action Final Report (2015a), *reconciliation* is defined as:

> Establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. For that to happen, there must be an awareness of the past, acknowledgment of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change the behavior. (p. 3)

Presently, we can correct the misinformation and inaccuracies of the past and move toward a shared Indigenous-Canadian story, specifically a Métis-story to benefit all students. Battiste (2013) affirms this moment by stating that instructors "must reject colonial curricula that offer students a fragmented and distorted picture of Indigenous peoples and offer students a critical perspective of the historical context that created that fragmentation" (p. 186). Reconciliation is an institutional process that can address significant gaps and omissions in the curriculum and harmful methods of teaching and assessment that continue to impact or hinder the achievement of Métis learners. Reconciliation can be a faculty's professional development opportunity and can elicit organizational change in universities to better serve Métis students, specifically those who have historically been segregated and oppressed within the education system.

The TRC's Calls to Action (2015c) section 62(1) emphasizes that education must address the development of the "curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada" (p. 7). While this Call to Action does not explicitly focus on Métis perspectives, it is a step toward correcting the curriculum in higher education. Universities are trying to address the Calls to Action by creating mandatory ICR courses; however, universities must contend with their history, roles, and positions in erasing Indigenous chapters of history and perpetuating *epistemic ignorance* (Fricker, 2007; Kuokkanen, 2008; Spivak, 1999). Kuokkanen (2008) referred to epistemic ignorance as:

> Academic practices and discourses that enable the continued exclusion of other than dominant Western epistemic and intellectual traditions. The academy fails to recognize indigenous epistemes grounded in different conceptions of the world and ways of knowing, and thus, indigenous people "cannot speak"; that is, when they speak from the framework of their own epistemic conventions, they are not heard or understood by the academy. (p. 60)

Instructors generally know one Western historical version of Canada's people, and many fail to learn the past from an Indigenous perspective, let alone a Métis perspective, and thus perpetuate a sense of ignorance. With the TRC as a guide, steps can be taken to address reconciliation in a curriculum that reflects Métis perspectives. Todd (2016) advised:

> In this time of reconciliation, not to lose sight of the importance of thinking, carefully and deliberately, about the impacts of our words, stories, and philosophies as scholars upon the very communities we are part of, and which are affected by how we articulate ideas about Métis peoplehood, governance, politics and existence. (p. 47)

Todd also reminds us of the TRC's Calls to Action (2015c) section 45, which calls upon the need to reconcile Aboriginal and Crown constitutional and legal orders (p. 5) and has described reconciliation as a priority regarding Métis people, which is "our duty is not only to rebuild thriving, dynamic legal orders for today, but to envision futures for ourselves to carry Métis people forward into another 154 years and beyond" (Todd, 2016, p. 55).

Métis people have been held hostage by the federal government through the rebellions, formation of the Manitoba Act, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop experiences, land scrip fraud, creation and re-creation of political organizations, the wrongful execution of Louis Riel, and the period when the Métis were considered Canada's "forgotten people" (Sealey & Lussier, 1975, p. 143). Along with the sharing of their historical legacy in Canada, it is time to move forward in the spirit of reconciliation by sharing the Métis story with students so that they can learn about, be empowered by, and be proud of, their ancestors. My study provides that voice to Métis students by exploring their experiences with ICR courses and how they define reconciliation.

Moving Métis Education Forward in Ontario

For many years in Ontario, institutions and academic papers have reflected on the need to increase Indigenous participation in universities as well as the success rates of Indigenous learners. Over time, there has been a rise in the targeted services and supports for Indigenous learners, primarily funded through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities through their Post-Secondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL). These services and supports are funded through the provincial government and carry no additional financial burden to post-secondary institutions, as reported in *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs*

(2005). This is one of the first reports in which the government of Ontario declares its commitment to working with Aboriginal Peoples to improve educational outcomes.

Because education in Canada is administered through provincial governments, the government must provide policy directions specific to the inclusion of Indigenous, including Métis Knowledge in the curriculum. In June 2015, the same year the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its Calls to Action (2015c), Universities Canada (2015) adopted 13 Principles on Indigenous Education that were developed with Indigenous communities as a step towards advancing reconciliation through higher education. Universities Canada represents 96 universities in the country and has looked for ways to close the education gap with Indigenous students to support their ambitions and goal of self-determination. Universities Canada also notes the greater need for the indigenization of university curriculum and leadership of Indigenous Peoples in education. They further note that post-secondary institutions have a role to play in the reconciliation process by asserting the need for appropriate governance structures and academic decision-making bodies.

In 2016, the Ontario government published the document *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, noting that the government needs to work with Indigenous partners and:

> Is committed to teaching coming generations about our shared history and ensuring that survivors [of residential schools] and communities are the ones sharing these stories. Children in Ontario must be given the opportunity to effect change and work to build a better province. This can only happen if we equip them with the truth of our entire history. (p. 16)

This learning of our shared history applies not only to students in Ontario but also to students throughout Canada which includes an appreciation of First Nations, the Métis, and the Inuit. As noted by Kearns and Anuik (2015), the lack of awareness on Métis history and culture continues because appropriate resources need to be created that produce an understanding of the historical Métis people, specifically in regard to their role in the Federation of Canada and the legacy of Louis Riel (p. 26). The document, *The Journey Together* (2016) highlights that:

> Education remains a key component of reconciliation. Through the Initial Teacher Education Program, accredited teacher-education programs offered by Ontario's faculties of education are required to provide mandatory Indigenous content. The Province is also working with Indigenous partners to enhance the Ontario curriculum to support mandatory learning about residential schools, the legacy of colonialism and the rights and responsibilities we all have to each other as treaty people. (p. 19)

To address the absence of the Métis within post-secondary curriculum, universities must provide space for Métis people to share their unique history and contemporary realities. This space will allow instructors to find a relational position to connect with Métis culture, thus, supporting and celebrating this unique culture of people (Kearns & Anuik, 2015, p. 26/27). As a Métis academic, it is essential for moving the reconciliation process forward in higher education that I provide further research on embedding a métissage lens in curriculum and institutional policies and practices in higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STORIES OF THE MÉTIS WOMEN

This chapter honours the stories of the 12 Métis women participants as gifted to me as part of the research's data collection process. I spent time listening to and forming a relationship with each participant as we had conversations about our educational experiences. The following highlights the participant profiles and provides a glimpse into the context of the data and results that follow in the subsequent chapters. The chapter ends with a preview of information that I wanted to share before formally sharing my research methods and methodology. This information stresses the importance of why I chose to engage in the sharing of stories, why I was the right person to conduct this research and some potential challenges I could have faced. I use this chapter to share my personal story, which provides many parallel experiences to that of the Métis women participants. Providing this additional information on each participant accentuates essential aspects of Métis education past, present, and future.

All participants are identified by a pseudonym they provided. All other personal and demographic information was disclosed through conversations and electronic communication, and this will further be described in Chapter 4, Research Methods and Methodology.

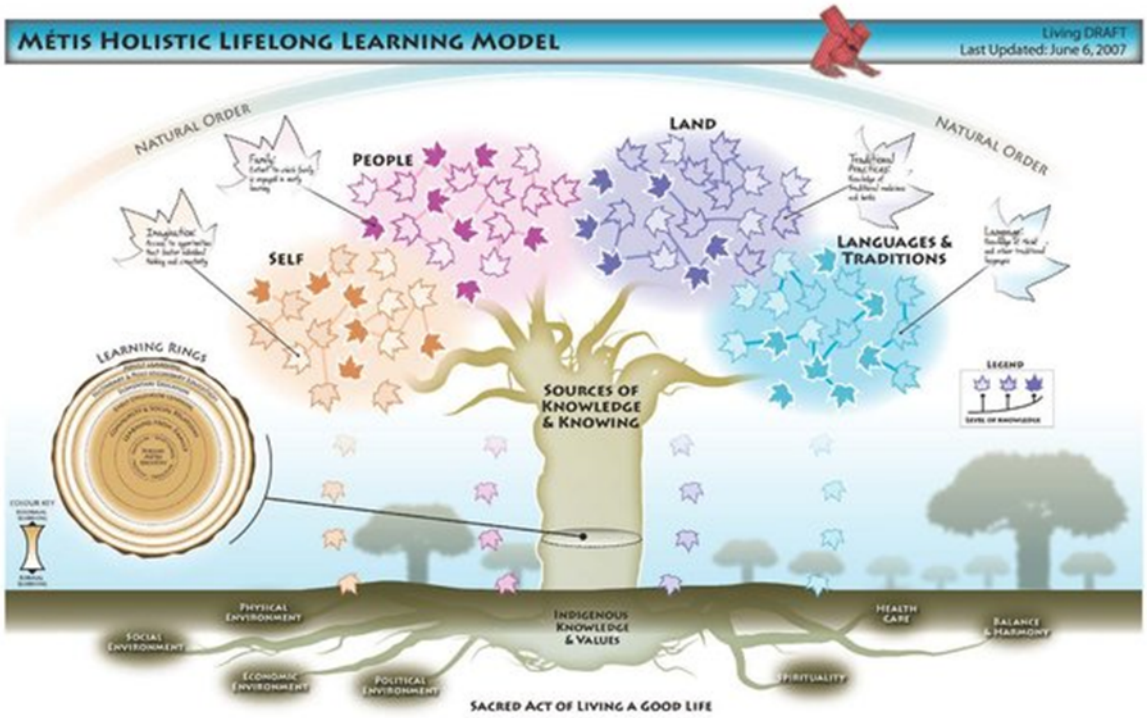
The Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Before I share the stories of the Métis women participants, I want to note the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. In 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) researched to define what success in learning involves concerning First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. Their goal was to develop and implement appropriate frameworks. Through their 2007 report, they highlight the holistic nature of Aboriginal learning across the lifespan. Workshops and

dialogues were held with Indigenous people to create models that identified relationships between the purpose of learning, learning processes, and outcomes from across the lifespan, to affirm each culture's values and beliefs, and to provide a framework to measure learning success (p. 22). Figure 1 is the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. The participants were asked to reflect on the model as I searched out their thoughts on a Métis framework that would best represent the worldview, needs, and experiences of adult Métis learners in higher education. These conversations lead to further discussions of an appropriate model that would best represent reconciliation with Métis learners today.

Figure 1

Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007)



The CLL (2007) reports that the tree diagram of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model represents learning as a holistic and lifelong process that is part of a regenerative and

living system seen in the lifecycle of the tree. The tree is an all-encompassing system that regulates the seasons, and the cycles of life, death, and re-birth, where all things are interconnecting and contribute to and benefit each living entity. An individual learner is part of a wider community of learning within the Natural Order. Métis learning is represented by four elements: the roots (determinants of community well-being), the learning rings (stages of lifelong learning), the branches (the sources of knowledge), and the leaves (the domains of knowledge). Métis learners, like trees, need these elements present to obtain optimal growth. The well-being of the learner (the tree) is affected by the health of the forest of learners, like the regenerative capacity of the tree, which is affecting by the changing conditions of the natural cycle. Harmony depends on reciprocal relationships based on trust and shared values, and these are important for both the individual and the collective (p. 22).

I draw upon my own life experiences, values, and knowledge as a Métis person to document my Ph.D. journey in the same manner as the Métis tree of lifelong learning. In each section of my research, I address literature of readings, articles, and research that I have analyzed, reviewed, and applied to my own identity as an emerging Métis scholar. I have also incorporated a myriad of lived experiences in post-secondary education, teaching, administration, management, and curriculum design to consider how Métis-specific learning approaches in education became a part of my Ph.D. journey, as reflected in my coursework experiences and scholarly activities. I use a collection of Indigenous/Métis and non-Indigenous education scholars to demonstrate Métissage research as an integrated combination of theoretical and methodological components related to the field of Métis higher education. At times, some of these theoretical approaches were complementary, while at other points, almost contrary. Prior to my Ph.D. journey, I had not considered any of my activities contributing to my identity

formation (Frideres, 2008), nor did I realize the significance of the journey that led me to negotiate a Métissage approach to reconciliation in academia.

The Stories

The Story of Whitestar

Whitestar was the first to volunteer when I was searching for research participants. Whitestar described herself as Métis, 31 years of age and as a student with ADHD. At the time of the study, Whitestar was not a current student at the research site. She had been a student during the 2017-2018 academic year. She left to study elsewhere because the research site program she was interested in would not provide her with the ability to condense her remaining credits to complete her degree requirements more efficiently. Whitestar graduated from the Indigenous Social Work program at another university in the spring of 2020. Whitestar was also a graduate of the Social Service Worker Diploma program from a northern Ontario college.

Whitestar was exposed to some Indigenous content in the college program she attended, but she did not take a specific course on Indigenous content. Until Whitestar enrolled in an Indigenous program within the university, her experience with Indigenous content, and specifically Métis content was minimal. She told me about a course she took that provided definitions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and how it referenced the importance of culture, but that was the extent of Indigenous content in her university education. After the first year of university, she left and went into an Indigenous-specific program at a different university. This second university (not the research site) where Whitestar attended as a transfer student was much more conducive to her needs concerning social work and working with Indigenous people. She took

many courses at this university reflecting on the history and the social and political aspects of Indigenous people in Canada.

She described how financially challenging her education was, because, while she is Métis, her family genealogy has not yet been validated through the Métis Nation of Ontario and therefore her access to education funding dollars has been severely restricted. Further, it has just been within the last two years that the Métis Nation in Ontario has been flowed funds by the federal government to be used in education. Whitestar believes funding to be one of the critical barriers to her educational achievement in higher education. She originally went to college; however, she decided she needed to attend a university for better pay; even though financially it was a struggle for her to keep up with the rising costs of tuition.

Whitestar had not known of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning model. Still, as she shares her thoughts, as she can see how knowledge and values are fundamental and contributing factors to the tree's growth or a person's development. She understands how the various sources of knowledge seen through the land, language, culture, and traditional practices are vital parts of Métis worldview. The model was reflective of Métis identity as it contained various components as represented in the leaves of self, people, land and languages, and traditions. She could see knowledge as an integrative process, the values and knowledge of the people, and saw these as the leaves' cyclical nature as they fell to the ground. She thought that someone would need to take the time to explain the model to others before they would thoroughly understand it but thought that a model or framework would be helpful to represent Métis students, specifically those attending university. She also believed that the model image was extremely busy with all the images and colours. For someone who has ADHD like her, these elements might make the model more complicated to use even as adult learners and with a concrete explanation of its

parts. A simplified, straightforward model was something that she would support. At the end of the day, your educational experiences belong to you. If there is a model that is confusing to you, it will be confusing to others. The model needs to represent education for everyone within the Métis community. The symbol of a canoe might be more appropriate than a tree because it represents the connection Métis people have to land and water. She also inquires as to whether a Métis person created the model. She wants to ensure that a higher education model reflects the Métis people, their history and culture. She is tired of seeing the Métis grouped into categories with First Nations and Inuit people and wants to know that the Métis worldview is centered.

The Story of Little Flower

Little Flower was a Ph.D. candidate in Native Studies at a post-secondary institution in Ontario at the time of the study. She identified herself as Métis and as 39 years old. Little Flower had worked for the Métis Nation of Ontario as a post-secondary officer. She described herself as a strong supporter of the Infinite Research Métis Student Solidarity Network. Little Flower had never attended the research site but had taught Indigenous content at an Ontario university.

As someone who has taken several courses on Indigenous content, Little Flower believes that the Métis people have primarily been excluded and misrepresented in course content. She feels like students need to be reminded why learning about Indigenous content related to the three distinct cultures is important. She sees this reflected in the amount of racism within the society on a very large scale. She connects Métis content to reconciliation efforts in higher education. She believes that because people do not understand Métis History, they are not going to prioritize reconciliation, and this concept means different things depending upon who's worldview it is interpreted from within. She does not think that the government is sincere with their reconciliation efforts with Métis people, so it will be a challenge to bring forward reconciliation

efforts in higher education. Due to limited influence by Métis people in higher education, there is no voice represented within the academy and reconciliation is likely impossible.

It has taken her a long time to understand her identity as a Métis person because her mother is non-Indigenous; her dad is Métis, and she was not exposed to culture growing up. Identity is a very important yet complicated matter concerning Métis identity and she says this from her position as an educator teaching Indigenous content within a university. She often feels overwhelmed by the ignorance of the adult learners within her classrooms. However, she is hopeful that as time passes and as initiatives evolve, higher education will allow Métis pedagogies and knowledges into the institution in formal ways. All Canadians need to understand the history of the Métis people but that the academy also needs to support this learning.

Little Flower believes that the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model could symbolize a connection Métis people share. Métis people have connections to their language, land, culture, self, and people but she does not think other non-Indigenous people think about this connection. Others need to understand how colonialism disconnected Métis people from one another and other important aspects in their lives such as their culture. If others within higher education could understand the connection Métis people have to one another embedded within deep kinship ties, they would be in a better position to support Métis students. People within higher education do not understand the Métis people or their culture.

Little Flower tried to organize an event in the Indigenous Student Center at one point, but she later regretted doing so. As a person with fair skin, she thought that making herself visible as an Indigenous was dangerous as she experienced racist and bullying remarks. Métis students do not necessarily fit into spaces as Indigenous students when they do not physically look the same

as others that occupy the space. Her experiences with racist microaggressions within higher education have been barriers to her accessing Indigenous student support services. Institutions need to do better with addressing institutional racism.

Little Flower tells me about her Ph.D. studies and finds the lack of theory concerning Métis research an underdeveloped area. Emerging Métis academics are creating research frameworks that blend Indigenous knowledge with western approaches and she wants to further explore the concept of métissage without being overly questioned. She has attempted to describe a mixed-world blended culture position in her research. She is tired of convincing others that Métis worldviews are worthy and an important part of knowledge production. Her research focuses specifically on student support services for Métis students within higher education.

The Story of Rachel

Rachel identified herself as Métis and was 37 years old. Rachel was not a current student at the research site. Rachel had obtained a Bachelor of Education degree (2011) and a Master of Arts degree (2013) from the research site. At the time of the study, Rachel worked at a community college in northern Ontario supporting student success; her work involved supporting Indigenous students academically, culturally, and in a broader social context. Rachel had also taught in a faculty of education at the post-secondary level.

While working towards her education degree, Rachel was able to take Literature of Canada's First Nations and Aboriginal Education courses. The literature course left a strong impression on her, especially because she loved reading, and she felt that stories connected her, challenged her, and helped her grow as a person. The Aboriginal Education course taught her about the concept of two-eyed seeing, something that Rachel had come across before in her

education used to described seeing the world through both her Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry. She was interested in references to land use as a classroom, and she felt most at ease and at home when engaged in land-based pedagogies or content. These two courses meant a great deal to Rachel's higher education experience. Up until this point in her education, she did not recall learning anything from Métis' perspectives. She believed that all Indigenous cultures were grouped into one category of Indigenous. She was uncertain if the content was simply structured as Indigenous content or if she blurred the curriculum altogether because there were often no references to Inuit and Métis people or histories. As an educator, when remembering her educational experiences, essays and tests were not always the best evaluation for students, specifically Métis students. Students should have multiple ways to participate and respond to the curriculum.

When I asked about the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning model, she not seen the model before, but she appreciated the roots of the tree and the notion that the leaves fall to the ground to nourish the tree's roots. She believes this circular system is like Indigenous storytelling and knowledge in that information is passed down from generation to generation and does not have an end. She felt the tree concept was difficult to understand because it represented one unified tree. She thought a strawberry plant might better explain the concept of lifelong learning. She thinks each plant sends out a root to make daughter roots, and this better illustrates the circular nature of learning while also honouring a web of different knowledge systems. A strawberry plant would better represent the insects as pollinators, air, and water, and this is the best metaphoric imagery of lifelong learning.

Rachel remembers self-identifying as a Métis student within the academy. She always self-identified for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) because she had hoped for

more grant funding. She did not self-identify within higher education institutions because although she grew as an Indigenous person, she is of fair skin tone. She knew this privilege has shielded and protected her from many of the trials and tribulations Indigenous people face, specifically around being discriminated against. She was uncertain how identifying would have added to her educational experience. She understands that self-identification can help students place themselves within their culture and education. As someone currently employed in a local community college, she believes that self-identification is more about the institution and their needs for funding dollars rather than around Indigenous students' needs. When institutions receive funds, they do not necessarily filter down to programs and services for Indigenous students. If funds do go to Indigenous student supports, this messaging is not made clear to Indigenous students. There is a lack of accountability on the institution's part to disclose how the government funds are spent and this is of great concern for Rachel.

The Story of Joy

Joy was a current student at the research site in her third and final year of law school. Joy was 25 years old and identified herself as Métis. She was originally from southern Ontario. Joy was an Infinite Reach Facilitator at the research site and had participated in that role for several years throughout her studies. Joy's undergraduate degree was also from the research site: she graduated in the Political Science Program (2016). Joy took a year off before completing her law degree and graduated in the spring of 2020.

Joy and her twin sister both attended the same university for many years as they obtained their degrees. While Joy was in political science and then later a law program, her sister studied nursing. She tells me about both her and her sister's experiences. There were two specific Indigenous content courses that she needed to take as degree requirements in her university

education. One of these courses was an Aboriginal perspectives course where she learned some interesting creation stories and the perspectives taught in the course were of First Nation's as the instructor was a First Nation's person. She felt disheartened learning so much about the perspectives of Anishinaabe people while her culture was being left out. The instructor tried to include Métis perspectives and even brought in a Métis guest speaker, so she was appreciative that the instructor knew to engage the community. As part of this course, she recalls an experience where there was a visit to a local historical park where the class learned about traditional medicines. She appreciated the learning that was connected to the land. She considered this experience a highlight of the course and felt much at ease being on the land. In her law program, she took a course on Indigenous law and for one class Métis perspectives were taught by a Métis lawyer and professor. She felt the class was very informative concerning Métis law and believed the content to accurately reflect the lived experiences of the Métis people.

Joy had not seen the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model and thought there was a great deal going on in the model that was primarily represented by a picture with not a lot of context. She wanted to know who had created the model to see if it was representative of Métis worldview. She thought that people would interpret the model in various ways based on what they knew about the Métis people. She thought that it was a good representation of having one's knowledge based in the ground with it expanding outwards. As you grow, so does your knowledge and this is how she views her education.

The Story of Sarah

Sarah identified herself as Cree-Métis and was 39 years old. Sarah was a Master of Education student at the research site. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Winnipeg (2011). Sarah took pride in discussing her

experiences from her Indigenous Languages Diploma that she achieved at Red River Community College in Manitoba (2007). Sarah was an employee at the research site and had supported students in their transition to university as they entered post-secondary education through an access/pathway program. Sarah had recently taken on a new role within the research site as the Indigenous Content Specialist providing professional development workshops for faculty and staff and supporting faculty with infusing Indigenous content within their courses.

Sarah does not remember any specific Métis content throughout her higher educational experiences until she participated in a master's program with a specific Indigenous specialization. She took a course on Indigenous pedagogies, but it was more about research methodology and not specific to Métis people. She remembers a course where they discussed the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and engaged in some small learning activities for one class related to its content. When she relates her learning to the idea of Indigenous content requirements, she is interested in the possibilities those types of courses could have specifically concentrating on Métis content. She would even be interested in taking these types of courses simply for interest should they exist, so she could learn more about Métis history. She believes that everyone should have a solid foundational knowledge of all three cultures of Indigenous people, and she believes that pan-Indigenizing the content does not give the Métis and Inuit proper visibility within the curriculum. At the same time, she feels that the experience of learning about First Nations, Inuit and Métis people would very much be dependent upon who was teaching the content. Sarah is hopeful that Indigenous people teach Indigenous content. When she attended university, she felt like Métis content was being pushed aside, so she would identify with her Cree ancestry to better fit in with the students, faculty, and institution that she was attending.

When asked about the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, Sarah thought that the image represented sharing or giving. The tree roots come from the land, which is where one situates themselves and their connection. There is a sense of community in the image and there is some freedom to connect with the land wherever you are located. As mixed cultured people, some just might connect more with their non-Indigenous ancestors and this is alright because our identity is so important to who we are as a people. She wishes that the model was more representative of Louis Riel and the Red River settlement, the connection to land, the road allowance people, how the Métis Nation formed in Canada, and how these ideas connect to the bigger concept of Métis identity and culture. She felt very passionate about noting that no one ever within her educational experiences taught her about these things as they related to her culture as a Métis person.

The Story of Bell

Bell identified as Métis and was 26 years old. She was a student at the research site in the Master of Social Justice program. Bell had been a resident of Thunder Bay her entire life and held a Political Science degree (2018) from the research site. Bell had recently been hired to support students at a northern Ontario university.

Bell has taken various Indigenous content type courses throughout her university experience, primarily as electives not because they were program requirements. She has taken about five or six courses out of interest and wanting to learn more. She finds Indigenous content courses more about what settler colonialism and the government did to Indigenous peoples and not so much about Indigenous peoples' perspectives or history. She also finds Indigenous content requirements harmful to Indigenous students because most faculty teaching the content are non-Indigenous people. She did not appreciate a non-Indigenous person telling her what her history

was. Her experience with Indigenous content has been pan-Indigenized specifically around lessons on residential schools, the sixties scoop, and the medicine wheel. However, she knows that each culture experienced these events differently and that the medicine wheel is not a cultural representation of the Métis people. As a teacher's assistant for a course on Indigenous content, she tells me about reading students papers and seeing in print all the racist remarks made by non-Indigenous students. She often feels overwhelmed by reading these types of papers. The racism that is played out in the papers results from ignorance and that higher education students do not even know that they are being racist. There is a difficult balance between supporting non-Indigenous students with Indigenous content and trying to re-direct them or educate them on their racist biases that are playing out within their writing. She sees Indigenous courses in higher education focussed on the impact of the trauma sustained by Indigenous people rather than a celebration of culture and resiliency. When she witnesses this, she thinks the classes should be focussed on settler colonialism or on white people's impact on Indigenous peoples. She does not appreciate the narrative that Indigenous people are victims, and she believes that this has been played out in the Indigenous content courses that she has taken or been a part of as teacher's assistant.

The Story of Lee

Lee identified as Métis and was 49 years old. Lee had a Bachelor of Education degree (1998) from the University of Manitoba. She was qualified to teach in the primary and junior division and did so in a North-western Ontario community. Lee also held a post-bachelor's degree in Education Administration with a minor in Native Studies. Lee held additional qualifications in mathematics, religious education, and French as a second language. Lee had never attended the research site.

Lee is a descendant from Saskatchewan and grew up in the Red River valley with Métis French culture. She is bilingual and takes great pride in understanding her Indigenous and European roots as a Métis person. Only taking courses without visibly Indigenous students, she felt like she could connect with others like her or the communities in which she grew up. She has some darker physical attributes, including a darker skin tone and dark hair and when she was in university it was primarily settler-Canadian people attending. She tells me about a memory of being signalled out in class and how uncomfortable she felt. She had not experienced a blatant calling out of her identity in education until she reached a university classroom. When she did experience Indigenous content, it was on First Nations and Inuit people and it did not refer to the Métis people or history. She believes it is important to understand the Métis experiences from the past, the present and the potential that lies ahead for the future.

Concerning the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, Lee believes it is best to be taught by Métis people who have a cultural and historical understanding of the Métis people. She finds this approach would allow more of the history of the Métis people to be visible within the model. With respect to the model, she thinks it is important that others understand the differences in the educational rights of First Nation and Métis people.

The Story of Louise

Louise identified as Métis. Louise held a Bachelor of Education Degree (2009) from the research site and was qualified to teach history and English in the intermediate and senior divisions. Louise also held additional qualifications in guidance and career education. Louise was 34 years old and taught at a high school in North-western Ontario. Before her current teaching position, Louise worked in the Student Success Centre at a community college in

northern Ontario supporting Indigenous students. Louise took great pride in supporting her high school students as the assistant girls' volleyball coach.

Louise has had few learning experiences with Métis content and perspectives. As a teacher, she has tried to advocate to have more Métis content included within the curriculum. Her only experience with Métis content that she can recall as a student is through a presentation she attended once while employed at a local community college. The experience was a good one because the presentation was delivered by Métis people that she believed understood the history and current political climate of Métis people. When or if Métis perspectives are brought into the curriculum, they need to ensure they accurately reflect the Métis experience. If faculty are unsure of content, they need to check with the local Métis community, so that experience is shared through the worldview of a Métis person.

Louise was unfamiliar with the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model but thought it might be useful with students. It appeared to be a good foundational piece to help students contextualize education. She wanted to ensure that the model was created by Métis people. It is important that others know the Métis have very distinct cultural practices. Further, as a people historically without rights in Canada, the Métis are not trying to infringe upon First Nations people's rights but are working towards reconciliation efforts that acknowledge rights on their own accord reflective of their Métis history. Further historical information would be useful in the model is going to reflect on the historical story of the education of the Métis people over time.

The Story of Sunshine

Sunshine identified as a Métis person and was in her first year of the Master of Education program (2019) at the research site. She was 24 years old. Previously, Sunshine attended the

University of Winnipeg where she graduated from the musical theatre production program (2017). She grew up in Winnipeg and was surprised when she came to the research site to discover how passionate her professors were in their content and teaching practice and that kept her engaged in her studies. Sunshine enjoyed a good espresso beverage while not attending school or working on assignments.

Sunshine was attending a program that does not include any Indigenous content as part of its program requirements. She was also in an arts-based program in theater before her master's program and there was no mandatory Indigenous content as part of that program. However, she is curious to understand and find out more information on what the university considered important Indigenous content. She feels it would be difficult to offer Métis course content specifically in her education without involving people from the Métis community because she understands that most faculty members are non-Indigenous people. When Indigenous content is taught, it should be given equal time between First Nation, Inuit, and Métis content. As a master's student she does not participate in student events or access the Indigenous student support centre. However, she does believe that addition financial support for her studies would have helped alleviate the financial pressure she has often experienced. At the same time, she thought she might feel a bit embarrassed, and some stigma associated with asking for additional funds for her education, partly because she is of fair skin tone. She does not believe others would see her as an Indigenous person.

When reflecting on the Métis model of lifelong learning she tells me that she does not understand it, as she was disconnected from understanding about her Métis as she was growing up. She thinks that for those learning about their culture as adults, the model should be more simplified and more of it needs to be explained. She does not believe that Métis culture is visible

on campus, she is uncertain how additional awareness would be given to something like a Métis model of learning or pedagogy. Also, with related to physical appearance and skin tone she thought that others within the academy might not take someone like her seriously if she started talking or teaching about a Métis concept like that of the learning model. She believes others would think she did not have the right to talk about a culture that perhaps she did not belong to.

The Story of Dumont

Dumont identified as Métis and was 29 years old. She held an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Ottawa (2012) and a Bachelor of Education degree from the research site (2013). She was qualified to teach in both the primary and junior divisions and did so in the Ottawa area. She had taught kindergarten and was also qualified to teach French as a second language.

Dumont felt extremely lucky to take a course in university taught by Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall. She felt overwhelmed and was so excited to learn about the Métis from the western part of Canada and felt it has had a deep personal impact on her educational experience. She also believed that the course had a lasting impact on her peers that were non-Indigenous people studying Métis history and culture. She had only hoped that the class would have contained even more people who could have taken it as an elective. She took many Indigenous studies courses throughout her time spent in higher education. Still, none of them spoke to or referenced Métis content except that one course. She found each course very interesting and well-taught, but often missed out on providing Métis and Inuit perspectives.

Dumont thinks reconciliation efforts in education have been attempted by many elementary schools as they have made changes to include more Indigenous perspectives. She felt

that educators think teaching Indigenous topics like residential schools is optional and based on their comfortability with the content and that these attitudes do not contribute to reconciliation efforts. The government cancelled key curriculum reform efforts in primary and secondary education that were to address the curriculum with Indigenous content and was deeply sadden by this announcement. She understands that educators do not have the resources or motivation to bring Indigenous content forward.

Dumont has never seen the image of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. She had tried to research the model once I had provided to her in advance of our story sharing. She asked me if I could share more about who created the model and was curious to know if Métis people had any input. She felt that the model captured many big picture items, but she was interested in knowing how other Métis people would interpret the model. Overall, Dumont had limited knowledge of the model and did not side with it one way or another.

The Story of Jesse

Jesse identified as Métis and was 30 years old. She was a graduate of the research site and held an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and Bachelor of Education degree, along with a Master of Education (2013). Jesse was working in North-western Ontario as an Indigenous Graduation Coach at a high school supporting Indigenous students whilst they transitioned from grade 8 into grade 9. Previously, Jesse was employed at the research site as a Transition Advisor, supporting Indigenous students in their first year of post-secondary studies.

Jesse has had some exposure to Indigenous content throughout her experiences in higher education. The content she was exposed to as a student focussed on First Nation's content with no inclusion of Métis people other than in a verbal acknowledgement of a reference using the

FNMI acronym. When referencing Métis people, she would like the content to reflect the ethnogenesis of the Métis people, how they came to be in Canada, and the various hardships they have faced such as assimilation. As an educator, content about the Métis people does not go beyond the fur trade era and there are no references to the Métis living in contemporary communities and society. She wants others to understand the full Métis story, which includes the many struggles as experienced within Canadian society. She wants others to understand what distinguishes the culture of the Métis from other Indigenous cultures in Canada.

Jesse had not known of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model before she participated in my research. She likes the imagery associated with the tree because it implies the natural progression of cultural reclamation and reflects on how individuals can grow into their identity if given the correct tools. She believes it also speaks to the things that Canadian society can help provide as a catalyst for that growth, such as health and conditions that affect the environment. The model speaks to the reclamation of identity and culture but does not touch on the history of oppression and violence perpetuated against the Métis people. Jesse is unsure if the tree is truly representing all that encompasses Métis history. The tree looks healthy and full of colour, but the Métis people experienced a very long and dark period within history, and this is not represented in the image.

The Story of Ms. C

Ms. C was 33 years old and identified as Métis. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Youth Studies, a Bachelor of Education (2009) and a Master of Education (2012) from Brock University. She was qualified to teach in the primary and junior divisions, to teach science in the intermediate division, and to teach social sciences in the senior division. She also held additional qualifications in special education,

> religious education, kindergarten, dramatic arts and teaching First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children. At the time of the study, Ms. C was living and teaching in southern Ontario in the Niagara region. Ms. C had consulted on the Ministry of Education's curriculum documents with respect to Métis content. Ms. C had never attended the research site.

Ms. C tells me that none of her courses at the university level contained Métis or Indigenous content. Once she graduated from her degree, she was able to take the additional qualifying courses in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis studies, but these courses did not include the Métis people and the content was pan-Indigenized. She understands that Métis content is often grouped into a pan-Indigenous approach and believes people do not have the content knowledge to bring forward Métis perspectives in various educational settings that span K-12 and post-secondary education. She is interested in Indigenous content requirement courses and specifically wants to learn more about the content, curriculum, and even potential courses' names that are now available in some universities. She is most interested in knowing if Indigenous people teach the courses and, if not, she wants to know how the community is involved in ensuring authentic voices within the content. Ms. C is uncertain about the value of students only taking one Indigenous content course thinks that students should take a course each year of their undergraduate degrees.

Ms. C learned of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model in her additional qualification courses. She believes that the model is important for all educators because it highlights the importance of living in the community, inviting the community to share knowledge, and allows Métis students to see themselves represented in their learning. The land, language, and culture are central to the model and should be a part of all educational

programming. The model would help remove barriers to student's learning because it reinforces the idea of balance through a holistic Métis approach central to student success.

My Story to Knowing my Métis Identity and Culture

As a person born and raised in Fort Frances, it was very common throughout my childhood to see my father hunting and fishing. He would participate yearly in a hunting excursion in mid-October and bring home many birds, deer, and moose. This meat sustained us for the winter months to come. My mom and grandparents also had very large gardens, and each fall they turned these gardens into many jars of vegetables and frozen berries that filled a space in our basement. I did not understand until much later in life that these traditional harvesting practices were important to my family and involved many family traditions passed down from generation to generation and were currently involved myself, my parents, and my grandparents. I did not realize the importance of being on the land and its connection embedded within my family. Although we are not rich by any means, the land we had was taken care of and the additional places we hunted and harvested were sacred and held meaning to my family, they brought generations together and provided sustenance for our larger family for many months that followed. Going to my grandparents' home and seeing animal pelts drying and used as what we would refer to as a contemporary throw was very common to me as a child. Smelling cedar tea boiling on the stove is an all-day event as common as my grandfather would drink this all day long for good health. I did not understand traditional plants' medicinal healing properties in such a formal format. I never saw these childhood features as a reflection of poor economic conditions but rather as family practices were a part of my everyday life. I had a very full and rich childhood filled with love and family and what I ultimately learned was a deep connection to my Métis culture. I do not remember the time in life where there was a formal announcement of

someone in my family telling me I was Métis, perhaps when I was born this was something innately instilled within.

When it was time to attend elementary school, I want to believe that I was ready. The school was within walking distance and provided a few minutes each day to get some fresh air before being forced indoors for six hours. There were many times I remember my mother volunteering at my school throughout my elementary education. I did not realize the special gifts she had until much later. She would often participate in art as she would join my class to make pine bough wreaths, where she provided all the fresh boughs. I did not understand why she would also volunteer to check children's hair when there was a head lice outbreak; little did I realize it was because she could braid all the female student's hair back into the beautiful creations that their mothers had sent them to school in. It was important of course for girls with long hair to keep it tied back and it would have been devastating to have to return to class with long hair so displaced by broken braids, as this is not how they left home. I also did not see the value in those donated items of blankets that my mother created and were raffled off by the school as a fundraising event. I have these very special memories of my mother and her contribution to my education and school community. She was not an educated person and I suspect that today she would be considered dyslexic as she often writes letters and numbers backward or inverted.

I have an experience in grade 5 that I discuss in detail in Chapter 6 which was truly one of the first times I felt embarrassment based on my identity and the lack of understanding others had of who Louis Riel was as a father of confederation and the leader of the Métis. As I continued through my elementary education, I remember the curriculum's content seldom, if ever referenced Indigenous peoples of any sort, not the First Nations, Inuit, or Métis people. At

the same time, perhaps at the onset of puberty, as my physical appearance began to change, I know that I had very dark hair and a large gap between my upper two front teeth. Of course, I never noticed these physical characteristics until grade 8 when teased about them. A specific boy liked to call me “bogan brown” because I guess he thought it was funny or perhaps he was able to see my darkening skin tone in a more discriminatory way than how I saw myself. His reference to “bogan” was slang for Indian. He called this name to me on a regular basis and in front of many of our peers, it was no secret that this is the word he decided would reflect who I was as a person. Perhaps, as I lived in a house of modest means and he was insinuating my position or class within our community. There was a time, he went so far as even crafting up a song that he would sing to me: Bog, Bog Bogan brown, meanest Indian in the whole dam town, meaner than a polar bear, Bryanna’s right over there. These words echoed in my mind for several years, especially throughout high school when he was present in our passing in the hall. Noting today how important identity and culture are, I think I fared well with his gestures not completely overriding my personality and personability with others. Today, this former bully is a teacher teaching high school students’ history in a northwestern Ontario community. I am curious to know if he has had the opportunity to reflect on his treatment of others and discuss those marginalized and poor economic means to his students. Throughout high school, I did not experience curriculum on Indigenous peoples. I do not remember ever reading an Indigenous novel or learning about Indigenous history. I had many friends of various economic and cultural backgrounds but do not remember experiencing discriminatory encounters as I did in my elementary school education.

At the same time as I entered post-secondary studies, the Métis Nation of Ontario was organizing and forming. So, my father submitted my documentation to be noted as a citizen of

this organization. I understand today that there is a great deal of genealogical information that is required for registration, along with other documents supporting your family's connection to a historic Métis community. Still, my father and my grandfather submitted the documents on behalf of our family members. After reviewing some of the documents, I asked questions. I sought out information from my local Métis family on the Treaty 3 Adhesion and what that meant for the Métis people living in the Rainy Lake area. I have been very fortunate to be surrounded by Métis family and people local to the area that I was living in and later attended post-secondary studies in. At the same time, I did not take any Indigenous content-related courses in my undergraduate education. For the most part, my academic experience was absent of learning about Indigenous people, histories, or perspectives. It was not until I decided on an Honours Bachelor of Social Work degree after completing my first degree, where I learned about marginalized people's history, including Indigenous people. I could relate to the course content and I began to see my culture as a contributing factor to my identity. I never attended any student support activities or events for Indigenous students; however, I received several bursaries when applying as a Métis student.

During the spring and summer breaks, I began to work in Indigenous organizations in Fort Frances with many First Nations and Métis people including children and youth. It is here where I learned more about the cultural practices of First Nations people while contextualizing my childhood experiences as a Métis person. I spent additional time volunteering with the local Métis community council in Fort Frances, when not employed there and was mentored by many Métis people of the area concerning cultural practices and understanding Métis history and its impact on our people. When I returned to classes each fall, I felt a lot more confident in my Indigenous knowledge base continuously being developed within my community. I felt much

more aware and confident with cultural ceremonies and practices. I felt much more confident in my identity and understanding what it means to be Métis as a young adult. As I settled and began to live and work in Thunder Bay, I participated in the local Métis community council in a variety of roles. I have consulted on behalf of the Thunder Bay region with the government and large proponents on development projects that would affect certain land areas where the Métis people have rights in this region.

As I continued my academic education and pursued employment, this is where I began to see some divide. As a federal government employee, it was clear as funds were being distributed for various programs that did not fund Indigenous groups and organizations at the same levels as mainstream organizations. As I worked on a healthy child development team, I learned a great deal about the health inequities and poor social determinants of Indigenous peoples' health. I began to understand colonialism and assimilation practices much clearer. Once I returned to the academy for a master's program, I contextualized the Indigenous people's experience in Canada better. When references were made to Indigenous health, I understood the references to connection to land, the importance of strong kinship connections, and the racism that was clear in the health system. As the federal government made cuts and shifted my career into education by entering a community college position, it was clear that Indigenous content was still missing in the curriculum. I was able to work with a group of people who wanted to be inclusive of Indigenous content but did not know where to begin. At this time, the TRC was just forming, and shortly afterward the Calls to Action were released. The two programs at the college that were Indigenous, were the only two that had Indigenous content. There was an attempt to offer an elective course to students in any discipline, but this was often highly debated amongst college

faculty. During my tenure at the college, I created an online course on Métis people's history in Ontario.

As I entered my final stretch back into the academy for my Ph.D. there has only been one course to date with three articles on or about Indigenous people. This experience has been more complex but the lack of Métis scholars on campus and overhearing and noting Indigenous student support staff's comments on Métis students not "really" being Indigenous. The university environment's pan-Indigenous nature is felt when various Indigenous initiatives are taking place and they represent ceremonies and activities of First Nations people only. I did not realize the true impact of these events until I started being on campus more regularly, started to attend events held within the university, and began to engage with others also working on various degrees as Indigenous people. I did not believe I was ignoring discriminatory practices on campus, but simply was uninformed and did not pay as much attention to the institution's politics as I do today. Today, as a PhD candidate working towards the highest level of education possible and referencing all that I can to reflect my culture's worldview and knowledge, I question why I could not have had a Métis community person on my PhD committee. The academy remains to validate only those knowledges of formal western institutions of knowledge, but I know community members represent my culture by holding the key to Métis knowledge.

Today, I can reflect on the past and my continuous learning development that has led me to understand my Métis culture. I have consulted and reviewed numerous curricula in K-12 education for the Ministry of Education. I have taught Métis courses at two universities in the province of Ontario. I want to make a difference in the education system and see the curriculum reflective of my culture of Indigenous people. I teach my daughter and my nieces and nephews about our family history, the history of the Métis people in Canada, and important Métis

knowledge about our historic Métis community located in Fort Frances. The stories we share contribute to passing down what I know to the next generation of Métis leaders.

Including my Story

Charbonneau-Dablen (2019) discusses how the researchers' subjectivity is part of the research as seen through the decisions made in the choice of topic, methodology, and interpreting of the data. The researcher's values and objectives are encouraged, and these are important pieces to the authenticity of the research, especially in situations when the researcher's cultural heritage of knowledge can contribute to the methodology (2019, p. 27/28). I chose to include my story of educational experiences as part of the data because I am also a Métis woman who has and continues to study within higher education. I have experiences like the women in my study. Our voices together intersect with one another's lived experiences, shared culture, resilient worldview, and collective identity as Métis people. Contributing as an additional voice in my research helps amplify and reinforce the commonality of experiences we share in our educational journeys. I wanted to track experiences and documents that were part of my work as an employee in an academic institution as "working from insider knowledge" (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 32). I was able to use my personal experiences to better understand the cultural experiences that I experienced within the institution. I was able to include my story that was organized chronically of my educational experiences and collect relevant documents through meetings and events taking place on campus where there was a cultural experience that I could write reflective notes about. This information was important to the study because the experiences occurred while I collected data from the research participants and a Ph.D. student within an academic institution. This opportunity allowed me to further reflect upon my experiences as a grad student, mature student, and current learner.

Why Stories?

The following section highlights key reflective paragraphs on the use of storytelling as an Indigenous research methodology. Chapter 4 discusses the research methods and methodology used in the study which combines grounded theory and métissage as the overall methodology and summarizes the use of storytelling and narrative within an academic research context. By providing my personal story to be analyzed and incorporated with the participants' stories, I had an impression of what might be like my story, but I did not have pre-determined themes. As such, grounded theory, also does not start with pre-conceived themes and for this reason it fits well in my research. As a Métis researcher, I used a mixed-worldview of combining Métis research methods with those of western methods because I wanted to commit to a blended worldview in hopes that it reflected my mixed culture. It thought several times about solely using an Indigenous research paradigm and solely using a western methodology like grounded theory, but staying true to my mixed-worldview, I believed it was important to incorporate both.

As I became more and more engaged in the research process specifically around listening to and then analyzing the stories of the Métis women, I began to realize that stories were taking on a more significant role than I had originally thought they would within the research. I felt it was appropriate to provide a specific section tied to the participant profiles that contextualizes the importance of the use of storytelling before getting to the broad philosophical underpinnings of the research methods. I did not want to become "caught in the context of colonial theories and methodologies" (Absolon, 2011, p. 23).

Both the narrative and the autobiography proposed as research methodologies are referred to by Archibald (2008) as "story work" which "grows out the actions of interrelatedness and synergy formed by the storyteller, the story, the listener, and the context in which the story is

used" (p. 373). Archibald uses story work as a research methodology because she believes that telling stories is a way of interviewing where the storyteller can keep control of the knowledge that is to be shared and uses "oral and heart memory notes" versus using any type of audio recording devices (p. 377). When engaged with a person sharing either a traditional or a lived experience story, Archibald believes there are seven principles that makeup story work and these include: respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, wholism, interrelatedness and synergy (p. 373) and these grounds the importance and seriousness of the meaning behind the stories being shared. Because I am asking research participants to tell me their true stories "âcimowin" (Cree) or "les histoires" (Michif) (Barkwell, Dorion, & Hourie, 2006, p. 9) in higher education, I wanted to be able to do this in a culturally relevant way where they can return to their traditional way of learning and feel the principles Archibald shares. I also want to be able to add in my own experiences as supplemental data where appropriate as the dissertation writing and research remains part of my higher education journey and is yet to be told.

The Heart of Storytelling

A core component of my research methods is viewed through engaging and relating to Métis women through conversations by which stories were shared. In western terms, this would be referred to as interviewing of participants as part of the research methods. Kovach (2010) insists that "Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral tradition of sharing knowledge" (p. 40) and it is through this Indigenous research practice that lies at the heart of storytelling and the core of my research methodology. Kovach (2010) uses the term conversational method in "Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral storytelling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 40). The knowledge I gained from the Métis women took place through the conversations we shared

where there was an exchange of stories, remembering, and confronting of some experiences that were painful and hurtful as seen in the discrimination, racism, and microaggressions experienced by the Métis women during their time within the academy. “Stories are an integral part of our lives: an integral part that for many years was left out of Western classroom teaching practices” (Davies, 2014, p. 84). The sharing of stories was the best way for me to capture the experiences of the women while creating relationships and developing trust with them. At times, I would share part of my story with them. As people of the same culture, we come from communities grounded in similar histories of racial violence and intergenerational trauma and this bonds us through developing close kinship connections. “Through storytelling and ceremonial life, we are involved in the lifeways of a people, culture, community, family, and tradition, and in it, we make a new story today of our connections” (Iseke, 2013, p. 573) and this is exactly what is represented in my research, a new story of connections.

An Indigenous Research Framework – it is about Relationality and a Commitment to Others

According to Wilson (2001), writing and sharing stories through an Indigenous paradigm is important because “knowledge is relational” and it is about interpersonal relationships. In the past, relationships have not been established and honoured between the researcher and Indigenous participants and this has resulted in the appropriation of culture and knowledge. Using storytelling or the practice of sharing oral stories as part of Indigenous methodology develops relational accountability. Wilson references this as “answering to all your relations when you are doing research” because you are accountable to a person or people (research participants), responsible to ensure their stories are told appropriately through the worldview that you share them (p. 176/177). It is for this reason that I believe I was best suited to conduct my

research study with the Métis women. We share the same worldview and culture, and through our educational experiences, we can relate to one another in an engaged and authentic manner. As Métis women, we share a connection on a deeper relational level that was based on our gender, culture, worldview, and family histories as Métis people. A non-Indigenous male researching Métis woman within a western research methodology is unlikely to garnish a successful outcome in the research of a similar nature because he does not share this same relationality to the participants as I did. “Indigenous experiences and knowledges are passed from generation to generation” (Absolon, 2011, p.24) and this was our commitment to our community.

Further, throughout time, research has acquired a reputation as something not done in a good way among Métis and other Indigenous people “because the purposes and meanings associated with its practice by academics and government agents were usually alien to the people themselves and the outcomes were, as often as not, misguided and harmful” (Brant Castellano, 2004, p. 98). This is another example of why as a Métis woman, I was best suited to speak with other Métis women about their experiences within the academy. “Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land the events that raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 29/30). As a Métis person, I want to represent the knowledge of my extended relations and I am here to share our stories through our worldview. We do not need the Western dominant researcher to narrate the stories we tell. I am a testimony to my people that I have the skills, knowledge, and community relationality to share our stories. My commitment is to women who entrusted and bestowed their stories onto me,

combined with my story and through my position as a Ph.D. candidate, I have the "authority" to represent my community through sharing their knowledge. Wilson (2008) tells us that the most crucial and meaningful part of the research is "fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship – that is, being accountable to your relations" (p. 77).

In the same spirit as the stories shared with me, I understand the value of reciprocity and giving back. "Within an Indigenous research framework, the principle of reciprocity, or giving back is essential…[because]…the knowledge given to you by the participant is a gift" (Lavallee, 2009 p. 35). Participants were offered tobacco bundles and gift cards as I way for me to show my gratitude for the knowledge that there were sharing with me. A few of the participants noted how important my research was and looked forward to reading it as a complete document afterward; they were pleased that I was assisting with providing a voice to their experience and I made the commitment to send each a final draft of the completed dissertation.

Storytelling as a Métis Research Methodology

Storytelling is important "because when you relate a personal narrative, you are getting into a relationship with someone. You are telling your (and their) side of the story and you are analyzing it. When you look at the relationship that develops between the person telling the story and the person listening to the story, it becomes a strong relationship" (Wilson, 2001, p. 178). As the researcher, my role was to keep their oral stories alive by capturing their voice to be shared with others. "Storytelling is a practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities and validates the experiences and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples" (Iseke, 2013, p. 559). As a Métis woman, my obligation was to validate other women's experiences that were to be shared with others and therefore I did my research in the way that I did. It is intended that each story could be shared with others inside and outside our community for generations to come. A further

obligation that I held concerning the women was to ensure that my interpretation and analysis of their stories reflected their worldview and experiences. The respectful, relational, and reciprocity developed between the women and I was crucial to our relationship and played a key role in how their voices would be captured and shared. I bonded to each woman to share a common connection to the research topic, which is our experiences in higher education. As women leading the way forward through the academy for our families and the larger community, we all commit to others. "Storytelling provides opportunities to express the experiences of Indigenous peoples… and nurtures relationships and the sharing of Indigenous knowledges and cultures" (Iseke, 2013, p. 559). For these reasons, I chose to interview the women as I wanted to listen to the stories narrated by the women, and we could share our experiences as we related to one another.

What Could have gone Wrong in the Research Process?

Had this research been conducted by a non-Métis woman, the research would not have accurately depicted the worldview of Métis women. I had a similar worldview to the participants which allowed me to gather the stories in the "ethical space" that Ermine (2007) stated we needed to have to move beyond just discussing trauma, but to finally move to a space where we could discuss the issue(s) more intensely. If a non-Indigenous scholar had conducted this research it could have led to a deficit-based or negative analysis of what was disclosed in the interview and it would not have provided the same level of knowledge as the participants provided. A non-Métis person would have brought their biases and perspectives of Métis into the research which might have counteracted the rich stories as they were told. A lack of relationality and the risk of a colonized version of a Métis experience does not serve the Métis women well, nor does it depict the women's lived reality. Throughout the past, "colonial definitions of the

truth and value have denied Aboriginal Peoples the tools to assert and implement their knowledge" (Brant Castellano, 2004, p. 102). I further argue that non-Indigenous people researching Indigenous people reinforces colonial practices. For example, there might not have been the desire to listen to the stories narrated through the women. The women might not have felt comfortable disclosing as much content related to their experiences as they did, and we might not have formed a relationship. Métis people are very capable of conducting research with or within their community, representing and bringing forward the voice of people that share the same culture. Today, Indigenous research be "an instrument for creating and disseminating knowledge that once again authentically represents ourselves [as Indigenous people] and our understandings of the world" (Brant Castellano, 2004, p. 98).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the dissertation outlines the research methodology for this qualitative study on reconciliation through métissage in higher education. This methodology allows for a deeper understanding of Métis peoples' experiences in university classrooms. It provides a way to develop a conceptual framework of reconciliation from the data that is most reflective of the Métis culture. In particular, the application of grounded theory and the sharing of stories through conversational method is used in my study and discussed throughout this chapter, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns.

Research Question

The study was designed to build a conceptual framework that answers the following question: *"How have university courses and learning experiences impacted Métis peoples' understandings of their cultural identities, the role of Métis-specific Knowledge in higher education curriculum and policies, and Métis perspectives on reconciliation in Canadian universities?"* This question is addressed through the following discussion of research design and methods.

Methodology

Grounded Theory Methodology and Indigenous-Métissage Methodology

The intent of the study was to use grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as the primary research methodology; however, as a Métis-specific research study, the inclusion of a métissage research paradigm was required to assist in capturing the worldview presented by the

research participants. Wilson (2008) argues that Indigenous methodology should be used in all Indigenous research. As a result, the qualitative research study grew to include the use of a blended methodology based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and métissage (Donald, 2009). Although the study grew, I was able to rely on the coding process of grounded theory to get me through to identifying key concepts; this flexibility was an important piece of why I continued to use a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory supported the Indigenous approach I took to my research. In line with a métissage research paradigm, the combination of the European research methods of grounded theory and Indigenous methodology, allows me to use both processes as a blended approach to conduct my research. This blended approach is much like my mixed-culture: instead of choosing one Euro-centric research methodology or solely focussing on the limited Indigenous research methodologies available, I chose both. "Indigenous methodologies have been employed for generations, but because of colonization efforts to eradicate Native ways of knowing, they lost value in mainstream research" (Tachine et al., 2016, p. 282). In this chapter, I describe the significance of both and their use in this study. Of note, is that grounded theory has developed and emerged over time, but to implement and describe the data analysis related to this study, I used a combination of critical constructs as appropriate according to *classic grounded theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), *modified grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and *constructivist grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2000) terminology.

Grounded Theory Methodology

Ground theory methodology originated with Glaser and Strauss's (1967) seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Grounded theory is both a method and a methodology that "involves generating theory and doing social research [as] two parts of the same process"

(Glaser, 1978, p. 2). In grounded theory methodology, "theory may be generated initially from the data, or, if existing (grounded) theories seem appropriate to the area of investigation, then these may be elaborated and modified as incoming data are meticulously played against them" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). Grounded theory methodology allows researchers to learn what they can from participants' interpretations and perspectives, and in turn, these become the researcher's conceptualizations (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280). I used the technique of word counting and the coding process of grounded theory to identify key concepts of the stories. This method assisted with identifying those words that appeared most often thus leading to key concept identification. Grounded theory methodology also promotes exploring multiple aspects during the research inquiry (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280). For this reason, I used the multiple perspectives of Métis students, alumni, additional community members, and my personal story.

Indigenous-Métissage Methodology

Denzin (2007) has claimed that using a modified version of grounded theory with Indigenous research is important "because of its commitment to critical, open-ended inquiry, [which] can be a decolonizing tool for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike" (p. 456). He has stated:

> We are during a global social movement of involving anticolonialist discourse. This movement is evident in the emergence and proliferation of critical grounded Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. These epistemologies are forms of critical pedagogy; they embody critical politics of representation. (p. 461)

The literature on métissage as an Indigenous research methodology is underdeveloped, and my research contributes to the exploratory use of a métissage methodology and thus

represents one population of Métis peoples' experience. According to Donald (2012), one main goal of Indigenous métissage is: "to enact ethical relationality as a philosophical commitment" where "ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other (p. 535).

I employed a Métis-specific approach to analyze the data to incorporate my blended worldview into the research and methodology. I wanted to utilize all that was available to me by combining my personal stance, research questions, literature review, theory, participants, fieldwork, data collection methods, and analysis to focus on improving Métis education. I used the métissage approach to discuss ways to enhance Métis education, to develop métissage as a methodology further, and to assist research participants in reclaiming Métis education through the Métis lifelong learning model. This body of work strives toward a Métis higher-education conceptual framework that is specific to the Métis culture. I am aware of the limitations imposed by using Western research methodologies, and that Indigenous research methodologies are not specific to the Métis people, hence the use of a *bricolage approach* (i.e., utilizing what is available to me as the researcher) which helped me explore and embark upon a métissage research methodology that reflects who I am as a person and my research participants. Tilley has (2016) noted:

> Analysis is a stage in the research process during which students need to understand and work against their limitations and consider returning to the literature (and other sources) in hopes of building historical and contextual understandings when needed. They have to take care not to continue with imperialist colonizing practices when their research involves Indigenous and/or marginalized individuals and populations. (p. 161)

For these reasons, a métissage methodology was employed, inclusive of Métis perspectives and Métis participants' voices and experiences in higher education. As I consider research a personal experience deeply rooted within a blend of perspectives and position myself within a mixed worldview, a métissage research methodology is relevant to my study. This methodology "highlights the relationship between a researcher's way of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history" (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011, p. 244). Applying métissage within a bricolage approach allows me to utilize my position as a Métis student with Métis knowledge, belonging to and claimed by a historic Métis community and living within the regional territory of my family. Using what I know situates me for my research with other Métis learners.

Generating A Conceptual Framework

Using a blend of western (grounded theory) and Indigenous methodologies (conversational method and the sharing of stories), supported my new conceptual framework on reconciliation with Métis perspectives emerges. "The final product of a grounded theory study is an integrated and comprehensive grounded theory that explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 13). The grounded theory research design encompasses the concepts in this chapter, including the research method, which occurred in three phases: 1) purposive sampling, initial coding, ongoing data collection and generation, constant comparative analysis (the generation of a conceptual framework), and category identification; 2) theoretical sensitivity, intermediate or selective coding, selecting of core categories and theoretical saturation; and 3) advanced or theoretical coding and theoretical integration. Throughout, I was also engaged in memo-writing (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 14) and the creation of fieldnotes to capture my thoughts and feelings. As well, the research participants who provided

their Métis perspectives make the study both-specific and representative of a métissage research approach.

The Researcher

It is challenging as a Métis person writing and researching about higher education, especially when there is no Métis worldview or framework accepted within the academy: "The notion that empirical evidence is sounder than cultural knowledge permeates western thought but alienates many Indigenous scholars" (Wilson, 2008, p. 58). I argue that my cultural knowledge supports my conceptualization as a Métis researcher: I claim my Métis identity, which is deeply connected to a historical base located within Northwestern Ontario and the larger Métis Nation. My family's history is substantiated through our genealogy as a post-contact people dating back to the 1800s. As a contributing member to my historic Métis community today, the kinship connections, values, and beliefs I hold are my Métis Knowledge system's grounded roots.

As a Métis person, I have a voice as a legal, political, and cultural rights-bearing Aboriginal person living on this land now known as Canada. I do not require others to speak on my behalf. Like Absolon (2011), I seek to advance my "Aboriginality and Indigenous knowledge" (p. 19): my Métis Knowledge system within the mainstream education system of post-secondary education. "A worldview is an intimate belief system that connects Indigenous people to identity, knowledge and practices. Indigenous peoples' worldviews are rooted in ancestral and sacred knowledges passed through oral traditions from one generation to the next" (Absolon, 2011, p. 57). My worldview is rooted in my identity, where I centre the Métis Knowledge of my family and community, giving them credit as the first teachers of my education.

At the same time, I am aware of the formal Métis ethical principles, which I embed within my research. These principles include reciprocal relationships, respect, a safe and inclusive environment, relevant research, the recognition of diversity among my Métis community, and an understanding of the Métis context (NAHO, 2010). Although these principles are used within a health environment, I use them to reflect the cultural perspective of Métis research. Researching within my broader Métis community allows my community to share their stories among generations. I can share the Métis history, post-secondary experiences, and culture with others. It is the voice of my community being engaged within my Métis research that is a "life-changing ceremony" (Wilson, 2011, p. 61) to be shared with future generations of Métis learners.

Study Participants

The sample drew from self-identified Métis participants who volunteered for the study. "Qualitative studies typically use some form of purposeful sampling" (Hood, 2007, p. 157); for this study, there was no age restriction or degree requirement for the participants, but all had to be Métis people living in the province of Ontario. People who currently attended the site (university) or who had graduated were the ideal participants for a purposeful sample. Métis community members working in education were also a major asset to the study. The knowledge and contribution of the larger Métis community is in line with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada (2014) in that it signifies "a collaborative relationship between the researcher and community... [signifying the community] acknowledges [the research] and registers no objection to it" (p. 112). The research participants were Métis people either currently enrolled or alumni, or who held master's degrees in social justice, social work, law, and education. Those who did not attend the research site were

considered Métis community people and Knowledge Keepers as they brought additional perspectives to the research and had valuable experience within higher education. It is noted that only Métis women volunteered for the study and while it would have been great to have a blend of female and male participants, no Métis males volunteered.

The participants were recruited through posters created and shared throughout the research site via a printed hard copy format and electronically through the Indigenous Cultural and Support Services (ICSS), the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and the Department of Indigenous Learning. I held preliminary conversations with staff in these departments to achieve their support and for them to distribute the poster. Students could share the information with their acquaintances; thus, I employed a *snowball sampling technique* (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28).

As participants expressed interest in the study, they were given the Invitation to Participate (see Appendix A). After they agreed to participate, they were given the Letter of Information (see Appendix B), the Consent Agreement (see Appendix C), and the Prompt List Questions (see Appendix D). Once participants had reviewed all the research study information and agreed to participate, they were provided pseudonyms, and they reviewed and verified a participant profile that was created about them.

Research Site

The site for this study was a northern-central university in Canada that has a mandated Indigenous Content Requirement course and a Department of Indigenous Learning. This university was selected because it is in an area thriving with Métis people, a local Métis community council and office, students, and was accessible to me as the researcher. Overall, this

site was identified as having potential to provide rich data regarding Métis participants; the university has approximately 8,300 students across two campuses, and many full-time undergraduate students come from northern-central locations in Ontario.

Data Collection

Consistent with grounded theory, this study used a variety of methods to collect data. "All is data" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), meaning that "data include[s] everything related to the topic the researchers encounter when engaging in the research study" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 188). I work at a university and am a member of that university's Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) committee. I also attend a university as a student; hence, it was beneficial to this research to ensure that the data included all of these experiences as auto-ethnography. *Auto-ethnography* "is a form of autobiographical narrative that explores the writer's own experiences of life" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 201). As the researcher, I also wanted to ensure that the study reflects an Indigenous research methodology; therefore, a description of my narrative and one-to-one interviews used as storytelling through an Indigenous lens follows.

The Importance of my Narrative

I reflected on a variety of autobiographical artifacts that represent critical moments in my Métis education and included it as data. These artifacts include photographs, academic transcripts, class assignments, field notes, and journals. This data was collected during my time as a Ph.D. student, while I was writing the comprehensive portfolio, to reflect on my experiences in higher education.

In developing the methodology, I drew from personal experience, including my Métis culture and my role as a Ph.D. student. This information has been included as an auto-ethnography, as history told by myself as the researcher (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). In engaging métissage as a research praxis, a researcher, inspired by authors such as Chambers et al. (2008) and Donald (2012), can explore ways to "weave the repressed languages and traditions of local cultures and vernaculars (particularly incorporating autobiographical material and local oral traditions and stories) with the dominant (often colonial) languages and traditions of literacy" (Chambers, et al., 2008, p. 142). Academics who use this approach blend their life experiences via an autobiographical context using colonial and academic discourse to deliver impactful messages. They do not sacrifice their identities as researchers, nor are they forced to use specific research methodologies. This method attempts to disrupt colonial systems of academe that continue to overlook or neglect Métis Knowledge. As a student, I have often been placed within contentious decision-making situations within academic work that does not allow for the mixing of perspectives, as there is no academic term to describe this blend. I have often had to choose from Western research methodologies or Indigenous methodologies without the flexibility of combining the two. As a Ph.D. candidate embarking upon research with mixed-cultured students (Métis), it is appropriate to reflect on my academic journey and to include it in the research as an auto-ethnography.

In their book *Life Writing and Literary Métissage as an Ethos of Our Times*, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) have used autobiographical texts to "braid text of lived curriculum" (p. 1); they weave their narratives through métissage and theorize with and through stories within a pedagogical context (p. 6). In their collaborative effort, they argue that: "when immersed in the act of writing and braiding, [they] are distinctively aware of how juxtaposing

and mixing [their] narratives create a new text that is stronger and more complex than of individual stories" (p. 7). This work assisted in addressing my second research goal, to collaborate with Métis students to collect a series of Métis Knowledge principles (epistemology) to describe and validate Métis students' perspectives in higher education. I include my autobiographical story as a Métis person with various educational experiences as a method of mentoring, sharing, and connecting with the study participants. Together, we worked to co-create a story of expertise specific to Métis students. Kovach (2009) has noted that "in co-creating knowledge, story is not only a means for hearing another's narrative, it also invites reflexivity into research" and that "through reflexive story, there is an opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing. Sharing one's own story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective" (p. 100).

The importance of my cultural grounding as a researcher assists in "the way that culture nourishes the researcher's spirit during the inquiry, and how it nourishes the research itself" (Kovach, 2009, p. 116). As the researcher, I see myself as conducting "research in relation" (Kovach, 2009, p. 116) by respecting and protecting my culture as a Métis person and the research process itself. I draw upon, and ground myself in, my own lived experiences in post-secondary education.

With my narrative of educational experiences included as data, as the researcher, I am mindful of *theoretical sensitivity* or *sensitive thinking* (Waring, 2012; Strauss 1987), terms associated with grounded theory research. "Interpersonal interaction is an essential feature of [researcher] experiences; therefore, the researcher must not only observe the behavior of their subjects, but reflect critically on themselves," thus, the researcher must also be aware of their

preconceptions (Waring, 2012, p. 300). Initially introduced in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original work, theoretical sensitivity "is deeply personal" according to Birks & Mills (2015) and:

> It reflects their [a researcher's] level of insight into both themselves and the area that they are researching. Secondly, a researcher's level of theoretical sensitivity reflects their intellectual history, the type of theory they have read, absorbed and now use in their everyday thought. Researchers are a sum of all they have experienced. (p. 12)

One-to-One Interviews and Written Submissions

As the researcher, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of Métis education from participant experiences through one-to-one interviews (referenced by Kovach 2010 as the *conversational method*), and written submissions (based on prompt questions). These qualitative methods allowed participants to share stories of their educational experiences with the option to participate in one-to-one interviews, a written submission based on the prompt questions, or a combination of both data collection methods. Métis community people (Knowledge Keepers) were invited to have a one-to-one interview and/or submit a written document; they did so by volunteering for the study. The audio of the interviews was recorded. This stage was used to generate data about milestone moments and stories from various participants' perspectives through qualitative methods: "in cultures with oral traditions, stories have a compelling utility as a way to pass knowledge from one generation to the next" (Tachine, et al., 2016, p. 283).

The participants were asked open and closed-ended questions based on three core areas: Indigenous Content Requirements (ICR) experiences, institutional policies and practices, and reconciliation (see Appendix D). Interviews occurred over the phone or in person. The conversations were recorded using a tablet, via an application called TEMI. All participants

consented to the discussions and the recording of the interviews. Each interview took place in a single session and was transcribed in real-time using the TEMI application. The interview transcripts were reviewed immediately after each meeting for accuracy. The interview transcriptions were not returned to the participants for review.

Initially, sharing circles (one circle per series of questions) were planned to gather data on the research themes (ICR, institutional policies and processes, and reconciliation), as well as a final sharing circle to close the study; however, after discussing these possibilities with the participants, a time that was suitable or convenient for all participants was impossible to find.

Storytelling

The storytelling process occurred through one-to-one interviews. I spent time with research participants as they shared their educational stories, and I asked questions that were relevant to my research topic. Personal stories were shared through interviews and written submission to prompt list questions (Appendix D); I contacted participants when further clarification was required.

The reconciliation process allows for relationships to be worked on, to grow and develop, and "to help with rereading, reframing, and reimagining the relationships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, and thus facilitating the decolonization process in educational contexts" (Donald, 2009, p. 5). Within this context, the storytelling (narrative approach) was employed in this research to better understand, in their own words, each Métis research participant's experiences in education to address my goal of reclaiming reconciliation in higher education. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) have described narrative approaches in research "as the way in which researchers conceive, capture, and convey the stories and experiences of

individuals" (p. 231). I collected stories to understand the students' experiences, how events unfolded, and the meanings that have been drawn from the stories (p. 231). The participants' retelling of experiences in narrative form, with the participants explaining their interpretation of events are inclusive of the stories that were shared. Collecting the stories of the Métis students' experiences in higher education played a vital role in my study. These participants were actively involved in academia and concurrently experienced institutional practices. As Bishop et al. (2019) described, a Métis voice was created "through the practice of weaving together multiple stories" in that "métissage celebrates non-linearity and disruption while finding common threads across stories, which serves to honor both unity and diversity in the individual and the collective" (p. 2).

Using a *braiding of narrative*, which is representative of the historic sash the Métis traditionally wear, I used various narratives (colorful strands of yarn, that is, stories woven together) to create a comprehensive representation (Métis sash) of the Métis students' experiences of reconciliation in higher education. Traditionally, Métis men wear this sash, which has had many practical uses throughout history. This imagery is reflective of my research vision, which allows for various students (strands of yarn) to gather and to share their unique experiences (narratives), thus creating a beautiful story represented by the sash. As Kovach (2009) has described, stories are an Indigenous methodology, and "remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledge while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller" (p. 94). I have similarly included my educational experiences as part of the completed narrative assemblage.

Moreover, as the government enforced a racist lens and attempted assimilation to instil what it considered civilization, it is necessary to question the moral aspects of education's foundation regarding the Métis and other Indigenous students in Canada: "Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan–their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed and ignored by the education system" (Battiste, 2013, p. 23). This truth must be advanced before the necessary changes can be made in higher education to address the dominant Western pedagogy; thus, the experiences of Métis people needs to be shared. "To be an anti-racism educator is to be a theorist and practitioner for social change" (Dei, 1996, p. 26), and change is possible through a culturally relevant, Métis-infused institution. Métis inclusion would allow students to see themselves reflected in the institution (curriculum, policies, and practices). Institutions can start by examining their own biases regarding Métis students while cultivating new approaches to support Métis learners. Métis pedagogies could focus on Métis culture, which would enable and empower Métis students who would otherwise remain on the periphery of the classroom or be seen through a racist lens. In this way, my research is crucial to the Métis student story in higher education.

Finally, the use of storytelling with Métis research participants marks a return to the cultural and traditional ways of education that Métis people are most familiar with concerning learning and knowledge-keeping. The Métis have a long history of using stories to transmit beliefs and values to teach life lessons to children: stories were intergenerational and often told by elders and parents to children to reinforce identity and prepare the young for adulthood (Prefontaine, n.d.). Using narratives through shared stories of the Métis participants both empowered the research participants and reclaimed the oral tradition of sharing sacred information while also incorporating a métissage methodology into my research.

The use of Auto-Ethnography as a Second Data set

Additional data includes the *Métis holistic learning model*-a picture diagram-(Canadian Council on Learning, 2007) used in the prompt list questions (see Appendix D); the researcher's autobiographical story; other data that was readily available on the research site's (university) webpage; as well as information related to the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses. I consider this data as part of my "experience, story and self-narrative to examine and connect with the social context" of the study and so it was included as auto-ethnography (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 201).

Data Analysis

Participants' stories (one-to-one interview transcripts), written submissions, and my narrative were paired with key texts (meeting minutes, memos, and notes) and were used as data that was then explored through the grounded theory method approach. This method provided the flexibility to investigate the Métis participants' experiences without the constraints of research methods that could limit the research goals. The data was coded to bring forward common words used to describe the participants' perspectives and analyze their amalgamated experiences. *Coding* is a crucial feature of data collection in grounded theory: it "is an analytical process used to identify concepts, similarities, and conceptual reoccurrences in data …and is a procedure for developing categories of information" (Tie, et al., 2019, p. 4). It "is generally done for broad concepts and as new concepts arise," and thus a list was maintained to keep an on-going record of codes (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 189). Further, "coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory [conceptual framework] to explain these data; through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). Coding the data allowed me to take all the data apart

while finding commonalities and differences as “the purpose of this process is to count numbers of codes once the coding process is finished for all relevant data” (Kelle, 2007, p. 193).

Each piece of data was coded separately, and had its own set of codes; next, similar codes from each were highlighted, and comparisons were made. This process is referred to as the *constant comparative method* or the generation of a conceptual framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which is used to “make comparisons at each level of analytic work” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 132). This method of the constant comparative technique “is used to find consistencies and differences, with the aim of continually refining concepts and theoretically relevant categories” (Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019, p. 4). The goal is to research to the point of saturation with the data, that is, to the point where no new information is gathered. I knew I had reached this point as a core category was identified, the data analysis failed to produce any new categories or themes, and I could not make any further relationships amongst the data (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Codes are two significant components of grounded theory methodology; the other is the concept of categories. As per Kelle (2007):

> A basic idea of grounded theory is that the whole structure or system of categories should not be exclusively developed in a top-down manner by deriving subcategories from major categories. Instead, researchers are encouraged to find major categories by carefully comparing the initially found categories (which later may become subcategories) and by integrating them into a larger structure. (p. 194)

Further, the categories are “constant[ly] compar[ed] to see if the data support and continue to support emerging categories …the process further builds and substantiates the emerging categories by defining their properties and dimensions” (Holton, 2007, p. 277) and where

"properties refer to the characteristics that are common to all the concepts in the category and dimensions are the variations of the property" (Tie, et al., 2019, p. 5). The constant comparison method continues throughout the coding process until a core category begins to emerge (Holton, 2007, 278/279). Categories "are referred to as theoretically saturated when new data analysis returns codes that only fit in existing categories, and these categories are sufficiently explained in terms of their properties and the dimensions" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 10).

Working Towards a Core Category

According to Holton (2007), *a core category* will emerge as the researcher moves forward with constant comparison and can be any kind of theoretical code. The purpose of the core category is to integrate theory and to make it solid and saturated (p. 279): "the criteria for establishing the core category within a grounded theory are that it is central, that it relates to as many other categories and their properties as possible, and that it accounts for a large portion of the variation in a pattern of behaviour" (p. 280). The core category is the primary occurrence around which the categories are constructed and from which the conceptual framework is generated (Noble & Mitchell, 2016).

Open Coding

The first step in data analysis is open or initial coding, which is used to identify important words or groups of words in the data and label them (Birks and Mills, 2015). Holton (2007) describes open coding as:

> Beginning with line-by-line open coding of data and comparing incidents to each other in the data, the researcher codes the data in every way possible …line-by-line coding forces

> the researcher to verify and saturate categories minimize missing an important category and ensures relevance by generating codes with emergent fit. (p. 275).

An *incident* is "a selection of the data, whether a word, line or paragraph, that the researcher has labelled" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 189). "Your study fits the empirical world when you have constructed codes and developed them into categories that crystallize participants' experience" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 133). By categorizing, "you select certain codes as having overriding significance in explicating events or processes in your data. A category may subsume common themes and patterns in several codes," and categories should be as conceptual as possible, remaining consistent with the data (Charmaz, 1996, p. 40/41). Open coding is "the initial conversation between the researchers and the voices, actions, and events of their raw data collected" (Matthew & Price, 2010, p. 156-157): "the purpose of initial coding is to start the process of fracturing the data to compare incident to incident and to look for similarities and differences in beginning patterns in the data …the researcher generates as many codes as possible from early data" (Tie, et al., 2019, p. 4). In initial coding, the researcher reads the data carefully (Charmaz, 2014, p. 114) and "remain[s] open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities we can discern from the data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 116). Charmaz (2006) has supported initial coding, which allows the research to remain open, to stay close to the data, to keep codes precise and straightforward, to construct short codes, and to compare data, and it also allows the researcher to move quickly through the data.

Concurrent data generation, or collection and analysis, is significant in the grounded theory research design. As the researcher, I "generate or collect some data with an initially purposive sample. The data from these initial encounters is coded before more data is collected or generated, and the process of analysis repeated" (Birks & Mill, 2015, p. 11). This process

differentiates grounded theory from other research methods, and through it, a researcher decides to collect and analyze data or to construct a theoretical proposition, leading to the collection of more data to test a hypothesis (Birks & Mills, 2015; Glass & Strauss, 1967).

Selective Coding

Once open coding is complete, *intermediate*, or *selective coding* occurs. This step "takes place after initial core categories and concepts have been identified in the data. Selective coding concentrates on theoretical development regarding the nature and relationships of core and essential categories and concepts emerging from the data" (Matthew & Price, 2010, p. 158). I used intermediate coding in two ways: "to develop fully individual categories by connecting sub-categories and fully developing the range of properties and their dimensions, and secondly, to link categories together" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 12). It is important to note, as per Tie, et al. (2019) that:

> Where initial coding fractures the data, intermediate coding begins to transform basic data into more abstract concepts allowing the theory [conceptual framework] to emerge from the data. During this analytic stage, a process of reviewing categories and identifying which ones, if any, can be subsumed beneath other categories occurs, and the properties or dimensions of the developed categories are refined (p. 5).

Theoretical Coding

The third and final stage of coding is theoretical coding; this process is described by Thornberg & Charmaz (2014) as follows:

> When employing theoretical coding researchers analyse how categories and codes constructed from the data might relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into

> theory [conceptual framework]. To achieve this integration, researchers have to inspect, choose, and use theoretical codes as analytical tools to organize and conceptualize their own codes and categories with each other to develop a coherent Grounded Theory. (p. 159)

Charmaz (2006) has referred to theoretical coding as the codes that follow the other coding processes. It concerns how substantive codes relate to each other as a hypothesis to be integrated into a theory or conceptual framework. It should also be noted that *coding families* (theoretical categories) are not mutually exclusive, nor are they collectively exhausted. Charmaz (2014) believes that, by coding full interview transcripts, ideas and understandings that otherwise might be missed, can be captured: "Theoretical codes specify possible relationships between categories you have developed in your focussed coding" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). The purpose of theoretical codes, according to Charmaz (2014), is therefore "to help [the researcher] theorize your data and focussed codes" and:

> Theoretical codes are meant to be integrative; they lend form to the focussed codes you have collected. These codes may help you tell an analytic story that has coherence. Hence, theoretical codes not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also may move your analytic story in a theoretical direction. (p. 150)

The final product of theoretical coding is arriving at a theory or conceptual framework. Holton (2007) has defined theoretical coding as "the identification and use of appropriate theoretical codes to achieve an integrated theoretical framework for the overall grounded theory."

Coding the Data Sets Separately

The initial interviews and written submissions were coded as one data set and analyzed as such to ensure that the participants' experiences would be considered "trustworthy" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in the results. As a significant portion of the research reflects Métis participants' experiences, the intent was to prevent influence from the second data set, which was kept separate from the participants' data so that the data analysis solely reflected the latter. The auto-ethnography data (e.g., meeting minutes, fieldnotes, and personal story) was coded as one set. In total, 19 artifacts comprised the second data set which was also coded using the NVivo software. The auto-ethnography data set was assigned codes through the open, selective, and theoretical coding processes. The word frequency query option was also employed.

Using the constant comparison approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I then brought the two data sets together and looked for the broader emergent themes. This process is called the *systematic triangulation of perspectives* (Flick, 1992) as "different perspectives within qualitative research are combined with one another in a targeted way, to complement their strong points and to illustrate their respective limitations" (Flick, 2004, p. 181) and where: "triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). I used this process to search for a broader Métis education framework for higher education; this process allowed for the blending of input–information of the Métis participants and my Métis-specific experiences within higher education. For example, the university research site has a substantial commitment to Indigenous People: the university has an ICR course, an Indigenous governance advisory committee, an Indigenous student support services centre, a mentorship program, Indigenous education, and a department of Indigenous learning. The institution also has experience with Indigenous students and external stakeholders, and I had

several encounters with each throughout the data collection process. In this way, including the second data set allowed for a more comprehensive data set that assisted in speaking to the research question and provided an additional Métis person's experience to be reflected in the research.

TEMI and NVivo

The software programs TEMI and NVivo were employed to aid with the data collection and analysis phase of the study. TEMI was used to record interviews and provide transcriptions of the text generated from the interviews. NVivo was used in the initial data coding process and later, to create more significant categories and themes, as well as to sort the data. The word frequency feature was used to search for the key terms that aided in creating the categories and sub-categories. As categories and themes emerged, the mind-mapping feature of the software assisted in displaying the results in a condensed, visual image form.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting ethical research was my main priority. Following the methods, described throughout this chapter was crucial to ensure the study's validity and reliability with respect to its ethics. Each participant completed a Consent Agreement (see Appendix C) before engaging with the research activities. All participants were over the age of 18, and the risks of the study to participants were minimal.

I noted the risks of uncomfortable feelings that the research participants might express concerning sensitive topics of Métis issues, including racism and intergenerational legacies of trauma. I was available to engage in respectful conversations on topics perceived as controversial or sensitive. The Consent Agreement (see Appendix C) referenced counselling available through

the Student Health and Wellness Centre, if requested, for referrals for help. I was unaware of any participant who utilized the counselling service.

As a Ph.D. candidate employed at the same school where I conducted this study, and with my involvement in numerous committees with various roles, it was necessary to disclose this dual role to the participants and one of the committees. I am a committee member of an Indigenous Advisors Governance Council and a member of the Senate academic sub-committee currently reviewing the ICR courses. I intended to reassure the participants that the information they provided as part of the data collection was anonymous and confidential; however, like other research dissemination processes, such as sharing research in conference presentations and posters or in publications, the data may be shared through the committee. The information brought forward to the committee is valuable because it represents current Métis research participants' experiences and perspectives on the ICRs. This dual role was therefore noted and approved in the Research Ethics Board (REB) submission (see Appendix G) and was disclosed to research participants in a prepared Preamble (see Appendix E), also indicated in the Letter of Information (see Appendix B) and the Prompt List Questions (see Appendix D).

Summary

A discussion of the participants and data collection techniques outlines and details how the study was conducted and who participated. A métissage-grounded theory methodology was used to develop a conceptual framework on reconciliation in higher education for Métis learners. All research study participants contributed to this new conceptual framework, as did I as the researcher through my narrative, by sharing our stories and experiences in higher education and our reconciliation perspectives. A description of the data analysis and coding procedures

highlights the research methods and includes critical qualitative research terms and concepts employed in the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

MÉTIS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter describes the data, results and interpretations of the métissage-grounded theory study exploring the question of how university courses and experiences impact Métis peoples' understandings of their cultural identities, the role of Métis-specific Knowledge in higher education curriculum, and Métis perspectives on reconciliation in Canadian universities?

Next, the chapter outlines and details how the data analysis was conducted as a métissage-grounded theory and how métissage was interwoven into the grounded theory analysis. Consistent with a grounded theory methodology, there were three levels of data analysis generated from the six written responses and six interview transcripts that were conducted with the 12 Métis women: this analysis occurred using (a) open codes, (b) selective codes, and (c) theoretical codes. At each stage of coding, I employed a constant comparison method to clarify or interweave the transcript data until Métis themes emerged. I include tables and graphics here to emphasize codes and categories, and to highlight the pivotal identity narratives of each participant.

Concurrent to the six interviews and six written submissions with the 12 Métis women, I gathered data from the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) committee meetings, field notes, minutes, and my autobiographical journal to merge with the Métis student transcription data. The two concurrent projects' data were gathered and analyzed separately, but interpreted according to the same grounded theory analysis, including the three coding levels. The results of the second data set are presented in Chapter Six.

Finally, all data were also interpreted together and presented in Chapter Seven to explore the research question from different angles of Canadian universities' responses to Indigenous presence, specifically Métis students and community, and develop a new conceptual framework to analyze and understand Canadian higher education responses to reconciliation with Métis people.

Métis Student Participant Group

The number (n) of Métis participants who completed interviews and written submissions to prompt list questions (Appendix D) for this study was a total of 12 (n=12), all who self-identified as Métis women living in the province of Ontario. Four participants are current university students. The other eight participants are Métis community members. Of these eight community members, five had attended university in the past, and all but one had graduated.

Of the four students attending the university, one was attending law school (Joy) after graduating with a full undergraduate degree in political studies; two students were in the Master of Education program (Sarah and Sunshine), and one student was in the Master of Social Justice program (Bell). Of the eight community members, three participants had never attended the site (Ms. C, Lee, and Little Flower); however, all community members were currently working in the K-12 education system. One participant had been enrolled in the university (Whitestar) but never graduated because she felt that the university did not meet her academic needs by not allowing her advanced standing credits for work completed in another post-secondary institution. She attended the university for one year before leaving. This participant graduated in 2020 from an Indigenous Social Work degree program located within Ontario at a university other than the research site. Four of the eight community participants had previously attended the research site;

all four (Rachel, Louise, Jesse, and Dumont) are graduates with Bachelor of Education degrees and were working within the education system at the time they participated in the study.

Participant Profiles

All the participants identified as Métis women and ranged in age from 24 to 49 years, with the median (m) age being m=33 years of age. In total, six of the participants held Bachelor of Education degrees, and one additional participant was currently earning her Ph.D. in Native Studies (not at the research site). At the time of the research, 11 participants had completed the minimum of a Bachelor of Arts degree, and 11 had either earned two degrees or were in the process of obtaining an additional university degree. Although one participant was in the process of completing her first post-secondary degree, she had already received a two-year Ontario college diploma from a local community college located in the same city as the research site. Chapter Three provides a description of each of the 12 research study participants.

Data Collection

The six interviews and six written submissions to prompt list questions (Appendix D) with the Métis women-who were either currently enrolled in post-secondary education or working within education-served as the primary research data source for this study. The demographic information collected supported the research data by allowing me to learn more about the participants' background stories. Each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym that I could then employ to personalize their university profiles and that they reviewed after I wrote them. After every written submission or interview, the data were coded and reviewed for emerging themes. The original letter of information (see Appendix B) and prompt list questions (see Appendix D) used in this study are attached. I disclosed to each research participant the

various roles I held within the institution in a preamble of information that was provided prior to the start of the data collection (see Appendix F).

I used an Apple iPad tablet to voice record and transcribe the interviews. The iPad Application (App), called Temi, was employed to record the interviews: Temi is an audio-to-text transcription service. The interviews were transcribed simultaneously through the app, and the participant and I could watch the words being transcribed into text live. Once the interviews were complete, I reviewed the text to ensure short forms or abbreviations of words were fully spelled out, and words were properly recorded throughout the interviews. For example, the term Métis would often transcribe as “made tea” or “meaty.” These words were corrected in the transcript before each interview was added to the NVivo software for further data analysis (coding). Participants did not review their transcripts.

Data and Analysis

All interviews (narratives) became data that was coded using the NVivo software after each interview took place. Written submissions to the prompt list questions (Appendix D) also became data and were coded immediately after I received them. Each piece of data was coded and analysed for categories or themes. Questions were provided in advance to each participant that agreed to an interview. The detailed prompt-list of questions asked in the interviews is attached (see Appendix D). It was best to use grounded theory coding as a way to generate the key concepts as found in the data (stories). I also used the word count feature on each transcription as a second process to validate key concepts.

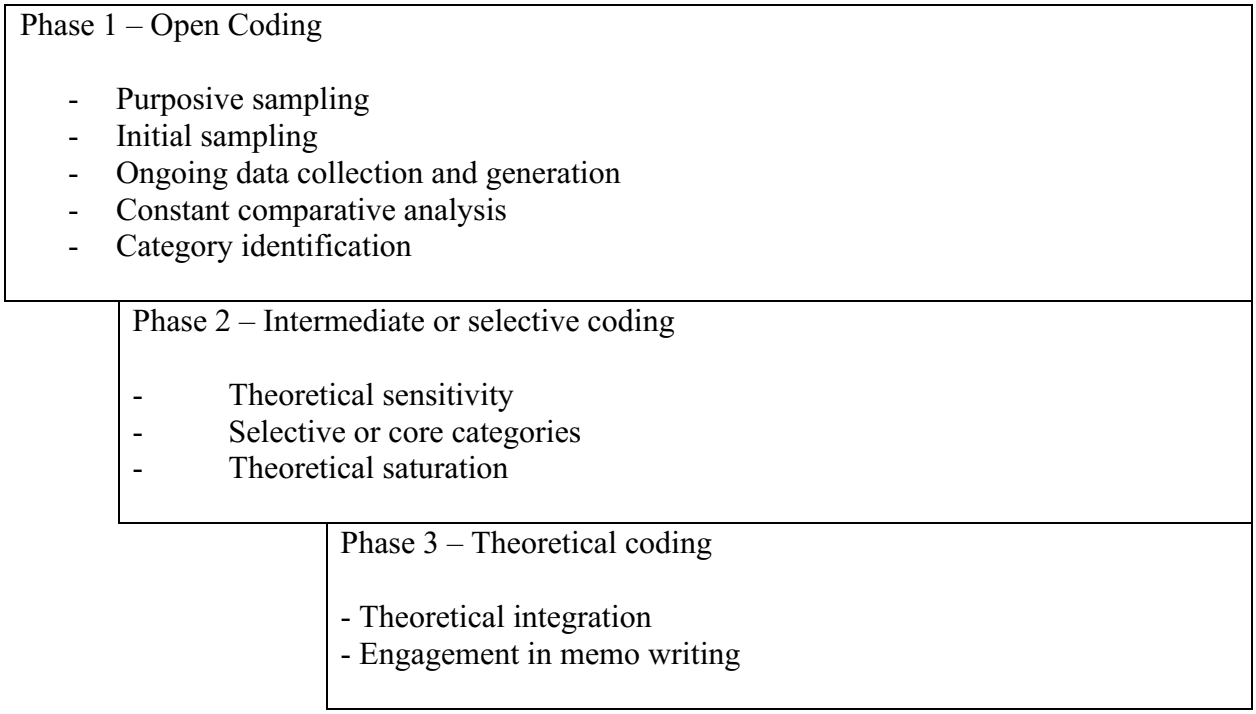
Transcripts of interviews and written submissions were uploaded into computer software, NVivo, for further analysis. NVivo is a computer software program that allows for qualitative

data analysis. All interviews and written submissions were coded line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph during the open coding phase. Having all 12 narratives for comparison aided in the use of constant comparative techniques, which are critical to grounded theory methodology, and the technique assisted me with consistency in emphasizing main points during the coding process. The open coding resulted in 135 codes.

The next phase, selective coding, allowed me to find categories emerging from the open codes, specifically about similarities. Using cluster analysis software, I took all the narratives and the open codes and mapped them into a cluster analysis. Figure 2 includes a summary of the data and the analysis process for open, selective, and theoretical coding.

Figure 2

Data Analysis Process



Note. This figure was adapted by Birks & Mills, 2015.

Using the NVivo software, a word-count frequency query was used to discover categories from the data. I decided to use this feature to extract the most frequent words in the interviews and written submissions of prompt list questions (Appendix D). I compared the word count results to the established codes from the open coding process as part of the constant comparison approach as I worked to achieve "high-level conceptually abstract categories, rich with meaning" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 90). This process was repeated in the second data set.

Theoretical coding resulted from the relationships both within and across the open and selective codes. I used the cluster analysis tool in the NVivo software to aid in this analysis. Relationships across the selective codes were analyzed across the cluster analysis. When building the cluster, each time a code linked directly to another code, I reviewed those codes for relationships. If there was a relationship, I clustered the codes together. The selective codes with the most relationships formed the beginning of theoretical coding. The codes were reviewed during clustering to ensure that the content was accurate (i.e., the meaning behind the code coincided with the participants' answers to the questions).

Following a grounded theory approach to interviewing, not all questions were asked of each participant, and similarly, not all participants answered all questions. Both the participants who were interviewed, and the participants who chose to send me written responses, were provided with the prompt-list questions. I offered these questions in advance in writing to allow the participants time to reflect on the questions before the interviews. One participant identified as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and asked for questions in advance; for this participant, the questions were completed through email. Constant comparison was used to ensure that additional weight was not added to codes. For example, every participant was asked if they thought Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses were beneficial to

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Still, not all participants were asked to describe their own ICR course experiences as some had not attended a university with ICRs. The ICR course experience question was only asked if the respondent had taken an Indigenous-focussed or ICR course as part of their undergraduate degree. Six participants had attended a university since the ICR requirement was introduced.

Table 1 highlights the three distinct categories that emerged through the data analysis using the GT coding process-identity codes, institutional practices codes, and reconciliation codes-and each are described following Table 1.

Table 1

Selective Coding Results

Category 1:	Category 2:	Category 3:
Identity	Cultural visibility	Truth-telling
Physical appearance	Student support services	Voice
Constitutional rights	Safe and welcoming spaces	Relationships
	Self-identification practices	
	University barriers	

Identity Codes: Constitutional Rights and Physical Appearance

Identity is the category used throughout this dissertation to describe what it means to be Métis, who the Métis people are, and how identity relates to the legal and constitutional rights of Métis people. Over 20 open codes for identity were assigned to what emerged as the category of identity. Within identity, the concepts of skin tone and constitutional rights were on many

research participants' minds: every participant mentioned at least one of these concepts as part of the category of identity.

Participants were clear in pinpointing that understanding Métis identity is a critical feature for other students when learning about Métis perspectives. Within the category of identity, the concepts of *constitutional rights* (legal rights) and *physical appearance* (skin tone) emerged. Understanding the history of the Métis people means learning about the various aspects of Métis identity, which includes the cultural, political, and legal components of identity. More contemporarily, understanding identity is made complicated by *race-shifting* (Leroux, 2019) which is an attempt by white-settler Canadians with no or little Indigenous ancestry identifying as Indigenous people.

Joy talked about the confusion that can quickly arise when discussing who the Métis are:

> I think the concept for a lot of people about who are the Métis is confusing. They need to know who the Métis people are and where they are located in Canada. If they know who a Métis person is, the burden is not on a Métis person to continuously explain.

Joy was adamant that all people need to understand Métis identity so that Métis people do not need to keep explaining their identity each time the word Métis is brought forward in a conversation. Understanding Métis identity is crucial in clarifying how the Métis emerged as a distinct cultural group in Canada. Understanding Métis identity also defines the constitutional rights of the Métis.

Louise described what she thought was essential to understand the mix of the political, cultural, and legal aspects associated with Métis identity. An awareness of the Métis people helps to shatter myths that Métis people are trying to be First Nations people and infringing on First

Nations rights. Education can help dispel inaccurate reflections of the Métis people and provide a better understanding of the distinctions in cultures between Indigenous People living in Canada. Louise told me:

> I think it is important to dispel the current myths out there regarding what it means to be a Métis person, i.e., having an ancestor of First Nation's decent does not make you Métis … Métis people are not trying to be First Nations. We have our own distinct culture and cultural practices that blend the cultures of our ancestors. Métis people are not looking to infringe on First Nations people's rights; we are merely asking that our culture and rights be recognized as well.

Regarding the political definition of Métis, Sarah highlighted an essential piece reflective of a more current understanding of the meaning of who the Métis are, which involves the big 'M'/little 'm' political debate:

> I want others to understand what Métis big 'M' and little 'm' means. I want others to understand the definition of a Métis person with respect to their identity. When I was learning about my Métis identity, I did not understand what it meant to be Métis, and [she] thought it simply meant that you were half Indigenous and half white.

For clarity, there is an insider understanding within Métis circles that big 'M' means those Métis people with legal rights recognized by Canadian authorities. The little 'm' means those Métis people born of mixed-blood (one Indigenous parent and one non-Indigenous) with no family lineage to a historic Métis community or no connection that would give them any legal rights recognized in Canada (The Métis National Council, in its opening statement to the United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations in August 1984 in Geneva, Peterson &

Brown, 1985, p. 6). Sarah brought forward an important concept through the big ‘M’/little ‘m’ debate connecting to self-identification issues. Some Métis people are deeply connected to and understand their family lineage well, while others are in the process of learning about their identity. The way Métis students self-identify is an evolving process based on their learning and their place of origin. For example, three people in my study identified that they were Métis of the Red River, while seven others identified as citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Bell pointed out an example of understanding the importance of culture concerning Métis identity. Like Sarah, her reference included being of mixed ancestry, including having parents that are both of First Nations and European (white) descent:

> Not only are we mixed, but we also have our own culture and tradition, and there are Métis people from different areas in Canada. Our experiences in our history are different. Just because one parent is First Nations, and one is white, this does not mean that you are Métis. Sometimes it feels like I do not fit in with First Nations students, nor do I see myself fitting in with the non-Indigenous students. I am in between. I think that if people have more knowledge, then perhaps that would mitigate my feelings.

Métis participants clearly understood that their Métis identity was more than just being of mixed-blood. While their cultures and histories may vary, being Métis was about being connected to Métis communities and understanding their way of life as distinct from their First Nations or Inuit relations. The Métis participants were also aware that legally they were rights-bearing constitutionally recognized Métis people. One’s Métisness is not solely dependent upon parents of mixed ancestry but includes recognition of constitutional rights.

Jesse suggested that to make Métis identity seem valued, discussions of the Métis in more contemporary terms is needed. The complicated history that many Métis families were challenged with throughout multiple generations needs to be brought forward. Jesse was aware that more Métis people are talking about their Métis identity, as families share their stories, and are creating a sense of pride in their culture. Métis people no longer need to hide their identities but can share their family stories as a reclamation of their culture. The Métis culture is one that is to be celebrated and shared, not hidden or ignored. Jesse told me:

> The more recent resurgence of Métis culture and the number of people reconnecting with their identity as adults is critical because the previous generations either took scrip and were not considered Indigenous by the government, or their ancestors felt ashamed of being 'Indians.' The pervasive systemic racism and societal expulsion led many Métis people to hide their progeny identities.

Constitutional Rights

The concept of constitutional rights appeared when participants made references to the legal rights of Métis people. Open codes such as "the Powley case[5]," "Daniels Decision[6]," or "Daniels case" and "Section 35 rights" appear under the category of constitutional rights. I felt it was essential to include this category because the legal rights of Métis people have only been recognized in Canada over the past few years. As Métis students embark upon higher education and are continuing to learn about Métis history and culture, the legal rights of the Métis need to

[5] The Powley case involved Métis hunting rights in Canada. In 1993 the province of Ontario charged Steve and Rodney Powley with illegal hunting. The case was challenged in court and in 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Powley's were exercising their legal Métis hunting rights.

[6] On April 14, 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Métis and non-status Indians are the responsibility of the federal government under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

be included as content. Legal rights reflect identity, but they also reflect a historical past that is now being constitutionally recognized.

Joy, a law student, referenced the importance of understanding Métis people and their legal rights under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This content was covered in one of her law classes by a guest lecturer, and she felt like the content was vital for others to know:

> We talked about some of the key Métis cases like Powley and Daniels. A Métis person taught the course, and she went through the history of the cases and talked about the concept of race-shifting (people claiming Indigeneity and the future impact of this concerning Métis rights). The course went through Métis rights, title, and land settlements. We talked about Métis culture rights concerning hunting and fishing.

Identifying rights specific to Métis people is crucial for someone like Joy. She was studying to be a lawyer. She was aware of the history concerning the lack of federal and provincial government's responsibility for Métis people. Through the Powley and Daniels law cases, Métis rights have come to the forefront and onto the legal scene in Canada. The responsibility for Métis people is now legally on the shoulders of the federal government. Historically, none of this content existed in higher education, let alone in a law program; for Joy, as a Métis person, having this content taught in her law program by a Métis lawyer was a significant milestone in her education.

Whitestar also noted the importance of understanding the Métis from a legal perspective as constitutional rights-bearing people:

> It seems although there are multiple definitions of what Métis are and who we are. As much as we have Section 35 of the Constitution, the Powley and Daniels cases, there is still a lot of confusion within the community about who the Métis are.

With the recognition of Métis people having constitutional rights, it is hoped that this also helps clarify legal definitions surrounding Métis identity and the fiduciary responsibility for Métis people. Métis students do not like the stigma of being classified as Aboriginal people with no legal rights, as this further stigmatizes them as to not fully being recognized and accepted. It is the same basic intrinsic need for many Métis. To fulfil that need, students want to feel like they belong and have others understand the legal aspects of the Métis history.

Physical Appearance

Four participants made references to "physical appearance" (skin tone) concerning identity and Indigeneity. Participants felt skin tone played a role within post-secondary institutions because it reflected how they fit into spaces and how they were viewed as "Indigenous" people. Skin tone is often seen as an institutional barrier for students wanting to access areas and places as Métis students. Little Flower told me: "Métis people often don't look Indigenous," which affects whether they fit in with other Indigenous students. How are Métis students to be taken seriously within the institution if they do not look the part (i.e., look like other First Nations students)? Skin tone is a barrier in education and as such, skin tone invites racist microaggression within post-secondary spaces. Systematic barriers come from within the Indigenous community on-campus, and externally from within the city, and affects student achievement as Métis students do not feel supported within the broader Indigenous community.

Métis people are more receptive to university staff and instructors who are culturally aware of diversity and differences among Indigenous students. Diversity and difference play out through the physical appearance of Métis people. I want to bring forward two points underscoring the importance of physical appearance through my research participants' perspective because it bothered them concerning institutional staff and instructors and how Métis students are made to feel when they enter spaces. First, I am trying to capture the essence that Métis students look different, and their shade of brown is not an underlying factor to their Métis identity. Still, when accessing spaces like Indigenous student services, all too often, Métis students do not look Indigenous enough to be in spaces designated Indigenous students. Second, skin colour should not relate to safety issues within institutions, especially institutions like universities that have policies on racism and discrimination. Here, I am trying to capture the nuances of institutional practices that reflect how staff and instructors observe and participate in students' learning, reflecting how they acknowledge and accept differences within specific populations. Instructors and staff should never be preoccupied with a student's skin tone. Still, they should focus on understanding Indigenous histories and supporting the worldviews of Indigenous students within the institution. In a general statement, Sunshine told me:

> We [as Métis people] are not seen as Indigenous, especially if we have pale skin tones. I am still learning a lot about my identity and what it means to be Métis. There is guilt that I experience being a pale skin Métis person and the privilege I have. I get angry when people do not take me seriously when I talk about Indigenous People, and people see my pale skin and do not think I have the right to talk about Indigenous People.

Jesse wanted others to: "Understand that our history was also a target of colonization and that we were affected. A student may be fair, but that does not negate their Indigeneity."

Similarly, Sarah also remarked on her skin tone and how this impacted her physical appearance as an Indigenous person:

> Not white enough for the white people, not Indian enough for the Indian people trying to fit in. Being looked at differently because some Métis people have lighter skin and are not seen as Aboriginal enough. There is not enough acknowledgement of the Métis people.

The skin tone issue represents the many shades of prejudice the Métis students feel as mixed-culture people: being misunderstood concerning their identity and the lack of acknowledgement of their culture in the larger Indigenous student population. There is even some racism within Indigenous student populations as some feel like the Métis students are not Indigenous.

Institutional Practices Codes: Self-Identification, Cultural Visibility, Student Support Services, University Barriers, and Safe and Welcoming Spaces

Self-Identification

Many open codes were identified before "institutional practices" emerged as a category. The concepts associated with institutional practices primarily focus on institutional barriers for Métis students. These barriers include "lack of cultural visibility on campus," "lack of inclusivity," uncertainty around "self-identification," "insufficient student support services," and "unsafe and unwelcoming spaces." Also, "student support services" was noted as a top concern. "Self-identification" was also identified as an essential concept after participants were asked if they felt it was important to self-identify as an Indigenous person when they enter university.

Sarah, Joy, and Whitestar were of the same mindset concerning the self-identification process within the institution. Sarah told me that:

> [I] see the benefit of self-identification because it helps connect students to the Indigenous community. It provides access to specific resources that are for Aboriginal students. I think it helps students feel connected. There are scholarships and bursaries specific to Indigenous students. I do not think that everyone must self-identify unless they want to, but I think it is important.

Joy also believes that:

> The university needs to know who the Indigenous are in the school. It helps Métis students connect to other Métis students. It gives you a sense of community. When you self-identify, you get weekly emails, and then you can see what is happening on campus, and this can help you feel less homesick.

Similarly, Whitestar told me that:

> It is important to self-identify if there is a benefit to the student like being linked with the proper supports and other Indigenous students… I am sure the university is tracking who the Indigenous students are and how well they are doing in their studies, but this can be a good thing if supports are being offered.

Sarah, Joy, and Whitestar identified two distinct issues concerning self-identification processes imposed by the university that are beneficial to Métis students. The institution's policy creates an opportunity for Indigenous students to connect and build a sense of community within the university. This often extends beyond the university's time, as students graduate, and new friendships and connections are solidified. Secondly, institutional mechanisms such as self-

identification processes, create opportunities for targeted funding, resources, and supports to be provided to the university, benefiting all Indigenous students, including the Métis students. These supports play out in terms of support for academics (tutoring), social events (special events and field trips), cultural teachings (funds to purchase supplies for moccasins or drum making), and recreational activities (funded extracurricular activities).

Although Dumont appeared to be of the same mindset as Sarah, Joy, and Whitestar, believing that universities should have self-identification processes for Indigenous students, she never self-identified to classmates or professors during her undergraduate program. Dumont explained her trepidation with the risks that can accompany such an institutionally loaded disclosure:

> I was worried about racism, lateral violence and [being] expected to provide the Indigenous or Métis perspectives [in my courses]. Now, I do not have any of those insecurities [after finishing her program]. Still, I think if we ask people to identify [in the university], we need to encourage cultural competency, services, and safety for [self-identifying] students.

Dumont voiced concerns focussed on racism and lateral violence within the institution and how she did not want to become a token voice for Métis students-something she feared if she self-identified. Dumont raised the need for acceptable institutional practices like cultural competency training for instructors and staff to ensure people provide self-identification processes for Indigenous students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes reflective of an understanding and respect for cultural diversity. Further, given that universities have long extended, avoided, or neglected Métis students' Indigenous and human rights, it is clear that Dumont believed universities need to do more to protect Métis students from racist exposure

when self-identifying as Métis/Indigenous. Without the institutional support (such as a clear reconciliation plan) to keep cultural identities healthy, sustained, and valued in every aspect of the university, there is no substantial advantage or real reward for Métis students to self-identify.

Rachel commented:

> As a student, I would say no [it is not important to identify as an Indigenous person]. As an employee in a post-secondary institution, I have questioned people who are higher up on why we have self-identification, and no one has answered that question. There are references to attempts to close the achievement gap on paper, but I think self-identification processes attempt to study the gap. I think self-identification is about funding dollars because when someone identifies as First Nations, then the government, from what I understand, gives funding dollars for those students. Self-identification might equate to more services for Indigenous students but not in a way that Indigenous students would know or understand unless they were provided with that information, which they never are.

Rachel's concerns with self-identification processes focussed on understanding how the institution uses the students' information. There is a lack of information being shared with students on the purposes or intent for collecting self-identification data. This needs to be disclosed to students before they self-identify. There are questions about how students benefit from self-identification processes, which extend beyond creating a network of students and advertising student events that target Indigenous students. Indigenous students were only told certain information about the self-identification process, but Rachel questioned if there are deeper reasons why institutions are collecting data on Indigenous students.

Little Flower told me a story of her experience with self-identification as it was not welcoming:

> I remember once someone almost physically hurt me and threatened me when I decided to organize an event in the Indigenous student centre—self-identifying means participating as an Indigenous person in the university. When you self-identify, you make yourself visible. It is important for people to be supportive and safeguard Métis people as they become more visible.

Little Flower was concerned with Métis students becoming vulnerable within the institution if they self-identify. Not all students want to be visibly recognized within the university because they do not wish to be segregated into certain classifications that marginalizes them as certain types of learners. The self-identification process is linked to cultural safety. The recognition of power imbalances and behaviours is explored to knowingly or unknowingly cause Métis people to feel welcomed and safe or refused and unsafe. Culturally safe environments allow Métis students to be supported and free from racism and discrimination; however, not all Métis students feel this within the institution.

Cultural Visibility

Like the concept of "identity", the category of "cultural visibility" emerged as participants expressed concern over not enough Métis culture being visible on campus. Bell said: "Having more visibility of Métis culture on campus would be nice." Similarly, Rachel noted:

> I like seeing art on the walls in the education building. That building does an outstanding job of having art in most offices and classrooms. Still, it is often a very sterile

environment in the other buildings, and it would be nice to see Indigenous artists, specifically Métis artists throughout the university.

Cultural visibility creates an environment where diversity is accepted, contributing to educational practices like supporting multicultural and anti-racist spaces. Indigenous art and artifacts bring conversations and questions into spaces about what and who is being represented. These conversations do not focus on the dominant Euro-settler Canada, but on people of global Indigenous places and the First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures living in Canada. Educational spaces are political spaces. When they become full of cultures and diversity not of the mainstream, the message is clear that an institution is making a step to make Indigenous histories, cultures, and languages visible on campuses. This step is an essential piece that addresses the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (2015) in education and reconciliation efforts.

The Infinite Reach program is funded by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Funds are sent from the MNO to universities to host Infinite Reach facilitators; upper-year Métis students are made available to new incoming Métis students to access student support services and provide Métis cultural events on campus. There is also a Métis student bursary program available at many post-secondary institutions in Ontario offered through the MNO. This program is a direct result of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities document entitled Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework (2011) created to close Aboriginal students' educational achievement and attainment gaps (p. 11).

Joy, Sarah, Whitestar, and Jesse referred to the Infinite Research program to create visibility of Métis culture on campus. The Infinite Reach program funded by the MNO provides funds for Métis students to host an event each semester on campuses to promote Métis culture.

Joy noted: “Infinite Reach facilitators go to Maadadizi each year to connect with students. It is good to have our presence there. We bring information and share information about our program.” Maadadizi is an Indigenous student welcome celebration held each year on the campus. The event focusses on providing students a fun, interactive day to get to know others on campus and provides a way for the community to welcome Indigenous students into the city. The Infinite Reach facilitators are invited to host a table at the event, which allows them to share their upcoming events with all students and university staff.

Sarah believed that by “using [the] Michif language around the university,” would enhance the cultural visibility of the Métis and create a sense of Métis students being welcomed onto campus. The campus has many Ojibwe words and Oji-Cree syllabus that are visible on various signage and used throughout key institutional documents, so including the Michif language on campus only makes sense to be inclusive of the many Métis students sharing the same space as other First Nations students. Currently, the message is clear that First Nations students are the dominant Indigenous voice; however, they do not represent the Métis students or their culture and, more specifically, their language.

Louise said: “Métis culture could be more visible within the institution, given the institution’s site is a key place in respect to local Métis history.” Often First Nations people are recognized in land acknowledgements as institutions work to respect the land where their institutions are located. At the same time, many historic Métis communities are located within proximity to land that is or was shared with First Nations people. Land acknowledgements should highlight the historic Métis communities and the treaties and territories representative of the First Nations people to recognize the vital contributions of the Métis people in the area. Many people are unaware of the historic Métis communities. This would be an opportunity to

share and draw attention to the Métis' role concerning shared land as a moment of decolonizing education and a step towards reconciliation.

University Barriers

Métis participants described barriers they have experienced while attending post-secondary institutions. Louise described a variety of obstacles Métis students face:

> The lack of understanding of acknowledgement of Métis people (especially outside of Manitoba), lack of funding and scholarships for Métis students, lack of inclusivity in Indigenous student centres, and the questioning of identity by peers, instructors, and support staff. These barriers, along with constantly having to prove you are "Indigenous enough" to identify with other Indigenous students, are all problematic.

University barriers affect Métis learners' success, which is very much determined by the mechanisms in place to support them. The typical experience for Métis students is as a first-generation learner leaving their home community to attend university in another city, and without having a support system once they arrive, is daunting. It takes time to develop relationships with other students, instructors and people working in the student support centres. Little Flower told me that "the idea of being a first-generation post-secondary learner is a barrier" because students do not have the support of their parents. Having to leave your home community is difficult for family systems. Students often want the opportunity to express their feelings and struggles but do not usually have anyone they can engage with as they enter the institution for the first time. As students search out Indigenous student services, they are met with questioning of their Indigeneity and made to feel unwelcome. As Métis students pay for their education out of pocket, finances are on students' minds as they pull together a plan of

attending courses and financial management. The institution's overall lack of awareness of Métis students concerning their identity and history fuels the fire of inequity.

Métis education has historically not been funded through the federal government like it is for some First Nations people, and financing education is a significant concern for Métis students. Sunshine told me that as a Métis student: "As a Métis person [she] does not qualify for funding programs or scholarships. [She] cannot be given awards, scholarships or bursaries because [she]is not fully status." As Métis students do not have treaty rights, there is not a place a Métis student can apply each year to have costs associated with tuition and living expenses covered. Métis students are unlike some First Nations students who can apply to their band or post-secondary offices where education counsellors review applications and decide for costs to be paid.

Further, the absence of scholarships and bursaries available to Métis students is of concern because it eliminates another option for Métis students to secure funds. When Métis students are included in Indigenous scholarship and bursary programs, the fund's administrators have varying qualifications that Métis students need to meet to receive a scholarship or bursary. There can be lengthy application processes requiring Métis identification, and many Métis students are being registered with provincial Métis bodies, so this excludes them from applying. Ms. C was clear in telling me that: "Funding for post-secondary education bursaries and scholarships would remove financial barriers and allow more Métis students to attend post-secondary studies." Sunshine also agreed that: "More financial support for Métis students is needed to assist students with education costs." There is an overall lack of funding available to Métis students. Those who pay for their education and can complete a Bachelor of Arts degree are often deterred from continuing their studies into master's and doctoral level programs

because students also need to work to cover their on-going living costs. If student debt has been accumulated from the bachelor's degree, this also needs to be paid.

Whitestar argued: "There are additional barriers associated with the lack of funding." Whitestar mentioned that further barriers exist when students are funded. In her experience, she had to submit her weekly attendance and semester grades to the funding organization. This condition of funding caused additional pressures on her in trying to maintain the grant she was provided. She was grateful but had a learning disability, so collecting the documents and staying on top of her weekly attendance records and submissions could have been time spent instead studying and working on assignments.

Ms. C also believed various barriers hold Métis students back from being successful within higher education: "Mental health, transportation, access to funding and lateral violence from other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people." Ms. C discussed that she never expected to encounter lateral violence as part of her university experience. Lateral violence plays out between Métis students and other Indigenous students and between Métis students and non-Indigenous students. There continues to be a lack of understanding of who Métis students are, their history as Aboriginal people in Canada, the legacy of colonization, and the oppression that Métis people have faced-and all these factors play out within higher education classrooms. Experiences of lateral violence affect the mental health of Métis students and distract them away from their studies, and they require time to heal from the trauma that they experience. Lateral violence is an essential factor that makes Métis students shy away from attending post-secondary institutions, a place where they repeatedly do not feel welcomed or safe.

Louise had also experienced lateral violence within the institution. She stated: "We are not always accepted as Indigenous, and we are often victims of lateral violence." The act of

lateral violence affected her sense of belonging and her lack of participation in Indigenous events and programs. She did not attend activities or go to spaces that were not accepting of her and her culture.

Similarly, Sarah referenced lateral violence within the institution and believed this occurs because Métis students are not honoured and are economically disadvantaged, making them a target. Many Métis students: "live in poverty, have lower levels of schooling, disadvantaged backgrounds, and are affected by colonization and residential schools." As an Indigenous student, if you do not present a status card within the institution, you are not given any additional funds-funds that are needed for living costs. There are inequities in funding, and they disadvantage Métis students specifically. Worrying about the costs of living and dealing with lateral violence, coupled with the various other disadvantages described in this dissertation, affects the mental health of Métis students and their willingness or ability to study within higher education.

Further, Bell disclosed that she experienced what she considers to be "a lot of accidentally racist comments or well-meaning things that are being said by instructors but are coming out as racist." She told me that these moments were complicated because she was there to learn but was distracted by the instructors' racist comments. She also told me that she had stopped instructors and did what she considered right, which was to bring attention to what was said as racist. She knew the associated risks with interrupting instructors, but she had a strong sense of self-confidence to correct the errors. She was a law student and believed that other Métis students who follow need to have instructors who do not play out their discriminatory judgements within the classroom's politics.

Safe and Welcoming Spaces

The concepts of “safety,” “comfortable,” “welcoming,” and “Aboriginal support centres” led to the creation of the category of safe and welcoming spaces. Métis participants strived to have that feeling of being included or fitting in within the university. Every participant referred to at least one or more of these concepts when recounting barriers in higher education.

Little Flower told me:

> Métis students do not feel entirely inclusive at times in Western educational institutes. They are moving forward, and they are making space for themselves. They connect with others, their peers and colleagues, communities, and their families as they move forward despite these spaces that do not recognize who they are or adequately depict or reflect who they are. Engaging Métis students within a safe space to talk about their needs is critical.

Often Indigenous support centres are laden with medicine wheels, drums, smudging spaces, etc. to be respectful of First Nations cultures, but are not so much associated with the Métis culture. Métis students are disconnected from Indigenous service and support centres because they do not see their culture reflected within the spaces, let alone with the larger university. Métis students feel unwanted in areas that support and understand First Nations cultures but do not include cultural artifacts and events that are reflective of Métis culture. Métis students hesitate to enter spaces where there are people who do not understand their culture and do not understand their needs. There is no space for Métis students to meet others like them to form the academic network they require to feel connected and supported.

Jesse acknowledged the barrier of Métis students not feeling welcome in spaces and suggested to assist in changing this barrier:

> Perhaps a Métis-focussed steering committee with delegates from the Métis community and the Indigenous Cultural and Support Services to determine Métis students' needs would be helpful. Having Métis students feel comfortable accessing spaces for Indigenous students is important for inclusion.

If institutions commit to being inclusive of Métis students and communities, governing bodies and committees need to include Métis community people, providing a voice for the Métis students. Also, seeing Métis students in leadership roles in university student clubs and politics is crucial to creating Métis students' welcoming spaces. Métis students need to see others like them within higher education, paving the way for inclusive Métis spaces.

Despite various negative experiences with safe and welcoming spaces on campus, Métis students are hopeful that change can occur. Dumont reflected on a story regarding her experience with the Indigenous Student Success Centre and how it could be more inclusive of Métis culture:

> When I was in University, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre targeted First Nations students. I hope they have become more welcoming to Métis and Inuit Students. Co-hosting or giving space for cultural celebrations specific to the Métis culture (Louis Riel Day, summer solstice, Powley) is good for everyone. Hosting guest lectures, speaking events, art exhibits, and workshops are also good for everyone.

University departments forging relationships with the Métis community to support Métis students are ways in which the broader Métis community can be included and a concrete way for Métis voice and inclusion to be incorporated into Indigenous student services. Providing space for the Métis Infinite Reach facilitators to use the Indigenous Student Success Centre to host

their events is another way the University can support Métis culture and create awareness of the Métis students who attend the institution.

Louise told me a story of her hopes for her nieces when they attend post-secondary education:

> I have two nieces that are both Métis at different stages of their education. I hope that once they are old enough to enter post-secondary studies, there is a much more welcoming environment for Indigenous students. I want to see our systems improve so that they can reach their goals with fewer barriers.

For generations, Métis students have not felt included and welcomed within the institution of higher education. They have lacked various supports, including funding and a sense of feeling welcomed and included within the institution, specifically within university's Indigenous spaces. The lack of understanding they feel about their identity not being understood is not helpful as they carry the lack of support. Simultaneously, in proper resilience style, Métis students continue to break through these barriers and attend higher education. The education journey is long and difficult for many, but with their educational aspirations as goals, they keep enrolling and graduating. The Métis students are aware and educated about their identity and clarify when necessary; they are determined not to silence their voices or deny their culture any longer.

Reconciliation Codes: Truth-Telling, Voice, and Relationships

The concepts of "truth-telling," "voice," and "relationships" were predominant throughout the study, and as a result, these linked to the category of reconciliation. Truth-telling, voice, and relationships are required when teaching Métis history through local Métis

Knowledge Holders and community members appearing as guest lecturers in classrooms. Participants were all asked what they thought was needed for reconciliation to occur in higher education and if reconciliation was important to them.

Reconciliation

Bell was not sure if reconciliation is important because:

> That would imply that there was a good relationship to begin with. Reconciliation is not my priority. I feel like reconciliation is more of a government initiative to make themselves feel better. You want a nation-to-nation relationship, but I feel like that is not the goal [of the federal government and that reconciliation is a way to] pacify native people, people who you are assimilating anyway.

Bell spoke about the ongoing relationship between the Métis and the federal government. Until recently, the province and federal governments treated the Métis like a football tossing them back and forth between their jurisdictions. No one government took ownership of the financial responsibility related to Métis people. Reconciliation between two groups would include an understanding that the groups were in a relationship, but this is not necessarily right for the Métis as they have historically not had a relationship with any government. Reconciliation would require the governments and Métis people to enter a nation-to-nation relationship so that issues related to Métis people could be discussed. There should not be confusion on what reconciliation is and who is responsible. Reconciliation is about taking responsibility and working together to ensure history is not repeated. There is some scepticism by Métis people on the government's intent for reconciliation.

Dumont told me that she thought:

> The action of reconciliation is significant for non-Indigenous People to take on. Our communities know what happened to us. I mean that others need to be educated on what happened to Indigenous People and communities because of residential schools (also 60s scoop, Indian act, dog slaughter, scrip, various wars, etc.). When everyone understands the history that was intentionally omitted from our textbooks, it will not be such a battle to explain why changes should be happening.

Dumont was uncertain if reconciliation can happen in education because she was doubtful that non-Indigenous People are willing to admit the historical trauma thrust upon Indigenous People. The truth concerning the 60s scoop, the Indian Act, the scrip system, etc. need to be shared throughout education, but it needs to be shared from the perspective of the people these actions affected. The horrific conditions that Indigenous Peoples experienced have been omitted from the education system until very recently. Although reconciliation is presenting a time to learn about Métis history, its impacts, and the role Métis people have played in forming Canada, she was uncertain if this information will make it into the curriculum anywhere, including the K-12 system and higher education.

Ms. C asserted that reconciliation was essential to her "as a Métis woman, but for reconciliation to occur, there needs to be an awareness of the past and acknowledgement of the harm that was done throughout Canada's history and to ensure this history does not repeat itself." Reconciliation is an opportunity to move forward. Reconciliation is a time to learn about Indigenous history, recognize the inter-generational impact of colonization, assimilation and cultural genocide and the effects these have had on Indigenous Peoples. Acknowledging the trauma experienced by Indigenous People and allowing for healing of this past is an important step in the reconciliation process. Reconciliation is a time that a commitment can be taken to

assume responsibility, and a time that works towards ensuring that a better future for every Canadian can begin.

Louise believed that:

> Education is a key piece to reconciliation. I think a lot of systemic and direct racism is a result of ignorance and lack of understanding. ICR courses can help educate non-Indigenous people before entering professions where they may uphold systemic racism. Eliminating non-Indigenous people's ignorance and misconceptions are essential in making our country a safe place for Indigenous People. While institutions have good intentions to participate in reconciliation, there is still a lot that must be addressed in terms of engaging Métis people.

Reconciliation is a time to acknowledge and let go of negative perceptions and stereotypes of Indigenous People. Sunshine told me that she believed reconciliation can help with: "ending negative stereotypes and prejudice against Frist Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples." It is a time to recognize the contributions Indigenous People have made in the creation of Canada. It is a time to respect Indigenous beliefs, cultures, worldviews, and the deep connections Indigenous People have to the land. Reconciliation is a time to bring all Canadians together to create a safe and respectful place for everyone within our society.

Truth-Telling

Participants stressed the significance of having the truth told about Métis people and history. The Métis story remains a piece of Indigenous history that many do not know. It is always best to have that story told by a Métis person; however, our education system does not

allow that opportunity. Métis guest lecturers (Elders) and community members can help share the Métis story as they are Knowledge Holders of Métis history and culture.

Sarah said:

> The truth comes, and then that is when the reconciliation with yourself happens. The truth of Canadian history and how that has affected Aboriginal People across Canada, what it has done and how it has marginalized and pitted Aboriginal people against Aboriginal People. It is recognized that everyone is carrying their history and having to work through that with empathy and understanding. We need to understand where each other is coming from because that is the only way things will get better.

Sarah believed that reconciliation must start with each person taking responsibility before reconciliation on a broader Canadian level can occur. Non-Indigenous people also need to ensure they understand the role that was played concerning colonizing and assimilation efforts and how this history has affected and continues to affect Métis people. She also believed that healing from past experiences is an essential step in moving forward.

Jesse similarly believed that reconciliation is a time for truth-telling:

> Information will slowly but surely be passed along to other people and help further the goal of reconciliation. People who do not have knowledge or experience with Indigenous history and culture need to gain insight and become interested in furthering truth and reconciliation. Insight creates the opportunity for growth that did not formerly exist… There have been minimal reconciliation efforts at this institution that are for Métis students, and I am certain I am not the only one who feels this way.

Jesse was convinced that many people do not understand reconciliation, let alone what reconciliation in higher education would look like for Métis students. People who are unaware of Métis history and culture could learn about it to understand how important it is for Métis people to share their truth concerning their experiences throughout Canada's history. Jesse was interested in my research study because she believed I am helping tell the story of Métis students to move reconciliation forward.

Voice

In conjunction with the truth of Métis history being shared, there is a need for Métis voices to be heard. Louise told me that "Métis students are often overlooked in Indigenous education initiatives because we are not given a voice within the institution." Not only would students benefit from hearing from Métis guest lecturers and community members (Knowledge Holders), but there also needs to be opportunities for the Métis students to share their knowledge about their culture. There is no opportunity to share this knowledge because the Métis voice is overshadowed by the First Nations students' voices, which creates frustration.

Sarah added:

> Each of our voices needs to be heard, respected, valued, and the knowledge that we carry needs to be honoured. I think we can speak respectfully to others about what we think and what we believe in and why we believe what we do.

If Métis students are not listened to or are not provided opportunities to expresses their voices, they remain oppressed and marginalized, and their knowledge remains unaccepted with higher education. Sarah also talked about the need to hear the voices of the students: "Within the Indigenous student centres, we need to listen to the students, as they represent the youth voice.

The Métis students need to be lifted up more, so their voice is heard." Métis students want to feel supported within the institution and services provided to Indigenous students. One way in which Métis students can feel supported is by allowing them to have a voice or input into Indigenous student activities and initiatives. Jesse expressed similar thoughts to Sarah:

> I would like to see a more impactful and engaged effort by the staff of Indigenous Initiatives (including Indigenous student supports services) at the university. Also, [she] would like for professors who teach Indigenous content to be more mindful to include Métis voices and experiences.

Métis students are aware that their voices are not heard within the academy in both courses and student support services. They are left to feel like their culture is not included within Indigenous initiatives, and their knowledge is not accepted.

There is an appropriate time and place for Métis students to have a voice that allows for the diversity of student experiences to share with higher education classrooms in a way that is supported. Giving students a voice helps to omit the marginalization that often plays out within the classroom setting, specifically those where the room is filled with mainly settle-Canadian students. Lee shares a negative experience regarding being singled out in a class: "The professor once singled me out and expected me to be the voice of all Métis, and I didn't have a choice because I was confronted in class at a specific time and I felt very uncomfortable." Many Métis students want to break the Métis culture of silence and allow their voices to bring their knowledge and worldviews out as active participants within the classroom community. Higher education needs to have appropriate learning cultures focussed on building community and bringing students together, but not singling out students of diverse cultures or racial backgrounds.

Relationships

Educated Métis people can change the curriculum across education systems by being actively engaged within their classrooms and other processes that allow for Métis content inclusion. Ms. C described her role as an educator and how she contributed to the Métis content inclusion in the curriculum:

> I am a Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizen, and I have been involved in a Truth and Reconciliation curriculum writing project with the MNO education branch. I sit on various committees within the community to advocate for the voices of Métis children and youth in the education system. I have also done curriculum writing for my employer in the education sector. I learn the most from my local Métis community council and my family.

By being actively engaged in education and creating and building upon relationships within the education system, Ms. C worked diligently to make changes inclusive of Métis content. Also, Ms. C was continuing her learning by being involved with her local Métis community council and family, and it is there where she was engaged in the practice of storytelling. The sharing of stories remains one of the common ways history and culture continues to be passed from one generation to the next.

Relationships are vital between different generations of Métis people sharing stories for knowledge transmission. Relationships are also crucial between non-Indigenous teaching faculty and Métis community people when bringing Métis perspectives into classrooms. The Métis community people, including Knowledge Holders, Senators (Elders), and local Métis community councils, are those that non-Indigenous teaching faculty can turn to for assistance when

introducing Métis content into higher education. This is especially important for non-Indigenous faculty who do not feel confident or competent to speak clearly and knowledgeably on Métis content. Non-Indigenous faculty need to seek out these Knowledge Holders and make connections with Métis people within their community. As a natural progression, non-Indigenous faculty will continue to learn Métis history, perspectives, and cultures each time their classrooms are visited by Métis Knowledge Holders, thus contributing towards truth and reconciliation efforts.

Joy told me that there was a Métis student representative on the Indigenous law student's association in the faculty of law that she attended: "The Métis student representative shares information with other Indigenous students concerning the law student association." Having Métis students involved in university governance structures and committees allows for a Métis student voice to be present and provides for the continued building of relationships within higher education institutions. These institutional structures are where changes occur, having Métis students participate in them fosters good community relations and allows for their input into important decisions that affect the educational experiences of Métis students.

Little Flower believes that instructors should reach out to the community to engage in their learning on Métis history and perspectives. This learning is beneficial if instructors need to teach courses with Indigenous content; it is learning that helps educate instructors on the uniqueness of the Métis culture and knowledge, which fosters reconciliatory processes.

> Instructors can have a better understanding of Indigenous communities that are diverse and varied when they engage and learn from the community and are outside of the classroom. It takes a lot of work to teach Indigenous studies, but that commitment is seen by students who have engaged instructors. Métis content can be learned from Métis

academics and emerging academics, students, and community members available to non-Indigenous instructors. There are Métis Knowledge Holders everywhere; instructors need to engage in their learning process on Métis history and culture.

There is a clear need for instructors to know more about Métis history, perspectives, and cultures, information that they can gain through engaging with the Métis community where hands-on and practical experiences occur. Without instructors engaging with the Métis community, they miss out on learning opportunities to broaden their knowledge base on Métis perspectives. The benefits of instructors learning Métis perspectives plays out in how knowledgeable they are when presenting Métis and Indigenous content and provides them with a place to draw from based on their learning experiences. These relational aspects engage Métis students into course content, materials, and their learning overall.

Theoretical Coding Summary of Results

Throughout the study, many theoretical codes emerged, but through ongoing analysis, one main theoretical code was key to the research: the core category code to which all other codes and categories are related (Hernandez, 2009). Theoretical coding is the final step in the coding process and involves examining the relationships between and among the core and related concepts to reach a conceptual framework (Holton & Walsh, 2017). The core category is the main them that runs throughout all categories of the data, it is the result of grouping similar concepts together and used to form a new conceptual framework. Through constant comparison, the core category of the need for Métis knowledge emerged: “A core category is a concept that encapsulates a phenomenon apparent in the categories and sub-categories constructed and the relationship between these” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 177). The need for Métis content Knowledge relates to several other concepts and provides a “focus for theoretical integration

through elaboration of the relationships between and among the emergent core and related concepts" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 86). Further, "theoretical integration is the 'prime function' of the core category, ensuring that the resultant theory [conceptual framework] is both conceptually dense and theoretically saturated through the increasing development of conceptual interrelationships that organize the theory [conceptual framework]" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p 86). I knew I had reached the core category of the need for Métis content Knowledge in the curriculum because it was: the theme that reoccurred through the data; meaningful and related to all categories; central and represented a large portion of the behaviour pattern within the data; and directly related to the development of a conceptual framework. As a result, the theoretical analysis was based on it as the core category (Goulding, 2002).

The Core Category – The Need for Métis Knowledge in the Curriculum

"A central idea is identifying a core category or concept that encapsulates the process apparent in the categories and sub-categories constructed" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 97). The need for Métis content knowledge is seen everywhere (Bryant & Charmaz, 2017); it represents the different educational experiences that the participants reflected upon including: identity, institutional practices, and reconciliation, and throughout the sub-categories of physical appearance, constitutional rights, cultural visibility, student support services, safe and welcoming spaces, self-identification practices, university barriers, truth-telling, voice, and relationships. In addition, the need for Métis knowledge in the curriculum describes the pedagogical content knowledge (PKD) Shulman (1986) believes is required of instructors teaching Métis history, culture, and perspectives in Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses or those courses that are designated as ICRs.

The definition of Métis Knowledge, as constructed through a combination of participants' anecdotes, was a critical discovery in this study. Métis Knowledge is defined as an understanding of Métis history. Métis Knowledge is an awareness of Métis people's political and constitutional rights that play out in how a person identifies as a Métis person, noting the contention throughout Canada on who can claim Métis identity. Further, it is an understanding of Métis people's way of life concerning cultural practices and traditions. Métis Knowledge grounds a Métis person to their historic community and extended family relations.

The category's centrality is apparent by participants' strong connection to their culture and their belief systems developed by spending time with, and listening to, their larger family and community stories. Little Flower described it as: "Métis people needing to see themselves and their knowledge systems in the curriculum in various disciplines because it is the right thing to do. Seeing every discipline infused with Métis content would be great." It is difficult for Métis students who are connected to their families and communities to enter higher education institutions that do not recognize their knowledge systems as valid. Little Flower told me that she believed many intertwined issues play out as significant barriers and she was concerned with the institution not "adequately reflecting Métis ways of learning and knowing." Little Flower disclosed that she does not believe that Métis Knowledge is acknowledged in higher education because it is not an "acceptable knowledge system." As a result, the number of Métis students attending master's and doctoral level programs is scarce. Today, many Métis students are first-generation learners, and there is no legacy of Métis Knowledge in higher education institutions. As a result, racial microaggression appears, and derogatory comments reflect the resistance of Métis Knowledge within the academy. The Métis culture has a knowledge system reflective of its history, and traditional way of life practices, and this system of knowledge is passed down

from generation to generation. When Métis content is excluded as higher education content, a sense of only one or a select few knowledge systems are considered acceptable and are taught and re-taught. Without space for the knowledge systems of other cultures, like the Métis culture, the status quo will be maintained, and no new knowledge systems will be discussed within the academy or learned by Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Ms. C also commented on Métis Knowledge systems and content as essential components to the higher education curriculum:

> I would like to see more courses specific to Métis history in higher education and the inclusion of Métis Knowledge Keepers, Senators, and Elders. I would encourage faculty to teach about the ethnogeneses of the Métis as well as our distinct culture, language, traditions, and lifeways.

Ms. C emphasized the importance of the inclusion of Métis Knowledge systems into higher education. She brought forward that learning that needs to occur on the ethnogenesis of the Métis people. Learning about the origins of the Métis people helps everyone to understand the unique perspectives associated with the Métis culture. She recommended that if instructors are unsure about how to include Métis perspectives into their classrooms that they should connect with Métis community people who can either teach them or come into the classroom to share teachings.

Similar to Ms. C, Dumont wanted to ensure that instructors understand who the Métis people are, and that the information being presented in classrooms is reflective of both current and historical information. She does not want instructors to “forget about the Métis and Inuit people [when discussing Indigenous history]:

> I encourage instructors to talk with the Métis Nation of Ontario to access Knowledge Holders and ensure an accurate understanding of Métis community issues. Always engage members from the Métis community when you want to learn about spiritual or cultural practices. [She also encourages instructors to] talk about historical and contemporary issues, not just cultural symbols.

The Métis people are rich with history, culture, language, traditions, and ways of life uniquely theirs with cultural variations among them depending on where families originated, relocated to, and settled. There is so much to discuss concerning Métis perspectives that Dumont was passionate about combing historical experiences with contemporary issues to get a full picture of all views related to and affecting Métis people today. If instructors are unsure about specific pieces of content that they wish to include within their classrooms, they can reach out to the larger political organization of the Métis Nation of Ontario for assistance and guidance. Providing a surface-level approach to content concerning the Métis can be avoided, mainly because there are community councils with resources and Knowledge Holders available to assist others in learning about the Métis.

Jesse was of a similar mindset to that of Dumont concerning instructors' having a comprehensive understanding of Métis identity and knowledge of Métis perspectives when teaching Métis content:

> Students should learn about Métis identity as well as the hardships they experienced over time. In my experience, knowledge about Métis history does not go far past the image of fur traders. I do not believe that many people realize that the Métis people faced substantial Canadian society struggles.

It is essential to tell the Métis story, and, unfortunately, this includes a great deal of content that is not always positive. Métis students want the truth about their history to be shared and their identity to be clarified but not be singled out as Métis students and asked to explain these things to their peers. Identity and full knowledge about Métis content and history are essential for Métis students regarding how their teachers engage with them, teach Métis perspectives, and represent their culture.

Participants also weighed in on recommendations for non-Indigenous faculty teaching Métis content. Consulting with Métis people and reaching out to community resources were among those suggestions as noted by Bell: "If there is not going to be an Indigenous instructor, then more consultation with community members or Indigenous educators is required." Louise made a similar remark: "Engage your local Métis council and local Métis youth council representatives." Following a similar reflection, Sarah noted:

> I would suggest instructors talk to and consult with Métis people, the Métis Nation or institutes like the Gabriel Dumont or Louis Riel Institutes. You must reach out within your region and find Métis people who will work with you because, depending on where you live you, there will be different perspectives. You need to bring a local, regional, and national level of content into Métis specific courses.

Bell referenced her concerns with instructors knowing the students in their classrooms, stating:

> I think it is important for the instructor teaching Indigenous content to be aware of and supportive of Métis content. That is not necessarily on everyone's mind, but there are

> Métis students in the class. It can be discouraging to have to bring up your own identity every single class.

The more instructors know about Métis content, the more Métis students are engaged and feel less like the teacher in the classroom or the one who speaks on behalf of Métis students to validate identity and clarify erroneous and inaccurate content on Métis history, should it present itself.

Jesse is concerned that instructors do not understand Métis identity and are therefore unaware of the need for Métis content Knowledge:

> There are faculty who see Métis people like mixed rather than Métis people with their distinct people and nation. We need to be on the same page so that instructors and students are not stuck in that narratives that identity Métis as simply Half-breeds; half of one thing and half of another because this is harmful and an inaccurate understanding of Métis identity.

Jesse and Bell spoke directly to the need for instructors to clearly understand Métis perspectives and the history of Métis identity in Canada. Métis students are overwhelmed by consistently clarifying their identity and culture in classrooms where instructors are uninformed. Métis students are also tired of being pan-Indigenized and want these types of conversations to move into appreciating and understanding each culture's distinct differences (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis). Instructors fact-checking their content with Métis students is also inappropriate and forces Métis students to identify in spaces in which they might not feel comfortable. Not all Métis students see their classroom as a place of respect, where relationships are formed, and where reciprocity occurs as information is exchanged.

Joy was concerned with the content knowledge of non-Indigenous instructors and who might be teaching Métis content. She felt strongly about knowing more about non-Indigenous instructors as they present to teach Indigenous content:

> Taking an Indigenous course is well and good; however, when you as an Indigenous person are being taught by a non-Indigenous person who is not all that in tune with the subject, the learning can be difficult. You [as the student] end up being more knowledgeable than the person teaching the course; therefore, you are not engaged or enjoy the learning as much as you could if you learn new content by an experience Indigenous instructor with a solid knowledge base.

Joy was extremely passionate about ensuring non-Indigenous instructors are well-informed when teaching Métis content. She believed that having a Métis professor (at the minimum) on campus is critical. At the same time, there is a lot of pressure on only having one person as a Métis voice. Rather, when a Métis scholar is available, non-Indigenous instructors need to build a relationship with that scholar and create a sense of community where they feel comfortable to reach out for support and guidance.

Rachel also brought forward her concerns with non-Indigenous instructors and their Métis Knowledge base. She noted:

> There need to be provisions in place so that instructors can be supported in gaining knowledge before they are expected to teach. Many instructors do not have any knowledge of Métis content. If the university wants faculty to teach Métis content, they will have to provide instructors with opportunities to learn the Métis content.

The need for on-going professional development is crucial for non-Indigenous instructors to deepen their knowledge base on Métis people living in Canada, their history, and their culture. Rachel put the onus on the university, as the employer, to ensure instructors receive the training they require to teach Métis content with confidence and competence.

Summary

This chapter contains the results of data analysis, connects the data back to the central research question, and is consistent with the proposed exploratory métissage-grounded theory methodology. Twelve participants were interviewed or completed the prompt list of questions in written format (Appendix D) for this study. Interview questions were structured to provide a better understanding of the how courses and learning experiences impacted Métis students' perception of their own cultural identity, Métis-specific Indigenous Knowledge in higher education, and Métis student perspectives on reconciliation.

Consistent with métissage-grounded theory methodology, three phases of data analysis were employed: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. One hundred and thirty-five codes emerged from the open coding of the interviews and written submission to the prompt list questions (Appendix D). Constant comparison analysis was exercised using the NVivo software to discover selective codes. Additional constant comparison analysis was used to discover the relationships between the open and selective codes, leading to three main categories: identity, institutional practices, and reconciliation. As the main categories emerged from the data collection coding processes, they highlighted the participants' learning experiences in higher education as Métis people. The emergence of the need for Métis content Knowledge in the curriculum as the core category-and main theme-demonstrates the prevalent attributes affecting the experience of Métis people enrolled in higher education. There is a need for Métis content

Knowledge to be included within curriculum to widely share the knowledge of the history and unique culture of the Métis that creates the elimination of the barriers that the women face including the lack of visible presence and representation on campus that could authentically tell Métis students and others that the Métis belong in the academy.

Métis identity within its cultural, political, and legal contexts needs to be defined and discussed when Indigenous content is presented. This clarification speaks to the history of Métis people and the Métis community's contemporary realities today. Métis students are frustrated when others reference them as simply mixed-blooded people without understanding the Métis ethnogenesis. Métis students are also frustrated with others' not knowing about constitutional rights and the supreme court rulings that acknowledge the Métis as Aboriginal People in Canada who fall under federal jurisdiction. Métis students want to have a validated place within institutions. Métis students have their university experiences affected when their culture and history are pan-Indigenized. People talk fluently about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people as if they share one history, one culture, one language, one worldview, and a single knowledge system, and this is not true. Métis students want to see their distinct culture, separate and unique from their First Nations and Inuit relations represented within the academy.

Within the institution, the Métis students want to be included, and this inclusivity comes from seeing the history of their people and culture reflected. By Métis symbols and artifacts being visible on campus, a sense of belongingness is created. Métis students also want to be welcomed to access various student support services in Indigenous student spaces. These spaces need to be inclusive of the Métis students, primarily because they self-identify through institutional practices. The areas need to be staffed with culturally aware and competent people who understand them as Indigenous students. Institutional practices reflect how the university

sees and values its Métis students and how inclusive it is within their university spaces. The knowledge others hold for Métis perspectives is crucial and greatly affects the Métis students' experience at universities. It is only appropriate that as a distinct cultural group within Canada, the Métis culture is visible while engaging with institutional processes.

Métis identity, institutional practices and reconciliation efforts significantly affect the university experience of Métis students. In the spirit of reconciliation, Métis students want people to have a well-developed understanding of Métis identity, history, and perspectives. Métis students wish others to understand that reconciliation in education is different for them as they have a different history in Canada as Aboriginal People. The Métis students want the effects of the historical treatment and trauma they endured by the government acknowledged, and this includes others knowing about Métis history, worldview, and knowledge systems. Non-Indigenous people need to let go of their prejudices, and negative stereotypes of Métis people as these are felt and experienced by Métis students in educational institutions today. Reconciliation is an opportunity for truth-telling and for everyone to take responsibility for their role in Canada's history. Reconciliation can occur to move things forward with Métis students in education. Institutional staff, including instructors, are encouraged to engage with the broader Métis community and traditional Knowledge Holders when including Métis perspectives to ensure they are accurately depicted. Reconciliation is a time for building relationships, truth-telling and allowing Métis voices and experiences to be a part of conversations within the academy.

CHAPTER SIX

MY AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY AS A MÉTIS PERSON IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter describes the data, results and interpretations of the auto-ethnography that explores my personal and educational experiences and my experiences as a Métis person working within the academy. Auto-ethnography includes the critical reflection of one's lifetime of educational experiences (Hughes & Pennington, 2018) and I share examples from both my K-12 education and post-secondary studies. The chapter describes the types of documents that I used to form my auto-ethnography, including field notes and memos, meeting minutes from the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) committee, and my own narrative story of experiences throughout education. Data from the two concurrent projects within my study (interviews and this auto-ethnography) were gathered and analyzed separately but interpreted according to the same grounded theory analysis, including the three coding levels. The results of the first data set are presented in Chapter Four. "All is data [which] is a core feature of grounded theory" (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p. 188), as such, I felt that my committee work and personal narrative were relevant to the data collection because they focussed on integrating Indigenous Knowledge into the university curriculum. The study of the self (Reed-Danahay, 1997) allows for my own educational experiences to be included, and this provides for an additional Métis student voice, respectively.

Data and Analysis

The sources encompassing the second data set include an image, personal story, field notes, and meeting minutes; the number of data sources collected totalled n=21. The image includes the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007), a

model also referenced in the prompt-list questions (see Appendix D) used in interviews with research participants. There are seven sets of Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) meeting minutes (2019/2020) included in the second data set and six groups of fieldnotes that I thought added significance. Also included is the ICR learner outcomes (see Table 2) and a chart referred to as the Learner Outcome Assessment Matrix (LOAM) (see Appendix F). The Indigenous Content Requirement Learner Outcomes below are for reference, as they are mentioned several times throughout this section and illustrate intended learner outcomes at the research site (see Table 2). The data containing my experiences is complementary to the research participants' data.

Table 2

ICR Learner Outcomes

1.	Identify Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and practices that relate to faculty specialities
2.	Identify culturally appropriate ways of engaging Indigenous communities in faculty specialities
3.	Demonstrate knowledge of the effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and racism on interactions between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society
4.	Demonstrate knowledge of Canadian Indigenous People's history
5.	Analyze the impact of legal decisions on Aboriginal and treaty rights, including the duty to consult
6.	Identify approaches to reconciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society
7.	Demonstrate knowledge of the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and strategies to resist assimilation
8.	Articulate the relationship between land, culture, language, and identity in Indigenous communities
9.	Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples, as defined by treaties and agreements, or lack of them
10.	Contribute to strategies for improving Indigenous communities' well-being

Note. This table is adapted from the research site.

All additional data sources were coded using the NVivo data software after data collection was complete. Each piece of data was coded and analyzed for categories and themes. All documents were coded line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph during the open coding phase. The open coding process included sixteen codes (see Table 3) grouped into four categories. As selective coding took place, four emerging categories emerged. Using the NVivo software, a word-count frequency query was an additional application used to discover selective codes from the data. Lastly, the categories were reviewed during theoretical coding, and one core category (wise-practice approach) has been identified. Table 3 summarizes the concepts and categories from the second data set.

Table 3

Auto-Ethnography NVivo Analysis Results

Indigenization	Curriculum and pedagogy	Professional development	Cultural Safety
Colonialism	Treaties	Non-Indigenous instructors	Safe spaces
Community engagement	Indigenous rights	Research principles	Well-being
Indigenous Knowledge or worldview	Land, culture, Indigenous languages	Faculty support	Trauma-informed teaching
Terminology used throughout the university	Legal rights		Racism, stereotypes, prejudice
Reconciliation			

Métis Cultural Teaching and Data Collection

In considering the ethical implication of the research, I want to ensure community engagement to demonstrate my efforts and diligence to maintain respectful Métis research while

moving Canadian higher education toward addressing Métis students' needs. To ensure the ICR meeting minutes were accurately reflected, a committee member reviewed the selected examples referenced throughout this second data set. This committee member also identifies as a Métis-Cree person. Each research participant checked their participant profile to ensure I accurately reflected their descriptions. As some of the data was received through electronically written submission, those participants could review their responses before I accepted them. For the participants that I interviewed, the technology I used provided accompanying written text, so participants could view their words as they were being recorded. I also offered a small gift to each research participant as a traditional practice to show respect for the gift of knowledge I was receiving and for their assistance with sharing their experiences. As the Métis culture prides itself on its deep kinship connections, sharing has always been an important element with the community. After the dissertation is complete, I intend to share a copy with each person who contributed to the dissertation's content.

My Formative Education through the Grade Five Curriculum Experience

I relate to the Métis students' stories through my own autobiographical experiences of both K-12 education and Canadian higher education. In exploring my own educational experiences, I work to deepen my listening and the resonance of the Métis experience across my different participants' stories as well as to deepen the analysis of the salient themes (Métis content knowledge) and categories (identity, institutional practices, and reconciliation). As a Ph.D. candidate, I have attended university for more than a decade over several degrees. Within all these degrees, never have I once engaged with Métis content, nor have I ever had the opportunity to take a course on Métis history because no one was ever offered. The clearest recollection I have on engaging with Métis content in my educational experiences is from my

grade 5 social studies class. The class was asked to write a reflection on whether we thought Louis Riel was a hero or traitor-martyr. I remember the confusion and questioning of my peers as many had no idea of who Louis Riel was, or for that matter, anything about the Métis people. On the other hand, I had a completely different response: it took me no time at all to articulate how much Louis Riel loved his culture and people and how he was dedicated to his cause of Métis rights and had sacrificed his life for these rights. I felt energized and excited to share my knowledge of Louis Riel; someone who was a hero and epitomized by Métis culture.

When we were asked to share back to the class, I was one of the very few students who viewed Louis Riel as a hero. My class was mostly comprised of white-settler Canadian students with one or two visibly Indigenous students. I remember listening to my peers condemn Louis Riel as a traitor, villain, and rebel, and how he deserved to be hung for treason. Most of my grade 5 classmates repeated the textbook master narrative that Louis Riel was bad for leading two rebellions against the federal government, but they did not have any reason or knowledge to understand why these rebellions happened. Most students did not know why or how Louis Riel was leading to preserve rights for Métis land and culture as the government was attempting to quash and trample theses rights to expand into the Métis homeland in the Northwest and steal it from them. Notably, the grade 5 teacher was unable to explain or reference any reasons for the condemnation of Louis Riel while ignoring and erasing Métis values and beliefs that were the source of Louis Riel's strengths and actions. This omission made the curricular focus on a traitor, an individualized story of a radical Indigenous terrorist, who defied the Canadian government and had to pay the ultimate price. During my learning, Louis Riel was never portrayed within classroom content as the founding father of Manitoba or his role in the confederation of Canada. I do not recall references to the Métis throughout my high school years either. As a young girl

who knew my history and was proud of my Métis culture, this middle school experience would leave a lasting impact on my education and as a result I have come to know that schools that can be sites of cultural harm where you need to hide your Métis identity as protection.

Experience Within the Academy

As I reached the university, the Métis Nation was forming, and my family underwent the process of submitting our documents and being verified as citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario. At this time, I thought about furthering my learning on the Métis through formal academic means. As I investigated Métis courses, there was nothing available and nothing planned to become available. I did not attend university at a time when there were mandatory Indigenous Content Requirements, nor did I ever explore taking Indigenous content courses. I participated in the classes I was required to take and chose elective credits based on my interests. I went unnoticed and never shared my knowledge or used my voice within a classroom with respect to being a Métis person. I believe my story is like the nuances transmitted by my research participants' narratives. Although we may have attended the university at different times, the educational discourse was similar in that Métis history, perspectives and culture were not acknowledged.

When I think about my experiences in higher education and never having the option to take a Métis-specific course, I felt deeply connected to the stories my research participants told me when I interviewed them. Their stories reflect similar experiences to mine as they lacked Métis content and their Métis identity went largely ignored. They identified barriers to their education and were keenly aware of what would have made their experiences within the institution better. They discussed reconciliation and what this means to them as Métis people and for higher education. For these reasons, I use my personal story purposefully to ground the study

and my research perspectives through the Métis women's experiences for greater reliability and depth of understanding. It is evident through both the experiences of the Métis research participants and mine that Métis people remain oppressed and marginalized within the institution.

I relate to my interview subjects as a Métis woman in higher education. For example, I once had the opportunity to write about my Métis culture in graduate studies; I was later told that my work was too Métis and that I needed to include more Indigenous content within the context of the assignment. Even when the opportunity arose to share my knowledge, my voice was silenced, and my worldview was not accepted. Indigenous perspectives are broad, so it is best to identify First Nations, Inuit, and Métis perspectives individually, so the contribution of each can be honoured. In the spirit of métissage-as-reconciliation, all voices and experiences need to be welcome within higher education, which helps to build relationships between and amongst the historic colonial institute and Métis people. Métis students have been patient and respectful to critical discourse as it plays out within the institution and this is demonstrated as the research participants recount their experiences within higher education where others have not understood their identity and culture. The voices of Métis students cannot be silenced if métissage-as-reconciliation is to move forward within higher education.

Canadian University Responses to Métis and Indigenous Presence: Indigenous Content Requirement Courses

Indigenization

At the research site, a university located in north-central Canada, Indigenization is discussed at Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) committee meetings in the context that

Indigenization is taking place within the institution. A fundamental discovery in the research led to the following definition of Indigenization as constructed through my experiences in participating in the ICR committee and field notes. Indigenization means infusing the university curriculum with Indigenous content. It allows for the recognition of colonialism as part of Canada's history involving Indigenous People. Indigenization allows for Indigenous worldviews to be present within the curriculum and for student assessment methods to be examined. Indigenization provides for a common language to be used throughout the university to reference the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. This language clarifies who the Indigenous Peoples are and how their contributions have contributed to Canada's story. Indigenization allows for the assistance of the broader Indigenous community to be engaged in university initiatives. Indigenization takes into consideration reconciliation between governments and Indigenous Peoples. It reflects Indigenous People's rights legally within Canada and within the Constitution Act, 1982 and the Indian Act, 1876. Indigenization involves the commitment of the larger university to include and make present the Indigenous experience on campus.

The ICR committee is a structure within the university that reviews Indigenous content courses before recommending them to the Senate Academic Committee. In other words, the committee is an internal structure used within academic processes for course approvals. On a broader scale, the committee is also representative of how the university is trying to move towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis peoples and Inuit by changing and shaping the university's curriculum and pedagogy of Indigenous Knowledge, experiences, histories, stories and honouring local Indigenous Knowledge and people. The research participants' stories intersect with the committee because they reflect the realities students encounter with the institution's teaching and learning experiences.

The research site (university) has committed to including at least one half-course (or equivalent) in all undergraduate degree programs having at least 50 percent Indigenous content. This decision was made through one of the institution's Indigenous Advisory Committee groups and later supported by the university's Senate. In addition to this decision, the institution agreed to move away from the term "Aboriginal" and move towards the word "Indigenous" as it "is more inclusive and the pull in this direction comes from the United Nations and federal government; there are legal implications to the terminology" (Jan. 28 ICR meeting minutes). Indigenization is a priority at the institution as it recognizes "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report with numerous calls to action for educators and educational institutions at all levels" (ICR Terms of Reference). The Terms of Reference for the ICR committee has "two main areas of focus: educational content that is mandatory and cultural competency and anti-racism skills training" (ICR Terms of Reference). In the Terms of Reference, the committee notes the university's view of its instructors as "educators that are key professionals in advancing the rights to culture, health, security and justice as advocated in the TRC report" (ICR Terms of Reference). The committee highlights the "distinctions-based approach that adds nuance and texture to previous education efforts" (ICR Terms of Reference) as part of the TRC's calls to action for education and that it wants to ensure something similar occurs at the university. An Indigenous Elder attended and was engaged in meetings held by the ICR committee and the Elder offered support and guidance to the committee.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

As Canadian universities move towards implementing reconciliation policies or changing programs with ICRs, curriculum (content) and pedagogies (teaching methods) will be critical components. One of the ICR committee's goals is to allow all students to learn Indigenous

content before graduating. The ICR takes this goal a step further and strives to ensure that all students are receiving information about Indigenous history from various perspectives. The perspectives include the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, Indigenous People living in contemporary society, and within the historical context that students have primarily been receiving the information (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes). With respect to the curriculum, there needs to be an understanding of the legal implications of Indigenous rights and laws, focussing on the Canadian Constitution (Jan. 28 ICR meeting minutes). The treaties' history and significance (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes) were reoccurring themes that committee members wanted to ensure were included within the curriculum. In addition, the ICR FAQs state:

> The ICR does NOT require that every student take the same mandated course as some programs already meet the ICR within their current structure. All academic units are developing ways to include Indigenous content into their programs. Indigenous content inclusion may include developing new programming or choosing electives from a range of courses available from different departments addressing many areas of academic interest.

The ICR committee is aware that Indigenizing the course curriculum needs to be a university-wide initiative. They have planned for consultations involving "asking deans and faculty representatives for course syllabi from the past few years, including course descriptions and rubrics for assignments" (Nov. 4 ICR meeting minutes). A small working group will apply the LOAM criteria and further discuss the content. The committee had previously led an "extensive internal and external consultation" leading to the development of the [university's] Strategic (2013-18) and Academic Plans (2012-17) and that resulted in a recommendation that all students would benefit from the integration of program-appropriate or discipline-relevant

knowledge about Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Other universities and colleges across the country are also examining how to enrich their curricula in similar ways. The committee notes that they are fortunate to have a handful of faculty and staff with "expertise in this area [of Indigenous studies] to help meet their goal" of incorporating Indigenous content into the curriculum (ICR FAQs).

Further, when discussing Indigenizing the curriculum, committee members referred to "non-Indigenous instructors not being told how to teach, but what to teach via curriculum" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes) and that experiential learning could play a more significant role. One ICR committee member shared a situation where students were told and being sent to "reserves to learn practices because this reduced the pressure on the in-class teaching [of the non-Indigenous instructor]" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes); this is not appropriate. More curriculum and pedagogical information needs to be shared with non-Indigenous instructors on "principles of teaching and learning practices, for example: using Elders and other Indigenous People as guest lecturers" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes). Another shortfall of the ICR course is there is currently no assurance that non-Indigenous instructors have the competence (skills, knowledge, and attitude) to address the Indigenous content as per course outlines. Issues around cultural competency become central as non-Indigenous instructors struggle with not being sure how to include Indigenous culture in respectful ways that are reflective of its intended goals.

Pedagogy stood out as a concept and emerged as I analyzed the ICR committee meeting minutes and my notes. "[Pedagogy] should be a focus and faculty support should be provided" (March 5 ICR meeting minutes) to teach Indigenous content with competence. Further support would be most effective on "decolonizing curriculum, Indigenous pedagogy, and trauma-informed teaching" (ICR committee participant Meeting minutes, March 5). The help would be

available to faculty through workshops provided by the Teaching and Learning Commons (a place where staff and faculty can access professional development). The committee also discussed a variety of additional topics to be taken into consideration within the institution concerning Indigenous content inclusion: “student voice, learner outcome assessment matrix (LOAM), course alignment, Indigenous research principles, narratives, local vs. global issues, faculty connections, decolonization, pedagogy supports, and delivery models” (December 2019 OAGC Chair Report). The concepts provide the depth to which the committee undertook its work, leaving no idea behind as information was gathered amongst the committee to establish its priorities. The committee works towards the larger goal of initiating a strong reconciliation effort by mandating all students at the undergraduate level to take Indigenous content as a condition of graduation.

Professional Development

It is widely accepted that Canadian universities are still not recruiting and retaining an adequate number of Indigenous faculty and contract lecturers. This low number of Indigenous instructors is even more acute when universities try to include more Indigenous content throughout its programs and then over-relies on the same few Indigenous faculty members to do this intense teaching, especially when the university claims that it cannot find or hire additional qualified instructors. The experiences of non-Indigenous faculty teaching Indigenous content was regularly part of the discussions at the ICR committee meetings. Concerns were raised on what content would be most appropriate to be taught by non-Indigenous instructors. The consensus was that “non-Indigenous instructors should do it [teach] from their [non-Indigenous] perspective and focus on how students may work with Indigenous perspectives in their field.

They should not speak to Indigenous worldviews or Traditional Knowledge that is not part of their heritage" (Feb. 20 & 26 ICR meeting minutes, as this was referenced at two meetings).

The ICR committee members' sentiment was that non-Indigenous instructors must teach their subjects with accurate Indigenous sources (published primary sources and recognized Indigenous scholars and writers) rather than make their interpretations of the Indigenous worldview of Traditional Knowledge. Simultaneously, when non-Indigenous instructors wanted to teach Indigenous worldviews or culture, they should have the option to bring Indigenous community and traditional people into their classrooms to facilitate this learning. Non-Indigenous instructors are often not familiar with the process of approaching community and traditional people and this is another area where education can occur. Although it is culturally appropriate to offer small gifts to Indigenous community people, the university budget may not be adequate to address an increase in requests of this sort.

There continues to be a variety of issues associated with professional development; however, non-Indigenous instructors need support through training and mentorship opportunities. These instructors also need to know to whom or where to go when searching for relevant course materials. At the university I work at and attend, there is an Indigenous Content Specialist position associated with the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) available to offer support to all instructors in the form of workshops and one-to-one sessions. The goal is to have non-Indigenous instructors understand the context of the Indigenous content they are presenting and to do this with confidence and competence. Indigenous content inclusion is important to the institution as there is pressure to include Indigenous content as an act toward reconciliation and to ensure higher education is a place of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In addition to having an Indigenous curriculum within the academy, there is also the additional pressure of having Indigenous methods of assessment incorporated. As part of the ICR committee review, establishing an assessment process for eligible Indigenous course content and course outline reviews is being undertaken. The committee has compiled a proposed list of 10 learner outcomes (see Table 2) that academic units need to consider when selecting a course(s) for review to ensure it meets the ICR requirements. The courses are assessed against the learner outcomes. There is a plan within the institution "for professional development within faculties to determine the additional faculty supports that may be required" (Jan. 28 ICR meeting minutes). The committee discussed a faculty/instructor survey to further determine supports that may be required to include and teach Indigenous content. There is a great deal of work that needs to be explored and initiated to Indigenize the curriculum. The institution is working diligently to meet these needs as acts of reconciliation.

The recruitment and retainment of Indigenous faculty and contract lecturers, non-Indigenous instructors teaching within their scope of Indigenous Knowledge, support for instructor training and mentorship, along with ongoing professional development opportunities to assist in the tools to assess Indigenous content courses is a summary of the identified areas that require addressing with respect to striving towards Indigenizing the academy inclusive of an approach that addresses métissage-as-reconciliation.

Cultural Safety

Adapted from the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2013), cultural safety is an on-going and evolving process that requires the institution to revisit and adjust modes of services to meet the needs of Métis students. A culturally safe academic institution includes cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competency as a centre when

working with Métis students and other marginalized students. I have included a brief description of each concept as they are important to the Métis student experience. *Cultural awareness* involves people within the institution being able to "recognize or acknowledge and accept differences within a population" (p. 2). *Cultural sensitivity* involves "recognizing and being sensitive to the different ways people do things; it means taking the cultural background and experiences of Métis into consideration while reflecting on how the world is viewed" (p. 3). *Cultural competency* involves "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of [the institution] which revolve around empowering [students]" (p. 5). These concepts are important because they speak to the skills and knowledge required within the institution to ensure it is a place where the academic and student support needs of Métis students are met. A place where differences are recognized but accepted and a place where each person's culture is respected is key to ensuring a positive academic experience for Métis learners. An educational institution that contributes to acknowledging the unique identity of Métis people and where Métis content is reflected in the curriculum enhances the higher education experiences for Métis students.

Further, one of the ICR learner outcomes is to "demonstrate knowledge of the effect of stereotyping, prejudice and racism on interactions between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society." The teaching and learning dynamic of Indigenous content presented in classrooms and how students received the content is currently being explored. Efforts are being made to incorporate Indigenous content, but how this is presented is not always considered culturally safe, depending upon who is teaching (i.e., non-Indigenous people), their worldviews, and their knowledge base. Conversations arose regarding "how instructors are selected, and the qualifications they possess to teach Indigenous content." There is a recognition that "students are feeling traumatized and overwhelmed by uneducated instructors" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes).

There is also a recognition that the "ICR courses are of good intent, but if the implementation fails, the effects can be traumatizing to both the instructor and the student" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes). The testimonials of Métis student experiences includes voices that are silenced, or instructors disagreeing with Métis student perspectives when presented. As a university, a more extensive plan regarding the cultural safety of students and instructors is required. Resources to support both students and faculty need to be made available, and everyone needs to know where and how to access them. The university is striving toward being an inclusive space with Indigenous content, and although this process is not easy, they are committed to it.

The university has a combination of Indigenous students who are both deeply connected to and know their Indigenous history and culture, and Indigenous students who have been displaced from their Indigenous community and, subsequently, have not learned their culture. Even with an experienced instructor, some classes need to be "started by warning students that the content to be discussed may trigger individuals and that there are resources available on campus" (Feb. 20 & 26 ICR meeting minutes). The content is not intended to have students relive painful pasts but to educate on the history of Canada's Indigenous experience. A solution is to support both the instructor and the student(s) should a student be triggered in class. If there are Métis students learning Métis history for the first time, the content needs to be accurate and taught to prioritize Métis experiences. The institution is working to ensure "safe learning spaces are created" (Dec. 3 ICR meeting minutes) for both students and faculty; however, the institution is not there yet in terms of having all the resources and supports they require in place. Even so, there are counsellors, an Indigenous student counsellor, and an Elder available to offer support. Supporting both Métis students and instructors is critical in efforts of métissage-as-reconciliation.

One Core Category – A Wise-Practices Approach

The core category of a Métis *wise-practices approach* (Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010) emerged from the second data set. This core category "pulls together all the strands to explain the behaviour under study. It has theoretical significance, and its development should be traceable back through the data" (Golding, 2011, p.88). The core concept of wise-practices encompasses the categories of Indigenization, curriculum and pedagogy, professional development, and cultural safety. I consider these categories to be the essential reverberating factors (between my own experience and the Métis women participants).

The essence of a wise-practices approach (Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010), as referenced throughout the ICR committee meetings, is grounded in the engagement of people, and acknowledges traditional worldviews of local Indigenous People. The ICR committee wants to create a guiding document for the implementation of a wise-practices approach with respect to the Indigenous content courses. A Métis-wise-practice approach for Indigenous content integration would "vary across academic disciplines" (Feb. 26 field notes) and would include the use of Indigenous "academic literature, consultation with key constituents [Indigenous students and faculty] to listen to their understandings of and experiences with ICR, and information [including history and perspectives of Indigenous People] that could be used in future ICR course creation" (Feb. 20 & 26 ICR meeting minutes). Any work on the mandatory ICR requirement, its evaluation, and topics related to professional development, must be based on a wise-practices approach. The goal is to have a curriculum that is culturally reflective of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. This is a necessary step towards Indigenizing the curriculum and an effort towards the TRCs Calls to Action (2015) on reconciliation in education.

A Vision for a Métis-Specific Wise-Practices Approach

As I reflected upon the Métis participants' experiences in higher education, and on the information contained within my experiences within the academy, I began to contextualize and visualize a Métis-specific, wise-practice approach as part of métissage-as-reconciliation. Instructors would engage in Métis literature and academic resources to include relevant Métis content into the curriculum. The wise-practice approach would engage Métis community people, traditional people, language speakers, and Senators (the name for Métis Elders) for content specific to a Métis worldview and cultural teachings. The approach would include community engagement to assist an instructor requiring assistance when having Métis-specific content but who is unsure of its appropriateness. Engaging the community fosters relationships between individual instructors, the community, and the institution with the community. A wise-practices approach includes Métis stand-alone courses as well as infusing Métis content into existing courses that currently do not have any Métis content. A wise-practice approach allows for instructor support and for assistance with linking to community people to help instructors build their awareness and understanding of Métis history, people, and culture. Professional development would help instructors learn about the historical ethnogenesis of the Métis and the contemporary realities of the people including identity (including its various cultural, political, and legal aspects). A wise- practice approach allows for student supports that are welcoming and includes staff that are aware of the Métis students and their unique culture. Student support spaces and classroom environments would be safe spaces that recognize and accept the differences among students while engaging in a respectful learning process. A Métis wise-practice approach is initiated in a way that contributes to the positive teaching and learning experiences for both instructors and students.

A Métissage Research Sensibility

As the two data sets merged within my study, I wanted to engage with a métissage research sensibility to bring all the pieces together. Donald (2012) uses a métissage research sensibility to centre his research interests within his Aboriginal identity; he uses a métissage framework as a way to break the tension between his identity and sense of belonging that he finds to be at odds with one another within the educational context of the academy. Similarly, I have struggled to make sense of a Métis research sensibility that allows me to use my Métis culture frame of reference while conducting academic research within the academy. Crucial to my study was allowing for stories of my Métis research participants to be centred. At the same time, I worked to chart a new course in creating a framework on métissage-as-reconciliation within higher education. I paid close attention to the relationships I formed with my participants, and the relationships I shared with others within the institution and my various roles. I take pride in these reciprocal relationships as they are key to collecting data. I could not have obtained complete narratives from my participants or used committee meeting minutes and documents without engaging with others; it was essential to spend the time to create relationships built on mutually trusting and respectful relationships.

A métissage research sensibility challenges me to listen to the Métis research participants' voices and experiences in higher education and to the voices of the agents within the institution working toward reconciliatory efforts. Following Donald (2012), my métissage research sensibility "is about relationality and the desire to treat texts–and lives–as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent" (p. 537). *Texts* refer to the documents and notes I collected as data, and *lives* refer to the stories of both the Métis research participants and the voices of others within the university (e.g., ICR committee members). Real listening allows for

being open to receiving and giving information with genuine interest while trying to understand the viewpoint of others. When required, I asked both the research participants and the ICR committee members for further information to ensure I was clear on the information I was receiving. As a result, I am confident that the relationships I formed are ones built on respect and reciprocity.

Like my Métis participants, there have been many times throughout my educational journey where I was part of the colonial story contributing to its manifestation. I did not always use my voice to correct inaccurate information about Métis people or speak about my lived experiences as a Métis. As I thought about my part in reconciliation, I thought about the teachings associated with respect. I understand the need to respect that some people know nothing about Métis history and have not had the opportunity to learn. The lack of formal education on Métis history is an experience I know well. I respect that the institution does have people wanting to work towards inclusive places, to form community relationships, and to advance reconciliation efforts. As an insider as a Métis student and employee, I am open to the changes proposed within the academy. I understand the colonized institution of the university and its lack of knowledge and inclusivity of Métis and other cultures. My interest is to assist the academy in ways that further their decolonizing project as they push towards reconciliation efforts with Indigenous People, and specifically with Métis people.

Reciprocity, relationships, respect, and reconciliation drive my métissage research sensibility. Braiding these concepts together brings me to joining all the components together of Métis students' experiences and the institutional efforts of Indigenization. I listen to the experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (staff, instructors, and all students) with respect as I am encouraged by the proposed changes and want to assist in the efforts. In

different ways, the institution and Métis students are striving to change the institution by challenging the status quo and questioning the curriculum and pedagogy, while working towards shifting institutional practices to ways that contribute to métissage-as-reconciliation.

Summary

Consistent with métissage-grounded theory methodology, three phases of data analysis were employed: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. Sixteen codes emerged from the open coding of the documents. Constant comparison analysis was exercised using the NVivo software to discover selective codes. Additional constant comparison analysis was used to discover the relationships between the open and selective codes, leading to four main categories. The categories—Indigenization, curriculum and pedagogy, professional development, and cultural safety—emerged from the data collection coding processes, highlighting my learning experiences in higher education as a Métis person. The emergence of a wise-practice approach as the core category-and main theme-demonstrates the prevalent attributes affecting my experience as a Métis person enrolled in higher education and working within the academy.

In this way, the two core categories of the need for Métis content Knowledge (Métis women participant's experiences) and a wise-practice approach (my auto-ethnography as a student and employee) from the two data sources come together to describe the importance of métissage-as-reconciliation within higher education. Thus, using a métissage approach while combining the data sets, Chapter Seven explores a new conceptual framework to analyze and understand Canadian higher education responses to reconciliation with Métis people.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HIGHER EDUCATION RESPONSES TO RECONCILIATION WITH MÉTIS STUDENTS

"The final product of a grounded theory study is an integrated and comprehensive grounded theory [conceptual framework] that explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 13); as such this final chapter is a discussion of the study's major findings as they relate back to the literature on Métis students in higher education, with a focus on the three main categories that arose from the data and analysis. A new conceptual framework is presented along with my final thoughts on the study and its impact.

This study has identified how courses and learning experiences impact Métis students' understanding of their cultural identities, the role of Métis-specific Indigenous Knowledge in higher education, and perspectives on reconciliation. Here, the connections within the study are described to explore the research question from different angles of Canadian universities' responses to Indigenous presence, specifically Métis students and community, and develop a new conceptual framework to analyze and understand Canadian higher education responses to reconciliation with Métis people.

The conceptual framework is multi-dimensional and comprised of the three core categories arising from the data—identity, institutional practices, and reconciliation—as a lived experience to be embedded into higher education policies, administration, recruitment, and operations. It is evident that these categories were deeply and personally related to the research participants, who were Métis learners and educators working in Ontario, Canada. In this way,

each category helps contribute to the higher education environment, in which having a Métis voice, though challenging, also holds positive future possibilities.

A new Conceptual Framework: Métissage-as-Reconciliation

Before I move forward with interpreting the findings, I want to introduce what I have created as the métissage-as-reconciliation conceptual framework (see Figure 3). This framework represents key themes as found in the research. Using the constant comparison approach, the data and literature were consistently being examined in search of relatable themes until key categories were formed. The framework demonstrates relationships among the participants' experiences and my narrative and how they relate to one another within the study. As I combined the two core themes of the need for Métis content Knowledge and a wise-practice approach from the two data sources, I was reminded of the Métis sash (see Figure 4) and its intricate finger-woven technique to tell the story. This framework is used to analyze and understand Canadian higher education responses to reconciliation with Métis perspectives. The visual of the sash and emergent conceptual framework is represented below (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Métissage-as-Reconciliation Framework

Note. The métissage-as-reconciliation framework is inclusive of the following elements: Métis identity, student support services, Métis content, community engagement, and instructor competence embedded within reconciliation.

Figure 4

Métis Sash

Note. An image of the traditional Métis sash.

The history of the sash (Vien & Barkwell, 2011) includes understanding the sash as a piece of clothing symbolic of French-Canadian and Métis people's identity. Sashes were typically finger-woven out of nettle fibre, buffalo hair, or native hemp (Indigenous practice), and braided woollen garters (French-Canadian practice). Similarly, here the sash uses the stories of Métis people's experiences and how they are affected by institutional practices as found in the colonized academy of higher education. The colours and patterns on sashes have varied over time, as does their creation in different parts of Canada. Historically, the colour black represented Métis suppression and the dispossession of their land by the government, and the primary colour of the sash was traditionally red. Many Métis also refer to the shade of red as symbolic of the bloodshed throughout the resistances. The blue and white on the sash represent

the Métis flag's colours that are contained in the infinity symbol; green represents fertility and growth, while yellow is symbolic of prosperity.

Today, the sash can be seen as an important knowledge system for the Métis people. According to Barkwell, Dorion & Hourie (2006), the sash originated in the town of L'Assomption, Quebec where French-Canadian weavers were the first to present the L'Assomption sash. The sash was known for its ceinture flêchée or arrowhead belt design (p. 81). Today, the sash has been adopted throughout the Métis nation as a strong cultural symbol of heritage and with its many historical and contemporary uses, the stories shared amongst Métis families use the sash as a representative way to share knowledge so Métis children and families can continue to share their cultural heritage and traditional way of life practices.

Red, Blue, Yellow, White, Green, Black

To use the sash colours as representative of key categories within the conceptual framework, I use the primary shade of red to represent reconciliation. Reconciliation is woven throughout as the central underlying theme of the framework. Reconciliation is represented by the relationships the Métis students have within the university and the university's desire to include Métis perspectives within it.

Blue, yellow, white, green–these colours represent the concepts of student support services, instructor competence (skills, knowledge, and attitudes), community engagement, and Métis content (historical perspectives and contemporary realities). These are the sash's colourful threads (emergent categories from the data sets); each holds significance and uniquely contributes to the layers within the framework.

Although the sash image does not contain a great deal of black, I propose this colour as it relates to Métis identity. Understanding Métis identity has played a significant role within the research. Although the time has passed where Métis people were suppressed and dispossessed from their land, I see the darkness of that history represented in black colour. As Métis identity remains questioned and not understood, this darkness adds to the representation of the lack of acceptance of Métis identity within higher education. There is work for everyone to contribute to gain a thorough understanding of the cultural, legal, and political aspects of Métis identity.

These beautiful colourful strands are woven together, and each strand in its place is required to create a unique and complete garment; the sash looks damaged when a stray piece of yarn is pulled from within it. With this image, the concepts of the two data sets (students support services, instructor competence, community engagement, Métis content, and identity) are brought together and interwoven as parts of a whole. Métissage-as-reconciliation is achieved when all strands are addressed equally within the institution. The two data sets allow for the mixing of my narrative with that of the experiences of the research participants, forming a rich story to move towards reconciliation with Métis people within higher education.

Interpretation of the Findings

While the academic program, graduation dates, and educational experiences may have differed for each participant, each of the three common categories (identity, institutional practices, and reconciliation) were prominent factors amongst the Métis participants and created valuable contributions to this study. These categories (or themes) have dynamic dimensions: they highlight elements of education that were essential to each participant based on their experiences in higher education and their identity as Métis people. Similarly, the themes of Indigenization, curriculum and pedagogy, professional development and cultural safety are essential components

when looking further into mandatory Indigenous content courses and institutional practices. Together these elements are woven together in the new conceptual framework proposed here to include the important elements required to actively engage in métissage-as-reconciliation within higher education.

Métis Identity

This study describes how Métis students are concerned with university erasure of their distinct identity as they observe the struggle of their non-Indigenous and First Nations peers to understand who the Métis are as a distinct Indigenous People within Canada. Specifically, the study's participants described three ways (politically, culturally, and legally) in which Métis identity needs to be understood.

Politically, most of the confusion on Métis identity results from a lack of understanding on how the Métis people are a distinct Indigenous People living on this land now known as Canada. Many Métis students attend post-secondary institutions, are connected to their culture, and understand the history of Métis people well. They are aware of the Métis story, which is their family story. They have come to understand and define their identities as Métis people.

The Métis participants expressed a collective fear, that without a direct and clear message on Métis cultural identity in the university curriculum, there would be gaps filled with more bias, stereotyping, and racism. Métis students may have lighter skin tones, even blonde hair, and their physical appearance may not reflect the conventional image of an Indigenous person with a darker skin tone and hair colour. The Métis people also have a distinct culture and are alive and living throughout Canada. Inaccurate myths concerning Métis people need to be clarified, as they

do not accurately reflect Métis identity or their contemporary realities. There is an opportunity in higher education to do just this and to teach Métis perspectives.

Legally, participants are clear in discussing the concept of 'little m' and 'big M' in relation to political definitions of the Métis, and how those political interpretations are essential to identity. Participants referenced section 35 of the Constitution, which describes the rights of Métis people. The best examples of constitutional rights are the Powley and Daniels cases, which are contemporary cases in Canada that have led to the resurgence of Métis rights.

The emphasis on identity in my study is consistent with how the literature describes Indigenous students' sense of culture, identity, and belonging. As Indspire (2018) stated:

> Indigenous students also talked about the pain of being in a post-secondary institution that did not value their culture, identity and belonging. Many students felt their needs were marginalized, and some felt they were unwelcomed and alone. The inaccurate reflections of their culture and their people often place students in a position of having to address the misinformation and course content presented by non-Indigenous staff. (p. 4)

Furthermore, the research participants in my study were all aware and concerned that who the Métis are as a distinct culture of Indigenous People is overlooked within higher education. They were aware of what Hodgson-Smith (2005) has reported that:

> The Métis are in a process of re-claiming their history across the Métis Nation homeland. The Canadian population generally is not aware that there is a Métis Nation and is not aware of the history, culture, and special rights of the Métis Nation - resulting from the need to reconcile occupation prior to confederation. (p. 4).

In relation to a student's Métis identity, the fact remains that, "Indigenous students learn to conform to the unwritten, unstated discursive and epistemic norms and rules of the academy, whether they want to or not. This may involve painful negotiations of their identities, cultural backgrounds, desires, and aspirations" (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 53). The Métis research participants claimed their identity was not understood, and their voices not heard and acknowledged within the courses they attended, nor, the student support services they accessed.

Institutional Practices

Self-Identification as a Métis Person Within Higher Education

Self-identification became a priority in Ontario universities and colleges after the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities released the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS) in 1991, which targeted Indigenous People's participation and completion of university and college programs. Subsequently, in 2011, the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework's began to explore the effectiveness of the Indigenous initiatives in Ontario. Self-identification processes needed to be developed, analyzed, and evaluated to collect better data to monitor the success of the government's investment in Indigenous post-secondary education and training (Council of Ontario Universities, 2018, p. 12). Today, tracking the academic progress of Indigenous learners remains difficult, as there is no systematic approach to how Ontario's colleges and universities collect data on Indigenous students (Council of Ontario Universities, 2018; Universities Canada, 2019). Universities continue to recognize the benefits of self-identification, including allowing for targeted student support services and financial assistance by the university (p. 8) or the community. According to Universities Canada (2019), without a systematic approach to collecting self-identification data, there are also missed opportunities to understand the diversity of those attending and graduating from various

programs (p. 39/40). Universities lack information concerning who they attract and retain among diverse Ph.D. and postdoctoral students, who could potentially move into university academic and leadership positions (Universities Canada, 2019, p. 39/40). A national survey conducted in 2019, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Canadian Universities, identified this lack of information as an issue considering that a top priority among university presidents is to attract and retain diverse talent (Universities Canada, 2019, p. 40).

The findings of this research support that self-identification can help connect students to critical resources and events that are conducive to their academic success, including scholarships and bursaries. Self-identification is a way for students to create a community and offer each other peer-to-peer support. In addition, self-identification allows students to identify more formalized support (i.e., counselling and health services) on campus and connects them with cultural events on and off-campus. While some participants indicated that self-identification was necessary, others decided not to self-identify when they were students because they worried about feeling unwelcomed, lateral violence, and racism and they felt unsupported within the university. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) have noted that Indigenous inclusion requires "the need for change, regularly accompanied by the argument that universities need to better service Indigenous students and communities" (p. 219). Métis students want to feel supported in their academics by student support services that provide useful resources (i.e., bursary and scholarships, counselling and health services, academic workshops, etc.) that contribute to their success.

Cultural Visibility on Campus

Participants agreed that there was not enough cultural visibility of Métis art or visible cultural artifacts on the campus or research site to make them feel acknowledged or to make them believe that the university pays attention to Métis intellectual contributions as vital to

Canadian academia (Schaefli et. al, 2018). Furthermore, research participants who were also citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario were aware of the Métis Infinite Reach program where post-secondary Métis students hold events each semester to reach out to other students to create cultural awareness opportunities for people on Ontario campuses. Universities can endorse and support these types of partnership programs to invite Métis community members into the institution to build a visible reconciliation approach to inclusivity. Métis community members invited into university campuses helps to foster relationships between Métis people and the university. Participants also noted the lack of the Michif language on campus as a deficit in cultural visibility, where other Indigenous languages are visible. For example, the use of Ojibwe and Oji-Cree signage further indicated the lack of priority given to the Michif language by its absence. Having a Métis cultural profile on campus is an essential piece of the institution showing visible, credible respect to local Métis history, and as such, would be a step towards reconciliation.

"Indigenization is a positive process that involves acknowledging, legitimizing, valuing, and celebrating Indigenous Knowledge systems (this includes languages, traditions and cultures) and their inclusion in spaces and places where they have historically been silenced" (Ottmann, 2017, p. 103). Similarly, Pidgeon (2016) has argued that Indigenization "refers to meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge(s), in the everyday fabric of the institution from policies to practices across all levels, not just in curriculum" (p. 79). The Métis culture also deserves this acknowledgement as a distinct culture of people in Canada. Métis-Indigenization allows for the specific traditions, Michif language, and cultural practices of the Métis people to be present in courses within the university structure. To create inclusivity, diversity, and equity among students, Métis perspectives need to have a place within higher education.

Some universities more successfully include cultural visibility on their campuses. Macdonald's (2016) article "Indigenizing the Academy" highlights Canadian university initiatives to include Indigenous spaces and symbols on campuses such as new building structures inspired by Indigenous cultures; campus gardens that respect the connection between nature, Indigenous Knowledge, and culture and includes traditional plants; pow wows as part of ceremonies and culture at universities; the use of Indigenous languages in university logos; and even the signage of streets on campuses (Macdonald, 2016). Further, without Métis cultural visibility on campus, students feel the university perpetuates spaces that do not support multiculturalism and anti-racist spaces.

Barriers in Higher Education

Universities Canada (2020) is an organization that provides university presidents with guidance on higher education, research, and innovation. It has acknowledged that Indigenous People face significant barriers in post-secondary education and that fewer Indigenous People have a university degree compared to non-Indigenous Canadians. The organization is committed to assisting Indigenous students with their academic pursuits, as education is essential to the reconciliation process. It has also committed to revitalizing Indigenous languages, ensuring Indigenous representation on governance and leadership structures, and bringing Indigenous Knowledge and culture onto university campuses to help advance reconciliation efforts. Universities Canada acknowledges that more needs to be done and is committed to working with governments to provide more assistance to Indigenous students to access and be successful in higher education.

Safe and Welcoming Spaces

The theme of inclusivity and the feeling of safety within the university setting resonated with the Métis participants. Having Métis students feel comfortable accessing Indigenous student supports and Indigenous spaces is an essential part of inclusion within higher education. A welcoming environment will help Métis students access student support services (e.g., counselling, cultural events, workshops, and financial scholarships), which will further reduce academic, economic, and social barriers. My research demonstrates that Métis people feel unwelcomed, unsafe, and uncomfortable as they do not see their culture reflected in Indigenous spaces or throughout spaces on campus. Métis students want to feel included in Indigenous spaces that recognize their Métis culture alongside that of First Nations students. Events that focus on Métis history and culture (i.e., Louis Riel and Powley, art exhibits, workshops, and guest speakers specific to the Métis culture) could also be held and celebrated, but instead the primary focus is currently on the culture of First Nations students.

In a study on supporting Métis learners and self-identification in post-secondary education in Ontario, Paci (2011) found that 40 percent of respondents reported that the institutions they attended offered a welcoming environment for Métis students (p. 6). One of his final recommendations, however, was for Métis communities to partner with Ontario post-secondary institutions "to expand Métis-specific programming and services on-site that are grounded in Métis culture, language and ways of knowing" (Paci, 2011, p. 8). Although student support exists for Indigenous learners, they are not often Métis-specific and are more likely to be rooted in the cultures of First Nations students. "By fostering diversity and inclusion on campuses and across the province, Ontario can ensure it is benefitting from the range of knowledge and ideas that help make our communities vibrant, our workplaces innovative, and the province a great place to live" (Ontario Universities, 2018).

Ontario Universities (2018) provides a united front in its goal of welcoming Indigenous students to campuses, and it supports Indigenous students' needs. Ontario Universities has also highlighted that diverse populations on campuses reflect the people of Ontario. This province cannot thrive without the knowledge and ideas of a diverse community: "Universities are committed to incorporating Aboriginal histories, culture, traditions, and culturally appropriate supports, and meeting the specific challenges that are laid out for educators as part of the TRC's recommendations" (Ontario Universities, 2018). The inclusion of the safe and welcoming spaces for Métis students is another step towards achieving reconciliation.

Reconciliation in Higher Education

Truth and Voice

There cannot be reconciliation without truth (Coburn, 2018; Morcom & Freeman, 2019): the Métis research participants in this study also clearly stated that reconciliation occurs best when the truth about Canadian history is shared, along with understanding how that history has affected Métis people across Canada. Specific attention should be given to how Métis people in Canada have been marginalized and how empathy and understanding can play a role in helping each person emotionally work through history to better understand one another to build relationships. A broad understanding of reconciliation in Canada with Métis people can be found in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) publication, "Canada's Residential Schools: The Métis Experience (2016)." This report does not address the overall educational experience of Métis people in Canada, but it does reference the early residential school system from 1883-1910 and noting the system to be based on a "haphazard policy" (p. 21) from 1899-1937 and through the 1940s-1960s, when the implementation of the residential school policy for Métis children was inconsistent. The federal government passed the

responsibility of Métis education to the provinces, and students attended residential schools, day schools, and schools operated by religious organizations, or they did not participate in school at all (p. 41). There are other TRC reports and limited localized stories based on specific communities in western Canada, but overall, there continues to be a gap in the literature on the Métis education experience in Canada.

Education needs to occur in early learning and continue throughout post-secondary studies to eliminate the ignorance and misconceptions regarding Métis people. Awareness of the past and acknowledgement of the harm caused to and imposed upon the Métis is crucial for reconciliation. This sentiment was echoed throughout by the voices of the Métis research participants. Much of the truth of the Métis experience is not available in textbooks and so "it is imperative to include the Métis in any discussion of Native people as they are regularly situated outside of contemporary narratives discussing the Indigenous-Canada relationship" (Belanger, 2018, p. 150). This oversight of Métis content needs to be corrected. Further, reconciliation can occur in higher education by acknowledging the harm of the past, dismantling barriers for Métis students, and addressing colonization; this leads to healing and forging a new way forward.

Reconciliation policies, statements, plans, and programs in Canadian universities must account for Métis people to share their truth and have a voice so reconciliation can be achieved because Métis students continue to face barriers that make obtaining education difficult (Government of Canada, 2020). According to the research participants, Indigenous perspectives have historically been taught using a pan-Indigenous approach to group all Indigenous People into one category. This creates a dangerous assumption that all Indigenous People share the same experience in Canada. The research participants shared their belief that a Métis voice allows for Métis-specific content Knowledge to be honoured. Métis content needs to be mindful of the

Métis experience, which lends itself to the unique experiences of Métis people. However, the research participants cautioned that the instruction of Métis content needs to be done by faculty with the knowledge and skills to accurately reflect the Métis experience, if not by a Métis academic. It can be argued that "the general lack of knowledge about Indigenous [Métis] Peoples and their issues, cultures, and histories also plays a significant role in making the academy feel hostile" (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 53). Honouring the truth with respect to Métis history is an important step towards reconciliation in education.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as Institutional Practices

The Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) committee work demonstrates how universities can extend Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) practices to ensure an inclusive community. Engaging with both Indigenous and Métis-specific community members is a way to reach out to local peoples to form partnerships and to bring them onto campuses to assist with Métis content inclusion. This study demonstrates that the Métis student experience focusses on feeling unaware of how their broader Métis community is engaged within leadership roles within the academy and questioning whether governance and advisory committees consult local Métis people. Both the Métis research participants and the ICR committee understood the value of local Métis community members and referenced the positive impact of having their presence on campus and in classrooms to help with the teaching of Métis perspectives.

Universities Canada (2017b) has claimed that approaches to teaching, research, and community are reflected in the values of equity, diversity, openness, fairness, and tolerance. They have also recognized that diversity in identity means representing people from different geographies, cultures, and worldviews, and they are aware of the under-represented groups identified in the Employment Equity Act (women, visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people

with disabilities, and LGTQ2+ people, along with men in female-dominated disciplines). Universities Canada has committed to principles to advance change within university institutions. With this commitment to change within higher education, and with the inclusion of Métis content and visibility on campuses, there may be a chance for representation. Universities Canada (2017a) has claimed that in the past few years, there has been a 71 percent increase in Indigenous leadership within governance and leadership structures; 70 percent of universities have partnerships with Indigenous communities, and there has been a 55 percent increase in university programs that have an Indigenous focus or are specifically designated for Indigenous students. Inclusion of local Métis community people within institutional practices (i.e., engaging in teaching within classrooms and participating in advisory and governance bodies) is a step toward institutions building capacity and strengthening their relationships to move reconciliation efforts forward with Métis people.

Including the need for Métis Content Knowledge Within Higher Education

Historically, the government has enforced a racist lens and the attempted assimilation to what they thought to be civilization, making it necessary to question the moral aspects of education's foundation with regard to Métis and other Indigenous students in Canada. "Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan–their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed, and ignored by the education system" (Battiste, 2013, p. 23): we need to advance this truth before we can make the necessary changes in higher education to address the western dominant pedagogy, and, as part of this, the experiences of Métis students need to be told and shared. "To be an anti-racist educator is to be a theorist and practitioner for change" (Dei, 1996, p. 26); as a Métis academic, I know that change is possible through a more culturally relevant, Métis-infused institution. Métis inclusion would allow students to see themselves

reflected in the institution (curriculum, policies, and practices). Institutions need to reflect on their biases of Métis students while they cultivate new approaches to better support Métis learners. Métis pedagogies need to focus on Métis culture, to enable and empower Métis students who would otherwise remain on the margin of the classroom or be seen through a racist lens. For these reasons, my research is crucial to the Métis student experience in higher education. My new conceptual framework focusses on métissage-as-reconciliation within higher education, as a step towards reconciliation, and thus the creation of inclusive, diverse, and equitable practices within the academy that provide for Métis student experiences to be acknowledged.

For example, through relating their own experiences, the study participants expressed their need for instructors who would only be hired when they had demonstrated their abilities to teach and deliver Métis-specific content. Participants expressed how the presence of a Métis scholar on campus would amplify Métis Knowledge as a legitimate and vital knowledge system in the academy and help validate non-Métis instructors' access to accurate and vetted content of Métis Knowledge.

And while the integration of Indigenous Knowledge into university curriculum content is now considered critical for any reconciliation effort in higher education, Métis-specific content has been relegated to a secondary spot in university reconciliation, like the road allowance people living on the periphery (Douaud, 1983, p.75). In a study supporting Métis learners and self-identification in post-secondary education in Ontario, Paci (2011) warns that there are limited opportunities for Métis students "to connect with their peers and to see their culture reflected in the curriculum" (p. 6); it is this lack of opportunity that must be avoided. Métis students deserve to see Métis content in mandatory Indigenous Content Requirement courses and in institutional processes as reconciliation efforts addressing the unique history and culture of the

Métis people, rather than furthering a pan-Indigenous tokenism approach to content integration that students have had to settle for because the institution has not had the capacity to address their content approach.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015c) defines reconciliation as:

> Establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country. For that to happen, there has to be an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action change to the behaviour. (p. 3).

Presently, we have the opportunity to correct the misinformation and inaccuracies of the past and move toward a shared Métis-Canadian story to benefit all of our students. Battiste (2013) affirms this moment by stating that instructors "must reject the colonial curricula that offer students a fragmented and distorted picture of Indigenous Peoples and offer students a critical perspective of the historical context that created that fragmentation" (p. 186). Reconciliation can also be viewed as an institutional process that has the potential to address significant gaps and omissions in the curriculum, as well as harmful methods of teaching and assessment that continue to impact or hinder the achievement of Indigenous learners. Reconciliation can be an opportunity for faculty development and can be used to elicit organizational change in universities to better serve Métis, along with other Indigenous students, specifically those who have historically been segregated and oppressed within the education system.

Infusing Métis Content in Higher Education and Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge

A Métis pedagogy that includes Métis content in the curriculum and is taught by a well-informed educator can be validated and substantiated as a conceptual framework centring métissage-as-reconciliation. Shulman's (1987) construct of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was designed to describe "a special kind of knowledge possessed by experienced teachers that constitutes a fusion of subject matter knowledge about learners and how to represent subject matter knowledge in forms that make it comprehensible to students" (Hashweh, 2014, p. 599). My conceptual framework on métissage-as-reconciliation includes experienced instructors and constitutes a fusion of well-researched Métis content that corresponds to Métis students and community, as well as how to represent Métis Knowledge, history, and culture in ways that are guided and validated by the Métis community, especially Senators, and is comprehensible to Métis students. "Educators generally agree that effective teaching requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills" (Gay, 2002, p. 106); Shulman's idea similarly focusses on trained teachers, whereas instructors within the academy may not have participated in teacher education programs. The results of my study align with Shulman's (1987) pedagogical content knowledge in that it:

> Represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue. (p. 8)

This study's participants stated they want Métis people to teach Métis content and to be available to mentor Métis students within the academy. If Métis scholars are unavailable, the participants were clear that there should be professional development available and that the instructors must consult with Métis communities or Métis Knowledge Holders to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of their content. However, the need for pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) concerning Métis content is two-fold; first, it assists with Métis students struggling to reclaim their identity; and second, it supports other learners with an understanding of Métis perspectives. This study confirms that instructors' PCK is crucial in teaching Métis perspectives within higher education and, as such, is a key to reconciliation in higher education.

A Métissage-as-Reconciliation Conceptual Framework in Education

There is a lack of formal literature that defines Métis Knowledge as a worldview. Macdougall (2017) states that "through extensive kinship networks and shared experiences, Métis people interacted with the natural and spiritual world that reflected their worldview, which included a profound shared sense of mutual responsibility for each other" (p. 9). A generalized approach to Métis worldview is prevalent as "much of Métis worldview contains philosophy and beliefs learned from their First Nations relations" (Dorion, 2015, p. 4). This worldview is not helpful for Métis students wanting to research and write through a Métis lens. This study's conclusion demonstrates that a Métis-specific Knowledge approach is absent from the post-secondary curriculum because there is no "singularly identifiable Métis worldview" (Lowan-Trudeau, 2014, p. 353; Gibbs, 2000; Richardson, 2004). My study defines Métis Knowledge and how it can be presented in classes where worldviews and perspectives on Indigenous research methods are taught and discussed as an option for those students wanting to incorporate a Métis-specific lens within their work. Métissage-as-reconciliation needs to continue to build upon and

challenge the places within the academy where there is an absence of Métis-specific perspectives.

Furthermore, reconciliation in education with Métis people is not clearly defined, so introducing a métissage-as-reconciliation conceptual framework is appropriate. Tuhiwai-Smith (2007) has argued that "an important task of Indigenous research in 'becoming' a community of researchers is about capacity building, developing and mentoring researchers, and creating the space and support for new research approaches to research and new examinations of Indigenous knowledge" (p. 122). Allowing for a Métis-specific conceptual framework in higher education would support Métis students using a culturally relevant academic tool. Indigenous researchers actively seek ways to disrupt "the history of exploitation, suspicion, misunderstanding, and prejudice" (Rigney, 1999, p. 117) of Indigenous People worldwide. This approach would help to privilege Indigenous Knowledges, while also creating Indigenous methodologies and approaches to research (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2007, p. 116). Implementing the proposed métissage-as-reconciliation conceptual framework would expand and include more Métis voice to be contextualized within the scope and practice of Métis research.

With research, one question often leads to another. This study allows for Métis Knowledge to be used in an exploratory way as a research method, methodology, and conceptual framework. Further research can explore and expand on these ideas. The development of a Métis-Knowledge research approach must be supported as an "acceptable" or trustworthy and recognizable form of Indigenous research within the academy. As the presence of academic Indigenous researchers (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008) and the number of Indigenous and Métis scholars in Canadian universities continues to grow, Métis master's and doctoral students must fit their research methodology and methods into either Western or

Indigenous (primarily First Nations) approaches. Donald (2012) has used "métissage as a decolonizing research sensibility" to connect historic and contemporary Indigenous People and Canadians within a decolonizing context (p. 534). Lowan-Trudeau (2012) has developed an approach that he has termed, methodological métissage, combining Indigenous and interpretive traditions for research in Canadian environmental education (p. 113). However, specifically in faculties of education, there is no Métis conceptual framework that is recognizable, discussed, or taught within higher education. As Métis researchers continue to work toward a model of research for their people and with Métis communities, this lack of a Métis-specific set of principles or conceptual framework needs to be demonstrated and opened for Métis perspectives to improve the academic freedom and environment to research from within a Métis worldview. A Métis-specific conceptual framework adds a culturally reflective approach of the Métis people and advances Indigenous research in Canada.

Conclusion

The notion of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for reconciliation within Canadian higher education must demonstrate validation of and access to the need for Métis content Knowledge. If Métis learners are to believe in Canadian universities' commitment, where Indigenous initiatives and programs are advertised as available and advancing reconciliation efforts is a stated priority, then there remains more work to be done to be inclusive of Métis people. The métissage-as-reconciliation conceptual framework lays the foundation to develop: an awareness of how learning experiences impact Métis students' understanding of their cultural identities; the role of Métis-specific Knowledge in higher education; and perspectives on reconciliation. This study investigates métissage as an exploratory research methodology, building upon the work of Donald (2012) and Lowan-Trudeau (2012). Métis students know there

is a great deal of work to be done within higher education to achieve the diversity, equity, and inclusion they seek as Métis peoples to be included within the institution.

A deep commitment to change derives from relationships that are built on trust and this needs to be addressed with respect to how Métis people are responded to within the institution by instructors, staff, learners, and institutional processes. If reconciliation efforts are not supported by the institution, they are likely not to happen. Support for reconciliation must be demonstrated through tangible actions with specific strategic initiatives in place, as well as the existence of safe spaces for Métis people on campuses, opportunities to come together to learn about Métis perspectives, and a focus on systemic inequities within institutions. Institutional practices need to be examined to ensure Métis perspectives and people are engaged within the academy.

Wolfe (1999) posits that the elimination of Indigenous societies is the goal of settler colonies, where invasion is seen as a structure, not an event and the colonizers come to stay (p.2): “Elimination is not [based] on race (or religion, ethnicity, the grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). In this case, the institution of higher education represents the territory. The academy has not been inclusive or kind to Métis people because it has primarily rejected the need for Métis content Knowledge and perspectives. Unrestricted by the colonizer’s gaze or liberated from settler impositions, my research participants shared experiences on their continuous marginalization and silenced voices within the territory of the academy. Despite having to face hardships, trauma, deprivation, and assimilation as a people, coupled with the extinguishment of Métis rights and dispossession from land, the essence of their culture has lived. Fighting against exclusion, each research participant has successfully graduated from university programs and their acts of resilience and resistance do not go unnoticed.

Lateral violence, a feeling of not belonging, a lack of financial support and a misunderstanding of identity are current realities faced by Métis students that place them at a disadvantage within higher education. These disadvantages are the result of policies, people, and politics that do not honour the knowledge of Métis people. The student experience for Métis people is different when institutions are willing to change. Métis people and institutions are aware that there is a great deal of work to be done within higher education to achieve the diversity, equity, and inclusion the Métis people seek within the institution. Through my research and weaving together the stories of Métis student experiences and institutional practices, I have demonstrated that métissage-as-reconciliation is achievable and will benefit teaching and learning for all. Métissage-as-reconciliation is possible as institutions are engaging with bringing Métis perspectives into the academy. This work is challenging, and Métis community members must support and assist institutions as allies. Weaving the sash together requires Métis people and the academy to build relationships, founded on respect and reciprocity, that are generative and infinite.

Summary of Recommendations

The study lays the foundation for understanding how courses and learning experiences impact Métis students' understanding of their cultural identities, the role of Métis-specific content Knowledge in higher education, and perspectives on reconciliation. Métis students know there is a great deal of work to be done within higher education to achieve the diversity, equity, and inclusion they seek as Métis learners to be included within the university setting. Opportunities exist for Métis content inclusion in higher education through curricula and instructor's knowledge of Métis perspectives. The following is a summary of recommendations for reconciliation through métissage in higher education:

1. Understanding the history of Métis people means everyone needs to learn about the various aspects of Métis identity and this includes a historical and contemporary understanding of the cultural, political, and legal components of Métis identity.
2. Understanding the ethnogenesis of the Métis as a distinct Indigenous people in Canada helps to share the story of the Métis as a post-contact people, a direct result of colonization.
3. Clearly articulating the strengths of self-identification processes within the university while ensuring university staff are well informed on the history and culture of Métis students.
4. Indigenous spaces need to be inclusive and welcoming for all Indigenous students. Métis students need to feel comfortable to access the student support services that they require to be successful within their academic journey. There needs to be input from Métis students on the types of supports they require. Inviting Métis Senators, guest speakers and having Métis events, including cultural teachings, would help to make Indigenous-specific spaces more inclusive of the Métis students.
5. As universities work to include Indigenous artifacts within university spaces, there should be an equal representation amongst all the Indigenous peoples living in Canada (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis). This will help to foster spaces that demonstrate the acceptance of the diversity of Indigenous Peoples living in Canada.
6. Métis faculty or people in leadership roles would be helpful role model positions that Métis students could aspire to and reach out for graduate student supervision or when needing additional support concerning their educational journey.

7. Providing professional development training for instructors on Métis perspectives, history, and culture would help make the Indigenous Content Requirement course experience beneficial to all.
8. Understanding reconciliation is a process that means different things to different people within Canada. For the Métis, there is a long-standing history of exclusion from many government processes including Constitutional rights and the treaty-making process and must acknowledge the harm imposed upon the Métis as a result.
9. Clarifying negative perceptions and stereotypes of Métis people within curricula (Indigenous Content Requirement courses) would aid in combating racism, lateral violence, and discriminatory beliefs and behaviour towards Métis students.
10. Allowing the truth of the Métis story in Canada as told by Métis people (instructors or through appropriate Métis produced resources, Métis community people, and Senators) helps to give the Métis people a voice to their contributions to Canada's history. The truth also fosters a Métis worldview for knowledge transmission used by Métis students within their research.

Final Thoughts

A great deal of work is necessary to further address reconciliation in higher education for Métis people. While this study did not intend or conclude with one core pedagogical approach to educating students in Métis perspectives, the assistance of a Métis-specific Knowledge approach will challenge the dominant, Western ideology within the academy and allow for more Métis-specific content to enter the higher education conversation. It is not enough to have Indigenous Content Requirement courses taught in a pan-Indigenous way as one Indigenous perspective, because these courses then group all Indigenous-Canadians into the same category. The

misleading information of a pan-Indigenous approach does not allow for the uniqueness of each Indigenous group's history and culture to be viewed as distinct and vital. "Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). Without cultural competence, a pan-Indigenous approach often further confuses non-Indigenous students and Indigenous students who seek to reclaim their identity through learning. The depth of these challenges, including the clarification of Métis identity, demands that higher learning institutions are better prepared to engage in this crucial work.

The goal for my research is to play a role in the ongoing need to improve the recognition and validation of the need for Métis content Knowledge in higher education. I have extended the participants' experiences into a conceptual framework that examines key features to be taken into consideration when delivering higher education to Métis people. My research participants reported feeling unsafe within the academy because their identity and culture were misunderstood. They revealed that their skin tone often added to this confusion of identity among their peers and instructors. Further, they found that Métis perspectives were missing in most of their higher education experiences and that the institution did not attempt to provide Métis scholars as mentors.

I appreciate the time I spent with the participants of this study. I learned a great deal from them not only about métissage and reconciliation but also about myself as an educator. Throughout this study, I was both a student and an educator as I reflected on Métis content within higher education courses and programs. I was able to engage in reciprocal relationships as I could share some of my own experiences as a Métis student at all levels of education. I am grateful for the opportunity to share and learn as we, Métis women, embarked on a journey to

explore how learning experiences in a university impact our understandings of our cultural identities, the role of Métis specific Indigenous content in higher education, and perspectives on reconciliation.

Weaving our Métis Women's Experiences Together

It may initially appear that the generated data and resultant conceptual framework is not new to those who are actively engaged within Canadian universities or to those Indigenous students who have shared similar experiences to my research participants. The findings from my study may also reflect experiences of the First Nations and Inuit students who have faced similar exclusion in higher education; thus, the results may support and guide other research that examines FNMI student experiences. However, the stories (generated as research data) were shared and gifted to me by Métis women speaking their truth, and from their heart, to questions I asked regarding their experiences within higher education. I fostered relationships with the Métis women, who came to trust me with their stories and share their voices. As an outcome of this sharing, it is my ethical responsibility to disseminate the research findings accordingly. I stand with the Métis women who graciously spent their time remembering and gifting their treasured narratives to me, which is part of Indigenous research methods (Lavallée, 2009; Wilson, 2000). My responsibility for these stories is one of the larger lessons within the research study. I can see how my most significant duty as researcher has been to honour, protect, and provide the space and conditions to amplify the voice of the Métis women's stories and to respectfully create a cohesive and collective account of Métis women's higher education experiences. This key lesson will guide my future research with Indigenous peoples as I remember and reflect on the responsibility of gifted stories entrusted to me.

Despite generational gaps, and the women identifying as from various homelands within the province of Ontario or Manitoba, our collective desires as Métis people remained the same - the validation within the university institution of our distinct cultural identity as Indigenous people in Canada. It should be noted how many Métis families have been disconnected from their cultural traditions and accurate histories through colonization processes, including day schools and loss of land connection. In obtaining university degrees, we want our histories to be explicitly taught and our culture abundantly visible in order to repair education as an institution and to recognize our people's ongoing valuable contributions to Canadian society and higher education.

As women of mixed-culture and first-generation learners, this study reveals the challenges that university policies and practices have on Métis identity and inclusion within higher education. Some Métis women do not feel supported within the institution due to their appearance and not looking Indigenous-enough. Inclusion as Indigenous may challenge Métis women as they do not physically appear as Indigenous and may be afraid to disclose their identity for fear of racist microaggressions due to the lack of awareness of the Métis. As Métis people, we can all recall experiences of misconceptions, racism, and lateral violence and how we have been affected by these experiences that have played out throughout our higher education experiences. Many of us are aware that some instructors do not teach Métis content for various reasons, including a lack of knowledge, inability to reflect Métis perspectives accurately, or discriminatory judgements that play out within the classrooms' politics.

Métis women lack funding opportunities for their education and are aware of their lack of educational rights. Unlike some First Nations students, there is no funding available to many Métis students. Additionally, there are few Métis scholars in higher education across Canada.

Although this list of challenges is long, there are many commonalities found in the women's resilient nature and their desire to persevere as they obtain their degrees. Many of the Métis women in this study graduated from university and worked towards second or third degrees. Knowing the challenges experienced at different times throughout their university journeys, the women continued to seek more educational degrees, which is part of lifelong learning (Kirkness, 1999; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

The strength and courage of the Métis women are demonstrated in their continued passion for education. Like me, many of them are teachers or working in education, working to make a difference, and working to bring Métis perspectives into the curriculum and into various educational settings. Although as individuals, we tell our stories from our personal narratives, our educational experiences are not so different; the stories bring us together and allow us to voice our collective Métis knowledge and experiences in higher education.

What I imagine …

I imagine a future in higher education with Métis-specific Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) courses available to all students with Métis Knowledge seamlessly interwoven into all subjects and fields of study. I envision Métis scholars and community members teaching Métis-focussed courses, as well as guiding and checking all ICR content to accurately reflect the historical realities and contemporary vitality of Métis people. I have a dream where a métissage research framework with defined methods and a distinct Métis Knowledge methodology becomes the theory of choice for Métis graduate students. I imagine Métis students feeling included within spaces on university campuses and having their culture visible within the institution. I imagine the federal government taking fiduciary responsibility for the Métis people as Section 35 rights-bearing Indigenous People and providing adequate funding

to each Métis student who chooses to attend university. I imagine the words “racism,” “discrimination,” and “microaggressions” to be words of the past. I imagine that these endeavours lead to reconciliation for Métis students in higher education. Most importantly, I believe the academy of higher learning can create change for my daughter and future generations: the Métis are no longer “the forgotten people” (Sealey & Lussier, 1975, p. 143).

My final thought comes from the Métis artist Christi Belcourt, who described a piece of her artwork with these words:

> Despite direct assimilation attempts. Despite the residential school systems. Despite the strong influences of the Church in Métis communities to ignore and deny our Aboriginal heritage and our Aboriginal spiritualty. Despite not having a land base. And despite our diversity in heritage. We are still able to say we are proud to be Métis. (Belcourt, 1999)

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

Participants needed for research in "Reconciliation through Métissage in Higher Education."

I am looking for Lakehead University Métis students to volunteer to take part in a study of their learning experiences and how they have impacted their perspectives on reconciliation in higher education.

As a participant of the study, you would be asked to: participate in focus groups (sharing circles), one-to-one interviews and/or a written submission based on prompt questions.

Your participation is completely voluntary and would take up approximately one hour of your time over three occasions (if you choose to participate in all three focus groups) during January – April 2020. By participating in this you will help to create new knowledge on Métis students' perspectives on reconciliation in higher education.

In appreciation of your time, a lunch and refreshments will be provided.

To learn more about this study, or to participate in this study, please contact:

Bryanna Scott, Ph.D. Candidate

brscott@lakeheadu.ca

This study is supervised by: Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University.

This study has been reviewed by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.

Appendix B

Letter of Information

Preamble: As part of the university community, I am involved in numerous committees and I am engaged in a variety of roles with responsibilities. For this reason, I wanted to share with you that I am a committee member on the Ogimaawin-Aboriginal Governance Council - Senate Academic Committee (OAGC-SAC) sub-committee currently reviewing the Indigenous Content Requirement (Type E) courses. I want to reassure you that the information you provide to me as part of my data collection is anonymous and confidential; however, information may be shared through my interpretation. Similar to other research dissemination process of sharing research at conference presentations, posters, and publications (to name a few), another way my data may be shared is through this committee.

Research Study: Reconciliation through Métissage in Higher Education

About the study: Bryanna Scott, a Ph.D. student from Lakehead University supervised by Dr. Lisa Korteweg, is conducting a doctoral research study entitled: "Reconciliation through Métissage in Higher Education". I want to explore Métis student experiences in higher education. I am interested in learning along with students on how best to address reconciliation through a Métis student perspective. This project consists of participating in sharing circles where specific questions will be asked regarding your educational experiences in higher education. Participants are asked to set aside one hour for each sharing circle they choose to participate in (3 sharing circles will be offered with an optional 4th sharing circle to be offered to close the research study).

Research question: How have learning experiences impacted Métis students' perspectives on reconciliation in higher education?

Research study information: Upon completion of the study, I will share the findings with researchers at Lakehead University, other universities, and colleges in Canada and internationally, at conferences, through research publications, and along with other researchers who work with students or have an interest in Métis student experience in higher education. By sharing this information, I will help other researchers and educators find new ways of defining reconciliation in higher education through a Métis student perspective.

I invite you to participate in this research study. It is your choice to decide if you want to participate or not. If you choose to participate, you will not be asked to do anything that you do not want to do but you will be giving me permission to include your experiences, anonymized voice, and project participation in my study. This information will help me communicate findings for presentations and write articles and papers. You are a very important source of information for my study. You have a unique perspective as students in higher education and I would like to learn from you about reconciling education through Métissage to improve the learning experiences for Métis students in higher education.

If you want to participate in this study, you can change your mind later on or at any time up to the project's final stage of data analysis (when all anonymized data is converted into one data repository through Atlas Ti software coding). I will then not use any of the information that I

have collected from you if you notify me of your withdrawal. If you do want to participate but decide you do not want to answer some of the questions that I ask, that is your choice and there will be no negative consequences.

I do not believe that participating in this study will put you at any risk of harm or inconvenience.

If you would like a summary of the research results, you can contact me, and I will be pleased to pass this summary to you (brscott@lakeheadu.ca) 807.620.5798.

If you choose to participate in this study as a participant, you will:

- Inform the researcher of intent to participate and sign the consent agreement
- Participate in at least one sharing circle

If you choose to participate in the sharing circles - You will be asked to provide a description about yourself as well as a pseudonym: a name which will not identify you personally during the research phase (please see attached page). This will be used for each participant to ensure greater confidentiality/anonymity.

Your approximate time commitment in this study as a participant will be 2-6 hours, if you choose to participate in multiple sharing circles, one-to-one interviews and/or a written submission based on prompt questions.

All your comments will remain anonymous. I will not use your real name in any of the presentations or reports or papers that I write on the research study. In any notes I take, you will be referenced by your pseudonym. Dr. Korteweg will not be listening to the primary raw data, she will only review the anonymized transcripts when requested by myself as the Ph.D. student researcher, or if requested by committee members to check or verify. Dr. Korteweg will look at the data primarily after it has been analyzed and coded by the qualitative software Atlas Ti.

This research has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of this study and would like to speak to someone outside the research team, please contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board at 807.343.8283.

Sincerely,

Bryanna Scott, Ph.D. Candidate

Faculty of Education

Lakehead University

Appendix C

Consent Agreement

Project: Reconciliation through Métissage in higher education

Student researcher: Bryanna Scott, BA, HBSW, MPH

Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Ph.D.

Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

Preamble: As part of the university community, I am involved in numerous committees and I am engaged in a variety of roles with responsibilities. For this reason, I wanted to share with you that I am a committee member on the Ogimaawin-Aboriginal Governance Council - Senate Academic Committee (OAGC-SAC) sub-committee currently reviewing the Indigenous Content Requirement (Type E) courses. I want to reassure you that the information you provide to me as part of my data collection is anonymous and confidential; however, information may be shared through my interpretation. Similar to other research dissemination process of sharing research at conference presentations, posters, and publications (to name a few), another way my data may be shared is through this committee.

As the participant of the study, I understand and agree to the following:

- The purpose of the study is to explore the opportunities that exist to include Métis student perspectives in higher education as reconciliation.
- All the information participants provide, all of the things they say (sharing circles), one-to-one interviews and respond to on paper (prompt questions, etc.), will potentially be included as data in the study.
- There are minimal risks or harm to participating in this study but risks of uncomfortable feelings should be noted. Sensitive topics of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) issues will undoubtedly arise including racism, intergenerational legacies of trauma and education as a colonial institution/system that has not served the educational interests of the majority of Métis learners. Bryanna, the Ph.D. research student will be available to discuss how these topics may be controversial or sensitive and she will refer participants to counselling through the Student Health and Wellness Centre if requested for referral or help. If at any time you wish to access professional counselling services, please feel free to contact 343-8361. If some of the topics that may arise during the sharing circles cause discomfort, you can pause or choose not to participate.
- Participating in this study is voluntary. As a research participant, you can stop at any time you choose. You do not have to answer questions that are asked by the Ph.D. student researcher if you do not want to answer.
- Your approximate time commitment in this study as a participant will be approximately one hour per sharing circle.

- Participants can ask for a copy of the research findings by contacting Bryanna Scott at brscott@lakeheadu.ca
- Participants will be asked to provide a description about themselves as well as a pseudonym; a name which will not identify the participant during the research. This will be the same name that Bryanna, as the research student will use for each participant to ensure greater confidentiality/anonymity. Real names will not be used in this research study.
- Bryanna, as the research student will record the one-to-one interviews and the sharing circles so your voice (anonymous-never identified) may be audible when the results of this study are presented in public (at academic or research sharing conferences).
- Any comments that you make during the one-to-one interviews or sharing circles will be confidential and will only be presented and transcribed in anonymous form (without your name or other participants' names attached to the comments or statements).

If you have any questions about the research study, you can contact Bryanna Scott, Ph.D. candidate at brscott@lakeheadu.ca

This research has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of this study and would like to speak to someone outside the research team, please contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283.

_____ By checking this space - as the participant of the study, you agree to be audio recorded (applicable to the sharing circles and/or one-to-one interviews).

Confirmation of Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of participant (please print):

Signature of participant:

Date:

Sincerely,

Bryanna Scott, Ph.D. Candidate

Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

Appendix D

Prompt List Questions

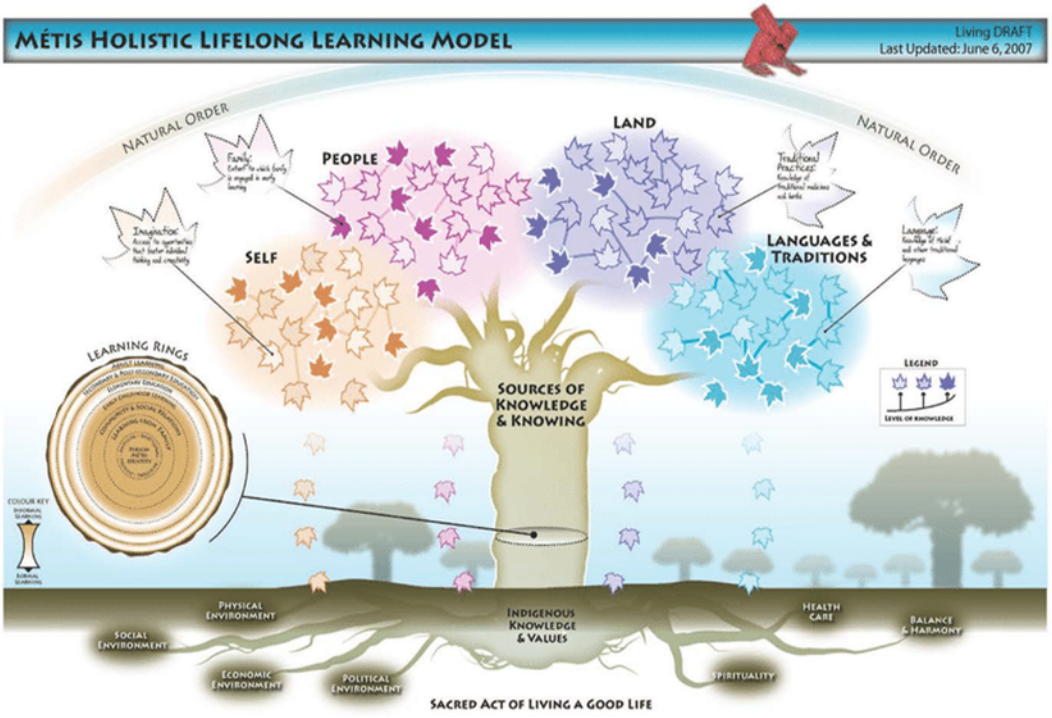
Preamble (to be referenced before the start of each sharing circle): As part of the university community, I am involved in numerous committees and I am engaged in a variety of roles with responsibilities. For this reason, I wanted to share with you that I am a committee member on the Ogimaawin-Aboriginal Governance Council - Senate Academic Committee (OAGC-SAC) sub-committee currently reviewing the Indigenous Content Requirement (Type E) courses. I want to reassure you that the information you provide to me as part of my data collection is anonymous and confidential; however, information may be shared through my interpretation. Similar to other research dissemination process of sharing research at conference presentations, posters, and publications (to name a few), another way my data may be shared is through this committee.

Sharing Circle # 1 - Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) Experience

Lakehead University made a commitment at the beginning of the 2016/2017 academic year, that all undergraduate degree programs would require a 0.5 credit course containing at least 50% (equivalent to 18 hours) of Indigenous content. With this in mind, please tell me about your experiences with the following:

- Tell me the first thought that comes to you mind following each of these three statements:
- Indigenous content requirement courses in higher education are beneficial to all students.
- Indigenous content requirement course contributes to the efforts of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
- The ICR course created an awareness and understanding on Indigenous content.
- If you were asked to describe a positive response to your course experience, what would you tell me?
- If you were asked to choose a negative response of your course experience, what would you tell me?
- What would have made the quality of your Indigenous content requirement course more effective?
- If there were additional courses available on Métis history and perspectives, how likely would you be to take the courses?
- Was there Métis content embedded as part of the curriculum within your Indigenous content requirement course?
- Have you taken any other courses that have contained Métis content and if so, describe that experience to me?
- What interests you about the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) course?
- Tell me about your learning experiences with Métis content and perspectives?

- What are your expectations regarding learning about Métis history? Are they being met?
- How did the ICR impact your educational experience?
- How do you see the ICR course preparing you for your future career?
- If you could make any recommendations to faculty teaching the ICR, what might you say to them?
- If you could make any recommendations to faculty teaching Métis content, what might you say to them?
- If there is any additional information you would like to provide on the Indigenous Content Requirement courses, please let me know.
- Have you heard of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model? (show image). After you see the image, what are your thoughts about the model? Do you think this model would work as a framework in higher education for Métis students? Why or why not? What would make it better?
- What content do people need to know about Métis history/culture/perspectives?



Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning, Report on Learning in Canada 2007 (Ottawa: 2007), p. 23.

Sharing Circle # 2 - Institutional Policies and Practices

In 2011, the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities released a policy document called: "Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework" with the purpose of closing the educational achievement and attainment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Ontario (p.11). With this in mind, please tell me about your experiences with the following:

- Do you feel it is important that you self-identify as an Indigenous when you enter university?
- What are the systematic barriers faced by Métis students in university?
- You are aware of Lakehead's policies and practices that are inclusive of Métis students?
- Name a policy or practice that is specific to Métis students within Lakehead University?
- What opportunities are there to further engage Métis students in university governance and decision making?
- How can the university further embed a focus on the needs of Métis students when undertaking strategic planning exercises in the areas of academic, operational, recruitment and campus planning?
- Do you participate in any Indigenous social/cultural committees/governing structures at Lakehead? If so, tell me about our experiences?
- Do you participate in any academic committees/governing structures at Lakehead? If so, tell me about your experiences?

Sharing Circle # 3 - Reconciliation

Reconciliation in Canada involves forging new relationships based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. It also involves redressing past wrongs and advancing self-determination of Indigenous peoples.
https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/nrc/indigenous-autochtones-en.html

With this in mind, please tell me about your experiences with the following:

- Tell me about your awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action report.
- How is reconciliation important to you?
- Describe reconciliation in education?
- How are we moving reconciliation forward between Lakehead University and Métis students?
- What are the key barriers to achievement in higher education for Métis students?
- What would you suggest is needed to overcome these barriers?
- Tell me about the specific initiatives in place that you are aware of to support Métis academic achievement?
- Is Métis culture visible within the institution?

- Do you access Aboriginal Cultural and Student Support Services? If yes, why?
- What type of additional services could be provided to better address Métis student needs?

Sharing Circle # 4 – Closing the Research Study

- What do you like about the Métis students' perspectives on reconciliation in higher education research project? What do you see as the rewards or benefits?
- What have you learned about reconciliation from being involved in this project?
- What have you learned about Métis learners from being involved in this project?
- What were some major challenges you faced or that you observed? How did you handle that situation? Is there anything that would have helped you or will help you out?
- Can you share some of the most memorable experiences/moments while experiencing the sharing circles (could be positive or negative). Is there anything you do not like about the sharing circles? Does your involvement or match the hopes you had for when you first agreed to be involved as a participant in this study?
- How would you change the institution to make it better understand reconciliation through a Métis student perspective? What directions or next steps would you like to see in this project?
- Thinking back to the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, after participating in the sharing circles, is there anything more you would like to comment on regarding this model as a learning framework in higher education?
- Any final comments?

Appendix E

Preamble

As part of the university community, I am involved in numerous committees and I am engaged in a variety of roles with responsibilities. For this reason, I wanted to share with you that I am a committee member on the Ogimaawin-Aboriginal Governance Council - Senate Academic Committee (OAGC-SAC) sub-committee currently reviewing the Indigenous Content Requirement (Type E) courses. I want to reassure you that the information you provide to me as part of my data collection is anonymous and confidential; however, information may be shared through my interpretation. Similar to other research dissemination process of sharing research at conference presentations, posters, and publications (to name a few), another way my data may be shared is through this committee.

Appendix F

Learner Outcome Assessment Matrix (LOAM)

	Learner Outcome	**Number of Course Hours Estimated on this LO**	**Example of how the proposes courses meets the specific LO**	**Does proposed calendar change meet this specific LO (circle)**
1.	Identify Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and practices that relate to faculty specialties			Yes or No
2.	Identify culturally appropriate ways of engaging Indigenous communities in faculty specialties			Yes or No
3.	Demonstrate knowledge of the effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and racism on interactions between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society			Yes or No
4.	Demonstrate knowledge of Canadian Indigenous peoples' history			Yes or No
5.	Analyze the impact of legal decisions on Aboriginal and treaty rights, including the duty to consult			Yes or No
6.	Identify approaches to reconciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and others in Canadian society			Yes or No
7.	Demonstrate knowledge of the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and strategies to resist assimilation			Yes or No
8.	Articulate the relationship between land, culture, language, and identity in Indigenous communities			Yes or No
9.	Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples, as defined by treaties and agreements, or lack of them			Yes or No
10.	Contribute to strategies for improving Indigenous communities' well-being.			Yes or No
11.	Other(s): please specify additional LOs.			Yes or No

Appendix G

Research Ethics Board Approval

research.ethics@lakeheadu.ca Fri, Nov 25, 2016, 1:42 PM
to Lisa, Bryanna, research.ethics

Date: November 25, 2016

To: Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Primary Investigator

From: Dr. Lori Chambers, Chair, Research Ethics Board

Subject: Renewal of REB Project #095 15-16 / Romeo #1464918

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant *renewal of ethical approval* to your research project titled, "Reconciliation through Indigenizing Post-Secondary Education: Embedding First Nations, Metis, and Inuit ways of knowing, content, perspectives, and pedagogies into community college classrooms (a case study of one Ontario community college)".

Ethics approval is valid for one year. A Request for Renewal can be applied for through the Romeo Research Portal. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project, also available through the Romeo Research Portal.

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior approval from the REB. You must also promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

If you have any questions, please contact Sue Wright, Research Ethics & Administrative Officer.

Best wishes for continued success with your research project.

/tm

Reply Reply all Forward