

TEACHING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMONSENSE:
INDIGENIZING TEACHER PRACTICE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Teaching with Indigenous Commonsense: Indigenizing Teacher Practice

Teaching topics on Indigenous people and culture can be challenging for educators in K-12 classrooms for a multitude of reasons. This dissertation examines the epistemological complexities that teaching Indigenous identity, cultural teachings, and futurities are met with in mainstream classrooms. In the early chapters, I spend time describing what I mean by using the phrase *Indigenous commonsense*. The core of this idea is that teaching and learning only occurs in relation to others, otherwise it has no context, and without context it has no meaning or significance. Learning *in a good way* requires ensuring the health of those relationships (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013; Wilson, 2008). However, even the most well-intentioned educators who do provide Indigenous standpoints in their teaching (authors, invited guest, contemporary perspectives) seldom account for how the processes through which Western epistemology filter and constrain how Indigenous people and teachings can be “known” by learners. In this study I was compelled to provide an analysis’ for how challenging teaching Indigenous topics are when attempting to be answerable to the goal of unsettling the influences of colonialism. To do this, I offered stories of classroom experiences shared by Indigenous educators.

In chapter IV I looked at what some basic inclusion of Indigenous perspectives would mean in a middle school English Language Arts curriculum. This chapter analyzes the ways in

which curriculum can be answerable to interrupting the multiple colonial epistemic maneuvers that attempt to confine Indigenous people's identities and cultural memories. In chapter V I examined the process for how, in many cases, Indigenous epistemologies come to be "known" through Western epistemological reading habits. This research was prompted by an interview with an Indigenous educator who shared the story of their experience of reading Indigenous philosophical texts in a graduate course with majority non-Native students. The primary purpose of this analysis was to invite educators to contemplate, through the acts of remembering or forgetting, who's or what futurity their chosen curriculum and teaching method is manifesting.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project explores what educational experiences are possible when deliberate efforts are made to indigenize teacher practice. By indigenize, I mean in the generalist sense imagining a teaching practice that enables the “heart and the mind to collaborate” (Anuik & Gilles, 2012) so students, and teachers, can access a more wholistic knowledge. I also refer to it as a process of naturalizing Indigenous knowledge systems in classrooms. This involves the practice of decolonizing our teaching in which we deconstruct and challenge colonial ideologies. I spent time with a small group of Indigenous teachers who agreed to explore these indigenized possibilities with me. Through our discussions, we explored what circumstances are necessary to bring Indigenous epistemologies from the periphery to the center—and then once centered as best we can, see what happens. I offer concrete examples drawn from my own and my collaborators’ practices to help identify what specific style of indigenization this study is referring to. I use narrative throughout to help frame complex concepts because *stories are our theory* as Indigenous people (Brayboy, 2005).

Positionality and Context

I have spent the majority of my life on school campuses as a student, a teacher, a coach, and during my time in graduate school, all three at the same time. For someone who admittedly does not “like” school, I find the trajectory of my life ironic. Now, I am finding my transition into the new role of educational researcher an even more peculiar experience. Though I have become skilled at performing variations of what Audra Simpson (2015) calls “refusal” throughout much of my schooling, I have always loved getting excited about learning new ideas.

What I have found the most unsatisfying about my schooling is that the educational process, in my experiences, has produced shallow and superficial relationships. I do not mean only relationships between people here. For instance, we are conditioned to value and trust only our cognitive mastery of subject matter topics like the science of ecosystems, or our ability to read texts, or narrow perspectives of history—and distrust our feelings about such things. With people, these surface level relations often lead to forms of transactional interactions between teachers and students. For an affectively advanced K-12 student like me, I struggled to find much purpose in schooling.

For the majority of my adult life, I have been fortunate enough to attend and work in institutions that have served majority Indigenous students. Since I was born and raised (first 18 years) in an urban area in the south, I consider my adult years as the time in which I have reconnected with my Indigenous roots. Because of these experiences, I have grown comfortable with my identity as a Kickapoo man—learning to *ascend into modernity* as a whole person and *practicing self-forgiveness* for doing so (Lyons, 2010, p.32). I love being a contemporary Kickapoo person.

Along this journey, one of the greatest Indigenous teachings that I have grown intimate with is the power, knowledge, and gift that a timely story can provide. When it comes to the focus of this study on indigenizing teacher practices, I can recall many stories from my time in schools that would be appropriate lead ins for articulating why *now* is as fitting a time as any to begin intentionally advocating for Indigenous ways of being in the educational context. But one recent experience on a middle school campus in Eugene, Oregon—which I will now share— was so profound that it has fundamentally shifted my perspective on the purpose of schools, teacher education, Indigenous knowledge, and life.

On a winter morning during my graduate studies, I visited a middle school as a duty of my job as a supervisor of student teachers who were in a master's degree program leading to teaching licensure. That day I had an initial meeting scheduled at 10:45 am with a social studies student teacher and their cooperating teacher to clarify expectations for the term. Typical student teacher support stuff. At approximately 10:43 am I was walking up the sidewalk toward the front entrance of the school when a youngish looking adult person flung the front door open moving in a hurry. Following closely behind were two police officers. I then heard one of the officers say aloud "well you are under arrest now" and both officers reached forward to grab their arms. From there, a struggle ensued between the three. Instinctually, I reached in my pocket for my phone to record the scuffle. As the officers attempted to wrestle this person's arms behind their back, the shirt and overcoat they were wearing rode up to expose their entire torso. Just as I was about to glance down to press record on my phone, I saw that this person had a gun in their waist band.

I did not have time to fully process what I was witnessing as this person wrestled one of their arms free. It was that moment that a surge of adrenaline, fear, and panic shot through me. Even in that most surreal of moments, I realized that the severity of the moment. I turned and ran away just as they... I did not make it but a few steps before I heard shots ring out. Five total. I ran down to the end of the school building and called 911—"there has been an officer involved shooting, about 20 seconds ago"—I gave the location and then I hung up. I did not know who shot whom. I did not know if anyone was shot at all. I did not know if I was in danger, as a witness. Since the commotion had subsided, I took a moment to catch my breath and slowly walked back in the direction it happened.

As I eased around the corner toward in the entrance of the school, I saw the two officers. I will never forget the trauma on one of their faces as they panted to catch their breath. Nor will I forget the scene on the sidewalk. A moment later, one of the officers spun around toward the school entrance, as if snapping out of a trance, and yelled to whomever was standing just inside to “lock it down.”

I sat through the entire aftermath approximately 20 feet away. I had a heartbreaking interaction with another witness just moments after the incident. Several police cars showed up one by one. I prayed. When they put the crime scene tape up, I was on the inside of it—sitting invisibly. Upon the arrival of the EMS, I glanced over to the scene one last time. I instantly regretted looking. I prayed. It took a half hour or so to eventually provide my statement to a detective, which just felt wholly inadequate and gross.

In the few months since this incident, realizations have come in waves. In the days soon after, my biggest question to ponder was *why me?* This question did not arise out of the notion that I am the conventional traumatized victim here, but in the sense that why, at 10:43 am, was I of all people, the person walking up that particular sidewalk. As I have learned more about the context of the incident the answers to that question have become increasingly clear. It turns out that the degrees of separation were not that vast regarding the folks who were involved. We shared many of the same friends. These mutual friends are folks who are passionate about social justice issues. Big hearted folks. Critically conscious friends. I have often wondered how it was that we had never met. The more I learned, the more I see that we shared many of the same passions around many of the same issues. All I wanted to do that day was go support my student teacher and help them develop into a strong, grounded educator. The more I talked to folks and

the more stories I heard, the more grateful I grew for Indigenous teachings that could help make sense of this seemingly random occurrence.

Indigenous Commonsense

A real human being is always aware of being in continuous relationship to everything and everyone else and needing to ensure the health of those ties. Attending to relationships, therefore, is both the means and the end of much traditional Native education. Teaching and learning always occur in relationship to others, modeling how to maintain harmonious, balanced relationships with all of creation. (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013, p. 19)

This is our epistemology. Think of the world around us as a web of connections and relationships. Nothing could be without being in relationship, without its context. Our systems of knowledge are built by and around and also form these relationships. Context is everything. (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

By way of a piercing thought one afternoon not long ago, the *why me* feeling that I was carrying dissolved almost instantly. If this set of circumstances is analyzed through what I am referring to as Indigenous Commonsense (ICS), figuring out *why* did not matter as much. I was involuntarily confronted with a drastically changed reality that morning—and through this process of privileging Indigenous epistemology, I have since accepted that it was no coincidence that it was me who “arbitrarily” witnessed this on a middle school campus. It was not random, it only felt random. In this moment of insight my web of new relations appeared more clearly. Being answerable to the experience requires more of me than to merely asking why. Relationships are ethical before they are epistemic. What is most important is how relations are

acknowledged and nurtured by way of given circumstances, not as much why and how the relationships exist—relationships just are.

More suitable questions to ask, from within this framework, may include: How can I carry forward the responsibility of my proximity to this occurrence? How do I act in accordance with the power of this story? To whom and what am I now accountable to? And how do I appropriately practice my accountability? To be honest here, I felt this type of disposition from the moment it happened, I just did not trust myself enough to fully engage it. My initial thoughts were to distrust my feelings. To trust only what I saw. It was a journey to arrive at what I am calling Indigenous commonsense in the days and weeks that followed. If I focus on questions like these above, or ones similar to them, I feel that examining educational experiences within settler colonial context can only remind us that, unfortunately, these occurrences are not unsystematic at all. I hope that sharing this can at the very least can result in something generative for the project of unsettling settler colonialism.

There is a reason that I did not share this incident with but a very limited amount of folks in my life for a good while afterwards. I did not care if folks knew about the incident and my proximity to it, but I do care deeply about what capacities others have to relate to it in its proper context. It has taken time to grasp fully what to do with it all. I share the story here partly because I hope that it can in some way help contextualize the vulnerability of the lives of students, parents, teachers, and teacher educators in the settler state. Random acts of settler violence were reserved for the most vulnerable groups in our society in the past. Now, we are all expected to teach and learn with a constant uncertainty for our own safety. These are acceptable circumstances when sense is made through settler colonialism.

Indigenous commonsense, on the other hand, can help us more accurately situate (in our hearts and minds) events like this by holding us accountable to the perspectives, lived histories, and lifeways of the Indigenous community in which it occurred. For instance, in Manulani Aluli Meyer's article *Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense* (2013) she describes knowledge as emergent from three distinct, yet collapsible aspects of human experience—mind, body, and spirit. Epistemology is formed by experiencing the relationship between these three. Although I come across this article late in my dissertation process, I would be humbled if I might contribute to the conversation she has started. Her observations on how modern quantum science can overlap with traditional Indigenous thought “creates a new-old-wisdom helping simplify complexity into purpose and common sense once again so observable knowledge can be valued once more.” (p.94) The process of making sense of our experiences is in dire need of unsettling. To continue to argue for change within settler discourse only further intrenches more settler discourse. This act of settler state violence transpired on Kalapuya Illihi¹ in direct proximity to children. It was not an isolated act of settler violence, and it will not be the last in this place. It just happens to be a recent example of settler violence within a long sequence of atrocities committed on Kalapuya land. As an Indigenous visitor to Kalapuya Illihi, I offer this story, and the accompanying analysis, as a gesture toward good relations to all who gather in this place.

To proceed in a *good way*, this analysis merits to be situated properly within the context of settler colonial theory *and from* the perspective of Indigenous commonsense. Otherwise, too much meaning is lost—too much knowledge will be disregarded—and too many possibilities for something better will go unheeded. To help in this process, Dian Million (2013) offers a pathway by suggesting we learn from the power of felt knowledge and experiences of Indigenous woman

¹ Kalapuya Homeland. Chinuk Wawa language. Original inhabitants of the Willamette Valley.

in the face of state sponsored existence, as explained in her Indigenous feminist theorization of Felt Theory. Her work highlights the resistance of settler society to grapple with “the truth in the emotional content of this affective knowledge: colonialism as it is *felt* by those who experience it” (p. 61). Felt theory has helped me examine the settler colonial and neoliberal nature of my initial inclination to locate the explanation within the *why me* question in the first place. Such an analysis minimizes a collective felt experience to an individualized perspective, which further ensures that settler colonial relational structures remain the modus operandi of understanding and intervening in such moments. As a result, I suggest that pervasive avoidance of felt knowledges leads to the reciprocal pattern of settler state violence and further perpetuates unresolved suffering. This emphasis on “healing” or “trauma” individualizes collective pain, thus concealing or obscuring the process of colonialism. This theory specifically functions as a way to describe the hidden gendered processes of colonialism. Though this overall project is not a gendered analysis specifically, I feel it would be disingenuous to not acknowledge how influential felt theory has been for making sense of this experience of state violence that I witnessed. Settler violence is almost always emergent from patriarchy.

In relation to the topic of this study, I can only hope that a story such as the one shared above and the many shared below can better help teachers foreground their feelings and instincts as a trusted knowledge source that can enlighten their mode of being in schools. But that is only my hope by offering this story—the story will be received on its own terms. As someone who is shaped by settler colonial culture, I have no illusions that I am somehow outside of settler values and discourses. Nor do I assert that this study alone will address all the complexities of what it takes to fully indigenize education. It is my hope, however, to substantively contribute to the emergence of practices that can lead to Indigenous informed educational possibilities.

This requires careful reflexive work and relational discipline—work I have spent my life striving to achieve. Teaching with ICS requires that special attention and ethical care materializes in all relationships in an educational setting. This includes our relationship to knowledge itself. It also requires that educators develop capacity to not only recognize the affective energy of their given classrooms, but also to attend to the impact of their pedagogy on identity, subjectivity, and relational possibilities. This in itself is a political act.

Intentions of Study

This dissertation is about making more possible in our classrooms. The focus is on teachers and how they could be educated to see, feel, and respond differently in classrooms and make a different kind of schooling experience possible. To be clear here, this project is not about changing the entire structure of schools—a worthy goal which I support—but it is not the focus of this study. It is instead about the insurgent work of indigenizing our current schools from within the fabric of the curriculum. To do this, I will not start with what schools are supposed to do, what students are supposed to learn, or what teachers need to know in order to contribute to those outcomes. I believe those instrumental frameworks are part of what prevents a different—I think more ambitious—approach to public education.

Essentially, I will approach schools unapologetically with an indigenized lens. Such an approach is warranted on its own merits, and I believe can offer benefit to all students in public schools. In other words, my theory of change refuses to seek justification for Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, or cosmologies as worthy (Tuck, 2018). This project operates from the assumption indigenized teaching practices are advantageous to the entire schooling experience and proceeds to see what the implications of that assumption would be.

Given this context, my research questions, loosely stated, will be: How can public school curricula and instruction be reimagined through the lens of Indigenous studies and Indigenous philosophies? How would teachers need to be prepared to make such a practice possible? I acknowledge that there is no one “Indigenous lens,” so my literature review will specify what traditions and thinkers I will draw upon in order to bring more clarity to these research questions. Now I will share some theories that can help us make a foundational sense for the challenges teachers experience in their daily practices—and theories that happen to be antithetical to teaching with Indigenous commonsense.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Settler Colonialism

For Indigenous people, settler colonialism may not be the primary lens of living or theorizing, but is also neither in the background or invisible.

(Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Cornassel, 2014)

Settler colonial theory, in the most fundamental sense, is built upon two defining conceptual features—turning land into property for settlement and the attempted elimination of the Native (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). By focusing on these defining features, studies in settler colonialism are distinguished from studies in colonialism. Colonialism, as a general concept, may include various forms of connection and cooperation from and with Indigenous populations; the concept of settler colonialism shifts the focus to the ways in which Indigenous presence, in any form, threatens settler rationalizations for occupying Indigenous land. Settler colonialism “covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession” (Veracini, p. 4, 2011).

By these standards, settler colonialism is the study of the logics that are required for settler populations to drop the settler labels, relinquish ties to a home country, and become the rightful heirs to settled land. For this purpose, settler colonialism is able to look in both directions at once—toward the past and the future—in order to do the work necessary to secure a present absent of Indigenous life. Thus, the presence of legitimate Indigenous histories, distinct cultural practices, and—most importantly for this study—Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, undermine the settler desire to be validated on occupied land. The fulcrum of this theory is Indigenous land and all the subsequent logics required to uproot and resettle that land.

Summarizing all the ways scholars have used this theory in analysis is much too ambitious for this literature review, but I will highlight a few of the substantive ways it is used in conjunction with Indigenous studies. In focusing on Indigenous land as the catalyst for social change, scholars have been able to center the “incommensurability’s” between conventional social justice agendas and those with intentional anticolonial purposes (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Byrd, 2014). These efforts have highlighted the ways in which some civil rights movements, regardless of intention, re-inscribe settler colonial logics of elimination. For instance, popular “occupy” movements of the past decade operated on the premise of squatting in places with the intention of replacing the ideologies of the current inhabitants. Though I agree with the sentiment that institutions like Wall Street should be pressed to change, settler colonial theory helps propose that a movements theory of change should not replicate another version of Indigenous invisibility. This challenges allies to rethink the unintended consequences of their movements. Even more so, it asks change makers to consider how their efforts can be even more emancipatory if it were centered in Indigenous based agendas constructed around relations to land. By doing so, an array of taken for granted notions of what it means to “occupy” space are surfaced and must be contended with. This is just one example of many in which settler logics inform efforts toward freedom.

Scholars have used the critical concept of settler colonialism to push forward thinking in an array of fields. For instance, Indigenous feminist and gender studies scholars have posited settler colonialism (desire for land) as the driving force behind the prescriptive nature of heteropatriarchy that shapes settler society (Rifkin, 2011; Arvin, Tuck, Morrill, 2013). Historian Aziz Rana (2010) uses settler colonialism to both historicize and acknowledge contemporary settler desires to “distance the country from its European origins and to assert an authentically

local American character or way of life” (p.7) at the expense of Indigenous populations. Here, his work in settler colonialism highlights settler aspirations to erase even their own origin narratives and supplant them with stories forged in rugged individualism and a self-righteous creation of a new identity. Studies in settler colonialism hover over the points at which settler desires for legitimacy are the most fragile and vulnerable.

The relevance of these theories for education can be seen in a research project that I am involved in outside of this dissertation endeavor. Leilani Sabzalian, Sarah Shear, and I are examining K-12 state government and civics standards in all 50 states in the US for instances in which tribal nations, tribal governments, tribal sovereignty, and tribal citizenship are mentioned, gestured toward, acknowledged, or overtly omitted (Sabzalian, Shear, Snyder). Settler colonial theory is informing our efforts to track the specific time frame and in which specific manner the logics of (Indigenous) elimination are enacted. The core of our study examines the ways in which teaching, reinforcing, and legitimizing a national settler colonial governance normalizes a past and present absent of Indigenous existence.

With regard to my project on Indigenous relational ethics and indigenizing teacher practice, I find Leigh Patel’s text *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability* (2016) helpful. Patel’s ambition to “be able to better identify when these logics are operating and with what material impact” (p.31) within the context of educational research is foundational for this work. To address the way settler colonialism influences our research, Patel proposes that it is most important to identify what logics organize our relationships, to question what research practices are legitimized in the research, and to enquire what the material effects of the educational research will be. Focusing on these questions helps surface the reductive nature of settler mentality throughout most research endeavors.

Patel highlights for us that under the current circumstances (Western academia), our relationship to the knowledge that we produce as scholars can only be legitimized and owned by an exclusive group (p. 34). The subjectivity of the researcher takes on that of the settler who is set up to choose who to research, to extract only the “worthy” knowledge, to determine what relations and correlations hold “true meaning,” and to set the parameters for what is a justifiable research project. Thus, this research project will not just be about describing classroom events. I will discuss in the next chapter how the choice of specific Indigenous methods and styles of description will shape my own, and the reader’s, subjectivity in relation to children, schools, and the world.

I gesture briefly above to the ways in which theories about settler colonialism can accentuate logics that may otherwise go uninterrogated when using other social theories. For the purpose of this study on indigenizing teaching practice, what I find most useful is when settler colonialism is “conceptualized in terms of everyday modalities” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, p. 8, 2014). This allows for the articulation of how settler colonial logics approve of certain modes of being as permissible and other ways of being to be inappropriate and unrecognizable. Scholar Mark Rifkin (2013) has conceptualized a “settler commonsense” in his work attending to the “affective networks” needed to understand how “settler colonial governmentality comes to be lived as the self-evident conditions of possibility for (settler) being” (p. 322). Settler commonsense is tending to an examination of how a settler styles of interpersonal existence upholds the structure of settler colonialism; and vice-versa. Shifting slightly, but remaining in the relational realm, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) invites us to concentrate more critically on the settler colonial logics performed through patriarchal white sovereignty and entitlement that assume access to Indigenous property. Part of her analysis, at

least, locates settler colonialism as more conceptualized in and of the body—specifically the white hetero male body (p.35). I find this useful in that it provides for the body, and the mode in which we carry and present ourselves, to be a site for intervention for unsettling settler subjectivities. The totality of Moreton-Robinson’s analysis, however, stretches well beyond the body and traces the ways in which settlers discursively enact possessive relationships with nearly everything. This includes discussing the maneuver of centering discourses on topics of race that, although they may be uncomfortable, do not fully unsettle the materiality of settler colonial social conditions. I engage Moreton-Robinson more in-depth in later chapters to discuss how having Indigenous educators teaching Indigenous topics in the classroom has the potential to be transformative in that it can unsettle settler possessiveness of educational spaces.

As appealing as this theory is, however, it does have some blind spots in regard to its commitment to Indigenous lifeways. Theories about settler colonialism have been critiqued for, at times, re-inscribing the very Indigenous erasures it seeks to address in its scholarship (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2014). For instance, it has been suggested that by framing settler colonialism as structurally inescapable, “settler colonialism struggles to narrate its own ending...” (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 427). This could result in, as some have pointed out, a highly theoretical discipline which has little material results. To address such concerns, I will complement the settler colonial studies resources upon which I draw with a review of Indigenous studies literature which centers Indigenous epistemologies so to avoid such erasures (discussed in the next section).

In this section I tried to frame how settler logics authorize our every relationship through affirming all forms of settler entitlement to land and lifeways and delegitimizing any trace of Indigenous existence—instantaneously. Though the rigor of settler colonial theory is exceptional

for conceptualizing political rationales, this study on teacher practice requires further theorizations for explaining the limits of how teachers can actually show up in the classroom.

The next section on Indigenous studies in education is divided into three parts. The first portion provides a framework for the cognitive and societal challenges that indigenizing teacher practice may be constricted by. The second part will emphasize the flip side of those challenges; the centering of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that exist in conjunction with and outside of settler realities. The third part is a review of a set of critiques of indigenization that discusses the need for caution when employing the term “indigenize”, even with the best of intentions. These modes of being—this Indigenous commonsense—is what I am hoping can eventually inform a more inclusive and healing practice in teacher education.

Indigenizing Teacher Education

Though I am examining indigenization in the form of and sociocultural conditions and individual motivations of teachers for this study, I am doing so because I believe that interpersonal teaching relationships do have broad political and cultural impacts. In other words, I am positioning this work solidly within the notion that the personal is political. I envision this indigenization project as an effort to decolonize our interpersonal relationships—particularly within the context of educating young folks in school. I will draw connections to the material influences as the study unfolds.

There is a risk however that by emphasizing the affective elements of indigenization that it can be viewed as an empty individualistic mimicry of Indigenous culture. There are vast examples cultural appropriation to substantiate this concern. Conversely, these shallow versions of interpersonal relations do not draw connection to and build upon efforts for Indigenous

sovereignty and decolonization, theorizing felt experiences of colonialism, or disrupting settler colonialism. They certainly do not connect us to land, or the history of the land. All of these concerns are prevalent in this analysis of indigenized teaching practice. Thus, *indigenization* is the specific actions that connect the personal directly to the political.

Because there are many various approaches to indigenization, I want to provide one more point of clarity to my usage of the term within the context of this study. Generally speaking, I am referring to indigenization in the pan-indigenous sense of the term. There are a few reasons for this. For starters, the design of the research involves working with teachers from diverse tribal backgrounds. There is a collective wealth of relatable knowledge we all will be able to draw from (i.e., collectivistic thinking and behavior, nonlinear conceptualizations, and so forth), but not one specific tribal tradition will be centered in this study. This is not to say that specific examples of traditional tribal knowledges and protocols will be fully absent. I will draw on these when they are appropriate, can be used respectfully, and to deliberately decolonize the research process by centering specific knowledge within a tribal context.

This section has three specific purposes. First, I will provide a discussion of the broad political features of how indigenization is theorized. Then further clarification for what I mean by indigenizing teaching practices will be provided. I will try to layer a handful of examples of similar research upon which this research seeks to build. These examples will be drawn primarily from literature on Indigenous teacher education. I will finish the section with comments on relational ethics and the political implications as it is referred to in the context of this research.

Indigenization

Indigenization has multiple meanings depending on the numerous contexts in which it is taken up. For instance, Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz (2018) propose that there are three ways indigenization most prominently manifest in higher education institutions: Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation indigenization, and decolonial indigenization. Indigenous inclusion is a method in which efforts to increase Indigenous students, faculty, and staff are made but preexisting institutional structures remain intact (p. 219). Reconciliation indigenization locates indigenization as the weaving together of colonial knowledge structures with Indigenous knowledges in a way that both are acknowledged and affirmed, but do not work to cancel one another out. Decolonial indigenization “envisions dismantling” educational structures and “building it back up again with a very different role and purpose” (p. 223). Of these three, I find the latter, decolonial indigenization, most aligned with this project because it supports “a resurgence in Indigenous culture, politics, knowledge, and on-the-land skills” (p. 223).

Gaudry and Lorenz further suggest that a resurgence-based decolonial indigenization may be best suited for bringing together policy and praxis in this decolonial work. Indigenization, then, is “about the redistribution of intellectual privilege, working toward collaborative relations that decentralize administrative power” (p. 225). This manner of indigenization supports the resurgence of Indigenous intellectual traditions (p.225). Resurgence-based decolonial indigenization positions Indigenous knowledges and lifeways as sources of values for institutional decision making.

An additional concept of Indigenizing conditions in an educational environment, the concept of Indigenization can further signify that “Indigenizing education means that Indigenous

approaches are seen as normal, central, and useful, rather than archaic, exotic, alternative, or otherwise marginal” (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013).

In order to remain clear-sighted on the matters of indigenizing teacher practice, I often have to remind myself that “indigenization” is as much a strategic unsettling of teaching and learning as it is claiming an Indigenous teaching is the “right” lesson or fit. This distinction is important since teaching Indigenous history, culture, and politics does not ensure that Indigenous epistemologies are enacted or upheld. In fact, the methods most used to teach such topics “reflects a more pervasive pattern of positioning Indigenous people as objects of study” (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 113). For teachers (and students) to engage these topics in a relationally ethical way, indigenizing a teaching practice would mean to cultivate relationships. Before this can occur however, growing accustomed to experiencing relations in a reciprocal way is an essential part of the process.

Indigenizing Educational Practice and Relational Ethics

Scholars have written extensively about the topic of Indigenous/Indigenizing teacher education. In their 2017 teacher education handbook chapter titled *Research in Indigenizing Teacher Education*, Brooke Madden and Florence Glanfield frame the practice of indigenizing as *pedagogical pathways* to Indigenous knowledges (i.e., learning from traditional Indigenous models of teaching; pedagogy for decolonizing; Indigenous and anti-racist education; and Indigenous and place-based education) (p. 1150). Each of these pathways respond to different needs and goals. At times, they also intersect.

This comprehensive review of the practicing teacher education literature highlights the Indigenous pedagogical pathways that most contribute to teacher prep. The first emphasizes

district and teacher collaboration (relationship building) with local Indigenous communities as a productive means for shifting (mis)understandings of Indigeneity (p. 1157). Another common pedagogical pathway that emerges from the in-service literature are projects “aimed at supporting teachers in translating theory and practice... and refining their attempts to engage Indigenous education were common” (p. 1158). This “translating theory-practice” for/with teachers align with the intentions of this research project.

The text *Stop Talking: Indigenous Ways of Teaching and Knowing and Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education* (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013) provides some practical suggestions for Indigenizing educational practices. These acts include but are not limited to: teaching at an “earth-based pace,” attending to relationships, incorporating place-based knowledge/learning from the earth, learning/thinking/working as a group, learning from elders, close observation and emulation, indirect teaching, silence-pausing-reflection, all senses experiential learning, visual/non-verbal learning, storytelling, dance and games, “good” instructions, and humor (p. 17). In different areas in the chapters to follow, I discuss in more detail some of these topics on indigenizing as they came up in the interviews with teachers.

Indigenizing educational practices requires that we always keep in sight what values are guiding our decisions as educators. Michelle Jacob (2013), in her book *Yakima Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing*, shares a traditional Indigenous approach to teaching and learning in her articulation of a critical Indigenous pedagogy. Examples of this indigenized method of teaching include intentionally creating a fun learning environment for students, emphasizing that sharing knowledge is a gift (which gives purpose to the knowledge for the learner) and teaching learners to behave in accordance to an ethics of reciprocity, holding learners to high standards and connecting learning to larger decolonization

efforts, and teaching learners a relational accountability—a level of pride valued in direct relation to the larger group. A critical Indigenous pedagogy can impart a pathway for teachers to teach their way to enhanced relations.

Moments of teaching that match these descriptions are too rare in our schools. But the fact that they are rare does not mean they are less significant. In fact, an argument can be made that they are more significant because they are rare. Vine Deloria offers that in a Western research paradigm a phenomenon that falls out of prescribed behaviors are said to be “anomalies” that should be given little attention or value (1999, p. 21). He suggests that Indigenous epistemologies are more advanced than Western ways of knowing because they seek to learn from these anomalies. In Indigenous epistemologies “the unexplained in traditional technology is held as a mystery—accepted, revered, but not discarded as useless” (p. 64). Paying attention to the rare occasions where teaching practices are indigenized involves traditional mindfulness (Yellow Bird, 2012, p. 57). This, in itself, is a form of decolonizing our relationship to education because it involves letting anomalies matter again. There are instances in my following chapters that examine what may seem like insignificant comments during the interviews but eventually became a significant part of the overall analysis. I especially discuss these in chapters IV and V.

Scholar/wisdom keeper Ilarion Mercurieff describes his early teachings from tribal elders. He recalls the elders “tell us that today we are living in an “inside-out” society in which we have reversed all the laws of living...we teach children how to make a living, but not how to live” (2013, p.61). For this study, I think of indigenizing as a way of being and knowing that co-constitute one another. Relational ethics is the style of indigenization I seek to examine in this dissertation. I think of relational strands of Indigenous thought as the tie that binds this project

completely together. In this way thinking and being, relations are ethical before they are epistemic. I offer that one way to think of ethical relations is an analogy with marriage—it is a relationship between independent parties that have their independent autonomy and needs. The relationship itself also requires attention and care in which each involved contribute to meet.

Scholar Dan Wildcat suggests that what the world needs is now is a RICH Indigenous assessment model for decision making—the *Relations In Complex Harmony* assessment (Wildcat, 2009, p. 124-125). RICH assessment requires that considerations be given to more than just the personal consequences of actions. I do realize that some of the points being made in this section on relationality are long held central positions within much of the Indigenous studies literature, but if anyone has paid any attention to the state of human to human and human to non-human relations even modestly, then I further make the claim that Indigenous knowledges need to take a more central role in the field of teacher education.

Indigenize With Caution

Much of the literature on indigenization addresses the need for outlining the views and perspectives of Indigenous people and provides language to describe how to do this in educational settings. The overall concept, however, has been critiqued for being at risk of folding into a “catch-all” phrase of sorts that works to improve the appearance of multicultural initiatives of higher education institutions, but remains distanced from tribal communities and tribal people. A good example of this can be found in Canadian higher education institutions’ efforts to “indigenize” curricula. Canadian activists and educators have developed a healthy mistrust for mandated Indigenous studies curriculum for all higher education students, in part because that term has been watered down, treated in a vague manner, and used to refer to a variety of

neoliberal educational reforms. Maintaining a lack of clarity about the purpose of indigenization is one of the practices that allow higher education programs to treat “equitable” and “diversified” approaches to pedagogy, content, assessments, and professorships as stand-ins for indigenization. In other words, inclusiveness can work as a strategy of avoiding change.

On this point, Monique Giroux (2017) asks

Why are we calling this “indigenizing” when really, we are trying to do what’s right? ... Isn’t teaching about Indigenous histories simply teaching a more complete history? Isn’t making sure that we use examples that Indigenous students can relate to just good teaching?

I’m also struck by the general lack of discussion about what it means to indigenize the academy. The efforts to indigenize universities is, as such, being done with little critical engagement with what “indigenization” might involve, especially if it is to benefit Indigenous nations.

She contends that these *best practices* approaches are mostly good for settler institutions because they prop up the university as not only the site where indigenization occurs but also as the institution responsible for providing the rationale for indigenization. This is yet another way a “good” intention can take too much energy and attention away from the communities they proclaim to uphold.

Similarly, the call to indigenize has also been critiqued because of the propensity to over generalize Indigenous concepts, knowledges, and contexts within educational systems. In reviewing Four Arrows’ (2015) book *Teaching Truly: A curriculum to indigenize mainstream education*, San Pedro, et.al (2015, p.156) warns that the “movement from Indigenous (as a noun) to indigenize (as a verb) in relation to education may, inadvertently, story over and story past the

very people and communities...” it allegedly is meant to benefit. The concern here is that indigenize discursively “becomes an action upon another action” (p. 156) that is not necessarily beholden to the places, lived experiences, and the epistemologies/ontologies of Indigenous communities. This runs the risk of creating dynamics in which there are “indigenized” teaching and learning occurring without the need for tangible engagement with Indigenous communities. In other words, the apprehension with referring to indigenize in this way is that it runs the risk of over flattening the context from which Indigenous epistemologies emerge, which is yet just another form of prescriptive erasure.

Comparable criticisms have been expressed by others to varying degrees regarding indigenization. Simpson (2017, p. 46-47) recommends a shift from

indigenizing the processes that maintain the structures of settler colonialism and expand, deepen, and reactualize the processes and knowledges of grounded normativity to structuralize Indigenous nationhood and resurgence and mobilizations as a mechanism to dismantle the structure of colonialism in all forms.

This withdrawal from seeking validation from within Western institutions serves the “resurgence of Indigenous intellectual systems and a reclamation of the context within which those systems operate” (p. 171). Simpson ultimately concludes that indigenization is a project that we should collectively abandon as it is yet another manifestation of settler colonialisms boundary setting for how Indigenous people should prioritize their commitments.

All of these critiques have merit. I am confident this study avoids the concerns Giroux (2017) raised about indigenization becoming a bland version of neoliberal multicultural education reform. In the chapters to come, it will be clear that the types of teaching practices

being discussed could not be easily interpreted as a relabeled version of constructivist pedagogy, student centered curricula, or teaching accurate history. It is as much about unsettling knowledge as it is about adding to it.

San Pedro's et. al. and Simpson's critiques about the concept of indigenization serving to erase or replace attention that could be given to place based and tribally specific approaches to education are of greater concern, as I can't be entirely confident this project escapes the threats they identify. However, part of San Pedro's et. al. worry is that the concept of indigenization is implicitly silent about tribally specific practices, and it is silence that performs the act of erasure. San Pedro does not deny the possibility of there being similarities across many Indigenous communities approaches to education or that some shared conceptions of education might emerge from contemporary Indigenous people's experience. He is concerned that this will become all that is talked about and supported. My analysis in this dissertation addresses this concern by acknowledging here and elsewhere the importance—no, necessity—of tribally specific forms of educational practice for any overall effort to decolonize our educational practices. This study is not silent on that point.

Simpson's critique goes further, by suggesting all Indigenous ways of knowing are fundamentally connected to specific places and the contexts in which they emerge. Any claims of a general form of indigenization is, therefore inherently contradictory and should be abandoned. Perhaps Simpson is correct on this point, and that ultimately any benefit gained from imagining general forms of indigenizing educational practice are offset by the negative consequences of the generalizing process. Though I am reluctant to disagree with Simpson, I think it is worth pointing out that, ironically, Simpson's totalizing critique of the concept of indigenization is itself a general theory of what indigenization looks like. It will always be

context specific. It cannot make general claims. More importantly, taken as a literal prohibition, it fails to allow that some practices of indigenization like the ones described here may have their origin in specific traditions and place relations, but that lineage has been erased. In that case it seems important to hold on to those practices, to cherish and cultivate them as a practice of survivance. This, at least, is what I have tried to do here.

This, of course, is not a refutation of Simpson's critique. Her analysis cannot be set aside. Instead, it must be carried along throughout this analysis. More specifically said, it is what I aspire to. It will haunt this analysis and thereby keep it honest and serve as a reminder of the broader context of responsibility in which all scholarship like this must operate.

Because of the concerns expressed above, I am quite aware of the of the danger that using indigenization as a framework for educating in a Western-based classroom can pose. I have, however, found *Pulling Together: A Curriculum Developers Guide* (Antoine, et. al) helpful for situating my overall discussion on indigenizing teaching practice. This guidebook was developed through collaboration between several universities, consultation groups, and Indigenous education leaders. It is intended to support systemic change in how teaching and learning occurs in higher education institutions across Canada through indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization. The guide refers to indigenization as "a process of naturalizing Indigenous knowledge systems and making them evident to transform spaces, places, and hearts." The goal is not to replace or change something Western into something Indigenous. Nor is it to merge the two epistemologies into one. The creators of the guidebook encourage that indigenization be thought of as a deliberate coming together of two distinct ways of knowing so that both can be understood and appreciated.

The curriculum guide purposely links the concepts of indigenization with decolonization as distinct but interrelated concepts (as cite in Alfred & Cornassel 2005). Decolonization is referred to as “the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches.” Decolonization involves undoing and problematizing inadequate power dynamics. It also encompasses respecting and revitalizing Indigenous knowledges and approaches that influence Indigenous ways of being. Decolonization is fundamental to indigenization because it unsettles dominant discourses and brings Indigenous thought to the forefront. In this way, I am locating Chapters IV and V in this dissertation as working the generative tension between the concepts of indigenization and decolonization as used here. Both chapters, each in a distinct way, deconstruct the bracketed colonial limitations in which Indigenous topics are taught and attempt to reconstruct an indigenized alternative. Again, I am aware of that using indigenization as a framework can be problematic if steps are not taken to prevent the movement from being coopted and redefined. I wish to emphasize that if my definition of indigenization here is used to displace or as a substitute for efforts to bring tribally specific forms of curricula and education into schools, then this project is a failure. That is not my intent. I hope my work here can help lend to creating space for tribally specific epistemologies by pointing out the epistemic relationships Western discourses seek to create when Indigenous approaches are taken in learning environments. As Giroux (2017) contends, indigenization should be profoundly unsettling and that is an uncomfortable process.

These issues and concerns provide motivation to undertake a research project guided by these questions: How can public school classroom practices be reimagined through the process of indigenizing particular teaching practices? How would teachers need to be prepared to be able to read the world through an Indigenous relational ethical lens? What conditions are required to

realize such visions? In the next section I will discuss the research methods I will use in my efforts to answer these questions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions just posed in a manner consistent with the theory that informs the project, careful attention to the study's methodology was necessary. Two principles drawn from the Indigenous studies literature in particular informed the design of the research. First, the research was guided by relational ethics as discussed in the Indigenous studies literature. This work emphasized a commitment to an ethics of reciprocity in the way it enacts a collaborative research process with teachers. Second, the methods were more performative than descriptive in their purpose. The focus of this analysis, data sources, method of analysis, mode of representation, and audience were all informed by these two guiding principles.

In the following subsections I will elaborate on these principles. In the first I will outline the focus of my study as well as define the precise data source used in the research. I will outline how I used specific Indigenous research methods to conduct data collection. In the second subsection, I will describe both how I analyzed the data collected and represented that data. The data analysis and data representation will be described simultaneously because in the Indigenous case narrative method used, the analysis and writing of the narratives are a part of the same process. I will discuss what that integration looks like and the specific modes of writing and representation that will be employed, and why they are appropriate for the project.

Focus of Study and Data Source

The focus for this study will be the knowledge, insights, affective relations, material, and social conditions that enable a certain kind of teaching practice that I am referring to as

indigenized. The conception of indigenized teaching I am using here has already been described in Chapter II, but to summarize here it is a type of teaching that seeks to foster modes of being that are more than specific types of knowing. These types of being can be described as relational, reciprocally accountable, respectful, and abundant with possible realities (Wilson, p76-77, 2008). The crucial focus was on the conditions that enable this kind of teaching, but this required some preliminary attention to teacher and educator experience.

This research uses an Indigenous case narrative design. The cases focused on moments in interviews with teachers that in some way illustrate the kind of indigenized teaching that is the focus of this study. These cases were compared for insights into the enabling conditions for this kind of practice. These enabling conditions will include, but not be limited to, teacher knowledge, habits of relation, emotional response, framing of educational events, and institutional supports. Examples of the types of things that I listened for in my conversations with teachers included comments on moves teachers made that questioned or challenged taken-for-granted settler logics that formulated the styles of relationships in the learning environment. These interviews included discussions over their motivations for curricular choices and their thoughts on how meaning is made from course readings. Further examples of educational conditions I looked for included but were not limited to, experiences, insights, and training that enables teachers to attend to these things in class, what it feels like to risk acting on such considerations, and what institutional conditions encourage or discourage such teaching.

Participants

Data sources were originally intended to include semi-structured individual interviews, focus group dialogues, participant observation, and document analysis with 4-6 Indigenous

teachers from local public-school districts. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to rethink these plans. In the end, data sources were constrained to several semi-structured interviews at outside meeting places, at participants' homes, and through zoom interviews with 4 teachers.

All four teachers were employed in districts within proximity to the University of Oregon, at least within a two-hour drive. Originally, this was done for the sake of convenience when visiting their classes. These 4 teachers were identified and recruited opportunistically through personal networks and recommendations from colleagues who understand the purpose of this work. This opportunistic selection of participants was necessary and appropriate because the purpose of this dissertation is not to describe what is happening generally in the field, but to describe what is possible in specific instances or cases. In order to describe these pedagogical possibilities, it was necessary to identify educators whose teaching style aligned enough to where those possibilities are already being realized. All four of the participants are Indigenous teachers.

Individual Interviews as Data

Once date and times were identified, meetings with the individual teachers were scheduled. My first meeting with each teacher was used to familiarize them with the goals of the project and to identify lessons or aspects of their curricula they wanted to discuss. These meetings were audio recorded when conducted in person and video recorded when conducted by Zoom. In some cases, these conversations focused on episodes of teaching that the teachers thought might qualify as having been distinctly influenced by values associated with their Indigenous values and identities.

In other cases, we discussed a reading on the topic of indigenizing education, for the purpose of stimulating conversations about the topic and to help refine our common vocabulary. In these conversations, participants shared personal ideas around the purpose of education, and discussed what indigenizing our teaching might practically mean. I, the researcher, also provided questions in advance of our visit for us to discuss at the meeting.

To begin the first interview, I offered gifts to each of the participants as a gesture of appreciation for their time and generosity. Beginning the initial meeting in this way is intended to have participants feel acknowledged, affirmed, and appreciated, heard, and valued. They were not only invited into this project to offer their insights as professional educators, but they were also invited to share holistically. This methodological approach is striving to model the embodiment of an Indigenous relational ethics design with these teachers.

After taking initial time to visit and connect, we began dialogue about the specifics of the research project. We began this dialogue with sharing general thoughts on what they each thought may require of us to indigenize our work. They had opportunities to share their thoughts for as long as they wanted before asking the planned research questions. Topics covered included providing clarity on what an relationships they valued most in their teaching; what is the purpose of indigenizing a lesson with an Indigenous relational ethics design and what it requires of the teacher; what it takes to expand on their “go to” Native centric lesson that they are most comfortable and experienced at teaching; their thoughts criteria for establishing on establishing relationships with students and school communities; and how to assess as teachers if we are achieving what we are setting out to do in the lesson. It was not my intent to predict what every interview would cover. I was looking to discuss the following kinds of phenomena in the broadest sense: Teacher planning, framing, and presentation of their lesson; the ways in which

they anticipated students engaging in the lesson; the objective of the lesson; what (if any) clarifying messages follow the instruction; what feelings and/or affective shifts in curricula they sought to bring about.

Data Analysis and Representation

The data analysis and representation process occurred simultaneously in what I am calling an indigenized case narrative research method. The procedure of composing the narrative was a collaborative data analysis process and the final narrative produced was the first stage of data collection. This process involved the following elements:

1. identification of a moment or extended period of the interview that demonstrated the possibility of a pedagogy that intentionally produces unsettled relational modes of being;
2. careful description of the context in which such effects occur;
3. identification of the insights, history, practices, and institutional supports;
4. speculation about subsequent impact.

All these determinations were generated during the process of preplanning and analyzing the research project.

Once these discussions occurred, I took the notes from these conversations and developed initial written narrative descriptions of the interview transcripts. This was followed by several rewrites of notes and developing theoretical ideas. The event descriptions were further examined to identify societal conditions. The narratives were then further developed to highlight the significance of these educational conditions as well as teachers' speculations about the impact of this kind of examination.

This process of narrative research has precedents in the field. The four main approaches that informed this scholarship will be Tribal Crit Theory as articulated by Bryan Brayboy (2005), narrative inquiry—especially recent iterations of this research approach that have been developed with Indigenous scholars and emphasize relational ethics (Clandinin, Caine, & Lessard, 2018), sonata-form case studies as developed by Jerry Rosiek, and survivance studies developed by Leilani Sabzalian.

At the broadest level this methodology is informed by Bryan Brayboy's (2005) account of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). According to Brayboy, TribalCrit shares Critical Race Theory (CRT) a methodological emphasis on stories. Brayboy writes:

Stories are not just separate from theory; they make up theory. As in the opening vignette, stories serve as a way to orient oneself and others toward the world and life... Stories are, [Keith Basso] argues, moral tools with psychological implications, in that they remind individuals of particular ways of being. (p. 439)

According to Brayboy, stories are data, but they are much more than data as those terms are usually understood. Stories have an agency of their own and generate felt relations in those that truly hear them. They invite us to a more wholistic relation with a situation. He writes:

Stories often are the guardians of cumulative knowledges that hold a place in the psyches of the group members, memories of tradition, and reflections on power...one that must be able to feel the stories. You tell them, hear them, and feel them—establishing a strong place for empathy and for “getting it.” (p.440)

Brayboy sees this facilitation of felt relation as not only a literary quality, but a methodological one. He sees the use of storytelling as a methodological practice and as a form of decolonizing the academy. Again, he writes:

I also hope that TribalCrit helps to further a larger conversation about methods of conducting research and analyzing data in ways that center Indigenous ways of knowing and lead to American Indian sovereignty and self-determination. (p. 441-442)

Finally, Brayboy makes clear that TribalCrit theory requires a commitment to action and activism. He asserts, “The final component of TribalCrit is that there must be a component of action or activism—a way of connecting theory and practice in deep explicit ways” (pg. 430). Relations are not just abstractions: they are ways of being *in* the world. Therefore, it would make little sense if this study, in an effort to find paths into a more intimate and wholistic relations with the work decolonial teaching, somehow sought to do that by stepping epistemically and emotionally back from the work of teaching. Instead, this research attempts to move fluidly into the relations of teaching and seek to do what it also seeks to describe. If it has no other effect, it will already be reaching for relational impact on the lives and practice of the teachers who choose to participate in the study.

This commitment to living the relational practice we seek to describe in our research is not unique to TribalCrit Theory. It can also be found in the tradition of Narrative Inquiry (NI) founded by Jean Clandinin & Michael Connelly (2004). In their recent book, *The Relational Ethics of Narrative Inquiry* (2018), Jean Clandinin, Vera Caine, and Sean Lessard reflect on how relational ethics is more than a methodological practice; it has to influence all of the relations involved in the research process even beyond those related to producing this dissertation.

As we met and talked and wrote, we discussed how relational ethics moves beyond methodology while remaining central to methodology. We gradually awakened to how narrative inquiry is not possible without having relational ethics at its heart...we also realized that relational ethics is the most visible in the living of lives, in the doing of narrative inquiry, in what we are asked to do as narrative inquirers, Relational ethics calls us to live, calls us to take actions with ourselves and our participants. (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 23)

What I take from this reflection is that the boundary between our lives in general, our relations with those around us, and our practices of research are not natural. They are something we invent. And although there may be reasons for maintaining some distance between our work and our home lives, trying to entirely dissociate our research from our general humanity makes little sense. It will come at a cost to our research and perhaps to ourselves as persons. Like Clandinin, Caine, and Lessard's conception of Narrative Inquiry, this project will seek a more relationally integrated approach to research that examines the storying of teaching experience.

Narrative inquiry, in general, takes the transformation of the lived experiences of inquirers to be its primary purpose. Clandinin & Connelly (2004) argue that teachers' lives and practices are constituted through story, so it is through the restorying of their lives and professional work that they can change their practices. Enhancing research participants' relation to their classroom practice is part of the purpose of this project. Stories also are powerful means of expression and communication, and this project uses them in that way as well.

There is a large literature on the use of arts-based representations as means of describing educational experiences that cannot be captured with other forms of representation (Leavey, 2018; Seigesmund & Cahnmann, 2018). Arts-based researchers see reality as including affect,

sensuous impressions, moral tensions, personality, nuanced community interactions, as well as concept, cognition, and statistical relation. Artistic modes of expression are sought after to represent this broader understanding of reality, of changing our relation to it (Rosiek, 2018).

The use of carefully crafted narratives is a part of this arts-based literature. Authors such as Tom Barone (2000), Paokong John Chang and Jerry Rosiek (2003), Zachary Sconiers and Jerry Rosiek (2000), Cathy Coulter (2009), and Jeong Hee Kim (2015) have written about the use of literary story writing techniques—including fictionalized short stories—in educational research. The use of stories in this way are justified in two ways. First, value is found in their capacity to represent complex relations. Stories can map out and help readers appreciate the multiplicity of possible relations in educational moments. As Jerry Rosiek (2000) explains, “Relevant insights are conveyed by the performative content of the whole narrative, not by its concluding paragraph” (p. 338). Second, resonating with Brayboy’s description of TribalCrit Theory, stories are considered valuable modes of representation because of their capacity to move readers to action (Barone, 2001). Movement to action, however, is not only or always based on feelings of righteous certainty. The work of building and respecting complex relations can at times be better served by stories that help the reader/listener sit in and appreciate the ambiguity, conflict, and loss. Barone’s 2000 book, *Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching*, provides accounts of how narratives accomplish both of these ends. His distinction between epic stories that seek certainty conclusions and novelistic stories that seek to evoke complex and conflicting relations between characters, events, and their world will inform this research.

Leilani Sabzalian (Alutiiq) brings these influences together in the service of teacher education that serves a decolonial purpose in her book *Indigenous Children’s Survivance in*

Public Schools (2019). Drawing on Brayboy (2005), Chang & Rosiek (2003), Vizenor (2008), and others' use of narrative in social analysis, she develops a methodology she calls "survivance storytelling." This methodology, she explains, "takes into account the important affordances of Indigenous traditions of thought and Indigenous studies" (2019). Similarly, as demonstrated by my literature review, my use of storytelling will be grounded in Indigenous studies literature and informed by distinctively Indigenous practices of knowing and being. Sabzailian's survivance stories "aim to disrupt, decenter, and destabilize 'master narratives'" while also being "generative, creative, and pedagogical" (p. 5). Although my stories are not exclusively about the experience of Indigenous teachers, and so will not perform the full description of Sabzailian's survivance stories, they share these objectives and stylistic elements. Like her, I see my research as a way of contesting colonialism and connecting to "a long legacy of Native survivance of which I am a part of" (p. 28).

This methodological literature provides both a framework and model for the way this study takes up storytelling as a methodological practice. I am drawn to stories because they are a source of data, because they enable me to enact a relational practice with my collaborators that is consistent with the values that motivate this project, and because they are a mode of writing that comes closest to indigenizing relations with my reader in a way that is similar to the kind of indigenizing I am hoping for in classrooms. I am sure there will be times when these aspects of my research slip out of alignment. This, however, feels like the right aspiration. As a goal I believe it can give the research an integrity that will bring benefit to those participating and improve the quality of the final dissertation in ways both seen and unforeseen.

Cross-Case Analysis

Finally, once my initial stories were composed, I undertake a comparative analysis of the stories. The individual stories contained their own analysis of the events and enabling conditions they document. The comparison in Chapter VI summarizes these elements and 1) look for notable similarities across different circumstances, and 2) look for unique but complementary features of cases that lend themselves to a broader organizational framework. The goal was to build a case for a variety of features of teacher education curriculum that would contribute to supporting an indigenized approach to teaching as I have defined that kind of practice.

The cross-case analysis concludes an inventory of implications of the research. These implications will most likely fall into three areas. There are implications discussed for both pre-service and in-service teacher education curriculum. The pedagogical methods used, the content for lessons, and the objectives of that curriculum are also considered. There are implications for the purpose of Indigenous studies in teacher education which includes, but is not limited to student, teacher, and school evaluation practices, classroom design, and school/community relations. Finally, implications for future teacher education research were considered.

Closing Thoughts—Completing the Circle

It is hard to explain the dissonance I felt in the days after witnessing the violence at the school. I came into this graduate school experienced with a well-informed viewpoint on the conditions of policing in the settler state. In fact, I was partly motivated to apply for this Ph.D. program by how moved I was by paying close attention to the Trayvon Martin story. It impacted me so profoundly because, for me, Trayvon represented the hundreds of misinterpreted, misjudged, and vulnerable young men I have coached over 18 seasons. What I witnessed that

day should not happen at any school site, but unfortunately settler colonial inclinations have normalized it. I remember what I thought I knew before I saw it, and I do not fully trust what I saw with my own eyes as the truth. In many ways, I think of research in the same way. Context is literally everything—that is just Indigenous Commonsense. The context that day just happened to be a school building full of children. I know now that what I thought was important before that moment really has little significance for me now. I am still processing the randomness of the challenges we all face regarding such issues.

My assumption is that teachers operate under similar versions of this dissonance every day in the classroom, even if it goes unacknowledged. This is likely when cognitive knowledges do not align with affective or instinctual experiences. We have deep investments in a settler form of education in which students and teachers struggle to find intrinsic value. These circumstances seldom produce a world that we want to live in. This is why I am committed to focusing my energies on preparing teachers to acknowledge, appreciate, affirm, *and unsettle* the relations in which they are engrossed every day.

Settler structures are upheld by our personal relationships. Thus, focusing on the subjective educator can have metapolitical implications. I am not just suggesting that teachers adjust and change their modes of being because I believe they are operating at some personalized deficit for this study. Rather, this research works from the assumption that because of our collective existence in settler society, we all shoulder the burden of pushing the limits of what is possible in this world. Indigenous ways of being and knowing just happen to give us permission to be our wholistic self.

CHAPTER IV

CURATED EXPOSURE

Planning a Unit on Native Americans

Answerability includes aspects of being responsible, accountable, and being part of an exchange. It is a concept that can help to maintain the coming-into-being with, being in conversation with. (Patel, 2016, p. 73)

Transforming knowledge into actual political power is perhaps the most challenging endeavor for community stakeholders. In June of 2018 I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend an Oregon Senate Bill 13 (SB 13) Tribal History/Shared History strategy and planning meeting. During the two-day session we mostly worked collaboratively on writing the Essential Understandings (EU) portion of the bill. SB 13 is the long sought-after state legislation mandating that Indigenous history be taught in public schools throughout the state. These EUs are the rationales that appear on the state website for educators to refer to when teaching this curriculum. In attendance were tribal education consultants, professional educators, social study educators, and retired educators (elders). Most of these stakeholders were tribal folk. We drafted EUs over the topics of tribal sovereignty, tribal government, and tribal history. In the afternoon of day two, we found ourselves bogged down in a deep discussion over how to articulate and phrase the EU regarding tribal lifeways. We were most concerned with how non-Native teachers would read and grasp our articulation of an Indigenous epistemology; especially if they had little or no point of reference for comprehending. During a noticeable pause in the discussion one of the elder educators in the room commented, “I just wish we had a way to ensure that teachers couldn’t treat this curriculum as just another history lesson.”

That sentiment helps frame what this section on indigenizing teacher practice and curriculum, at least partially, is driving at. I believe what made us pause that day was the collective realization that, with the tribal lifeways EU, we were asking teachers to do more than just master a body of concepts and teach them as just one more set of facts and ideas. We were requesting of them to be *answerable* (Patel, 2016) to the curriculum in an anticolonial way. To be answerable ask educators to “articulate explicitly how their work speaks to, with, and against other entities” (p. 73). It requires more than acknowledging a responsibility to do better. To speak of tribal lifeways (cultures, traditions, languages) in a public-school classroom, one must account for the “deep trajectories” of colonizing logics at every level of education (citation?). This EU, we felt, should involve some sense of ethical encumbrance, a practice of respect and appreciation of the difficult work of cultural reciprocity in a settler colonial context.

It did not take us long to realize that the language we chose for the EU on tribal lifeways felt overwhelmingly inadequate—but at the same time the realization energized our focus. There was a shared realization of how much we wanted to ask of teachers, and even ourselves, in the moment. It is my hope that this dissertation can similarly give us pause about our approach to including content about Native Americans in our curricula and create a similar energy—an energy that can contribute to building pathways for teachers to become more aware and attuned to the nature of their relationships to curriculum, their students, and the larger community.

Curating a Native American Unit

The Indigenous relational artist or curator questions the confines of settler materialities—such as space-time, language, and written law—opting instead to examine Indigenous nonlinear narrative form, which exists in multiple physical and spatial realms, from our dream visions to our waking lives. (Nixon, p. 202)

Carla and I decided to meet for our interview on a Saturday morning in a conference room reserved for Indigenous graduate students in the University College of Education. We planned to discuss the possibility of collaborating to design a few lesson plans that could serve, at least to some small extent, to indigenize curriculum. It did not take too long into our discussion to realize that I had a lot to learn from Carla. When asked to describe the objective of her 8th grade English Language Arts (ELA) 2-3 week-long unit on Native Americans, without hesitation she replied, “Exposure! Curated exposure that can help somebody who can, if she doesn’t have any information, get it.” I followed up with “Exposure to what? Identity?” to which she responded with a resounding “Yes!”

Using curation as a framework for choosing curriculum has a specific kind of meaning for Carla since she worked in museum management prior to her career shift to teaching. Western museums have certainly been pivotal in the process to fix Indigenous people as unchanging relics of the past in the imagination of settler society. Using the concept of curations for building a curricular framework to support Indigenous people may seem unlikely, ironic even, given the extractive and exploitive relationship museums have had with Indigenous communities. The more Carla shared her collection of curricula on Native Americans, it became apparent this kind of exploitive presentation is not what Carla meant by using the expression *curated exposure*.

The challenge Carla faced was not just that the presentations of Indigenous life in Western museums were frequently inaccurate, often comically and injuriously so. Such misrepresentations also saturate settler colonial culture while Indigenous culture is ignored entirely. Policy makers who oversee the official national and state curriculum standards have done educators and students no favors by curating an educational experience largely absent of tribal life and experience. For example, nationally, 87% of the time Native Americans are mentioned in state history standards it is prior to the year 1900 (Shear, et al., 2015).

Contemporary Indigenous issues are largely erased. National civics and government standards do not fare much better. Fourteen states do not mention tribal governments in any fashion whatsoever in their standards. Several other states methodically erase tribal sovereignty through the constant rehearsal of only locating official governing bodies as local, state, and federal while omitting discussions of tribal governance altogether (Sabzalian, Shear, & Snyder, 2021). Such examples can lead educators to assume there is no pressing need to teach contemporary Indigenous life, culture, and governance.

Carla shared an ambitious plan to counter many of those issues. She began by describing several short stories, poems, videos, and articles she had already compiled and planned to use. The unit, she described, would cover the topics of Indigenous identity, the history of educational experiences, and contemporary issues as “pre-teaching” context “for reading *The Marrow Thieves* as a class.” Cherie Dimaline’s (2017) popular young adult (YA) dystopian novel is about a post-apocalyptic world in which Indigenous peoples are being hunted and abducted for the purpose of having their marrow extracted—narrated from the perspective of a 16-year-old Native boy. Throughout this interview Carla shared many thoughts on what she was hoping to accomplish with the curriculum she assembled. She acknowledged that her curricular autonomy

stems from teaching in her district, and specifically in a building with administrators that “allow me to be obnoxiously radical.”

The next few sections are dedicated to investigating and describing the way Carla’s selected curriculum was a carefully thought-out response to pervasive colonial relationships and logics. The purpose here is not to provide readers advice about what curricula on Indigenous life is appropriate or safe to teach. The central questions, rather, are: What is the curriculum speaking back to with respect to teaching Indigenous topics in settler colonial context? What is the curriculum doing? How is it being answerable? I think these questions are important because official curriculum (textbooks, standards, etc.) already answers such questions for us by excluding Indigenous based teachings altogether. Teachers who curate their own curriculum should, in my opinion, repeatedly ask these questions for themselves.

What Is a Native Anyway?

The first theme Carla and I discussed was on the topic of tribal identity. She planned to begin the unit with a cluster of quick reads that concentrated dialogues on Indigenous identity, citizenship, and the concept of blood quantum. Grande Ronde tribal citizen Kamiah Koch’s article *Indigenous Blondes* (2019) discusses the experience of being culturally raised as Indigenous while incessantly being asked the disparaging question of “how much Indian are you” by non-Indians because of her hair color. Koch describes the ways in which having her identity reduced to physical traits is a constant assault on her Indigeneity. Yet, this has been her lifelong experience. Carla then discussed with me another reading she was excited to teach. Rita Pyrillas article *Sorry for Not Being a Stereotype* (2004) uses biting sarcasm to articulate the contemporary Indigenous experience of being a regular disappointment by not fitting the

stereotypical image non-Natives have in their minds. Pyrillas is Lakota and was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. She describes how, outside of an imagined stereotypical way, Indigenous peoples “very existence seems to be in question.”

Next, Carla shared the 6-minute online video titled *The Conversation with Native Americans on Race* from the New York Times (2018) that she was planning to show. This is a montage of younger contemporary Indigenous people bluntly discussing blood quantum, antiblackness, patriarchy, and being mixed raced as these issues pertain to their identities. They describe various ways the historical and political policies that attempt to constrain Indigenous identity are a source of trauma for them, their families, and communities. The video also highlights some consequences for a shifting Indigenous identity which includes experiences of being objectified and having access to Indigenous peoples’ land.

After reviewing the readings and video with the class, Carla shared that “we will do a quick write, asking students what if anything, has changed about your understanding? Are you able to tell who a Native or non-Native is by what they look like?” What is more interesting than what this lesson is trying to accomplish is what it is *not* setting out to achieve. Nothing in this set of teachings bring certainty to what an Indigenous identity is. Each reading refused to bring into focus a definitive Indigenous characteristic. Centering urban, contemporary, and phenotypically diverse Indigenous voices deprive an essential settler desire to not only know the Other, but to define the knowledge they need. For example, it would not be unreasonable to expect students to object to lessons like this by saying they haven’t actually learned anything about Indigenous people—“where are the teepees?”

The expectation to know Indigenous identity in this particular manner has deeply unquestioned epistemological roots. Mackey (2016) theorizes the notion of “settled

expectations” as the flexible ways “non-Indigenous people and governments often unconsciously and unintentionally employ and embody common-sense colonial paradigms and relations.” (p. 9)

Within the framework of her book, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land, and Settler Decolonization*, settled expectations are “fantasies” (p. 9) and “taken-for-granted settler frameworks and practices of entitlement and expectation of ongoing privilege...”. (p. 11)

Though Mackey’s text is mainly describing how these logics are expressed through settler arguments over land disputes with Indigenous nations, these “fantasies of entitlement” are first taught and upheld through formal schooling. Settler ontological “certainty” is taught and reinforced through the reverberation of “hierarchical and racialized categories of personhood” that are “deeply related to securing certainty in land and ontological certainty for settler society” (p. 33). Presenting a bygone, unchanging, and one-dimensional Indigenous culture preserves an image by which settler society can gauge its own development and predictability. For this, it is essential to keep Indigenous identity in the category of things that can no longer be up for deliberation. When Indigenous identity is taught as something that is fluid and contemporaneous, feelings of certainty can recede into a sense of disorder—an Indigenous subjectivity that can speak on its own behalf can threaten the well-constructed security of settler subjectivity at any given time. Therefore, each of Carla’s selected readings and the video, expressing the viewpoints of contemporary Indigenous people who describe what it is like to experience these logics in their diverse, daily lives, emphasizes the ways in which their very existence unsettles desires for certainty and settled expectations.

Examining the historical ways in which Indigenous youth have been authorized to learn can help sort out some of the points made above. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) meticulously detail that what has been allowable to teach about Indigenous culture and people has shifted in

congruence with changes in U.S and tribal relations—most notably along the lines of political and legal policy changes across generations. In their book, *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, they describe how and why “safety zones” emerged and morphed pending upon the leanings of federal Indian policy of the era: “Drawing the boundaries between safe and dangerous cultural difference and illuminating the safety zone of American national culture lie at the heart of our history of American Indian education” (p. 5). Safety zones are proposed as a theoretical model to help trace the logics and purpose of education as they relate to the “perceived threat, or benefit, to a sense of shared American identity” (p. 6). Safety zones, as articulated here, have held immense power over how Indigenous identities can be known. For Indigenous people, the process has included having to learn about themselves through the eyes and imaginations of settlers. That is, learning “about” histories and cultural practices that are stripped of Indigenous ontological context. This concept of safety zones, I believe, applies to the education of non-Natives as well, for it is the sociopolitical endeavor of safety zones to protect and preserve a settler subjectivity. Carla’s lesson has potential to unsettle settler subjectivity by teaching perspectives from outside of prescribed safety zones. This curriculum becomes dangerous in its refusal to succumb to settler nostalgia regarding Indigeneity.

The readings and video also highlight the various ways Indigenous people experience degrees of visibility and invisibility within settler society. Brayboy (2004) posits nuanced versions of the terms visibility and invisibility to help “capture the ways two seemingly opposing states are intimately related.” They also “explain the complicated role of individual agency” in describing how the (in)visibility of Indigenous people “simultaneously create and are created by processes of marginalization, exclusion, assimilation, and oppression” (p. 128). This is to say

that what is visible about Indigenous people is more often what settler society imagines them to be, as opposed to what their experiences are really like, even if it is in plain sight. Because contemporary Indigenous life and political concerns are so rarely presented in state curricula, any attention often makes Indigenous people and issues hyper-visible. This dynamic intensifies the necessity that Indigenous people and/or issues be presented as non-threatening as possible to the status quo. In other words, Indigenous people should be on their best behavior when attention is given. To assume that visibility is inherently good and invisibility is always bad gives the false impression that mere recognition is the end goal. There can be, and often is, empowerment in not being seen, understood, or fully known by those who seek to subjugate your stories (p. 128). This point stresses the bigger premise of this discussion: It is the process of determining the settled/unsettled logics embedded within curriculum, for one's own self, that educators should be beholden to—not the expectation of a resolution. Through this habit of teaching, one can build endurance for being answerable to the colonial context (the who, what, where, and why) that informs state curricula. That choosing of curricular content with an intent to unsettle colonial ideologies involves more than including additional facts. Such inclusion can simply feed a narrative of resolution, which in turn permits a reversion to the “settled” acceptance of our current colonial cultural relations.

To embrace the positionality of Indigenous subjugation as a pedagogical advantage would require careful thought on behalf of an educator. Curating our own Indigenous centered curriculum provides opportunity to take inventory of our own assumptions about what motivates people, societies, and change. Supposing that settler society is first and foremost concerned with preserving its own legitimacy and innocence is a good starting place (Mackey, p. 41). Guiding this intention is the need to manage settler apprehension around what Indigenous centric views

are taught. This bares the question, then, what are we expecting our curriculum to do in response? Chances are that a unit on Native Americans requires more than filling in gaps of information. In fact, the lack of information is often so void of context that it makes it difficult to even determine what information might be needed. This question is better to just sit with than to attempt to pin down a definitive answer.

What may be more productive is to consider what visions endure when we abandon the impulses to achieve resolution and compromise. This strategy is reflected in Tuck and Ree's (2013) theorization of *Haunting* as a reluctant theory of change. For them, the concept of haunting "is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation" (p. 642). This idea emerged through observing differences in how hauntings are portrayed in popular US and Japanese horror films as discussed between the authors. Generally, in the US, characters who experience hauntings are portrayed as indiscriminately blameless victims who, through the arc of the story, eventually earn hero status by resolving the issue (i.e., killing ghost and monsters and restoring order). We, the audience, are called to side with this archetype because the hauntings by ghost and/or monsters are unjustified. Thus, hauntings happening to anyone of us at any given time, for no foreseeable reason, is a real possibility.

In contrast to US tales of righting the wrongs of ghosts, some Japanese horror films are stories of ghosts "wronging" (p. 640) past injustices. The reason for hauntings are the consequence of wrongdoings committed by the protagonist themselves, or by someone in their family lineage, or even something societal that needs addressing. At times in these stories there are interactions motivated by a sense of revenge. This is different than the goal of righting-wrongs (forgiveness, reconciliation, recognition) in which justice, although forever delayed, is

relentlessly pursued. There is a comfort in the familiarity of justice. In the business of “wronging-wrongs” (p. 654), however, we are called to remember that past injustices for what they were and not for what wrongdoers work so hard to forget or recast as less harrowing. The characters and circumstances are not reduced to innocence versus evil in this process of remembering. There is a perseverance to hauntings. Absolution, or lack thereof, refuses to be enclosed (p. 641-642).

Settler colonialism is designed to read, write, and teach Indigenous people out of collective memory. Whether it is through settled expectations, maintaining safety zones, manipulating (in)visibility, or any other efforts of enclosure, these forms of settler “Erasure and defacement concoct ghosts” (p. 643). There can be no hero in this story. “Horror films in the US are not preparing settler states to unsettle their own complicity” (Tuck, 2018). Regrettably, the same can be said for most school curriculum. To deem haunting, of all things, as a guide for thinking through the choosing of curriculum is a commitment to unsettling society’s ability to compartmentalize the wrongs of the past and present. Haunting is not a binary remembrance simply appeased by having an accurate recollection. The refusal to stop remembering “is the resolving... not what needs to be resolved” (p. 642) Hence, “the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is not accumulation, it is unforgetting” (Tuck, 2018). On the surface, haunting seems abstract and lacking a form. In contrast, however, ghosts and monsters (i.e., settler anxieties as epitomized in Indigenous standpoints) are conjured the more wrongs are sought to be righted or forgotten. Hauntings are both particular and universal—and as unpredictable as settler forgetfulness tends to be.

After her opening cluster of lessons on Indigenous identity, Carla shared a few readings she would use to help teach about Native American boarding school experiences. She expressed

excitement about reading aloud to her class the children's picture book *I am Not a Number* (Dupuis & Kacer, 2016). This is the story of a young First Nations girl, Irene Couchie, who was taken to a residential school at the age of eight. The book details how relentless and cruel the assimilation process was at the hands of Catholic nuns during her first year at the school. She and her brothers were allowed to return home to visit family for the summer after their first year at the school. Upon hearing of her experiences, her parents decide to hide her from the school agents when it came time to return to school in the fall. This book is noticeably different from other boarding school renderings in that it focuses considerable attention on the care and love her parents had for Irene and her brothers. Her parents are not dismissed as powerless objects in the background who have no will or ability to protect their children. Instead, this is a story of a family deciding together that they will resist state authority despite the unknown consequences. In one of the final scenes of the text, Irene's Father is not backing down from the threats of the school agent while hiding his kids. In place of ending the book with the children's eventual return to the residential school (damage), it ends with Indigenous children being loved and cared for by Indigenous parents.

Carla then mentioned that she planned to have the class read the article *Those Kids Never got to Go Home* (Gammage, 2016) and complete a quick related assignment. This is a *Philadelphia (PA) Inquirer* newspaper article that chronicles the efforts of the Rosebud Sioux tribal members to have the skeletal remains of ten children buried at the former site of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania returned and reburied on their home reservation in South Dakota. Carlisle's legacy is well documented for its infamous proclamation to "kill the Indian and save the man." In total, over 200 Indigenous children died at the school. Efforts to have the remains returned were renewed when a group of high school students, while

on a trip to Washington DC, stopped by Carlisle to visit the gravesites. The article describes how emotional the visit was and how a connection was renewed with the spirits of their ancestors. The tribe has since petitioned to have the remains exhumed and returned to the reservation for a proper burial. Since the gravesite is on an Army base in Pennsylvania, the Army has agreed to cover the cost of returning the student's home. Overall, this newspaper article blends the grim history of the institute with inspiring voices of contemporary tribal members who still care deeply about the children who attended the school. As with the book Carla planned to read with her class, the Indigenous people in this article are not passive subjects with no capacity to challenge supposed authority. Rather, they are setting a future course for other tribes if they so wish to have their loved ones returned home as well.

After sharing these plans for teaching her class about boarding schools, Carla casually followed up in the interview with: "Then usually what I'll throw in, My Grandma. My Grandma went to Chemawa." Chemawa is a Native American boarding school in Salem, Oregon and is one of the few still in operation today. She detailed further that her grandmother "was missing her back teeth because her little brother had a cavity, and they pulled those teeth and they pulled her and her sisters." She went on, "They pulled all the kids' teeth in the family because they didn't want to deal with cavities. I tell them stuff like that. [laughs] I'm like, this messes up a person." Just as quickly as she slid into this story of family experience, she went right back to discussing additional planned curriculum for this unit.

There are many reasons for an Indigenous teacher to share a personal family story like this to supplement course curriculum. On the surface, this pedagogical decision could be read as an instance of "damaged-centered" awareness-raising intended to bring light to the inhumane experiences of colonization—with a personal touch. I would caution anyone to fight the urge to

interpret Carla's family story as such. Stories like this are most frequently met with sympathy, discomfort, or resentment. Contemporary society provides few other options for responses to what is perceived as ruin, but these habituated reactions serve primarily to uphold settler desires to reinscribe settler innocence. Responding to this as a tragic occurrence, warranting sadness, is a problematic oversimplification because it frames it as something extraordinary and therefore not implying the need for changes in the foundations of our societal relations today. It is one more way settler colonialism (re)centers itself. Sharing stories are more than efforts to elicit sympathy. They are intricate, multifaceted, and unfixed efforts to transform all relations. Expressing memories and descriptions of colonization may be more aptly explained as *desire*—that is what Indigenous people

know about ourselves and damage is what is attributed to us by those who wish to contain us.... Desire is a refusal to trade in damage; desire is an antidote, a medicine to damage narratives.... It is a recognition of suffering, the costs of settler colonialism and capitalism, and how we still thrive in the face of loss anyway; the parts of us that won't be destroyed. (Tuck and Ree, p. 647–648)

These stories are generative in that power is located in Indigenous people's ability to know, not in a settler ability to understand. Remembering, retelling, and making sense of these types of stories is reassurance that our own knowing is enough.

Stranger than Fiction—Teaching Indigenous Dystopia

After covering the topics of Indigenous identity and boarding schools (among other things), Carla intended to spend the bulk of the unit reading Cherie Dimaline's young adult (YA)

dystopian novel *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) with her class. This text is set in futuristic Canada and is narrated through the perspective of Frenchie, a 16-year-old Métis boy. This is during a time after the world as we know it has been destroyed through various climate induced catastrophes causing the death of millions of people. In this post-apocalyptic world, because of immense trauma, non-Native people have lost their capacity to dream and believe the cure lies within the bone marrow of Indigenous people. At first, they sought the cooperation of Indigenous volunteers to donate marrow. But as desperation grew, so did the lack of consent. The story follows a small group of Indigenous people as they become a makeshift family by relying on one another for survival. The book begins with the story of how Frenchie becomes a member of the group. Throughout the story they are continuously moving and hiding in the Canadian wilderness to evade being detected by “recruiters” and Indigenous collaborators who hunt Indigenous people for the purpose of harvesting their bone marrow at undetermined facilities. As told in the novel, “We go to the schools and they leech the dreams from where our ancestors hid them, in the honeycombs of slushy marrow buried in our bones. And us? Well, we join our ancestors, hoping we left enough dreams behind for the next generation to stumble across” (p. 98).

The novel’s context shifts between the characters’ past and present lives during and before the apocalypse. Each of the characters have voice at various times in the text, specifically when they share their “coming-to” stories with the group. These are the accounts of the turn of events that led to them escaping and eventually joining up with the group, as well as memories of what and whom they left behind. One of the central themes of the text is the reliance on traditional tribal teachings that help keep people connected amid crises. These include sharing personal and general stories of how life was before, the use of tribal languages and names, and using traditional ecological knowledge to survive off the land, to name few.

Indigenous scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy offers some thoughts on teaching dystopian stories in Indigenous studies that may be worth visiting here. In her 2014 blog, *Why I Teach 'The Walking Dead' in my Native Studies Classes*, she highlights parts of the storyline from the show to help her respond to the belief that Indians should just “get over it.” *The Walking Dead* was a popular contemporary television show about the lives of people living through a zombie apocalypse. Upon stressing the many ways their existence is unstable, violent, and anxiety ridden from being constantly hunted by zombies, her question then becomes at which point is it okay to tell survivors of a zombie apocalypse to get over it? At what point is it appropriate to declare the zombie apocalypse never happened? Baldy likens the show to the experiences of Indigenous people in California during the Mission System and Gold Rush eras in which there was no shame or reasoning with those wishing to commit harm on you and your community. Her greater point for using *The Walking Dead* pedagogically is to emphasize that Indigenous people have already experienced an apocalypse and, in many ways, are living in a post-apocalypse now.

For many, the appeal of dystopian novels is that despite how exaggerated and unlikely the scenario may be, there is still a small chance that it could happen (and also that we can stop it from happening). Teaching an Indigenous based dystopian novel does something that is seldom accomplished in K-12 curriculum—they imagine a future for tribal people in a familiar genre that students already know how to read. So much effort is necessary to revise and correct the histories of Indigenous people that not enough consideration is afforded for how the past and future are inextricably linked. As Noelani Goodyear-Ka’opua (2018) observes, “We might think of Indigenous futurities in terms of relations between living, passed, and yet-to-come” (p. 86). The significance of this cannot be overstated since settler colonialism’s ordering nature exerts its authority in multiple directions at once, ever on the ready to smother Indigenous influence.

Chronologically speaking, Indigenous representation any place in time loosens the hold of other segments of the colonial story. The proposition of an Indigenous future, however, is perhaps the most threatening of all. Studies that imagine Indigenous futurities offer a means for unsettling this desire for suppression: “Indigenous futurities are enactments of radical relationalities that transcend settler geographies and maps, temporalities and calendars, and/or other measures of time and space” (Goodyear-Ka’opua, p.86).

This foundation for conceptualizing the future brings about a sense of immediacy that “tend[s] away from controlling and possessive ways of knowing” (p. 87). The need for a controlling and possessive relationship to futurity are perhaps the biggest source of anxiety for settler society. Whereas futurities are enactments of “radical relationalities” in the present with time and place within Indigenous theorizations, settler futurities posit “the future is terrain upon or through which white racism will get resolved” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013, p.80). As opposed to connecting across difference toward a share futurity, this approach “cleaves the future from the present and, thus, gives the future discrete ontological form” (Baldwin, 2012, as cited by Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013, p.80).

To imagine a settler futurity requires little more than assessing current social conditions. This, in general, is a story of a disingenuous relationship with its past and an anxiety ridden relationship with the future. To imagine an Indigenous futurity may require nuance and metaphor. This is a story of connecting with a past worth every effort to revitalize and dreaming of a future that gives those of us in the present purpose. This is why *The Marrow Thieves*, in my opinion, is such a powerful piece of curriculum. Positioning Indigenous dreams as the resource desperately desired by settler society is a deeply generative metaphor. Even at the end of this

settler made world in the text, society resorts to where it began with stealing Indigenous bodies and (attempting to) steal their dreams for future generations.

The power of this story is that it illuminates existing relational dynamics in which colonial society wishes to possess Indigenous knowledge while rejecting Indigenous people and context. This makes the entirety of Carla's curated curriculum even more remarkable. Her curriculum was designed to repeatedly and deliberately frustrate settler desires to encapsulate Indigenous experience. What I have attempted to illustrate in these pages is how this unsettling of settler colonial expectations provides a kind of answerability to Indigenous futurities. This answerability cannot be formulaic. It is the antithesis of formula. It is the removal of relational obstructions that prevent deep speculation about possibilities that include Indigenous lives and presence. There is no straight path to teaching about such Indigenous issues because of the liminal positionality of Indigenous people in settler society.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONAL READING

In my final interview appointment with Aleta, we spent a considerable amount of time visiting before I got to ask my research questions. Aleta was the only teacher in this study that was not actively teaching children at the time of the interviews. Though she was fresh off nearly a decade of teaching in an Oregon school district that served many Native students, she was a full-time PhD student in the college of education—in the same program as me. Our conversation was more like two grad school friends confiding in one another rather than a scholarly research interview. At the time, she wanted to share details from a recent class discussion of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2020) text *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* in one of her graduate courses.

A few things were not sitting well. She reflected on the epistemological tug-of-war that seemed to occur during class through which the cultural context provided by Indigenous authors and the standpoints of readers do not align when making meaning of the text. She made clear that comprehension was not the issue. What Aleta was calling into question was the way the *act of knowing* occurs by way of engagement with the text in class—specifically the style and cadence of the interaction.

She was only one of two Indigenous students in the seminar course. “It was really interesting to participate... they think about the world in such different ways. Like, philosophizing and tearing apart a text and the words authors choose to employ.” Aleta was referring to the way the class conversed about Kimmerer’s opening version of the story of Sky Woman first coming to earth in the time of creation. Kimmerer made it a point in the opening

pages to refer to the first human to visit Turtle Island (North America), Sky Woman, as a visitor, a guest, and specifically employed the term immigrant in this teaching. Aleta's concern was around how, of all the topics available, the class gravitated to discussing Kimmerer's use of immigrant at length. "We know what she is saying, but when a... person picks up that book and is like 'Oh, we are all immigrants,' that gives them a lot to feel, because, I mean, that's a contested conversation." This epistemic move can be described as what Tuck and Yang (2012) term a settler move to innocence. Expending the intellectual energy in the room on deconstructing a term like immigrant at length from a predominantly non-Indigenous perspective is an enactment of the strategies or positionings that function to secure a settler futurity. Settler positionalities in turn are absolved from feelings of guilt and accountability without relinquishing material advantages. In other words, since we were all immigrants at one time or another, we are all on equal footing.

This can lead to an unsatisfying experience for an Indigenous graduate student who has the rare opportunity to read Indigenous authors in graduate school. Moves to innocence are often subtle and difficult to track. Aleta did share that she interjected into the conversation, "She's not talking about immigration in the ways that we think about it... and that the story is talking about how plants and animals were here first... In the order of living organisms that have come to live on this earth, she's saying human beings are immigrants." Her recollection led me to recall a handful of similar classroom experiences that I had been ruminating on for the past few years. In my case, our class was discussing a section titled "On Being a Real Human" from the text *Stop Talking: Indigenous Ways of Teaching and Learning and Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education* (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013). This teaching highlighted that to be a real human being and live up to our true purpose, embracing cognitive *and* affective awareness is essential

for accessing holistic knowledges. The subsequent class conversation centered more on a critique of the authors word choice of “human.” As we (doctoral students) learned in our earliest theory courses, the category of human in research has a lot of baggage in the context of academic inquiry. The classroom comments piled up quickly—” I am not fully comfortable with the term human,” “human is problematic in research because it has been used in the past to justify categorizing people into hierarchies,” “human as a category is too easily used to uphold reductive discourses, like colorblind logics for instance-as in we are all humans here.”

In a room full of graduate students with a sharpening command of critical language and analytic skills, these conversations can arrive at a consensus quickly. Who was I to disagree? This is partly why this experience has been so memorable for me. I agreed with my classmates’ initial charge of what appeared to read as human-centered should be approached with caution. It is well documented how the development of *human* as a construct has been used to maintain social hierarchy through research. What did not sit well was the way in which the Indigenous authors came to be known. It just did not feel right to dismiss such a pivotal teaching so harshly. In hindsight, I see now that it is these types of epistemic transfers that smother the voices and perspectives of Indigenous authors. I remember thinking to myself “this is not what the author is talking about,” and unlike Aleta in her example, I chose to stay quiet. How is it though, that we can all read the same passages and arrive at such vastly different conclusions?

I bring attention to these experiences in a graduate school classroom because they help locate an easily overlooked site for unsettling colonial epistemic scripts. These stories are examples of how settler subjectivities are produced and maintained by reading Indigenous authors, which is the exact opposite intention for reading such works. Since *settler* is a positionality (not a fixed identity) in which settler colonial inclinations are always served first, I

am taking up ‘reading practices’ as a site for unsettling the commitments and performances that uphold these dispositions. This investigation is especially timely since existential matters such as climate change have increased interest in Indigenous thought and philosophy among non-Native scholars. I, among many others, think of Indigenous knowledges as an instruction manual for living on this earth. I am thinking of this discussion on how to *read* Indigenous knowledges as an instruction manual for the instruction manual, so to speak.

I am inspired by the model for anticolonial reading practice developed by Deondre Smiles and Max Liboiron published on their website *Collabrary*, short for Collaborative Library (civiclaboratory.nl). Their blog page, titled “Methodological experiment for reading with reciprocity: How can we change academic reading relations that tend to be extractive into something more reciprocal, humble, generous, and accountable?” (1/3/21) was a response to their observation that few have been trained to read academic texts in an anticolonial, reciprocal, humble, generous, and accountable way. They, too, had experienced discussions of Indigenous studies literature in higher education setting the way Aleta and I did and were motivated to find a way to think through often uninterrogated habits of reading. Their framework has influenced the analysis and recommendations that follow.

Efforts to decolonize curricula too often focus on building the right reading list. Spending time reading anticolonial work is unquestionably important, but it is only part of the project. What you do with assigned readings also matters. Arguably it matters more. This concern about how readings are treated is in alignment with Eve Tuck’s (2019) annoyance with what some non-Natives scholars imagine Indigenous studies scholarship can do, specifically for them: “In reading Indigenous work, they ask for more work, even if they have done little to consider what has been carefully and attentively offered” (p.15). When we as readers arrive to the point that we

want something—as Tuck says, “more theoretical,” “less theoretical,” “more practical,” “less radical,” or “more likely or possible”—we are absolving ourselves from perhaps the most important requirement of the teachings: to sit in the incommensurability of it all, to experience colonization for what it really is, to feel its pressure. This is an important part of the process, and it cannot be skipped. From the despair, to proceed forth with hope is indeed radical.

Around the time I was re-reading the passages shared above I had a sobering reminder of how well versed I am in settler colonial relationship building via reading. On the same day I sat to write the first draft of the passages in the above paragraph on Tuck’s provocations, I read from a subsequent chapter in the same book passages on the complexities of teaching Indigenous Content Requirements in higher ed institutions in Canada (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2019). I literally thought to myself “jackpot, this chapter is a goldmine” because an entire section of that chapter offered compatible insight to the points I am trying to make here. Unfortunately, my lapse into an extractive relation to the text did not come as a surprise. Few of us would be where we are if we were not fluent in this type of academic reading. As Tuck puts it, “Often it seems that settler readers read like settlers (that is, read extractively) for particular content to be removed for further use” (p. 15). I had a moment where I experienced pride in my self-awareness. I chuckled to myself and yet kept reading for what still felt like extraction. Self-awareness is not, on its own, an adequate means of resistance to settler ideologies. Settler colonialism is more than just an idea; it is material, a system of economy and thought in which we are embedded. In fact, presuming individual critical self-awareness is a sufficient means of resistance is one of the lies of settler colonialism.

Other qualities of scholarly engagement that meet the criteria of being a *good student* risk being extractive as well—including instinctually reading for contradictions, the habit of

deconstructing word choices to pull meaning into our epistemology rather than staying in the world the author is seeking to create, critically interpreting author motives (without reflecting on our own), ascribing to and highlighting passages that only bring us comfort. Such qualities often make us *bad relatives* to Indigenous knowledges and authors. These academic protocols do not align with Indigenous cultural etiquettes and do the work of putting off and silencing. That is, unless we as instructors, teachers, and students set out to meet the authors and knowledges on their own terms, we are not doing responsible, relational work.

I am grateful to Aleta for wanting to talk through her experience that day. It can be disorienting to have to track all the competing voices at one time, though to do so is often a required skill for survival. I will drop here a few broad guiding questions to better frame what this section is driving at, which I will elaborate more on later in this section: What work are we asking our selected course readings to do for us? What am I willing and able to do to help accomplish that goal? What makes it possible that Indigenous authors are left to their own devices in our classrooms to do the important work of decolonizing and indigenizing on their own? Spoiler alert. I am not going to answer these questions. I offer them as a space to sit in and contemplate our complicity. In fact, I am likening this section to sitting on an overlook, seeing the complexities an Indigenous based education poses for a Western classroom, and taking this chance to re-imagine the nature of our relationships to knowledge.

It is important to note that most of the observations made so far and those to follow have been made before. If this is not commonly understood, it is because misinterpreting, misusing, dismissing, and misreading Indigenous knowledge is foundational to the colonization process. It is the nature of colonialism to erase Indigenous insights and their authors. Our current education system prepares students to be fluent in carrying out this mission every day. The purpose of this

story is to contribute to efforts to do otherwise. Therefore, acknowledging those who have wrestled with this challenge before is necessary. Please think of this dissertation chapter as an effort to both model and to imagine what a decolonized reading practice of Indigenous texts might look like.

This story is parsed into three discussions on the trickiness of reading Indigenous studies literature. First, I will build out a framework for what a more generous reading of Indigenous studies literature may require. This will center on reading for relationality, generosity, reciprocity, decolonization, and Indigenization. After that, I will discuss how it is possible, and highly likely, that the act of reading Indigenous based scholarship can contribute to reasserting a settler subjective authority over the very Indigenous knowledges that seek to break free from this arrangement. This discussion on subjectivity formations is more of a suggested dynamic to pay attention to in our efforts to teach with anticolonial intentions; a theoretical scheme if you will. Finally, I will share an experience of teaching Indigenous knowledge in a public-school classroom to help envision what a reciprocal reading practice could be.

Be Quiet Please, the Leaves Are Talking—Reading and Relational Accountability

This part of the story examines the epistemic relationships that, it appears, necessitate more care when teaching Indigenous perspectives in any classroom. A common expectation for research conducted in Indigenous communities is that the analysis be conducted collaboratively, reciprocally, and respectfully (Brayboy, 2005; San Pedro, 2017; Patel, 2015). I (among others) am proposing that this approach should apply to *reading* Indigenous knowledge in texts as well. As was reflected upon earlier, Indigenous knowledges that are read/discussed in educational settings are usually decontextualized and thus lose much of their original meaning. As is the case

with other forms of extraction, resources stripped of context can cause discord that requires cleaning up. So, what would a reciprocally ethical practice of reading look like? What would it mean to engage a text collaboratively? In a Western humanist framework, we collaborate with people, not things. People merit our ethical concern, not text.

These are, indeed, difficult questions. Ethical, reciprocal, generous, and respectful are assumed feel-good notions that can ironically raise anxiety when contemplating how to practice them in our reading practice. At least that is how I experienced the proposition of researching relational reading. I sat this project down a handful of times frustrated by the colonial desire to construct and vet a Native approved “how-to” checklist of reading strategies informed by an Indigenous relational ethic. In a Western education system, we are all most familiar with the act of reading that is evaluated using constructs like comprehension, literacy, and fluency (to name a few) to determine if various levels of retention are achieved. This precise way of knowing upholds the knower/known dichotomy of Western epistemology.

Relational, ethical, and reciprocal reading, on the other hand, positions knowing as a value attributed to the quality of relations generated by the process of reading. Even more so, relational reading is a process of intentionally working the interaction. For example, rather than requiring a text to *prove* itself to us, we could engage with a genuine openness to the meaning the text makes possible. It involves respecting the text as a dynamic, even living presence that both offers something to us and asks something of us.

The way we engage with text is a cultural and political practice. How we read is as influential as what we are reading. How we conceptualize what reading and writing to be *doing* can even be more culturally significant. I found a subtle phrasing by the creator of the Cherokee syllabary, Sequoyah, helpful with this teaching. He famously referred to his understanding of the

written word as “Talking Leaves” (Gubele, 2012). Though this may appear overly prosaic and simple for some, this phrasing stresses an essential distinction between a traditional Indigenous and a Western way of knowing. Indigenous epistemologies are “axiologically embedded” which include an “ethical and spiritual base associated with relationships between people, nature, and the cosmos” (Kovach, 2021, p. 67). This is the starting place for what is knowable in an Indigenous epistemology. From this origination knowledge is a “tangible and intangible *animate* world that is process oriented and cyclical, such as that expressed in verb-orientated languages (e.g., with *ing* endings), which comprises many tribal languages” (Kovach, p.68). This framework espouses a “metaphysical and pragmatic” epistemology that is “brought alive by an animate language structure” and “must be understood from the vantage point of collectivism and relationality” (p. 67-68).

There is a sense of immediate obligation in an Indigenous understanding of relationality. “An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability” (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). Western rational correlation, objectivity, validity, and other value judgements are decentered from epistemic control. Without these descriptors of knowledge to gather around, we come to know in a way that answers the call for balance in a relationship to matter most. There are obvious challenges when living and thinking within an Indigenous epistemology and being required to read and write within the Western tradition. Relationships can become strained while writing from an Indigenous epistemology when “[t]he word cannot mean the object. The Signifier and Signified are in two different worlds” (Alberts, 2010). To know, then, may require something different of the reader than we are accustomed to. We should account for language in all its forms. Language is not only composed of signs, signifieds, signifiers, and human interpretation, but is also multidimensional in how it participates in its own creation. Tribal

languages, for instance, are viewed as conduits that connect us to the earth and our ancestors. We need to stop talking over and drowning out the Talking Leaves as our default method to know them. To stop talking or quiet oneself does not mean to disengage or concede. Nor does it mean to just uncritically support or yield. Regardless of how you think about the text, it will still be there and be affecting you. I rather offer the above version of an Indigenous knowledge structure to draw attention to the way traditional conceptions of research and reading limit the relationships with text that are available to us.

For instance, we are often left to the devices of the discursive enclosures available to us in a Western arranged classroom. We are expected to make good **arguments** and well supported **claims**. I am not saying that these are not important pedagogical requirements, but I will suggest that this type of language provides the exclusive metric for how we should relate to, and engage, the readings. To **argue** discursively contextualizes knowledge as solely emergent from the author, and that it is the responsibility of the reader to read for illogicalities. In contrast, it would be hard to imagine Sequoyah referring to the Cherokee syllabary as “Arguing Leaves” from within an Indigenous epistemology.

Reading Is Not Knowing

A major challenge for teaching Indigenous knowledge in a Western classroom is that, by and large, the standard learning method is the practice by which (k)new knowledge (Edwards, 2009) becomes the new possession of the Western classroom. This possessive desire has everything to do with how we can and cannot imagine a relational reading habit, let alone how to materialize it. (K)new knowledges are concepts and understandings that have been long-established within an Indigenous epistemology but are being taken up in contemporary academic

discourses anew. These cultural teachings take form as histories, stories, ideas, and cosmologies written in text that are as relevant today as they were for our ancestors. Engaging Indigenous epistemologies as (k)new can help interrupt the absolutisms of colonial dichotomies, such as, “feeling/fact,” “ancient/new,” and agential/dormant, to name a few (Meyer, 2013, p. 100). (K)new knowledges are contextual and modern, but they are not posed to affirm a hierarchy that posits “new” ideas as superior.

(K)new knowledge teachings can bring awareness to the relational ontologies of the instructors, teachers, students, readers, readings, and learners that are co-created and co-maintained in our classrooms. For instance, for a Western epistemology to make sense in the present, we must continuously recreate a subject who is entitled to discover and own any knowledge they desire to possess. For this to occur, the desired knowledge needs to be rendered to the status of “lacking will.” That is, “at an ontological level, the structure of subjective possession occurs through the imposition of one’s will-to-be on the thing that is perceived to lack will; thus it is open to be possessed” (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 50). To assert willful possession “requires a subject to internalize the idea that one has proprietary rights that are part of normative behavior” (p. 50). This is the essence of settler relationships.

To be lived subjectivities, these logics need to be continuously embodied, expressed, reproduced, and must shift “depending on social relations, historical experiences, and material conditions” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 117). They also desire to be acknowledged, affirmed, and appreciated in the educational setting—and for the most part, they are. This collective subjectivity of learners in a classroom can be particularly problematic in that Indigenous scholars are not generally concerned with seeking the epistemic approval of the Western academy. For this reason, (k)new knowledge can trigger anxiety in the possessive individual subject. (K)new is

a concept that invites us to experience difference in a manner unlike we have been conditioned to engage the new—to discover, master, and determine usefulness. Being asked to experience learning in this way may require our otherwise concealed possessive subjectivity to be revealed to us. There are many ways to respond to these disconcerting feelings, but too often it is defensive and hostile in nature. As Baily (2009) observes, escaping this subjectivity can cause “our identities to fall apart, our privilege-evasive scripts to no longer work ... and we get a glimpse of how we are seen through the eyes of those whom we have been taught to perceive arrogantly” (p. 296).

An illustration may be helpful here to further develop this point. I took a course on Indigenous Philosophy some time ago. In that course we read and discussed E. Richard Atleo’s text *Principles of Tsawalk: an Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (2011). After that class discussion, I described it to a friend as feeling like we were a pride of lions descending upon a carcass. As we engaged this theoretical text, analyzing each sentence, deconstructing its possible meanings, I felt I could almost hear cartilage tearing and bones snapping. For me, the analysis felt offensive given the context of the Indigenous teachings involved. The text was treated as a thing to be dissected. Contradictions were pointed out. But the overall message and intent—the life of the text—was ignored or not noticed. It was disappointing. Even more disturbing was the posture with which students engaged in this manner—as if no other relation to the text was possible, not to mention desirable. The text was taken apart, its component parts were understood, maybe. In this way every part of it was made an object of knowledge as a possession, but the text was not known as far as I was concerned. Leigh Patel, in her book *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability* (2016) summarized what I felt that day well: “This does a deep disservice to the materiality and immutability of

expression, verbal or not, as well as to the core nature of exchange and intersubjectivity... this desire for ownership of data serves the dual functions of elevating some to the position of scholar, with rights of ownership, and others to contributing goods and services to be owned” (Patel, 2015, p. 36-37). When knowledge comes out of the other side of this transformation process, it is no longer recognizable within its own epistemology.

To be clear, in no way am I advocating for a full abandonment of this form of literary reading tradition. Indigenous philosophies often recommend we avoid the reductive toil of binary problem solving. Vine Deloria’s teaching on a traditional Indigenous metaphysics, for example, included a call for a practice of “suspended judgement” (2001, p. 6), a willingness to hold contradictory premises in one’s mind and heart at the same time without seeking to immediately resolve them. This can be an effective concept for helping contextualize what a relational reading approach could be. From this stance, “people did not feel it obligatory that they reach a logical conclusion or that they would summarize the world of experience in a few words or sentences” (p.6). What is more important is to delay arriving at a full conclusion on an experience until more “data of a closely related content” (p. 6) is obtainable.

This style of epistemic pluralism is more than just a pedagogical thought experiment to try out in our classrooms. To not judge immediately what we read is a way of being. When delayed judgements do emerge, they may very well come from an epistemology informed by patience and care rather than from a desperation to know. If your desire is to change what is into what you think it should be, you can no longer understand it. Within Deloria’s suspended judgement teachings, I see connections to the teachings of generative refusal shared by Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 242). Generative refusal is a turn toward connecting to Indigenous sources of knowledge and power as a means of living. Refusal, like suspended judgement, is also a turn

inward to not seek epistemic or ontological validation from without. It is important to note this is not a teaching in conscientization that can at times, relationally speaking, further disconnect us. Do not make the task of suspending judgment a new objective. The more effort you expend to know the (k)new, the more you judge. This is the inescapable loop of replacing one “possession” or colonial logic for another. Simpson (2011, p. 145) shares an elder teaching that may be helpful to further make this point. There are instances in which acts of refusal/resistance can be like throwing a stone into water. The initial impact displaces the water briefly before sinking to the bottom to be fixed in time and space. The concentric waves to follow are longer lasting, more subtle, and have mostly unpredictable influences that continue rippling. Practicing suspended judgement (the initial impact) can displace Western epistemology long enough for something else to be possible. This may include seeing and tracking obvious (to you) critiques that need to be made but choosing not to immediately do so. Sometimes the Leaves need to keep talking after you are finished reading; and to keep listening is a form of relational practice.

It is also important to remember that critical Western reading habits are also *a* tool, and within favorable contexts, can be very useful. Knowing when and how to engage in critical analysis requires determining which colonial conditions that we are reading, teaching, and learning you want to unsettle. For instance, Linda Smith (2021, p. 171) suggests a critical rereading of Western history as one of the twenty-five suggested Indigenous research projects offered in her foundational text. This approach advocates a mapping of the “origins of imperial policies and practices, the origins of imperial visions, the origins of ideas and visions” (p. 171). A critical reading practice like this one can be a relational practice that is appropriate for some contexts. The contexts of a colonial history as it is often told is one-dimensional and dismissive of Indigenous pasts and presents, which is a circumstance that summons a critical analysis. The

move to relational reading, as I refer to it here, is a more inclusive conception of which critical reading is a part. The problem we face is that critical reading is often treated as the only way to relate to texts and one another's utterances. In the colonial context there is calculating pressure to privilege critical thought. This style of relationship, most always, is implemented without consent.

There is a way that a critical analysis can act as a smoke screen to hide the process by which possessive logic establishes normalcy. In her work to theorize colonial blind discourse as an educational ideology,² scholar Deloris Calderon (2011) draws heavily on research done on colorblind discourse (Bonilla-Silva 2001) and the conceptualizations of epistemologies of ignorance (Mills, 97; Tuana, 2006). Colonial blindness is more than an omission or gap in knowledge regarding Indigenous histories or issues; "they are actively produced and enabled by flattened epistemologies. Flattened epistemologies shape how "colonial blindness discourse are produced through epistemological reliance on issues of cognitive authority that actively silence other knowledge forms (p. 115)." This passage suggests that the dominant subject's way of knowing is not accountable for grasping differing epistemologies, and in turn seeks protection by intentionally maintaining ignorance. In colonial blindness discourse, both ignorance and knowledge are mutual and reciprocal. Thus, what one views as knowable is as much founded on what is deemed unknowable. Colonial blindness gives us language for describing how the entitled all-knowing subject chooses to transform into the incapable-of-knowing subject when confronted with anticolonial options.

² I am aware that keeping with Calderon's original language of "blindness" can be problematic in reproducing ableist discourses. As I continue to revise drafts of this manuscript, I will include a discussion addressing this, or use different language altogether.

Indigenous epistemologies often struggle against both visible and invisible forces that conspire against them. Marie Battiste, in her book *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (2019), developed the notion of cognitive imperialism as the basis for outright rejecting Indigenous knowledges in the educational settings. Cognitive imperialism is the process of omitting or ignoring Indigenous knowledges in schools while advancing Eurocentric foundations for learning (p. 20). This form of knowing in school “generates knowledge legitimization, production, and diffusion, thus positioning some knowledge connected to power, and others marginalized, dismissed, or lying-in wait until they are useful” (p. 159). Cognitive imperialism “is about the white-washing of the mind as a result of forced assimilation” (p. 20).

Whereas cognitive imperialism theorizes Western epistemology formation as the preferred tool to delegitimize Indigenous knowledges in the classroom, colonial blindness theorizes epistemology as flattened to the point that we do not know what we do not know. In general, Western epistemologies are “flattened” to the point that other perspectives and knowledge forms have little or no entry points for grasping. This system of knowledge relies on a standard that is “flat, reproductive, and unidirectional in the way knowledge is created, produced, and disseminated” (p. 113). This structure even flattens out foundational systems of Western knowledge making them outdated or irrational over time.

Both these theories offer descriptions for the colonial epistemological context in which we read Indigenous knowledge in text. We internalize these logics and they come into existence in our relationships. There is something internal, almost phenomenological, required of our very way of being to get something else to happen by way of a relational reading practice. This is necessary, in my opinion, for anyone who teaches practices that enable us to be sensitized to, and build an endurance for, a different mode of being.

This section provided reasons that the traditional reading habit cannot, and should not, always be trusted as the primary way for learning from/with (k)new knowledge. The colonial baggage is too burdensome. In the next section I will share a teaching experience. This story is intended as an illustration of the theoretical ideas just discussed. Following Bryan Brayboy's observation that our stories are our theories, this section is also, perhaps more importantly, a further development of those concepts and a refusal of the primacy of a narrow disembodied and decontextualized approach to knowing.

Teaching Academic Subjects

Some time ago I was invited to guest teach for a day in an 8th grade classroom during Native American Heritage month. The welcoming teacher was popular in their district social justice circles so I assumed students would be primed to respectfully participate in a lesson on Indigenous culture. I put together a PowerPoint of my favorite go-to teachings for students in this age range. I am a storyteller, so I planned to share a few fun Coyote stories early on to develop a cultural and ethical arc to the lesson. This all would lead into the contemporary issue that I really wanted to teach about; the 2016 Native American led resistance efforts to a stop the building of an oil pipeline through tribal lands at Standing Rock, North Dakota. The creation stories would help reinforce the significance of cultural connections that Indigenous people have to land they live on and with. A conversation on Standing Rock would give the students an introductory perspective on tribal relationships with land. In hindsight, the rationale for the lesson was to expose students to how Indigenous knowledges can be a distinctive and useful way to address environmental issues. The hope being that the more people who could understand environmental issues in a similar manner that Indigenous people do, the more capacity we could build for

meaningful change. I had one class period to make a lasting impression and I was confident, experienced, and excited to teach this lesson to this age group. I felt well positioned to teach an accurate, real, and thoughtful lesson. In fact, I still have this lesson on PowerPoint, and I still think it is a good one for middle schoolers.

I scrapped this lesson the day before I was to teach it, however. It just so happened that two days prior to visiting the middle school I read two chapters from Alutiiq scholar Leilani Sabzalian's dissertation (now published in her book *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools*, Sabzalian, 2019). The chapter titled *Little Anthropologist* gave me a considerable reflective *pause* (Patel, 2016, p. 1) regarding my soon to be taught lesson. Through a narrative case study, her chapter highlights the nuanced ways even the most well-intentioned teachers produce Indigenous peoples as mere objects of study and “do little to disrupt the ways the curriculum continued to privilege the Western gaze, center settler subjectivities, and arm students with the desire and skills to know the Other as a legitimate form of multiculturalism” (p. 133) (also see Paris, 2019, on the Settler gaze). It occurred to me to imagine the potential conversations students may have with their parents and/or guardians about the Native American teacher that told Coyote stories who visited their class that day. The image that came to mind made me cringe immediately.

Unbeknownst to me, my lesson was poised to inscribe the insider/outsider dichotomy by providing students with “insider” cultural knowledge, thus setting the relational context for the *knower of the Other* subjectivity to feel recognized, settled, and comfortable. Sabzalian's chapter led me to reflect, or perhaps what may be more accurately described at the time as *panic*, my way through rethinking my lesson. My judgement that Indigenous epistemologies (stories) are more suitable for teaching young people about ethical relations mattered little if on the receiving

end colonial logics are left to their own devices. I found myself contemplating the unchecked assumptions that uphold possessive subjectivities. Suffice it to say, this was my path to deciding not to introduce students to Indigenous culture and instead teach an 8th grade version of settler colonial theory.

Settler colonialism is a relational knowledge if nothing else. Its defining characteristics conceal all the ways colonial logics establish normalcy. If there is no conceivable path in or out, then there can be no unsettling. Having previously taught similar lessons on race and social justice issues in undergraduate classes and in teacher trainings, experience readied me for potential expressions of settler privilege and/or settler fragility (Gilio-Whitiker, 2018). Similar to how White fragilities maneuver to disavow responsibility for racist structures, “settler fragility stems from the need to distance oneself from the complicity of settler colonialism” (NP). To address these subjectivities requires calling into question the very legitimacy of settler identity and sense of entitlement.

The few times I experienced pushback it came in the practice of questioning the legitimacy of “privilege” as a concept in and of itself. This often takes the form of trying to delegitimize the concept of White privilege by reducing it to universal hardships that all people can experience (i.e., #AllLivesMatter, White poverty). I would anticipate a delegitimization of settler privilege in the same way (i.e., Europeans conquered one another in early history, it’s human nature, Tribes took each other’s land before Europeans arrived, etc.). Since I have experienced the grim feeling of not having a plan for when these lessons are hijacked by settler fragility with classes of adult students and teachers, I now prefer to begin with a pedagogical scaffolding technique to bring us into a consensus of what concept we are going to explore. In the case of teaching to unsettle settler colonialism, I begin with a set of rhetorical

questions intended to not only accomplish having a common understanding of a concept, but also to have us relate to it by sharing a common experience.

With the 8th graders, I approached the discussion something like this—Has anyone ever stayed the night at someone else’s house for a sleepover? As expected, most every hand shot up in the class and I had their full attention. Next, have any of you stayed at a friend’s house? Not family, not your favorite cousin’s house, but maybe a friend from school? Again most, if not every hand shot up. I then ask, what was that experience like, mostly to stimulate a lively discussion, but also have them vocalize what appropriate behavior and expectations are for familiar relations. Then I ask if while they were staying at their friend’s house, did they go open the refrigerator door and take a swig of orange juice without asking? I entertained their responses and follow up by asking, did you kick your shoes off and throw your feet up on their couch grab the television remote and start flipping through the channels? Of course not. A ghastly yet fun exchange ensued. To bring the conversation back around, I remarked something to the effect of, “Most all Indigenous peoples, ever since the first boats arrive through this very day have experienced strangers rummaging through their refrigerators.” The energy of the room shifted, the lively chatter ceased, and I lost nearly all eye contact.

The reason for sharing this brief teaching story is to emphasize the relational dynamics at play when Indigenous perspectives are taught from a different angle. The purpose here was not solely to make anyone feel bad. The point of this teaching was to lessen the abstraction of settler colonial theory for 8th graders, hopefully at least, long enough for the notion of colonization to be modestly experienced before being reasoned away. To be clear, I did not go into this classroom visit expecting 8th graders to be anything less than kind and generous and that is exactly the treatment I received. Neither am I offering the rhetorical questions from my teaching example as

a fix for settler colonialism. They were just starting points for discussing abstract theory. I do offer them, however, in agreement with Patel's (2016, p. 21) suggestion to those of us in the business of educational research to ask, literally, where do the questions that we ask come from? This is an important question for educators who take anticolonial teaching seriously.

In our current moment in the history of this world, this kind of relational teaching is almost always engaged in and against more pervasive cultural currents. What I sought to get across to the 8th graders, above all else, was just how *rude* the (dys)relational ontology of settler colonialism is. This point too often gets lost in the minutia of analysis. The relationships available to us within a Western settler colonial k-12 classroom always threaten to swallow up our interventions, like the stone dropped in the water mentioned earlier. This is not, however, simply an exercise in futility. Indigenous presence, once seen and felt, whether materially or discursively, can impact the way all subjectivities in the classroom are formed. The ripples from the stone spread in all directions and can influence future experience. Over time, I believe these effects can accumulate and profoundly unsettle settler subjectivities.

How might this happen? The questions about sleeping over at a friend's house and the subsequent conversation described were an effort to desubjectify not only myself as teacher but also the collective understanding in which Indigenous people come to be known. Desubjectification "is the process of breaking free from one's subject position. This involves adopting a critical attitude toward, or destroying, the discourses and norms by which one is made a subject, namely, a colonized subject" (Flowers, 2015, p. 42; Foucault, 1975). These are practices through which subjects recognize that taken-for-granted habits of relation have a history, that they could be otherwise, and that they probably should be otherwise. It is a shift not just in ideas, not just in "understanding," but in felt relation, an expansion of our moral world,

and a diversification of the futurities we can imagine living within. This is possible, desirable, for all students. To the extent that we all are subjected by settler colonial culture and discourse, a detachment from the acquisitive and objectifying habits of the “colonized subject” expands the possibilities for what can be learned and the kind of lives we can live. For Indigenous students, it is especially important because such processes of desubjectification make it possible to stop conforming to expectations and norms created by their oppressors.

I share this example of being an invited educator to teach Indigenous topics because I think of Indigenous authored texts as being in much the same predicament that Indigenous people find themselves in within institutions of Western learning. Reading Indigenous authors and welcoming Indigenous people into educational settings does do the important work of unsettling complete erasure, but it will not alone unsettle coloniality. This is partially because of the aggressive relationships that await them. But what if we pondered what it would require of us to treat the text as an honored guest who is visiting the class? What if we contemplated what our etiquette should be when the authors are inviting you as a guest into the epistemology within which they create? What if we listened to it as we would a respected relative? What are they telling us? Why are they telling us this? What if we considered a relationship to texts that did not begin and end with reading to identify key concepts, underlying assumptions of the authors arguments, or the limitations of those arguments? How might our relational ontology feel different? In the spirit of reciprocity, what am I willing to barter (from within my Western reading skills) in order to access a reciprocal relation with the text? These are just some of the questions that come to mind when I imagine if Indigenous philosophical teachings were met with the same energy and spirit they seek to teach with.

When we treat the text as an honored guest, we do not just change our relationship to that text. We implicitly reveal that we could have different relations to all texts—and, thus, to all knowledges. *Unsettling is the process of building the capacity to be unsettled.* Reading Indigenous authored texts provides an *opportunity to practice* an unsettling of our relation to knowledge, texts, people, and place. Why is this important? What difference does it make in students' lives? Or to phrase this question more precisely, what worlds are possible if we help students desubjectify, help them unsettle their settler colonial habits of relation? There can be, of course, no comprehensive answers to such a question. There can, however, be definitive answers about what is not possible if we do not make this effort. Any practice of living that reaches beyond settler colonial commodification and objectifying to the many ways of being in this world, of ourselves and each other, depends on just such unsettling of our current world. That possibility seems to me to be important. In fact, I would argue it is the most important bequest we could possibly offer the children who look to us for education.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND TRANSITION

This dissertation has been a meditation on possibility. It is not an empirical documentation of what is happening, at least not generally. It is, instead, a speculative exploration about an educational futurity in which curriculum is informed by Indigenous common sense. In this way, this dissertation begins in a refusal of the educational reality in which we live, the way it is shaped by settler colonial fantasies of achievement, accumulation, or claims. It does not stay in that refusal, however. It then engages in a speculative exploration of what approaches to Indigenizing curricula is possible in our current educational settings.

Actual events and conversations with Indigenous teachers about their educational planning have been discussed, but not in a foundational way. The speculations and envisioning done in the preceding chapters are not “justified” by the examples provided but are stimulated by them. The ultimate merit of the analysis, therefore, does not lie in how well my speculations follow deductively from the examples and principles cited, but on the value of the curricular possibilities articulated and the educational and social futurities to which they could contribute.

None of this research would have been possible if not for the kindness, openness, and generosity of the teachers involved. They gifted me, and hopefully others, beautiful examples of conceptualizing teaching and learning based in Indigenous epistemologies. Most all the interviews were conducted either at dining room tables or at an outside park bench. The initial proposal called for all the research to occur in their classrooms. Because all our daily lives were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the methodology of this research project changed immediately. Rather than cocreate curriculum and observe teaching, the project was limited to a series of 33 interviews with four teachers over 5 weeks in the spring of 2020. They all made time

to schedule weekly visits while they adjusted to their first experiences with online teaching. This was new for all of us. Only one interview was conducted prior to the initial COVID-19 official shutdown of schools. The remaining 32 interviews occurred during the first 4 weeks of the shutdown when they were all finishing out their school year

Although I had prepared 3-4 interview questions for each of the meetings, we spent time visiting before we got to them. I am grateful I recorded these pre-interview conversations because some of their most profound comments happened during those preliminary exchanges or after the formal questions had been asked. The teachers spoke about what they were stressed and excited about in their job at the time. We talked about what motivated them to become a teacher, how their Indigenous identity influenced their teaching in public schools, and what was most important for them as an educator. They shared the novel enjoyments and frustrations in transitioning to online teaching. It was in these conversations that the values they cherished most came into clearer focus. Adverse circumstances tend to have that effect. Throughout all these interviews, what we did most was share stories. There were endless directions this research could have gone, but the stories shared here emerged because of a particular confluence of local events, world events, their individual values, and my interests as a researcher. We were excited about the ideas we were discussing and the conversations flowed almost effortlessly. It was obvious the teachers cared deeply about what they were discussing. We did not have to question or explain too deeply what we were describing in our thoughts. It just made sense to us to discuss them in this way and the energy of the conversations felt significant in the moment. I decided to follow those feelings.

I entered this research project intending to explore the following questions:

- How can public school curricula and instruction be reimagined through the lens of Indigenous studies and Indigenous philosophies?
- How would teachers need to be prepared to make such a practice possible?

These Indigenous educators helped me be answerable to these questions. Many times when I was stumped or exploring deeper meaning, I would revisit the interview transcript and find something (k)new, or a fresh angle, that the teacher talked about or described to push my learning even further. What I usually found was some form of revisiting or circling back upon an earlier point they made to emphasize the purpose of their pedagogical decisions. They are Indigenous teachers after all—we use every part of the lesson and waste not. This chapter takes the knowledge they shared and further applies it to the generative process of (re)imagining the past, present, and future of topics within Indigenous education.

Summary of Dissertation Main Points

Teaching Indigenous topics often present a conundrum for educators when they appear in K-12 curriculum. On the one hand, K-12 schooling has been so efficient at removing accurate representations of Indigenous people from mandated courses that there is little to no established context for how and when they should be presented. Collectively, systems of education are not familiar enough with what an Indigenous centered curricular context may require, which ensures its position on the margins. On the other hand, well-intentioned educators who do provide Indigenous voice (authors, invited guest, contemporary perspectives) seldom account for how the processes through which Western epistemology filter and constrain how Indigenous people and teachings can be “known” by learners. For these reasons I was compelled to, as best I could,

provide examples for how challenging teaching Indigenous topics are when attempting to be answerable to the goal of unsettling the influences of colonialism.

In the opening chapters, I provided a review of several different theories and practices thoughtful people have developed for this kind of unsettling teaching. These included writings about settler colonialism, Indigenizing pedagogy and curriculum, Indigenous resurgence, as well as the ideas of phrase Indigenous commonsense. Settler colonial theory informed most of this analysis. It was specifically helpful in tracking the multiple ways settler logics seek to establish Indigenous erasure and settler epistemic control (Veracini, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Patel, 2016). Studies in settler colonialism describe the ways relationships with land, people, temporality, and with knowledge are constructed in settler society. This theory also helped in naming the precise rationalities that need to be disrupted and unsettled. Settler colonial theory, however, has been critiqued for “struggling to narrate its own ending” (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 427) and for its failure to center Indigenous epistemologies across the field. Though this theory is invaluable in social analysis, it needs help in imagining the alternative.

The literature on indigenization helps us conceive relational ontologies outside of those structured by settler colonialism. In addition to examining how indigenization is realized by way of Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation, or decolonial indigenization, Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) also offer a theorization of resurgence-based indigenization that may be best suited for merging policy and praxis in efforts to decolonize. Most helpful in this study has been the generative space between a decolonial indigenization that foresees an undoing of educational structures as they are, and a resurgence-based indigenization that is about a restructuring of knowledge creation and decentralization of authoritative power in educational institutions. Theories in indigenization, too, are examinations of relational knowledge. Though all these styles of

indigenization are essential and practical in various context, this study examined the points of tension that are revealed when indigenization in any form is introduced within a Western based classroom.

In Chapter IV I looked at what some basic inclusion of Indigenous perspectives would mean in a middle school English Language Arts curriculum. That chapter considered the ways in which Carla's curated curriculum sought to be answerable to interrupting the multiple colonial epistemic maneuvers that attempt to confine Indigenous people's identities and cultural memories. It expanded upon the cultural and political significance of Carla's curricular decisions. Teaching about Indigenous people through carefully chosen young adult literature written by Indigenous authors or from the perspective of Indigenous protagonists, just made sense to her. Colonial discourses that usually prefer to remain hidden were intentionally spoken aloud in the various analysis throughout the chapter—from an Indigenous and anticolonial standpoint. This is similar to the way Rifkin (2013) describes settler commonsense as affective networks that come to be lived as irrefutable settler social conditions. In this chapter, I attempted to bring to light what is possible when an approach to teaching an anticolonial curriculum is not organized around accommodating settler trepidations, but instead seeks to unsettle the taken-for-granted erasures of Indigenous life and presence. The difference between settler and Indigenous commonsense is that the former seeks to hide and essentialize the origins of its epistemology, and the latter seeks to openly embrace the ongoing process of creating its epistemology.

Carla discussed her unit on Indigenous issues as flowing into three themes. In the first theme on Indigenous identity the curriculum was designed to refuse the settler desire to "know" what Indigenous identity is. Instead, the lesson surfaced the various ways settler society frames, stereotypes, or constrains Indigenous identity to fit settler expectations. It was not enough to only

say that Indigenous identity is multidimensional and complex. The lesson also sought to create a conversation about why a complicated and sovereign Indigenous identity is so threatening to settler society. Through this process, Carla's curated curriculum helps in identifying the "what" that needs unsettling.

Carla's selected readings on boarding schools functioned in much the same way. Indigenous people in these readings expressed the will to resist circumstances that could reasonably be seen as insurmountable and inevitably leading to despair and failure. They engaged in this resistance through telling their stories about boarding schools. These were stories of parents and home communities that cared deeply for the children at the schools. So much effort goes into focusing on only the experiences of students at the schools, within a fixed frame of time and place, that it is easy to overlook the wider impacts of the forced enrollment of children in boarding schools. This compartmentalization is a settler style of remembering. Due to this, the perspectives that Carla chooses to share in the readings haunt a settler society that invest so much in forgetting the children and families from which they were stolen. As a theorization, haunting (Tuck & Ree, 2018) is the act of not forgetting with pronounced detail what settler society seeks to hold as only a blurry memory at best. Not forgetting is preferred because settler memories are not to be trusted. Hauntings are conjured when settler society seeks to reformulate or threaten to forget despotic settler contexts.

The primary purpose of this chapter was to invite educators to contemplate, through the acts of remembering or forgetting, who's or what futurity their chosen curriculum is manifesting. Indigenous futurities are radical relationships with concepts of the past, present, and future. Carla attended to speculations in Indigenous futurities by planning to teach an Indigenous authored young adult dystopian novel about Indigenous people existing in an inevitable settler colonial

future. This is, above all else, a story of Indigenous people relying on traditional ways of being and relating amid settler induced destruction all around them. The characters share stories, teach one another tribal language, and hold and share memories as a means of sustaining a relation to the world and each other that is not simply surrendered to settler colonial violence and extraction. Carla used this novel to unsettle the silence around issues of settler extraction, settler violence, and the importance of thinking of unsettled futures.

In Chapter V I examined the process for how, in many cases, Indigenous epistemologies come to be “known” through Western epistemological reading habits. This research was prompted by an interview with Aleta, an Indigenous educator who shared the story of her experience of reading Indigenous philosophical texts in a graduate course with majority non-Native students. She expressed unease at the forceful way the text was being related to, which was in stark contrast to what the cultural teachings were calling for by the author. Concepts from within settler colonialism discourses were used as a basis for summarizing how Indigenous knowledge is forced into an epistemic relationship that seeks to change its purpose, redefine its meaning, and impose unrelated value judgments upon its worth. The chapter opens with a few examples (stories) from graduate school classrooms of how settler subjectivities are created and sustained by reading Indigenous authors. Reading practices, then, are taken up as the site for unsettling settler proclivities to make all knowledges theirs.

The middle portion of the chapter emphasizes differences in how relationships are formed within an Indigenous epistemological approach to reading and a Settler epistemological approach to reading tends to materialize. Moreton-Robinson (2015) helps us understand how it is that most Indigenous authored text are met with the possessive subjectivities of learners in the Western based classroom. For possessive logics to be upheld the possessive/settler subject must impose

its will onto that which it desires to possess—a process that refutes the always already existing will of the new possession. Indigenous knowledges communicated in texts are frequently forced into these types of relationships with readers without consent.

Taking possession of Indigenous knowledge is only one relational ontology that can materialize when reading. Other Western relational logics can be employed as well. Colonial blind discourses, for instance, provides understanding for how it is that Indigenous epistemologies are subjected to a convenient inability to be known (Calderon, 2011). Refusing to learn is the preferred form of knowing when confronted with epistemologies not devoted to protecting settler colonialism. Whether it is through the process of altering meaning to make Indigenous knowledge a possessive or by intentionally recoiling into a form of innocent ignorance while reading, these relational habits are rewarded in educational institutions.

The primary purpose of this chapter was to illustrate what Indigenous knowledges are up against when read in Western classrooms. These conditions are not only a rehearsal for having Indigenous perspectives quashed, but also for having settler subjectivities reinforced in the process. A review of an Indigenous relational ontology was offered to juxtapose the absolutism of colonial dichotomies. This is not asking settler society to build an additional shelf for Indigenous texts to be brought into its fold, but rather an effort to help settler society fathom that it is the one being invited into a relational ontology that exists outside of the Western frame of knowing, mastering, or understanding. To lend to this, I encouraged throughout this chapter special attention be paid to how the subjectivities of learners are created and affirmed when making sense of Indigenous based texts. This means we educators pay special attention to the purpose and functions of the multiple relationships enacted in our classrooms, as well as contemplate why it is not engrained in us to already do so as part of our professional practice.

Between the two chapters, one of the lessons that materialized with the most clarity was that the proposition of indigenizing pedagogy within a mainstream classroom plays a lot of tricks on educators and learners. Perhaps the biggest trick is the way settler logics are able to hide within a context of its own creation—that is, until they are threatened in some way. The tricks only continue when the logics do make a rare appearance. For instance, when efforts are made to indigenize curriculum by including perspectives and/or authors, it often plays into the instincts to consume damage, over exoticify, or stake a possessive claim to them. Another trick it plays is by giving us false solutions to what seem like insurmountable problems. Maybe they are impossible in a system that does not care to change.

What settler colonialism cannot account for, however, is that in many ways Indigenous epistemologies emerge from original trickster knowledges. Not only do educators operating from within Indigenous relational practices see and track the tricks played on us, but we also play tricks of our own. The teachers interviewed in this project all spoke about a critical regard for the promises of mainstream settler schooling institutions. They assumed inclusiveness did not always mean inclusiveness and that culturally responsive did not always mean culturally responsive. Such things always depended upon the context and manner of delivery. As often as not, such social justice-oriented rhetoric meant in practice the opposite of what it meant on the surface.

The educators in this study also sought to subvert settler colonial norms, often in indirect ways, by curating curriculum that frustrated settler desires to enclose Indigenous identity and histories. For example, here in Oregon public education, with its mandates that the experiences of the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Oregon Trail pioneers be taught to all students, Indigenous educators organized and insisted that standards be also created that mandate local

Indigenous histories be taught. These activists used the settler colonial construct of state level curriculum mandates to pass Senate Bill 13 and require that a different history be taught. Since this history was manifestly also true, it was difficult for the settler colonial system to refuse the demand. But once taught, these histories challenge the validity of the descriptions of Indigenous peoples recorded by Lewis and Clark that had previously been treated as authoritative (See Schmitke, Sabzalian, and Edmundson, 2020). Similarly, Carla taught young adult novels that problematized taken for granted conceptions of Indigenous identity, without explicitly telling students that is what she was doing. She planned to let this conclusion emerge from reading the novel itself and the subsequent class discussions. Once such simplistic notions of Indigenous persons and communities had been undermined, however, there would be no going back.

The theme that remains consistent throughout these examples and all the interviews was how intentional the effort was for each teacher to center Indigenous perspectives in their teaching. This was true even of the interviews I conducted that I did not end up citing. These Indigenous teachers, each in their own way, were working against the grain of an always already present and taken-for-granted settler colonial system.

Another feature of teachers' efforts to teach in a manner guided by what I have called Indigenous Common Sense that showed up in all of my conversations with the teachers in this study, was that there could not be a single, clear, and established way of working against the grain of these settler ideologies. The desire for a clear procedure was itself suspect, and when our conversations seemed to veer in that direction, it felt wrong.

I could offer a general reason I think this is so, recognizing the irony of that relational teaching is always contextual. The forms of indigenized teaching described in these pages had ontological, not just epistemological goals. Teachers were attempting to help students develop

felt, affective, embodied, sometimes moral relations to their ways of being with one another and in particular places. This was a form of knowing, but it was more than knowing a concept or piece of information. It included knowing oneself in relation to other people, things, and places. As such, the content of that knowing depended on where people were and who they were with.

For example, Carla's stories about her grandmother's experience at boarding school was just one of a handful of personal anecdotes teachers said they used in their teaching. There were also stories of how siblings, themselves, and their own children were treated unfairly in school. Not only are the anecdotes unique to each teacher, the choice of when to share them depended on the moment and the feel of the classroom. The onus fell on each of the teachers interviewed to develop ways to resist the pull of settler colonial norms and erasures in their curriculum in the particular setting in which they met with their students. Because of this, teachers resisted claiming their way of doing things was a "best practice" or would necessarily work for others. Some features of what they were reaching for were similar, but in each case, their manner of reaching was a unique, individualized, and deeply personal process of relating to curriculum.

This did not mean teachers' efforts to Indigenize their classroom were entirely idiosyncratic. For example, one of the teachers told of how they were hoping to distribute the curriculum on Indigenous people they had put together with fellow educators in hopes they would teach similar lessons. Another teacher spoke about how she was coordinating with an African American colleague to share Indigenous based and Black history curriculum with one another. But even these choices about what to share and when to share them were influenced by the context of the sharing. Not everything was fit to share with everyone under all conditions. e

Another unifying feature of these two chapters was the sense of gravity with which the teachers approached the endeavor and the conversation. Each teacher expressed excitement about

their ideas and a belief in the importance of the effort. They also conveyed unease in their awareness that they may not be doing enough. They knew mere representation or inclusion of discreet bits of information about Indigenous people was insufficient. In all, they seemed to approach their curriculum development unapologetically regarding their chosen purpose and pedagogy.

The discussions we had on the specific uses of chosen curriculum were especially telling. Teaching topics on Indigenous identity, experiences with colonialism, and Indigenous futures were discussed at length. It is important to note the bulk of these discussions did not come by way of pre-planned interview questions but were ideas shared when the initial opportunity to examine Indigenous education was offered. Missing from most all these discussions was the need to debate their purpose or decision-making process. Their rationales seemed to be taken for granted. So much energy is dedicated to arguing for why an Indigenous disposition is valid that inclusion seldom gets past a surface level. We did not spend much time with justifying the effort to Indigenize our teaching. Using and discussing anticolonial curriculum, pedagogy, and rationale was commonsense.

Many of the discussions on curriculum stressed the importance of disrupting stereotypes and misappropriation of Indigenous culture. Much of Chapter IV is dedicated to describing a teacher's refusal to provide students with a definitive characterization of Indigenous identity, experience, or history. Instead, their focus was on reflecting back what it is like to live and exist within settler society as an Indigenous person. This is not always an easy or clean perspective to teach but the consensus was that to do otherwise would be a disservice. Again, this assertion was assumed and not discussed at length. I reemphasize this point because in previous interviews I

conducted with majority non-Native educators (for another project), there was less clarity and certainty expressed around how an anticolonial approach would take form.

When the content focused on Indigenous history or past experiences, the conversation did not focus on tribal specific cultures or histories. Rather, they brought attention to the nature of the relationships with settler society. Discussed at length was the approach to teaching boarding school experiences. Special care was taken to not focus on damage or victimhood as central to the telling. The curriculum discussed positioned Indigenous people as present and autonomous in their own histories. Children's books and contemporary newspaper articles were used. As important as describing the "correct" curriculum, most of this discussion involved explaining the importance of choosing curriculum when there is not a true context for it to connect to.

Implications and Possibilities

The features of an Indigenized approach to teaching that I have attempted to describe have not stayed within the bounds of a specific recognizable segment of educational studies. Those traditional disciplinary boundaries—such as the distinction between psychology and sociology, curriculum and pedagogy, etc.—are, to some extent, part of the structure of settler colonialism. As a consequence, this study has implications for the conversations that happen within multiple divisions of the education research literature. In what follows I will look at a few of what I consider the most significant, starting with some traditional areas of educational scholarship then moving to Indigenous studies on education, and ending with implications for process of research on education itself.

Curriculum Studies

The field of curriculum studies in Western settler colonial academic institutions is over a century old and has generated many theories about what is worth teaching. According to Rosiek & Clandinin (2017), this includes but is not limited to:

- The published curriculum—the content that is published in textbooks or other mass produced curricular materials.
- The mandated curriculum—the learning objectives that are mandated by various governing bodies at national, state, and local levels.
- The planned curriculum—the content a teacher plans to teach before a class begins.
- The enacted curriculum—the content a teacher actually gets around to teaching once class actually happens.
- The assessed curriculum—the content that is covered in the assessments of student learning.
- The learned curriculum—the content students actually learn as a consequence of lessons.
- The hidden curriculum—tacit messages built into the structure of a lesson or learning process, such as whose knowledge is valued, the importance of conformity, submission to authority, etc.
- The null curriculum—the tacit messages conveyed by things left out of a curriculum, such as implying Indigenous people no longer exist by leaving them out of textbooks.
- The lived or experienced curriculum—all of the things students learn as a result of the holistic experience of education; this includes hidden and null curriculum as well as the affect, development of habits of relation, community, and identity.

This dissertation has touched on all of these different conceptions of curriculum. The discussion in Chapter IV about SB-13 that required schools to deliver curricular content about Indigenous peoples has implications for our understanding of the efficacy of mandated curricula. Such legislated mandates are usually intended to disrupt the null curriculum about Oregon Indigenous communities. However, it is obvious to many who think about this that simple inclusion is not enough. Recalling the Elder's comments on the challenges of presenting a Tribal Lifeways essential understanding, even when this content is present by mandate, we run the risk of "this just being another history lesson."

It is generally acknowledged that there are many kinds of information about Indigenous lives and history that should definitely be included in K-12 curricula, even if it is not mandated. For example, the contributions of tribal Code Talkers during World War I and World War II should be taught during any lessons over those eras. Civil rights curriculum should include lessons on the Red Power Movement from the 1960's, the occupation of Alcatraz, and the resistance at Standing Rock in 2016. These are just a few examples of the ways curriculum can position Indigenous people as possessing self-determination and control over their own destiny. Students should also be taught the names of the Indigenous nations and communities on whose land they reside. This provides an opportunity to discuss how this information can alter relations to land and place. There are also some basic concepts that need to be taught, like tribal sovereignty and tribal/government relations. Including such content in published textbooks, lesson plans, and subject matter content standards is a necessary part of teaching a truthful history of what is currently known as the United States. This can also enhance students' perspectives on the expected functions of local, state, and federal governments as well as help them imagine a system out from under the rule of a broken settler democracy. Teaching an

honest curriculum about Indigenous existence is to teach an entry point to a reality outside of settler colonialism.

In Chapter IV, however, we discussed the limitations of this kind of curricular inclusion. Indigenous perspectives taught within a settler context only become accumulation. Something more transformative is required. Ideas for curriculum that seek not to add information, but to disrupt existing settler colonial frameworks for understanding/erasing Indigenous peoples and communities were discussed. For example, Carla's plans to include a video of contemporary college-aged Indigenous people talking through the ways governmental policy regulating Indigenous identity impacts their lives and communities subtly insinuates that this conversation has a history of criticism, and that this conversation will continue into the future. Her use of young adult literature texts disrupts the era and manner in which Indigenous people are typically taught about—in a primitive past or through trauma-based process of coming into modernity. In these lessons Carla was doing more than just including content. She was intending to introduce students to a world they do not know even exists. This constitutes a particular kind of curricular intervention that goes beyond simply filling the absence of a null curriculum. It is, arguably, creating a new kind of hidden curriculum. It is a tacit undermining of settler colonial stereotypes of Indigenous lives and communities, which in and of itself is a different space for learning to occur. It is, to some extent, a deliberately created hidden curriculum whose purpose is unsettling settler colonial norms and expectations.

In Chapter V, a different form of indigenized curriculum was discussed, one I called relational reading. As already mentioned, it is both similar to and different from the teaching recounted in Chapter IV. Its distinctive features—a focus on teaching that invites students into a different mode of relation to knowledge itself—also has implications for the curriculum studies

literature. The teaching in this chapter is most similar with Ted Aoki's (1993) ideas about lived curriculum, but is not identical to it. Aoki's lived curriculum was comprehensive. It included affective relations as well as conceptual content, identity, and feelings of purpose. The ideas discussed in Chapter V, specifically the idea of reading as an epistemological form of listening to "Talking Leaves," also included affect and identity. It was, however, distinct in at least two ways. It located the effort to enact relational reading as part of a larger political and spiritual struggle against settler colonialism. I do not believe that what has prevented a more relational approach to reading has simply been a lack of imagination. Many have imagined a more profound purpose and practice of teaching. However, something conspires against such practices, organizes to suppress and erase their presence. That something is settler colonialism, or at least that is one name for it. The practice of teaching relational reading is simultaneously something creatively affirmative and is also an act of critically displacing something that currently exists and presumes it is all that can exist. This, I believe, constitutes both a contribution to the literature on lived curriculum and provides some illustrations of the intersection of that literature with Indigenous studies in education.

Teacher Education

Once we are able to appreciate the distinctive contributions to the field of curriculum by taking up the question, "What is worth teaching?", then we are led to the question of methodology—How can we teach it? I will be honest; I am not interested in discussing whether there are particular teaching techniques or strategies that can be used to accomplish the kind of Indigenized teaching I have tried to describe in these pages. I do not think the things discussed here can be reduced to techniques. Indigenous epistemologies are holistic knowledges that adapt

to and account for the context in which meaning is made. Additionally, the desire for such formulations seems to me to be a feature of the settler colonialism to which we are seeking an alternative. Instead, I prefer to approach this question through the lens of the teacher education literature. I think it is more productive to ask what it would take to prepare teachers to develop and enact the unsettling curricula and the relational reading curricula as discussed here. I think there are at least three ways to respond to such questions.

First, we need more Indigenous teachers. This may or may not be obvious. More Indigenous teachers would mean the ethically relational world we are striving for could be more attainable. I am in no way implying that all who identify as Indigenous are a monolith, but the vast experience of Indigenous people do offer the possibility for something different. As described in Chapter IV, teaching an anticolonial curriculum was just commonsense for Carla. This is not to say that having an Indigenous teacher would unsettle the community of a school alone, or that every Indigenous teacher is ascribes to, or is even aware that anticolonial pedagogies are possible. I am saying, however, that Indigenous bodies in the room disrupt settler colonialism. To what extent, we will have to observe and see. I know that I never had an Indigenous teacher until I attended a tribal college at 18 years of age, and it impacted the way I approached school. It matters. Our proximity to other Indigenous teachers, people, and communities also matters in the context of our workspace. I am reminded here of a teaching on relationality shared by Leanne Simpson—an individual star alone is without context, but multiple stars form a constellation. Constellations provide direction, purpose, and meaning. It is important not to reduce this teaching by just thinking that transformation will organically occur if we assemble a cohort of teachers. Training more Indigenous teachers builds capacity for an anticolonial educational experience. Capacity building is about building connections

(constellations) between various stakeholders. Constellations can be generational, interdisciplinary, communal, and so much more. For instance, the research in this dissertation was made possible because of an Indigenous teacher education program was the catalyst for connecting educators from various cohorts. We were able to share ideas and express beliefs about our profession with like-minded Indigenous educators. Having more Indigenous teachers matters in ways yet to have been imagined. Imagine a night sky of Indigenous meaning and relationality.

Second, we need to engage the Indigenous studies literature more deeply in teacher education programs. I would begin with suggesting that prospective educators become fluent in settler colonial theory. This would involve understanding this as a relational knowledge that seeks to hold authority over most every relationship in which we can engage. This also includes acquiring pedagogical practices that guide the ways in which the subjectivities of learners and educators are formed. Knowledge of this theory is pivotal for transforming and unsettling the relationships formed by our educational experiences. Perhaps this theory's greatest contribution is that it helps to name that which prefers to remain nameless. Educators should also be made aware that knowledge of this theory is not to be fully trusted either, as the critical nature of its analysis often creates more settler styles of relations. In other words, settler colonial theory alone is not enough to unsettle.

Beyond the engagement with the critical literature on settler colonialism, I believe all teachers would benefit from exposure to examples of affirmative accounts of Indigenized ways of knowing, being, and teaching. This might be achieved through reading some foundational Indigenous philosophy, such as the work of Vine Deloria, Jr., Daniel Wildcat, Robin Wall

Kimmerer, and Michelle Jacob. Of course, it would best be achieved through seeing such teaching modeled, preferably by instructors fluent in specific Indigenous cultural traditions.

Third, I think we need to think in terms of stories. Stories help us learn what relationships we should have with people, places, and the more-than-human world. Stories provide context for ways of knowing in places that a context does not exist for them. The research in this dissertation would not have been possible if not for the generous and reciprocal exchange of stories. Stories allow for Indigenous people to articulate how Indigenous knowledge can help better the education process from within their own epistemology.

Sabzalian (2019), for instance, uses the concept of survivance stories as a framework for reporting the ways Indigenous students and families assert various forms of self-determination while navigating a complex settler schooling system. These stories refuse to trade in damage, even though the schools do inflict harm. Rather, similar to how survivance theories draw attention to Indigenous people's *active sense of presence* in the midst of attempted erasure, these stories are active in their own creation. That is, the stories help make a home for the complexities of Indigenous life in settler schooling. These are important points for disrupting the typical ways settlers come to know. Stories are not a "do this" and "don't do that" formula. Rather, they respect the intelligence of the reader/listener and are meant to be revisited at different points to hopefully have different insights revealed.

Indigenous Studies in Education

It is my hope that this study can also in some way contribute to the Indigenous studies in education literature. In fact, it matters most to me that this dissertation can influence this vibrant field, even if only minutely. At one level this dissertation has taken some ideas circulating in

contemporary general Indigenous studies literature and applied them to educational settings, specifically to teachers' practice in classrooms. This represents an effort to help educators become aware of how these discourses can be realized in the teaching of Indigenous issues. These include Eva Mackey's (2016) writings about *unsettled expectations* and Moreton-Robinson's (2015) concept of *the possessive subject*. I applied these concepts to students' encounters with texts. Although these two authors developed these theories to explain how settlers justify settling Indigenous land, I thought it was possible and important to apply these theories to the way we think about the acquisition to knowledge as well. A possessive relationship to knowledge is taught in most public schools. It helps if an educator is aware of these discursive dynamics before introducing versions of Indigenous studies into a mainstream classroom.

Similarly, I drew on Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua (2018) as well to point out how the concept of *Indigenous futurities* doesn't register as a possibility in typical curriculum development. These theories about futurity were coupled with Tuck and Ree's (2013) theorizations on *haunting* as a theory of change. Both of these theories employ elements of imagination while at the same time enacting the doing of something different in the present. When applied to educational conditions, these theories unsettle settler epistemologies in that the presentation, performance, and intention of knowledge no longer exist to exclusively stabilize colonialism. To enact these theories is not to hope for a better future, it is to build one.

Within the Indigenous education literature, my work builds on Sabzalian's (2019) writings on how mainstream curriculum regarding Indigenous people is a tool for upholding the discursive and material authority of settlers. Her book, *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Schools*, documents and critiques the way Indigenous stereotypes and other forms of

misrepresentations, or teaching superficially accurate content outside of the context that gives it significance, reproduce and reinforce settler subjectivities as authoritative discoverers of the Other. Teaching students to push back on these ways of learning requires an anticolonial analysis of the problematic curriculum. Students can, she argues, learn to be aware of these contexts which position them not as consumers, but as agents of change.

In my effort to build upon Sabzalian's work, I found Rachel Flowers' (2015) use of the concept of desubjectification useful. This is the process by which a "colonized subject" breaks free from one's subject position assigned to them by destroying discourses given to them by their oppressors. Flowers uses this notion to describe the process in which some residential school survivors in Canada stopped comparing/changing themselves and their behavior to meet settler norms. Through desubjectification, they rejected the idea that their worth relied upon the recognition that a publicized apology would offer. In much the same manner that Sabzalian calls for a resistance to framing Indigenous people the objects of study by teaching students to have a critical read on such curriculum, the practice of desubjectification of Indigenous people also unsettles this kind of settler subjectivity. If Indigenous people are no longer available for discovery and study, then settlers can no longer be the consumers of Indigenous identity and are compelled to renegotiate a different subject position. We cannot have one unsettled subject without the other also being unsettled.

Lastly, at the beginning of this dissertation, I spent time describing what I meant by using the phrase *Indigenous commonsense*. The core of this idea is that teaching and learning only occurs in relation to others, otherwise it has no context, and without context it has no meaning or significance. Learning *in a good way* requires ensuring the health of those relationships (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013; Wilson, 2008). To elaborate on this concept, I drew on Dian

Million's (2013) writings on Felt Theory, an affective knowledge that is privileged in an Indigenous epistemology. The examples of teaching I presented and the analysis I provided were illustrations of what I meant by Indigenous commonsense.

After my data collection was complete and I was writing my research, I came upon Manulani Aluli Meyer's writings on modern quantum science claims that align with traditional Indigenous thought. In her article *Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense* (2013) she describes knowledge as emergent from three distinct, yet collapsible aspects of human experience—mind, body, and spirit. Epistemology is formed by experiencing the relationship between these three. Although I found this article late in my process, I would be pleased and humbled if I might contribute to the conversation she has started.

In this study I use of the concept of Indigenous commonsense to contribute to an educational futurity in which certain practices of relation that are common in Indigenous communities and traditions of thought become a default relation—displace the taken-for-grantedness of settler colonial practices of knowing that compartmentalize and commodify so many aspects of our experience. This may seem like an impossible goal. So much is arrayed against this possibility. And I do not have a plan or strategy that seems likely to bring this about. Nonetheless, as Tuck and Ree (2017) tell us, part of the structure of settler colonialism is blocking and suppressing our ability to imagine such possibilities. Nothing can happen if we do not allow ourselves to imagine such a future. I have tried here, in a small way, to contribute to that imagining.

Transitional Remarks

I prefer not to end this document with a section called “conclusions,” as that has a connotation of finality that I do not feel and that I believe is antithetical to what the Indigenous commonsense approach to teaching that I have tried to describe. The world, in my view, does not wait for our final description of it. Our ways of knowing are ways of changing the world. They alter our modes of being and affect those around us—human and non-human. So there is no final resting point in the process of (k)nowing. Every (k)new insight is a change in the world which leads to further change.

So, what kind of summative statement can I make at the culmination of this part of my educational journey? Shawn Wilson, in his book *Research as Ceremony* (2008), wrote that “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right.” Following his lead, I will start with how this research process has changed me.

I feel as if I have only scratched the surface on a getting to know the theories I used in this project. Even so, they have fundamentally changed the way I see, experience, and write in the world. Each of them, from settler colonialism to felt theory, require you reveal yourself in the process of learning them. Although I feel like a novice, I know from trying to write within these theories that it was not my objective to master them, but to be, as best I could, a conduit for them to build more context. I would like to say that I chose the more abstract and theoretical discourses because I just like to overextend myself, but I can’t. Working to appreciate, understand, and then apply a variety of Indigenous studies scholarship within the field of educational practice has fundamentally changed the way I think for the better, and I am grateful to the many authors of that scholarship.

The teachers who participated in this research were kind and generous and taught me many lessons from our very first engagement together. In addition to the many stories they shared with us, perhaps the best gift they gave me was hope. So many of the suggested teaching practices discussed in this dissertation, they are already doing in their own classrooms. They are always already using anticolonial curriculum, unsettling relationships with colleagues, students, and community, teaching with Indigenous commonsense, because this is the world they are intentionally creating for themselves. The intervention for this research was clearly on me. If or when I may get frustrated and overwhelmed, I will remember these teachers who are already doing what I have suggested is needed.

There is no way possible that this writing project could have been completed alone. I do not have the words to express my gratitude for the scholars/mentors/academic aunties who shared their time and energy to listen to ideas, help make sense of theories and experiences, and just make time for meaningful connection. I can recall a handful of encounters when folks went out of their way to see me when it felt like others did not. I am also grateful for the important reconnections made that has helped get this project completed. Graduate school can be a weird place, and all this behind-the-scenes connection work is important, to say the least. Thank you.

One of the dynamics that transformed the most over this process has been my relationship to writing. This has always been difficult for me, but this project would not have been completed without a fundamental overhaul to this academic requirement. I have learned to meditate through this process, sometimes multiple times a day. I had to learn to practice some of the teachings that I was trying to write about, to be able to write them. I had to learn to be aware of what was occurring physiologically when I spent too much time in a cerebral space. What I am saying here is that I had to learn balance to be able to write. This was not only balance in being aware of

what was going on when I attempted to write, but balance in other parts of my life. I am sharing this because I know that I am not the only one who experiences this pressure.

Of course, the purpose of a dissertation is not just one of self-learning. Research is about going through a process and on the other side having gifts to offer our community and relatives. I have sought to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this document: How can public school curricula and instruction be reimagined through the lens of Indigenous studies and Indigenous philosophies? How would teachers need to be prepared to make such a practice possible? What I hope has emerged throughout this document, more than anything else, is that relationships make us and our realities. We do have agency in how we engage the world, no matter what tricks settler colonialism tries to play. In the words of Carla, teachers need exposure to something different to be able to even imagine it. I intend for this research this to be a small contribution to a larger political and cultural struggle that has been going on for centuries. I hope that whoever is looking for this type of conversation finds it and knows they are not alone.

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