MÉTIS TEACHERS:
IDENTITY, CULTURE AND THE CLASSROOM

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By
Melanie MacLean

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Head of the Department of Curriculum Studies
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
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This thesis is a study of Métis teacher practice. Teacher practice evolves from experiences that teachers had as students. In a hegemonic educational system, certain practices are more valued than others. Minority teachers have been schooled in this same hegemony. The struggle for many minority teachers is to fully integrate their cultural identity into their teaching practice. They need to resist the established dominant norms and the pressure to conform in their classrooms. There are very few supports for teachers who challenge the status-quo.

Four Métis teachers were the participants in the study along with the researcher who became a co-participant. The study investigated how the participants viewed the role of Métis culture in their professional and personal lives. Using a voice as a Métis woman and teacher, the researcher used narrative to analyze and reflect on the data.

It was found that the participants’ cultural identity influenced their teaching practice. The standards that guided their classroom choices and behaviours have been shaped by their own experiences. The participants realized that it was their task to teach for social change and support their minority students in learning how to function in an oppressive society. The participants taught for social justice through critical pedagogy and their choice of teaching methodologies. They taught their students how to question power, privilege, inequality, knowledge and ideas. Using the teaching methodologies of storytelling and dialogue allowed these teacher participants to honour themselves and the uniqueness of each student. They created an environment that respected diversity and affirmed their
students' identities.

In this thesis the researcher provided a voice of Métis that is distinct, yet can be viewed alongside other Aboriginal cultures. It is believed that this study can assist other teachers in analyzing their own practice as well as demonstrate how teaching for social justice benefits all students.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving and supportive husband, Michael. He willingly supported me through his contributions as editor, caregiver to our children and household partner.

I also want to dedicate this thesis to my three beautiful daughters, Krystin, Kathleen and Ava. You allowed me to work uninterrupted and waited patiently for hugs and attention. I could have never accomplished this work without your love, encouragement and support. I love you all.

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Chapter One - Embarking On A Journey

I have walked around the base
of the hill
apprehending its daunting rise
from the low lying terrain.
The hill is quite high, as if
the sun is pulling it near. It is not a mountain,
because mountains
do not fit within the prairie landscape.
It is home
among the trees, grasses
and rolling land.
The hike to the summit
will reveal the perfect vista.
I have decided to embark
on this trek, a journey
toward a new perspective.
I am full of anticipation
to view the panorama that awaits.

At first,
I hurried toward the summit.
Scrambling along
the rocks and fauna.
There is no trail to follow,
instead I am required to find my own course.
The falls that I have encountered,
have left my knees and hands bloody
with scrapes of dirt and sweat. Yet,
the small glimpse that I see
of what lies before me
and how far I have traveled
compel me to continue.
This quest has not come without support.
I have had a walking stick
to help me follow this jagged course
and water that has quenched
my thirst along the way. But what I will gain
at the end of the challenging journey
will be a view beyond explanation.

The hill I am climbing is a desire to discover more about what it means to be a Métis educator. It is through this expedition that I will have the opportunity to understand my practice as a teacher. I want to reveal how the practice of teaching and culture relate to one another. I want the voice of Métis educators to be heard and recognized. I want to be recognized for who I am and who I am becoming. In my heart and spirit I am Métis. I want to be seen as a Métis woman, an educator, and an advocate for Métis education. The purpose of my thesis is to see these goals to fruition. I will use the education afforded to me to find validity in my own voice and my experience be recognized as worthy.

The question that guides my research is teacher practice. How do Métis teachers in cross-cultural classrooms incorporate their Metisness into their teaching practice?

**Who are the Metis?**

In my thesis I will use the Canadian term Métis to refer to two groups within this community. I will define Métis using two different definitions. There are two fundamental meanings that have found acceptance within my cultural community. The first definition of Métis
identity addresses the ancestral roots of Métis people relating to Batoche, Red River settlements or other established historical Métis communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (Dorion & Prefontaine, 2001; Shore, 2001; Adams, 1999). This group of people have a strong cultural connection to a community that has existed for hundreds of years. They have established customs, rituals and language that mark them as belonging to this cultural group.

The second definition takes on a Pan-American view of Métis identity. Those who identify themselves as Métis do not fit into First Nation or non-Aboriginal Canadian culture. They have ancestry that is Aboriginal and form a group of mixed-blood people. They do not identify with the strong cultural elements of the first definition, but they are without status as an Indian and therefore identify themselves as Métis, as a mixture of ethnicity. Both of these definitions may or may not include ancestors who applied for scrip in the 1800's.

Scrip was a process the federal government used in the 1800s to extinguish the land rights of the Métis who lived in the west. The Canadian government sent its surveyors west to survey the land for dispersal to the many European immigrants coming to Canada. Purich (1988) describes the process of scrip by the federal government:

...it issued “scrip” certificates entitling the bearer to either a specified acreage of land or a sum of money which could be
applied to the purchase of land. Scrip certificates were issued to individual Métis to satisfy their claim to land entitlement.

(pp.107-108)

Those Métis who applied for scrip had to prove their identity by providing “documentation to confirm identity as well as place and date of birth” (p.116). Purich goes on to state that “these facts were proved by sworn statement, other times documents such as baptism records had to be produced, and on yet other occasions witnesses would be called to give sworn testimony” (p.116). The poorly planned and implemented system of scrip has left many Métis people without the land promised to them by the federal government (Purich, 1988; Nicks & Morgan, 1985; Sealey & Lussier, 1981).

The Métis National Council (MNC) has put forward a definition of Métis people. The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan adopted this definition on January 17th, 2004. The definition states that “Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation” (Métis National Council, 2003). Métis people need to decide if they are willing to accept this definition from a political source or define Métis for themselves. Within this definition, the historic Métis Nation refers to the area of “western central North America” where Métis people resided (Métis National Council, 2003).
The Métis communities of Red River and Batoche have long been associated with Métis peoples, as well as many other northern communities. The Métis National Council does not specify the allocation of scrip to determine Métis status. It does use the negative term “halfbreed,” which was also used on scrip applications (Métis National Council, 2003). Scrip applications allowed Métis people to use their Aboriginal rights to gain a land base.

**Culture**

I also need to define culture as it will be referred to throughout my thesis. Culture will refer to the way in which one lives, their lifestyle, their customs, traditions and language. Nieto (1999) defines culture as “the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion” (p.48). Culture will also refer to the assumptions, beliefs and values that we garner from our cultural community and lived experience. Britzman (1991) cites James Donald: “... our cultural identities are formed as the experience of our biographies accumulate: we become experienced. And that entails the conceptual ordering of what happens to us within consciousness” (p. 214). It is also important to note that culture is not static, but is always changing. McConaghy (2000) discusses the
problem of viewing culture as static:

... we understand ourselves and our culture through what we are not, that is, through what we understand others to be. This binary logic requires and produces a functionalist notion of closure in relation to cultures, one in which cultures are perceived as discrete entities: ahistorical, observable, and able to be compared. (p. 96)

Our experiences and relationships play a role in who we become. Identity and culture are closely linked. Ward, Wason-Ellam and Williamson (1997) describe the push and pull factors of identity: “like culture, identity is dynamic and is always in the process of becoming and transforming while helping individuals centre their roots and buffer the insensitivities of the hostilities encountered in schools” (p.23). The hostilities that some encounter in schools can be racist. As a graduate of SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program), I have heard other students in the mainstream program comment how the classes at SUNTEP were watered down so we could pass. They were surprised to hear that the classes we took were the same classes they took. This kind of racism extends beyond university. Hall (2000) confirms this in his discussion about the construction of identity:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside,
discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific
historical and institutional sites within specific discursive
formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.
Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of
power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference
and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally
constituted unity - an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is,
an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, with internal differentiation).

(p.17)

The institutional and historical sites where identity is constructed has
caused many Aboriginal people to withdraw or abandon their cultural
roots, or what some view as a loss of culture (St. Denis, 2002).

Identity

"One's basic identity is one's self-identity, which is ultimately
one's cultural identity; without a strong cultural identity, one is lost" 
(Asante, 2000, p.45). My identity has not been lost. I have known it all
my life. Identity's definition is obscure. It can mean different things for
different individuals. Hall (2000) defines identity:

In common sense language, identification is constructed on the
back of a recognition of some common origin or shared
characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and
with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process'.

(p.15)

Identity is always in flux. Our experiences and relationships shape our identity. Because identity is always shifting, how we identify and make meaning is always changing. This has made it very difficult to describe Métis education.

It is within the context of the classroom that has brought into question what is Métis education. In order to clarify this subject, I need to first examine teacher practice in Métis educators' classrooms. I need to find out how these Métis educators teach from their cultural self. Or is their cultural self left behind when they enter into their professional lives? Ward et al. (1997) discuss identity and role of culture in the teaching lives of some First Nation and Métis educators: "Aboriginal and Métis teachers put two selves together: the professional self which is patterned on a mainstream model of teaching and knowing, and the personal self, a more culturally bound identity, which is kept separate from school identity" (p.21). We have been schooled in "mainstream" classrooms (Norquay, 1993). These classrooms reflect dominant society and strive to encourage that the norm be upheld. It is easy to recall the
many times in my teacher practice where I have used mainstream practices that were a familiar part of my own schooling experience.

Our identities, and similarly cultures, are "multiple and shifting" (Norquay, 1993, p.244). Britzman (1991) addresses this in the context of teaching:

What makes this reality so contradictory is the fact that teaching and learning have multiple and conflicting meanings that shift with our lived lives, with the theories produced and encountered, with the deep convictions and desires brought to and created in education, with the practices we negotiate and with the identities we construct. (p.10)

We all live within multiple identities and cultures. I belong to the Métis culture, both ethnically and socially. I also identify as a wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece and teacher. I play rugby and belong to that culture. I am middle-class in my socio-economic status. Nieto (1999) reminds us that "culture identifications are multiple, eclectic, mixed and heterogeneous" (p.51). She also points out that identity has been "based primarily on ethnicity" and readdresses this:

Because culture is not simply ethnicity, even among specific cultural groups there are many and often conflicting cultural identities. Skin color, time of arrival in the United States,
language use, level of education, family dynamics, place of residence, and many other differences within groups may influence how one interprets or "lives" a culture. (p. 51)

Keeping identities separate is akin to functioning in two worlds. The ability to make one's way in school, and likewise dominant society requires certain knowledge. Also, the ability to function in Métis cultural communities requires a particular knowledge and understanding.

I am very familiar with living in two worlds. I have my family and culture which are Métis and have supplied me with the "cultural capital" to exist within that tradition. Bourdieu (1986) addresses cultural capital in this way:

These are the things that enable a person to function within a culture. Their knowledge, attributes, values and even language are a commodity that allows them to find acceptance within that culture. Many minority groups are thought to have a deficiency in the dominant culture because of the large capacity of cultural capital they hold in their own culture. (p.241)

The cultural capital that the participants and myself bring from the Métis community is the understanding of how our past is part of who we are, and to respect the diversity found in one another. Our families and
communities gave us stories of pride, determination and hard work. The value of each person was always emphasized, as well as the gifts each person possesses.

We are all given gifts. The Creator has given each of us certain gifts to use in our community. It is our responsibility to find out what our gifts are and how we can use them to better serve the needs of our community. It is also our responsibility to recognize the gifts of others and how we can rely on one another to work together as a collective toward our ultimate goal. Collaborative and cooperative learning are at the heart of Métis epistemology.

As well, I have attained cultural capital to exist within dominant society. The cultural capital that I have gained in the dominant society is the ability to work within the status quo and use the education, although hegemonic, to empower myself and my culture. The “hegemonic curriculum” not only “holds a dominant position within the schools, but also ... it helps to generate and reinforce class hierarchy in the society as a whole” (Connell, 1993, p.34). By using the standard discourse I can bring awareness to the needs for respect of diversity and other ways of knowing. I am able to identify with Monture-Angus (1995), who describes her self-portrait in stating: “I can pick the best from both worlds. More importantly, the Creator chose to put me down in the middle. And it is in the middle, the place between two cultures,
where any bridges of understanding will be constructed” (p.47). I have fair skin, this is seen as cultural capital in dominant society. Many Aboriginal people refer to this as “white skin privilege” (Anderson, 2000). Unlike my mother, I do not have dark skin and dark hair. I am not visible as a minority and therefore I am able to move throughout the dominant society without being detected as a minority or being acknowledged as belonging to an Aboriginal group. A Penobscot Elder’s words to Catherine Martin are:

She is that way for a reason. She can go places we can’t go. She can speak in places we can’t speak. People like her have been part of our culture ever since time began. We have always had people like her to do the work we can’t do. (Anderson, 2000, p.31)

I know that I have important work to do. It is important to inform others what I am about so they can understand how I negotiate my position of privilege.

“Physical beauty is the key to social mobility” (Noel, 1994, p.87). The dominant society judge people in part on what they look like. If you have certain features or physical attributes it will either advance or hinder your position within that dominant society. Noel (1994) continues to state that, “suppressing or reducing visible differences is one way to try to integrate with the dominant group” (p. 87). I have not
had to reduce any visible differences to integrate with dominant society,
and this has provided me with a privilege not afforded to many
Aboriginal people. Frakenberg (1996) writes about “whiteness” and what
this has to do with her identity. She states:

Coming to consciousness about one’s racial identity and/or race
privilege as white is not, then, by any means the same as
transforming it. Racial positioning and self-naming are contextual
and thus their transformation must always entail collective
processes, one that take place, so to speak, within history, rather
than as individual journeys. Racial identity is also relational,
made through the claiming and imposition of sameness and
othernesses. (p.4)

Whiteness is understood in terms of “the Other”. McConaghy (2000)
employs the insights of Edward Said’s construction of “Orientalism” and
stereotypes of the Other in stating:

Through these stereotypes, the West is able to promote the self
through the denigration of the other. One of the methods for
doing so is the creation of oppositional binaries in which the other
is presented as opposite or alterior to the more superior self. (p.21)

Identity has been defined by what we are not. The margins of
subjectivity outline our identity. I would like to look at my identity from
the centre, to know what it is rather than defining it by what it lacks. St. Denis (2002) discusses poststructuralist theory and its “claims that identity is a construction, a product of competing discourses and discursive practices. Poststructuralism emphasizes the importance of language in the construction of human subjects and their social and material world” (p.17). Poststructuralist theory also helps me to ask critical questions about how I have come to view my identity, both privately and professionally. Identity as a construction substantiates it as process. Identity is not static, but always in the process of being formed.

**Colonization**

As a Métis woman, I have been shaped by my history and education. I have been schooled well in the ways of the dominant society. I have learned my place in the world. I know what I need to do to improve my place within this society. Overall (1995) writes about class hierarchy and the belief that for the oppressed “there is something to escape from, that there is something to escape to, that escape is possible, and that escape is worthwhile” (p. 210). The oppressor wants the oppressed to believe that with hard work we can all succeed. Freire (1993) asserts that “as long as they live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor,”(p.48) the oppressed are confined in achieving their liberation. (Original Italics)
There have been many institutions of colonization that have shaped our identity. Aboriginal People have been colonized through educational, religious, governmental, judicial, health and economic institutions. Following religion, education has served as one of the primary modes of colonization for the last hundred years. Ng (1993) critiqued the building of Canada through a race and gender analysis:

In Canada formal education has always served as an assimilationist tool. It was designed by the dominant groups to impose cultural conformity upon subordinated groups by eliminating the latter’s cultural heritage (see Clubine, 1991, p.2). Nowhere is this function more visible than in the education of the Native people.

Initially education of the Native people was carried out by missionaries. It had a two-fold purpose: to make the “Indians” into dutiful and loyal subjects of the Crown and to prepare them to adopt to a new mode of production. This process was racist in the sense that it was through religion and education that the ideology of European superiority and supremacy was inculcated among the Native people. (p.54)

Education institutions have led many of us to forget our history, stealing our connectedness and our notion of who we are. Schools and
universities have focused on Eurocentric perspectives and knowledge. The Aboriginal students who walk these institutions’ halls are left with no validation of their history or ways of knowing.

For Most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their images. They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world. As their grandparents and parents were stripped of their wealth and dignity, this realization strips Aboriginal students of their heritage and identity. It gives them an awareness of annihilation.

(Henderson, 2000, p.59)

Education has internalized the history of Aboriginal people as being discovered by Columbus. That history began with the arrival of the Europeans. The land was unoccupied and unused in terms of how the European society defined occupation and appropriate use of resources. Adams (1989) writes of the stereotyping and bias that went into historical writing:

Although we are taught that history is true and objective when based on primary sources, the observers’ interpretations are bound to reflect the specific emphasis of the period and its unique circumstances. Furthermore, these capitalistic historical writings
represent only the forces contending for power and their power relationships. Consequently, the experiences and relationships of the "common" people are largely omitted from historical writing, because in capitalism the masses are not the ruling force. (p.18)

Additionally, religion has worked closely with education in stripping the identity of Aboriginal people. The government used religious groups in their assimilation policies. Adams writes about the service of church groups to the government: "Clergyman particularly Anglican and Catholic clergymen, worked closely with the imperialist companies of Europe in the conquest and exploitation of native people; they were as important as the military in conquering the indigenous populations of the colonies" (p.12). The constitution and laws are set up to reduce and assimilate Aboriginal people. It has been to the benefit of Métis people that the government has not passed an Act that defines Métis. Otherwise we would be left with the same battles that our Indian cousins face, being perceived as a ward of the state rather than our present focus of acquiring rights as a people.

Since the arrival of Europeans to this country successive governments have administered acts of assimilation, through education, religion and language. Their treatment of Aboriginal people has been brash and selfish. The government and religious groups have tried to convince others and themselves that these acts have been legislated
with the best interests of Aboriginals in mind. Noel (1994) writes about the alienation of minority groups:

Thus it is possible for the dominator to believe that he is vested with the power to establish controls, resort to physical force, and even mould consciousness, always invoking the welfare of the individuals and groups on whom he imposes his will as justification. (pp. 126-127)

The dominators justifies their methods because they view themselves to be superior. The dominators are not able to see outside of their experience. They cannot understand why any group of people would not want to be just like them.

**Emancipation**

The reason for this study is to give voice to what has not been heard. There is very little heard from Métis teachers, not for lack of trying but more because of systematic inequalities in education. As a minority group of educators, Métis need to use the current framework to restore our presence in the educational dialogue. Noel (1994) discusses sharing and understanding of our history to “shape the present and the future” (p.155). She also suggests that alienation is ended through this process, “since knowledge is the sole guarantee for reappropriation of their identity” (p.155).
This thesis will allow me and others to continue giving back to our communities all that we have received. Hingangaroa Smith (2000), a New Zealand educator, communicates the need to respect Indigenous knowledge: “Individuals have a responsibility to share knowledge with the group. If one person in the group fails to contribute, then the group as a whole loses, and the mana of the group may be diminished” (p. 281). I want to contribute to the work of other Metis people. We can work together to benefit our present situation and future.

I am thankful to my family for the sacrifices they have made for me. My ancestors struggled and fought for recognition as a nation, a truculence that continues today. It is part of learning that we share our knowledge, and that is what graduate work has come to mean to me, a sharing of knowledge, and a sharing of a gift.

There is very little written about Métis education specifically. I have encountered a few books and articles that discuss teacher education programs such as SUNTEP, urban Aboriginal students and Métis teachers, identity, curriculum, history, language, family and literature. The focus in Aboriginal education has mainly concentrated on First Nation education and First Nation perspectives. Therefore, there is an overwhelming need to close the gap.

There are many Métis authors who have been working to correct
this oversight. Howard Adams has published books to give a Native perspective of Canadian History (1984, 1999). Maria Campbell initiated dialogue about Métis identity and lifeworks into the mainstream with the publication of her autobiography “Halfbreed” (1973). Emma LaRoque has published many articles that focus on identity and the role of Métis people in education and society (1997, 1990). Beatrice Culleton (1983), Lee Maracle (1996) and Ruby Slipperjack (1989) have crafted fictional stories of Métis life and identity, which celebrate the strength of Métis people. As well, different Métis groups, such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, the Louis Riel Institute in Manitoba, and Pemmican Publishing Inc., have come together to publish books, anthologies, music and videos to share insights and feelings about Métis life.

Educators and students are led to believe that by addressing one or the other you have done justice and service to the histories, rights and the needs of both Métis and First Nation peoples.

It can also lead society into believing that the rights afforded to First Nation groups are shared with their Métis counterparts. It is important to note that Métis people continue to struggle for recognition as a nation and for a land base. The goals of self-government are expressed by both Métis and First Nation people. But to date, the two groups have not come together as a collective to reach these goals. Friere (1993) discussed how the oppressor works to keep groups of minorities divided. If all dominated groups gathered together, they would out-number the dominating minority. Freire writes:

As the oppressor minority subordinates and dominates the majority, it must divide it and keep it divided in order to remain in power. The minority cannot permit itself the luxury of tolerating the unification of the people, which would undoubtedly signify a serious threat to their own hegemony. (p. 141)

The Canadian government has hesitated to become involved in discussions regarding Métis rights until a definition of to whom the term “Métis” applies had been formulated. The recent definition put forward by the Métis National Council (MNC) only serves to divide the Métis
people. There are many people who may identify as Métis, but do not fit the MNC's definition.

**Vision**

The importance of establishing a distinct place for Métis education in Saskatchewan has led me on this quest. I have decided to embark on this research journey to bring forward an interpretation of Métis teachers' practices. I “reframe” what it means to be Métis (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In order to do this, I need to ask certain questions.

In order to understand Métis teacher practice, my research questions will consist of queries that reflect on culture and self. It is important to ask the participants: Who do you view as part of your cultural community? What were your family experiences growing up as a Métis? What were your school experiences? How do you feel your culture was acknowledged within your education? Why did you decide to become a teacher? Do you thread your cultural perspectives into your professional life in the classroom, and if so how? What supports exist for you as a Métis educator? What are your dreams for Métis education? How does your own personal understandings of your culture enable you to teach in cross-cultural classrooms? Have you encountered any struggles or obstacles in your practice?

As all the participants identified themselves both personally and
in their professional lives as Métis, it is this cultural perspective that I was interested in researching. How participants see themselves as a cultural person and how they see themselves as a cultural teacher will hopefully emerge from the data.

In trying to understand how each of the participants framed their professional lives, I needed to ask them to reflect on why they chose education as a career. This question was important because it framed their lived experiences, how they saw themselves as educators, and their decisions about teacher practice.

The choices we make have a lot to do with our assumptions, beliefs and values. These assumptions, beliefs and values are formed within our cultural community. McConaghy (2000) theorizes that "culture' is a metaphor for what we do in our everyday lives" (p.91). We represent a small part of a larger context. As Métis people teaching diverse groups, we are participating in cross-cultural education. It is important to examine how the participants see their role in cross-cultural education. Through these questions the teachers had an opportunity to reflect on their own identity, beliefs and values first, then moved toward sharing how their identity affected their classroom practice.

These questions sketched a portrait of the participants’ life story
and professional life. Their narratives revealed a chronicle of teacher’s self, personal self and cultural self.

This research and writing is important to my journey as a Métis woman and as an educator. It also gives me the opportunity to give voice to a particular Métis perspective. If knowledge is seen as power, then the knowledge that I share gives power to the voices of the Métis.

There has been so much writing about Aboriginal people, that it is important to use our education to author our own stories. Aboriginal people have been left out of many stories or have been included by non-Aboriginal authors appropriating Aboriginal stories and knowledge.

A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and rerighting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.28).

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) contributes Patricia Grace’s view in how books are dangerous:

She argues that there are four things that make many books
dangerous to indigenous readers: (1) they do not reinforce our values, actions, customs, culture and identity; (2) when they tell us only about others they are saying that we do not exist; (3) they may be writing about us but are writing things which are untrue; and (4) they are writing about us but saying negative and insensitive things which tell us that we are not good. (p. 35)

It is important to write about Métis perspective so that a curriculum can exist that respects the knowledge and ways of knowing of Métis people in Saskatchewan. Britzman (1991) cites Ward Churchill in her discussion of how curriculum contributes to the exclusion of others:

Churchill calls “white studies”, the hegemonic academic curriculum shuts out consideration of the controversial dynamics of race and racism by either presenting Caucasian views as universal, or obscuring the convoluted dynamics of race with its occasional parade of noncontradictory racial role modes. (p. 234)

Teaching is often viewed as being neutral. The practices that teachers use are often supported by unspoken norms. These “normative social practices are most difficult to describe because they are made to appear transparent and natural” (Schick, 2000, p.301). Many minority teachers are forced to support the status quo because difference is viewed as inferior. Ng (1993) acknowledges the existence of the systems of
domination and subordination in stating that these:

Systems of ideas and practices have been developed over time to justify and support this notion of superiority. These ideas become the premise on which societal norms and values are based, and the practices become the "normal" ways of doing things. (p.52)

It is easy to believe the myths and assumptions about minority groups because it frees us from having to challenge the status quo or feel a moral obligation.

Saskatchewan Education has provided adaptive dimensions in curriculum, lists of resources and sample units for integration of Aboriginal education. The resources produced by Saskatchewan Education (2002) are as follows: Actualization of Core Curriculum, 1999; Adaptive Dimension in Core Curriculum, 1992; The Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2000; and Diverse Voices: Selecting Equitable Resources for Indian and Métis Education, 1995. Although well intentional, these efforts represent little more than a weak attempt in correcting the injustices that Aboriginal learners have had to endure for decades.

**Overview**
Chapter One described the purpose of this study and its parameters. It initiated the discussion that will take place in later chapters. It set forth the definition of terms to be used throughout the thesis. It provided a watermark that I can build upon in further chapters.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that I will be using to analyze the data. Some of the literature used represents other minority groups but lends itself to the discussion of teaching from a cultural self. The literature that deals explicitly with Aboriginal people, and more specifically with Métis perspective, allowed me to develop a context that I can work within to discuss the issues that are relevant to Métis people.

Chapter Three provides the research methodology that is used in this study. It reiterates the research questions and the need for these questions to be answered. It provides a rationale for the methods that I chose throughout the study and references to why these methods best serve my purpose.

Chapter Four presents the data from the research. It is in this data that themes have emerged. I will use the literature to illuminate the themes that are presented.

Chapter Five provides the opportunity for me to interpret the data
and bestow an analysis of how I found these themes to emerge from the data. The interpretation of the data allows for conclusions to be drawn. Chapter Five also grants me the opportunity to share my recommendations from the analysis, and to elaborate on the future development of Métis education. It is within these interpretations that I can continue on in my journey as a Métis educator.

Chapter Six summarizes my research journey and what avenues I will walk next. The research has empowered me to find valuable sources of knowledge. This knowledge has come from the sharing of personal experiences, opinions and beliefs.
Chapter Two  Soul Songs

It started softly
and quietly
beckoned me forward.
The notes seeped
into my mind
as words formed
on the page.
I knew the haunting
melody would overcome
my thoughts and sleepless moments
causing me to stir
from my comfortable
place in the classroom.
It was like visiting the symphony
with a cacophony of sounds.
At first,
it began with just one thought
that slowly brought the other
instruments off the shelves
and into my hands.
The authors are impassioned
virtuosos who take their pen and play
for me and other interested listeners.
The songs that I have discovered
have led me
to regard my own instrument.
I need to determine
what practice is
in order to join the symphony
that is beckoning for change
and transformation.
The artists or authors are the instruments
of my writing.
Their literature has allowed me
to examine my own work
and the work of others
to bring some harmony
to the cacophony of ways
educators view teacher practice
and
cultural relevance.

**Indigenous Authors**

In Chapter One, I pointed out the lack of literature directly pertaining to the area of Métis education. In my search for literature about Métis people and identity I came across several Métis authors. I will use this literature, as well as literature from other minority cultures to analyze the data that I have collected.

LaRoque (1975), a Métis author, has addressed the topic of identity in relation to the classroom context:

That Native people have been defined by others is not only unfair, but also annoying to them. The responsible thing for educators to do is now open their policies and their classrooms to Native people who are defining themselves, and there are encouraging indications that more educators are accepting this responsibility.

(p. 13)

The concept of “othering” is defining people or groups by what they are not (Wendell, 1989). “When we make people ‘other,’ we group them together as the objects of our experience instead of regarding them as fellow subjects of experience with whom we might identify” (p.116,
original italics). Dominant society idealizes the white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class male. “Unseen, and often unnamed, the oppressor thus is the implicit incarnation of the supreme model, the ideal type, the yardstick that measures the humanity of anyone who does not resemble him” (Noel, 1994, p.12). Othering becomes a form of control, it enables oppression to exist and results in feelings of inferiority in the dominated.

When reading LaRoque’s work in her publication *Defeathering the Indian* (1975), I found myself deeply frustrated. My frustration was not the result of what she wrote, but in the fact that her words were published almost thirty years ago, and there has been little change. Many of the recommendations that she suggests have still not been realized in today’s classrooms. It is also important to note that her reference to “Native people” includes both First Nation and Métis People.

In addition to culture, identity is shaped through our gender, race and class (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Anderson, 2000; Schick, 2000; Nieto, 1994). The identity of teachers is also influenced by the personal as well as the practice of teaching. Whelan (1999) shares her journey of teaching on several “pathways”: “As a teacher who has experienced these multiple pathways, recognizing and naming these differences, I am enabled to see the significant influence the out-of-classroom place has had on my in-classroom practice and on my
evolving teacher identity” (p.20).

The out-of-classroom places that have influenced me are my family, my upbringing and my experiences with others. I have not enjoyed the judgements others passed in regards to how I look. I take great care in my in-classroom practice to not pass judgement on others based solely on their physical appearance.

“Teachers are ‘embodied enactments’ (Britzman, 1991) whose identities are organized through the particulars of life histories and already regulated social relations” (Schick, 2000, p.301). Teachers are expected to not only identify as individuals, but more with their profession and its predecessors. Teachers are required to bring into the classroom an identity based on their profession, not one based on their personal history.

The writing of Aboriginal authors takes the strength and courage from our past, and our ancestors and bring it forward to give themselves strength when change seems distant. It is in the same frustration that I feel in reading the writing of the last thirty years that compels many contemporary writers today to continue to author stories and strive for action towards change.

Adams, another Métis author, has spent most of his life working as a leader in Native rights. Throughout his book, Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View (1989), Adams intertwines his own
personal struggles of identity:

We were a new generation, starting our lives of defeat, without hope, ashamed of ourselves as halfbreeds. Although our forefathers... had fought gloriously against the Ottawa regime, we were still the wretched on the earth. How much easier and happier it would have been to start knowing the glory of our forefathers and their accomplishments. The truth would have given us all strength and pride, but instead we followed the debased path cut-out for us by the white image-makers. (p.98)

I have not had to start my life in defeat, as Adams describes. My mother has experienced in the shame of being called that same derogatory term, a “halfbreed.” Through my parents strength and courage, they taught me to be proud of who I was and where I came from.

Racism sanctions feelings of shame and denial in many minority groups. “Racism is historically constituted and located in everyday practices, including language. Racism is not a thing, but both a product and expression of social relations: more accurately, racism is located within specific social relations” (McConaghy, 2000, p.34). Racist behaviours and comments that are accepted as commonplace become the most destructive. For example, teachers questioning the need to integrate other ways of knowing into the curriculum. Adams (1989)
commences by discussing the history of racism through imperialistic
endeavours:

In Canada, indentured or semi-slave labor had to be secured and
made available for business men of the fur-trade industry. ... So
European scholars and clergymen began creating racial theories
which showed that the native people of North America and other
colonies were primitives, innately inferior and subhuman. (p.12)

Adams continues with his deliberation on the colonization of Indian
people with the "ossification of Native society" (p.35). He points out that
"the establishment of the archaic, caricature did not kill the native
culture; on the contrary, it was forced to continue in agony in limbo
existence" (p.36). This archaic culture is typified in school curricula.
The abundance of resources in the traditional ceremonies and rituals of
Aboriginal people surpass the material promoting a contemporary
Aboriginal people. It is important to recognize the past and history of
our people, but not at the sacrifice of the people living today. It is
important for Aboriginal students to be able to see themselves as
teachers, engineers, architects, artists, lawyers or doctors, and as
successful parents. The accomplishments of present day Aboriginal
people need to be celebrated in order for students to want to reclaim
their history in a society that emphasizes belonging to the mainstream.

Adams proceeds with addressing how Native people in Canada
responded to the imperialistic, colonizing and oppressive manner of the Federal government. It is in this examination that the identity of Métis people is revealed.

The subjugation of Métis people has existed for over two centuries. Métis people continue to suffer this oppression as long as they allow themselves to remain silent. Emancipation is a long and difficult journey. It begins with restructuring how we see ourselves. Whelan (1999) emphasizes the need to listen to yourself on your journey:

When you become weary as a traveler, sometimes it is easier to follow along in silence than it is to listen to your own voice. I cannot help but think about what important parts of myself I leave behind on the trail when this occurs. (p.31)

Anderson, a Cree/Métis writer, is the author of A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood (2000). In this publication, she interviewed several Aboriginal women reclaiming their identity. Aboriginal women have had to face a mis-constructed identity that has existed over a hundred years due to oppression and colonization. The narratives in this book reveal the visions of Aboriginal women on how to share their gifts and create a community that values each member.

Anderson begins with identity. She takes into account that "some Aboriginal people have always maintained a strong Aboriginal identity,
but many of us have not, and at some point we must begin to reclaim ourselves" (p.25).

This has caused me to reflect on my own notions of Métis-ness and Indianness. I have always known that I was Métis and questioned those who only claimed this identity once they had reached adulthood. My mother would refer to these individuals as “born again Indians.” My suspicion of these newly-identifying Métis or Indians was that they were only ‘discovering’ this part of their identity as it allowed them to gain material rewards (grants, tuition, money, etc). They were not interested in serving their communities but were only concerned with what entitlements they could take to benefit themselves.

My mind was opened as I continued to read about Anderson’s own struggle for recognition. Like me, she has had to “continually work through lots of doubts, notions and stereotypes that challenge my legitimacy as an Aboriginal person” (p.25).

Because I have such fair skin, I am constantly assaulted with the statement, “You don’t look like an Indian!” Many people are trapped in this preconception that Indian and Métis people conform to some racial stereotype and look a certain way, with dark skin and dark hair: to fulfill a Hollywood image.

This pressure is echoed when Anderson states, “I feel that I do not measure up to some kind of standard Indianness” (p. 25).

I have experienced these comments not only from the mouths of non-
Aboriginal people, but from Aboriginal people as well.

McConaghy (2000) writes about the “notions of authenticity” which have “the effect of homogenising (sic) Indigenous people and denying diversity and individual agency” (p.99).

I have been told by some Aboriginal people to wear beaded earring or clothing that would appear more ethnic to onlookers. I am tired of dressing up to play a role. I don’t need to pretend.

Like Adams (1989), Anderson also states:

We must guard against the tendency to ‘ossify’ tradition, and we must question the benefit of calling on these things as a yardstick for Native identity. - ‘Tradition’ and ‘ceremony’ can thus be damaging if we use it in a static or fundamentalist way to interrogate how ‘Native’ we are. (p.27)


This notion of culture has also been criticised (sic) as one which prescribes authenticity and membership. Who is in, who is a ‘real Aborigine’, ‘real Inuit’, and so on. In prescribing membership and authenticity, culture used in this way also has the effect of normalising (sic) and pathologising (sic) people. That is, it also determines inauthenticity and degeneration. (p.99)

In order for some Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people to see me as a
‘real’ Indian, I need to participate in certain events. If I do not portray what is deemed, by some, as Aboriginal culture than I cannot claim that identity. Anderson (2000) also discloses her need to not neglect her identity as a mixed-blood person.

_I have always identified as Métis, even though my father is Euro-Canadian. I was raised in the Métis culture and my father’s culture was not nurtured in me._

The identity of a Métis person has allowed me to work in two worlds, yet it needs to be noted that “the complex path of a mixed-blood individual can be greatly affected by factors such as one’s appearance, location and political climate” (Anderson, 2000, p.29).

_Mixed ethnicity has given me light skin. This is seen as functioning from a place of privilege._

McIntosh (1998) writes about “white privilege” (p.165) and how it protects “unearned advantage and conferred dominance” (p.169). People “do not see ‘whiteness’ as a racial identity” (p.169) and that frees them to “disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms” (p.168). White privilege does not need to be acknowledged in order for it to be enjoyed. In fact, many who enjoy it are oblivious to the privilege or that a majority of people function outside of privilege.

Anderson (2000) also raises these points because it “separates me
from many Native people in terms of lived experience" (p.31). She reveals that she has not had to endure many of the lived experiences that others have inherited: “It is telling that many of the things that I have experienced as privilege as a Native person are really just basic human rights. What does this say about the position of Native people in Canada?” (p.31) Her question is one that all can ask about the society we live in. It can also be extended to wonder how so many people can live without things that so few take for granted.

Anderson frames her book against the backdrop of reconstruction. She matches this framework against the process of resist, reclaim, construct and act. As a Cree/Métis, she considered the writings of Aboriginal women to answer the question of “Who I am not” (p.16) This process of resistance considers the colonization of Native women. She investigated the various roles that Indigenous women have traditionally held within their societies:

- It is clear when we listen to these women that their societies understood the significant roles, responsibilities and skills involved in being the primary caregivers of children. Their societies upheld the people who held these roles and gave them the power to make decisions about families, communities and nations. (p.68)

Anderson explains the powerful role that Native women held in their
communities in attempting to destroy the culture of Aboriginal people. She quotes Catherine Martin:

In order to break down and destroy a culture, you have to get to the root of it. The heart of Aboriginal culture is the women, as givers of life. So it makes sense to start making policies that would banish the women, the givers of language, culture and life.

(p.70)

Women are seen as the strength of a culture. Their role as caregivers put them in a pivotal place to nurture culture. Anderson continues with the images of Native womanhood and the construction of negative stereotypes to keep Aboriginal women oppressed and marginalized. These negative images dominate the beliefs, assumptions and values of dominant society toward Aboriginal women, leaving them susceptible to low self-esteem, violence and abuse.

Anderson outlines the process of resistance through family, community, storytelling and spirituality. The “ties to the community are as significant as ties to the family” (p.123) in terms of fostering a positive identity. The role of storytelling and writing becomes an act of resistance:

...the process of writing creates a space where they can deal with anger, pain and sadness, and then begin to kindle positive feelings about identity. As women heal and reclaim their identity, the
overall healing movement for Indigenous people takes hold.

(p.141)

As I write, I am creating a space to deal with the lack of understanding and knowledge of Métis people. Through writing I can deal with my frustrations and sadness over the theft of authority that Aboriginal women have had to endure.

Monture-Angus (1995) informs us that "writing - talking back - is the process through which I come to terms with my pain, anger and emotion" (p.55). Writing allows the author to not only share thoughts and feelings, but also provide an avenue to release pain and frustration.

Monture-Angus is an Aboriginal author who identifies as a Mohawk woman. I have chosen her book, Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks (1995), because I found many common links to my own struggles in working between two worlds. Monture-Angus unveils that her "experience is one of negotiating contradictions" (p.219). She explains one of these contradictions:

Individuals of Aboriginal ancestry who try to walk in both the academic world and Aboriginal world are confronted by the profound cultural differences in the ways in which truth, knowledge, and wisdom are constructed. The instructions we receive through institutionalized education indicate that we must locate truth and knowledge outside of ourselves. (p.218)
Others are better equipped to write about Aboriginal experience.
Academic writing is often void of personal voices. The objective voice is viewed as having more authority than the subjective. Monture-Angus shares with her audience the struggles, frustrations and anger she has faced in coming to terms with her identity as a Mohawk woman and an academic professor: “My race, culture and gender are pushed behind the title, professor, into obscurity” (p.62). She resumes:

I do not share with my colleagues a common view of the world.
Nor do I share with them a common personal history. Often, my colleagues do not recognize that we share little in the way of a common background because they can choose to see me as a (law) professor. (p.69)

Personal, and even cultural identity is put behind the professional self.
The professional has more value and authority.

Yet, I truly believe that the diversity of experiences and histories need to be considered so we can begin to realize the similarities that exist among us.

Tuhiwai Smith is a Maori woman from New Zealand. In Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999) she examines Western research and methodologies.

Globalization and conceptions of a new world order represent different sorts of challenges for indigenous peoples. While being on the margins of the world has dire consequences, being
incorporated within the world’s marketplace has different implications and in turn requires the mounting of new forms of resistance. (p. 24)

Tuhiwai Smith provides 25 Indigenous Projects to use in working toward the establishment of Indigenous Methodologies. These Indigenous Methodologies are forms of resistance. She discusses the role of imperialism in history, writing, theory and research. She uses a poststructuralist lens to critically discuss history, writing and the production of knowledge. She writes about the importance of critically looking at history:

The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization. (p.29)

*Tuhiwai Smith reminds me why work, like mine, is important, and how Aboriginal research needs to take place.* Questioning needs to take place, as well as, different perspectives need to be shared.

In critiquing the relationships between the individual and society and how this relationship informs western research, Tuhiwai Smith writes:

Social science research is based upon ideas, beliefs, and theories about the social world. ...Western forms of research also draw on
cultural ideas about the human ‘self’ and the relationship between
the individual and the groups to which he or she may belong.

(p.47)

My research is framed by this colonial position that Tuhiwai Smith has
described. The identity I have, as a Metis woman, is tied to the Metis
community with whom I claim membership.

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1993) by Freire acknowledges
education as oppression. Freire inscribes the theory of critical
pedagogy. It addresses cultural identity and a desire to break away from
oppression and colonization.

Freire's book gave me the opportunity to reflect on how I have become the
colonized as well as the colonizer.

Freire conceives that:

... the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of
domination in which they are immersed, and have become
resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom
so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires.

(p.47)

It is far easier to follow along than to strike out on your own path. It was difficult
in the beginning of my teaching practice to follow my own path. The prescribed
paths of teaching that are so familiar from my own education were deeply
entrenched in my consciousness.
The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; ...between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; ...between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account.

(p.48)

*It is the struggle between two worlds that continues to shape my identity and journey.*

*The dilemma to accept a role within dominant society or continue on a course that has been fostered by my cultural roots.*

**Cross-Cultural Education**

Reid (2001) echoes the experiences that Aboriginal communities faced in Australia in her article “Magpie” Babies: Urban Aboriginal Students: Identity and Inequality in Education. The British government colonization policies are parallel in both Australia and Canada. Schools served as the primary agency of assimilation. Reid writes how “cultural difference was seen as cultural deficit on the part of Aboriginal children” (p.20). Similar to Canada, the Australian government responded to this “deficit theory” (Nieto, 2000) by changing the curriculum to include the culture of Aboriginal children. “Aboriginal Studies became the vehicle through which Aboriginal identity was
constructed in the minds of educators and other children” (Reid, 2001, p.21). The feelings shared by Aboriginal students and the community demonstrated that the needs of the Aboriginal children were not being met. Reid observes that “studies have pointed to the low expectations of teachers, culture-clash, differences in learning styles and racism as factors contributing to unequal outcomes” (p.24). This has led many teachers to focus their practice on “issues of self-esteem, to make students feel more comfortable in the classroom and to acknowledge culture” (p.24). Reid continues her writing by discussing how culture is viewed and quotes Stuart Hall in stating that:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (pp.28-29)

*I find that quote very illuminating as I reflect on how my history, language and culture continue to guide my process of becoming. I am shaped by my history, not just my past experiences but also the history of my family and community. These histories are like footprints that point in a direction of where I will travel, as well as something to look back on to see where I have come from.*

Blair (2001) examines the lives of middle years Aboriginal girls in an urban setting in her article On the Margins of the Middle: Aboriginal
Girls in an Urban Middle School. She writes that “children are involved in the daily process of constructing their identities. Ethnicity and gender are two very important parts of this socially constructed phenomenon” (p.63). In her observations Blair found that “gender and ethnicity emerged as interwoven constructs in this middle-years classroom. They were fluid, active processes, not static, clearly defined entities” (p.71). It is also noted in her writing that gender is clearly marked, unlike ethnicity which can be invisible. For many of the Aboriginal participants in her study, ethnicity was clearly visible. The reality of being a visible minority means that you have to deal with the daily injustices of discrimination and oppression.

**Postcolonialism**

The legacy of colonialism has not only affected Canada. Indigenous groups around the world have felt the effects of colonial powers since European countries began exploration for new lands and resources. Postcolonialism looks at how these colonial powers still influence our lives today.

Postcolonial theorists offer resistance to social practices that relegate Otherness to the margins of power; they interrogate how centers of power and privilege are implicated in their own politics of location as forms of imperializing appropriation; and, of crucial importance, postcolonialism contests the dominant Eurocentric
writing of politics, theory, and history. (Giroux, 1992, p.20)

There are other researchers who challenge the dominant discourse in an effort transform the cultural politics that have silenced so many.

Hampton (1995) writes of the basic need and “right of a people to define themselves and choose their own name” (p.6). He describes Indian education and emphasizes that “no aspect of a culture is more vital to its integrity than its means to education. As I have been taught, nourished, and sustained by my culture, so it is my duty and privilege to transmit it” (p.7).

It also enables Aboriginal students to move through their struggles and frustrations in a hegemonic society while choosing their own education.

Battiste (2000) writes that “the challenge for postcolonial educators is to transform education from its cognitive imperialistic roots to an enlightened and decolonized process that embraces and accepts diversity as normative” (p.xxxix). It is important for the oppressed to move out of the shadow of their oppressor to reclaim their voice. She furthers that “the need for a decolonized text inspires Indigenous peoples to break their silence and regain possession of their humanity and identity” (p. xxix). Battiste shares the writings of Indigenous people from around the world who are working to help their communities reclaim their voice and vision.

Little Bear (2000) says that:
Any individual within a culture is going to have his or her own personal interpretation of the collective cultural code; however, the individual’s worldview has its roots in the culture—that is, in the society’s shared philosophy, values, and customs. (p.77)

It is the difference in worldviews that cause minority groups to struggle against the dominant society. Dominant society believes that its worldview is natural and universal and therefore correct. Duran and Duran (2000) comment that “there are valuable ideas in the Western world; we believe that by integrating worldviews and psychological understanding we can develop a model that will benefit Native American people as well as others (p.93).

Duran and Duran’s comment parallels the genesis of the Métis culture. Métis people had the opportunity to take what they liked from both, European and Indian cultures and make it our own.

As a product of colonialization, Métis must also go through a process of decolonization. Laenui (2000) suggests five phases of decolonization that “can be experienced at the same time or in various combinations” (p.152). They are rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and action. The first phase forms the foundation for decolonization in that the person or group embarks on “rediscovering one’s history and recovering one’s culture, language and identity” (p.153).
In looking at decolonization it is important to address the role of the oppressor in colonization. Noel, *Intolerance: A General Survey* (1994), analyzes how oppression is found in the areas of race, class, gender, sexual preference and age. She points out that “a comparative analysis of the parameters of identity is required” (p.6). She examines the role of both the dominator and dominated. In her analysis, Noel explains that:

...not only does the dominant discourse proclaim the superiority of the oppressor’s identity over that of the ‘other,’ as well as the objective nature of the expert verdict invoked to defend this principle, but it places responsibility for the inferior position on the oppressed squarely on their own shoulders. (p.7)

Noel’s historical accounts of oppression leads to an understanding of how the oppressed can learn from these experiences to reach emancipation. The road to emancipation is a journey of stages. She describes “three fundamental realms that must be conquered by anyone aspiring to emancipation, often after centuries of subjugation: identity, autonomy, and power” (p.191). Identity is the key to liberation. Minority groups need to be able to define themselves in order for them to reject subjugation (Noel, 1994).

McConaghy (2000) analyzes culture in *Rethinking Indigenous Education: Culturalism, Colonialism and the Politics of Knowing*. She
emphasizes the importance of “an analysis of various traditions of knowing Indigenous education and with the processes by which certain knowledges become dominant” (p.1). There are four issues that need to be considered to understand how “culturalism has framed Indigenous education work within a politics of cultural identity” (p.15).

The four issues are:

... who is the other to which we refer by the term ‘Indigenous’; how do we know this other, that is, which methodological instruments do we need to employ; who knows the other best, that is which methods and analytical frameworks reveal the most plausible truth claims; and what should be the form of our educational work after each of the preceding issues has been determined.

(p.15)

Defining who is Indigenous is full of controversy and contradiction. Who gets to put forward the definition? And are they the same people who decide who will fit within this definition?

McConaghy begins by discussing the work of Edward Said’s Orientalism in analyzing the dominant discourse for the production of the West and its oppressed.

Orientalism creates stereotypes of ‘the Oriental’ which have destructive consequences. Through these stereotypes, the West is able to promote the self through the denigration of the other. One
of the methods for doing so is the creation of oppositional binaries in which the other is presented as opposite or alterior to the more superior self. (p.19)

The discourse of difference is set-up through binaries. One group is compared to another, and the dominant group determines what the lines of comparison should be. McConaghy points out that:

To know one part of the binary is also to know the opposite. For example, male and female, black and white and Indigenous and non-Indigenous are powerful binaries in which the ‘modernist fantasy of self-definition through opposition’ (Frow 1995, 25) is achieved. (p.91)

Identity is often defined through difference. I know what I am by stating what I am not, and how I am different from others or how they are different from me.

I have defined my Métis identity on not being First Nation, not being European, and all those cultural markers that make culture visible. The visible cultural markers of the Métis culture are a shared history of music, language, dances, food and clothing.

McConaghy further points out that:

For many decades it has been assumed widely that knowledge of Indigenous people and their cultures is the foundation of good Indigenous education. This knowledge is assumed to lead to
understanding, sensitivity, tolerance and better outcomes for Indigenous people. (p.105)

It is very important for educators in cross-cultural classrooms to consider how they use their knowledge about Indigenous people and cultures. McConaghy cites the critique of Martin Nakata of how culture is used in education:

...we need to consider how culture is used in education, how it has been defined, and what the consequences of certain notions of culture are in terms of educational strategies and the material and social conditions of Indigenous people. (p.105)

The role of culture in the classroom is played out through teacher practice and the daily choices that teachers make in the classroom.

**Teacher Practice**

I am researching the role of culture in the teacher's professional life and personal experience. It is within this structure that I also need to identify how teachers have come to understand their professional identities and how they thread their cultural identity into their professional lives. Ladson-Billings (2001) examines teacher identity in addressing the need for cultural competency:

Helping students become culturally competent is not an easy task. First it requires that teachers themselves be aware of their own culture and its role in their lives. Typically, white middle-class
prospective teachers have little or no understanding of their own culture. Notions of whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated. But being white is not merely biology. It is about choosing a system of privilege and power. (p. 96)

People need to look at their right to receive certain grades, achieve particular successes and live a better life than others because of belief in the myth that it was worked for, or to not interrogate how these privileges were awarded, or how some groups of people will never be able to achieve what is taken-for granted no matter the effort.

Britzman explores the struggle of practicing teachers to find their own voice and identity in the classroom in her book Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach (1991). She examines cultural myths of teacher education and of teaching as these student teachers share their struggles to maintain their vision among the pressure to conform to past practices.

Britzman analyzes what teaching does to teachers and notes: "...how the activity of teaching expresses something about the subjectivities of teachers and determines ways teachers come to construct their teaching identities" (p.2). It is in this assertion that I feel she is urging us to take a deeper inspection into how our practice as teachers continues to shape us as teachers.

The practice of teaching requires us to come to terms with our
own values, beliefs and assumptions. Britzman affirms this in stating: “Teaching concerns coming to terms with one's intentions and values, as well as one’s views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiations, and dependency and struggle” (p. 8). The subjectivities that she references is the idea that teachers are not only performing in the subject of their discipline, but also as a female or male person, Métis or First Nation, or any other relationship that causes us to form an identity. She explores the subjected lives of student teachers, who are both teachers, and students, as well as the personal beings from a particular community and family.

Subjectivity is both our conceptual orderings of things and the deep investments summoned by such orderings. It organizes an individual’s ideas about what it means to recognize oneself as a person, as student, a teacher, and so forth, and arranges strategies for the realization of these multiple identities. (p.57)

How we identify ourselves has to do with the social relationships we experience in our family and communities. Métis teachers identify themselves through their personal relationship to their families and communities. They also pay attention to the historical relationship of Métis people to the country of Canada in determining their unique status as Aboriginal people.
The identity of teachers is complex in that we each bring to the classroom our own histories. We share the role of guiding students toward a greater knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The methods that we choose to guide students has more to do with our experiences as students than as teachers. Teachers are also unique in what perspectives we share in the classroom. As our experiences change so do our perspectives. Britzman conveys this approach to identity in stating: “...identity is contingent in that it is always positioned in relation to history, desires, and circumstances. Identity is constantly affected by the relations between objective and subjective conditions and in dialogue with others” (p.25). Exploring the practice of Métis teachers will allow me to investigate how these teachers deal with the growing demands of a cross-cultural classroom, juggle the methods they have learned with the needs placed before them.

In becoming teachers, have these Métis women and men suppressed aspects of themselves or followed a “default” mode of teaching in order to survive the teaching ordeal? Florio-Ruane (2001) cites Cazden’s default mode of teaching in how teachers will operate like a computer in default mode, “unless we take direct, explicit steps to change” (p.33). How do they see their practice as Métis teachers when the demand for culturally-relevant educators is at a premium?

In order to answer these and other questions, I need to discuss
voice, knowledge and curriculum in shaping cultural identity. Britzman (1991) observes the use of voice and knowledge in her exploration of teacher practice.

*The role of voice is empowering. Our voice allows us to share with others the experiences that have shaped our lives. I will examine the voice of the participants to see how they paint the picture of their experience. The picture will shed light onto the many relationships and events that colour the voice of the participants.*

“Our voice is always contingent upon shifting relationships among the words we speak, the practices we construct, and the community within which we interact” (p.12).

*My voice, as researcher, will take a more critical stance through this study. I want to make a critical observation of the voice of the participants, and how it reveals their identity as Métis teachers.*

Britzman defines a critical voice as one that is “concerned with not just representing the voices of oneself, and others, but with narrating, considering, and evaluating them” (p.13). *I want to use my critical voice as I narrate the practice of the teacher participants, while considering my own practice.*

The writings of many researchers point to the fact that curriculum and the practices and policies of schools reflect the needs of dominant groups and are established to maintain the status quo (Florio-Ruane,
Britzman writes that "... every curriculum, as a form of discourse, intones particular orientations, values, and interests, and constructs visions of authority, power and knowledge" (p.17). The curriculum in Saskatchewan also intones certain values, while maintaining the structures of power and authority.

Adams (1989) explores the "Schooling of the Redman". He observes how the school system has been set up to colonize and oppress Métis and Indian students. His observations of teachers' language, use of literature and portrayal of history serve the purpose of "inferiorization".

The present formal education program is irrelevant and meaningless to native people. The white middle-class values inherent in classroom instruction mean very little to native students. The curriculum is so strange that students have difficulty relating it to their frame of reference and making it part of their knowledge. (p.132)

Throughout the interviews I hope to hear how these Métis teachers address content that does not reflect their culture, and also does not reflect the needs of other minority students. Britzman (1991) refers to this as "homogenized learning, that all students must learn the same thing at the same time" (p.77).
The importance of acknowledging our own culture as teachers allows our students to see the relevance of their culture in their own lives. As educators, we must be willing to reflect on how our culture has shaped our values, beliefs and assumptions. With reflection, teachers will be better suited to meet the diverse needs set before us.

*Teachers need know their self and accept that self in order to be effective culturally relevant teachers. If teachers foster a positive identity in the classroom it will enable students to embrace their own identity in a positive way.*

Students will feel valuable when their voices are honored in the classroom. When teachers believe in them, the students will feel capable. When students can make connections between their lives and school experiences they will feel their lives are worthwhile.

Ladson-Billings shares her dream for culturally relevant teaching in *The Dreamkeepers* (1994). The “dreamkeepers” are those teachers who encompass culturally relevant teaching and keep the dreams of minority students alive (p. x). Her study of excellent teachers of minority students “offers the reader models for improving practice and developing grounded theory” (p. x).

In her book Ladson-Billings cites the research of “culturally congruent”, “culturally appropriate” or “culturally responsive” teaching (Villegas, 1988; Giroux, 1983; Au & Jordon, 1981; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). She coins her own phrase of “cultural relevance” in the need for
materials and teaching to reflect the "history, culture, or background" of minority students represented appropriately.

Ladson-Billings shares a view of excellence in teaching through teachers beliefs about students' academic success. Teachers who regard their students as "without colour" perform "dysconscious racism" which is an "uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (pp.31-32). It is important to note that dismissing the colour of one's skin is "dismissing one of the most salient features of the child's identity" (p.33). As teachers, it is important to know who each of our students are and teach to those differences: "If teachers pretend not to see the students' racial and ethnic differences, they really do not see the students at all and are limited in their ability to meet their educational needs" (p.33).

Ladson Billings confirms the research of Spinder and Spindler (1988) in addressing the notion of teachers responding to only those students who resemble their own class, culture or background. She provides this point of view:

Students who fail to look, talk, or act as the teacher does are in danger of being placed in the lowest tracks. Placement in these low tracks is likely to mean less attention and individual instruction from the teacher. In a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, these students, who have had little instruction, perform at lower
levels. Their ability to rise above these levels is compromised because they have had less attention. Thus they continue a cycle of poor school performance that was initiated by a teacher's biases and predispositions toward them. (p.59)

*I wonder how many times in my own teacher practice did I not meet the needs of my students. The students home life was to blame for their poor abilities. I did not change my practice or shift my biases to better serve their learning needs.*

Ladson-Billings offers many definitions of culturally relevant teaching that “honor the students sense of humanity and dignity” and where “self-worth and self-concept is promoted in a very basic way” (p.76). The definitions of culturally relevant teaching demonstrate teacher practice that is child-centred.

Ladson-Billings investigates the lives of new teachers in her second book *Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms* (2001). She uses the biblical story of Moses leading the people of Israel to the promised land from Egypt. Once Moses reaches Canaan with the Israelites, he does not continue with them, but passes leadership over to the younger, less experienced Joshua. She uses this story as a metaphor of experienced teachers and teacher educators leading student teachers toward the promised land of their own classroom, only to leave them to enter into the classroom alone.
In using this metaphor, Ladson-Billings is questioning what we need to do to prepare our future teachers, so that they will be comfortable to take on the leadership role in diverse classrooms. She writes that "an important component of preparing to be a teacher is interrogating the way status characteristics like race, class and gender configure every aspect of our lives" (p.5). The teacher participants were asked to reflect on their own practices and determine what characteristics influence their lives.

Ladson-Billings continues her investigation by looking at what it means to be a good teacher. "Teaching well,..., means making sure that students achieve, develop a positive sense of themselves, and develop a commitment to larger social and community concerns" (p.16). In order for teachers to come to understand their practice and determine if they are teaching well they need to reflect. The process of reflective inquiry is "a learned one" (p. 21). Teachers need to have a willingness to reflect on what they are doing; this "represents a particular outlook or point of view - a view suggesting that the place of improving student performance begins with the teacher" (p.21). The process of reflection continues to make me more aware of how I can make my practice better.

Ladson-Billings examines good teaching by inspecting pedagogy and the building of culturally relevant teachers for diverse classrooms. She suggests the notion of pedagogy for many is "probably formed by
years of being students" and that “teaching occurs when the person designated as ‘teacher’ very deliberately and obviously *controls* classroom discourse” (p.25, original italics).

Ladson-Billings cites Giroux and Simon’s definition of pedagogy:
It can be understood as a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular ‘moral character.’ As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. When one practices pedagogy, one acts with the intent of creating experiences that will organize and disorganize a variety of understandings of our natural and social world in particular ways. (p.29)

*In reviewing this definition of pedagogy, I find that teacher practice is at the heart of pedagogy. The practices that we include in our teaching repertoire allow us to promote culturally relevant practices or ignore them.*

Ladson-Billings acknowledges several aspects of culturally relevant teachers: “... culturally relevant teachers know that for students to exhibit any power over their own lives they will need to be critical about information...” (p.76). Teachers can do this by understanding that “helping students raise critical questions and search for multiple perspectives is an important aspect of academic achievement” (p.76). As critical thinkers, we are able to question our practices. The process of thinking critically allows us to investigate the
why's and how's of a situation or experience. It is through this process that we are able to make meaning of our lives in relationship to others. She continues: “culturally relevant teachers understand that culture is a complex concept that affects every aspect of life. Such teachers are able to recognize their own cultural perspectives and biases” (p.98). It is important to understand who we are and where we come from so that we can realize our how our choices of language and behaviour influence those around us.

*As a middle-class person, I must accept that I come from a place of privilege. I need to appreciate that my experiences are different from the experiences encountered by my students.*

Ladson-Billings suggests: “Culturally relevant teachers know that it is their job to learn about the their students’ cultures and their communities. They need to bridge the divide between the school and the students’ homes” (p.99). The responsibilities of teachers to their students does not only exist in the classroom. Teachers need to be aware of the responsibilities of the family, community and greater school community. The teacher has only a part in the students life that extends into the school and community. She points out:

*Culturally relevant teachers understand that learning is facilitated when we capitalize on learner’s prior knowledge. Rather than seeing students’ culture as an impediment to learning, it becomes*
the vehicle through which they acquire the official knowledge and
skills of the school curriculum. (pp.99-100)

Teachers can recognize the students prior knowledge by providing
opportunities for them to share their knowledge and experiences. This
allows students to make connections between their knowledge and the
curriculum. As has already been acknowledged, the curriculum does
not encompass the needs of culturally diverse learners. The materials
that many teachers are left to work with are also void of any kind of
representation of the cultures of many of their students. It is then up to
creative and responsive teachers to find resources that reflect the needs
of their classroom.

It is in acknowledging the different perspective and values that
teachers can best assure their students will acquire knowledge to assist
them in their own voyage through a hegemonic society. Ladson-Billings
maintains: “culturally relevant teachers are people who take the long
view. The students in their classrooms are important for who they are
and for who they can be” (p.121). Students need to believe in
themselves in order to achieve academically. Teachers holding low
expectations for their students will only succeed in encouraging low self-
esteeem among them. LaRoque (1975) expands on this idea in
discussing compensatory education for Native students. What can be
seen as good intentions in helping Native children can also be perceived
as not allowing students to find their own capabilities and skills. Friere (1993) discusses these acts as “false generosity”:

Any attempt to ‘soften’ the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their ‘generosity,’ the oppressors must perpetuate the injustice as well. (p.44)

Many practices that teachers employ are acts of false generosity. Teachers may realize that they have power and privilege their students do not. They attempt to soften their responses toward these minority students, instead of inquiring into why these injustices exist.

Ladson-Billings (2001) reminds us that “although it is important for teachers to understand their students’ culture, the real benefit in understanding culture is to understand its impact on our own lives” (p.83). The influence of dominant society in my life is quite significant especially since I have been schooled in the dominant culture. Many of the activities that I have pursued are also part of the dominant culture. All these experiences have shaped who I am.

Florio-Ruane addresses this same situation in her book Teacher Education and the Cultural Imagination: Autobiography, Conversation and Narrative (2001). Her narrative encourages teachers to not only
view their own lives critically but become aware of the cultural lives of their students.

Florio-Ruane discusses the void of culture in teacher education in stating that the “denial of culture in teacher education similarly precludes an historical, contextual analysis that might help us examine how we became the teachers we are - that is, how our histories shape our practices, assumptions, and expectations” (p.24). Our practice as teachers is determined by our education as students, as well as our education as student teachers. In order to understand ourselves we must analyze what has shaped our identity.

We need to examine ourselves critically so that we can better appreciate the individual differences of those that are seated before us in the classroom. Florio-Ruane clarifies: “Gazing both inward and outward, and in dialogue with others, we might thus uncover culture not as a trait by which to label others, but as a shared human experience” (p.44). Culture becomes shared in how we make sense of the world. There are many commonalities between cultural groups. The notion of hospitality is not reserved to one group, but is found in many cultures. The differences come into play when we share our beliefs, values and attitudes with others.

There is a problem in how culture is perceived by many as something that is used to describe other people: “Culture is what ‘other
people’ ‘have’. As such, culture is thought of as trait of a group of people and typically operates to limit opportunity, prompt conflict, or otherwise isolate” (p.33). Canada is often described as a mosaic. There are many different cultures that make up the Canadian culture. It is very difficult for many Canadians to describe what is Canadian culture. Culture is viewed as something that belongs to other ethnic groups, something that is brought with you, not something that develops and changes over time. Teachers’ practice is greatly affected because of this limited view of culture. Florio-Ruane outlines three views of culture related to student learning:

1. Cultural differences are problems rather than resources for learning.

2. Pupil performance is the result of two primary factors of pupil psychology and family socialization.

3. Cultural background is largely determinant of school achievement and future economic standing. (pp.34-35)

*These attitudes are something that I have experienced in my earlier years of teaching. I did not take the time to examine what teaching practices of mine were preventing some students from achieving, but instead defaulted to this deficit view. It was beyond my control, I could not fix their home life or psychology.*

I concur with Florio-Ruane’s idea that school is not made to fit,
but “students must change to fit school” (p. 39). We then must ask ourselves as educators, why is this not questioned? Why do we continue to follow the status quo?

Florio-Ruane suggests that we need to move beyond viewing culture as “ethnic food, costume, holiday practice” that “represents culture as a static system of knowledge organizing the practices and interpretive frames of a group of people -their idealized ‘ways of life’ (p.43). The static view of culture leads many teachers to use an Additive approach, it doesn’t take into account the social injustices many cultural groups face. This view also generates minority students or teachers to be seen as a “cultural expert.... where teachers assume that students’ (or teachers’) cultural membership automatically makes them capable of teaching others about their culture” (Nieto, 1999, pp.119-120). Florio-Ruane (2001) advocates that “in order to create a profession more reflective of the strengths of our population’s history and diversity, we need to transform the texts and contexts of teachers’ learning to include multiple voices and stories of culture, literacy and education” (p.44).

Florio-Ruane describes culture as a complex and dynamic concept. This concept is always being challenged and changed by our lived experiences and our relationships with others. Cultures change as we come into contact with others. Within her discussions of culture the
following attributes were analyzed:

- Culture is dynamic, changing over time and with contact with other people, places and activities.
- Culture colors and is colored by the experiences of attending school and becoming literate in that context.
- Culture is expressed differently by individuals and families, even among those of the same ethnic group.
- Culture exists even in the experience of "White teachers".
- Culture is appropriated, resisted, and changed by individuals.
- Culture is cross-cut in our society by other factors in the experience of individuals and families (e.g., age, gender, race, socioeconomic standing). (p.130)

These attributes exemplify that culture cannot be limited to something that only others possess. Culture is something that we all participate in and it is shaped by identity and experience. The negative attitudes toward particular cultures lead to policies or practices that end up pressuring people to assimilate.

Many minority groups endure similar experiences to those of Métis people. These parallel experiences occur at the feet of dominant society. Minority groups suffer oppression at the hand of the colonizer.
The dominant are characterized as white, anglo, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class, male adults. Anyone who does not fulfil these characteristics than becomes one of the dominated. Noel (1994) describes this order as follows: “While the oppressor embodies the completeness of existence, the identity of the dominated is often defined by what is lacking or by a fault of nature” (p. 17).

Aboriginal people, as well as other dominated groups, have had to work within and outside of these norms. In trying to become more like the dominant society, the dominated face losing their cultural identity and history. Adams (1985) shares his personal struggle with his identity:

In the previous couple of years I had discarded everything that was halfbreed. I was making it in the white world and I didn’t want anything holding me down. All my friends were white, especially girlfriends. I had a car and an apartment in the city; I had shaken off the ugliness of Indianness. I couldn’t afford the albatross of a halfbreed heritage. One bad move could destroy years of cautious progress into mainstream society. (p.123)

I have also struggled with my own identity. I am quite adamant about being recognized as a Métis woman. It is something that I continue to strive for from both Aboriginal groups and dominant society. It is important to see each person for who they are, not just what they appear to be, and to take the time to get know where someone comes from.
My family and community always take the time to ask people where they are from or who their family is. It is in this sharing of our personal histories that we can better understand each other. It is also the way in which we bring our connectedness to one another into the forefront. Where we come from and who our parents are tell others about our beliefs and values. There have been so many times when I have met people and my mother has asked me, “Who are their parents?” or “Where are they from?” Then from this small bit of information she was able to relate a larger story of how we are connected to these people and what kind of people she felt they were.

Our stories and experiences are shaped by who we are, and in turn, identity is shaped by our experiences. Britzman (1991) describes this struggle:

We are all situated by race, class, and gender, and without an understanding of the social meanings that overdetermine how we invite and suppress differences, the complexity of biography is reduced either to the dreary essentialism that beneath the skin we are all the same, or the insistence that differences can be overcome by sheer individual effort. (p. 233)

No matter how hard we try we cannot change who we are. We can pretend or deny that we do not belong to a particular group. Even the few oppressed who have been able to break free of the bondages of domination still have to face the discrimination that exists in society.
Delpit introduces her book *Other’s People Children* (1995) by outlining three scenarios in which minority children have endured the stereotypes and prejudices of oppression:

As I have lived through each of these scenarios, a familiar sense of dread closed in around me: my throat constricted, my eyes burned, I found it hard to breathe. I have faced this fog too many times in my career in education. It is a deadly fog formed when the cold mist of bias and ignorance meets the warm vital reality of children of color in many of our schools. (p. xiii)

*This poignant description is one that I have also endured in my life, as a student and in my career in education. I refer to these feelings as the burn of racism.*

*This burn stings at contact, and it takes a long time for the pain to subside.*

*Even after the pain has subsided, you are still left with the scar of the burn to remind you of the pain you have endured. I am familiar with the feeling of my throat constricting while choking back tears, the trembling of my body and gripping my hands tightly so as to not reveal the shaking turmoil I feel inside.*

Delpit goes beyond asserting the need for culturally relevant teaching that Ladson-Billings (2001, 1994) supports. Delpit evaluates the need for minority children to also become knowledgeable of the "culture of power" (p.24). She concludes that parents of minority children want something more for them: "They want to ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional
styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society” (p.29). She discusses the importance for teachers to know who their students are and where their are from. It is impossible for teachers to change a students’ life at home.

What the school personnel fail to understand is that if the parents were members of the culture of power and lived by its rules and codes, then they would transmit those codes to their children. In fact, they transmit another culture that children must learn at home in order to survive in their communities. (p.30)

Delpit questions the pedagogy of teachers who refrain from teaching skills and critical thinking to minority students. Some teachers approach minority students by teaching multicultural education. Teaching multicultural education can mean different things to different educators. Multicultural education can be seen as celebrating a particular group or certain festivals through the year. A more profound view of multicultural education is about transformation.

Nieto (1999) writes about multicultural education and teacher transformation in The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities. Learning is constructed through “social relationships and the actions of individuals that take place within particular sociopolitical contexts” (p.2). The attitudes and beliefs that the teacher brings into the classroom support or hinder the learning
climate. Teachers need to be aware of how they affect learning in their classrooms. "The very act of teaching carries with it a social and political commitment to students and to uncovering a fuller and more complicated truth" (p.81). Our teacher practices reveal our values, beliefs and attitudes toward children. She emphasizes that if teachers feel that some children are incapable of learning then our teaching strategies will ensure that outcome. Nieto cites Cochan-Smith's phrase of "teaching against the grain" and describes that "to teach with this attitude takes great courage and vision because it dares to challenge official knowledge and prevailing truths about 'what works'" (p.81).

Teaching against the grain provides many students with learning opportunities that they might not otherwise experience. This attitude creates a context that is caring and respectful of student identities. Nieto reinforces this in stating that "no longer is it possible to separate learning from the cultural context in which it takes place, or from an understanding of how culture and society influence and are influenced by learning" (p.14). The influence of these social and political norms on the learning environment requires teachers to adopt a critical pedagogy.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy comes out of critical theory and is "fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge" (McLaren, 1998, p.183). McLaren uses the
critical theory of education in writing *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (1998). He writes that the work of philosopher and critical theorist Foucault is "crucial in understanding the socially constructed nature of truth and its inscription in knowledge/power relations" (p.183). Politics, culture, and economics are fundamental principles in critical pedagogy.

With regard to politics, McLaren points out that "critical educational theorists argue that teachers must understand the role that schooling plays in joining knowledge and power, in order to use that role for the development of critical and active citizens" (p.164). Teachers need to employ a critical pedagogy to enable their students to think critically. Without it, students would not be able to "understand why their lives have been reduced to feelings of meaninglessness, randomness, and alienation and why the dominant culture tries to accommodate them to the paucity of their lives" (p.18). Teachers need to use a critical pedagogy to help their students understand how things in their life have come to be and how society functions to keep minority students in a place of domination. McLaren confesses that:

While it is probably true that schools cannot remake society, they must find better ways of making themselves vital places for all students - places where students can be empowered to gain a sense of control over their destinies rather than feel trapped by
their social status. (p.154)

Student empowerment comes from students learning to think critically about their life and the world around them. McLaren realized from his own teaching experiences that “students needed to be taught on their own terms first, and then taught to critically transcend those terms in the interest of empowering themselves and others” (p.155). Schooling reproduces “inequality, racism, and sexism” as well as emphasizes “competitiveness and ethnocentrism” (p.164). Therefore, the “critical perspective allows us to scrutinize schooling more insistently in terms of race, class, power, and gender” (p.166). Critical pedagogy allows students to question why certain groups have access to power and privilege when others do not.

McLaren cites Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, which “refers to the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to the next” (p.193). McLaren underlines that “students from the dominant culture inherit substantially different cultural capital than do economically disadvantaged students, and schools generally value and reward those who exhibit the dominant cultural capital” (p.193). Students who closely resemble the dominant culture will garner access to previously unavailable resources.

McLaren observes that “schooling transmits and reinforces those
ideologies that reflect the prevailing values and ethos of a male-dominated, hierarchical, middle-class social structure” (p. 206). Those who do not fit into this description are faced with a life-long struggle. It is up to critical educators to create places of empowerment for their disadvantaged students.

Similar to McLaren is the work of Giroux in Border Crossing: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education (1992). Giroux comments that “schools should be about ways of life. They are not simply instruction sites. They are cultures which legitimize certain forms of knowledge and disclaim others” (p.14). He also contends that “you can’t deny that students have experiences and you can’t deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process” (p.17). Because of the many different experiences that are presented each day in the classroom “teachers need to be intellectuals, to realize that teaching is a form of mediation between different persons and different groups of persons” (p.17). Mediation between different people or groups is needed to realize and understand the boundaries that separate them.

Giroux recommends a border pedagogy which “respects the notion of difference” (p.28). Border pedagogy stresses the “epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins that structure the language of history, power, and difference” (p.28). When teachers engage in a critical pedagogy that teaches their students to question taken for
granted assumptions they are also enabling their students to “engage knowledge as border-crossers, as people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power” (p.29). He also points out that teachers become border-crossers “by being able to listen critically to the voices of their students” (p.34). Teachers need to understand the limits of their own knowledge and experience, as well as how difference is constructed.

Giroux also outlines an anti-racist pedagogy. He writes that teachers “should allow students not merely to take risks but also to push against the boundaries of an oppressive social order” (p.141). This makes schools a site for transformation.

Teachers who engage in transformative educations “must be willing to be transformed” (Ramirez & Gallardo, 2001, p.xii).

Educators committed to promoting an education that recognizes the human potential of each individual and fosters his or her development, regardless of the social conditions surrounding the person's birth and upbringing, need to search for educational principles that support a liberatory praxis. These principles can be found within an encompassing umbrella loosely defined as transformative education. (Ada, 2001, p. viii)

(Original Italics)

Educators need to move beyond the contributions approach (Banks,
of focusing only on food, fashion and festivities of various ethnic
groups. Instead they need to use the real-life experiences of their
students to foster inquiry and reflection.

Reza (2001) states that a “transformative approach to
multicultural education implies being critically reflective of oneself as
the instructor, professor, teacher, facilitator, and student” (p.209).
Critical pedagogy requires an analysis of how things came to exist as
they do today. The process of empowerment begins through
questioning. “By accepting the premise of critical theory, one must
address oneself on an interpersonal level, not just as a professional
teacher but what one brings to the classroom in terms of personal
experiences” (p.210). Once we are able to understand how
acknowledging our lived experiences affects us then we will be able to
better serve the students in our classrooms.

Smith (2001) parallels this same insight in submitting that as a
“culturally responsive educator” you must begin “with one’s soul”
(p.141). Once teachers are aware of our own privilege and the “painful
acknowledgments” that come with it, we can start building a
relationship of trust with our students and their families.

**Social Justice**

Schools as an institution are based on an unequal distribution of
power and knowledge. Social justice education must struggle against
these inequalities. Bell (1997) points out that when group memberships “co-exist within an unequal system, they inevitably generate multiple and conflicting personal meanings” (p.9). She also states that oppression needs to be understood in terms of group membership, “for people are privileged or oppressed on the basis of social group status” (p.9). Since those who belong to privileged groups already experience full participation in many areas, social justice is intimately tied to those who do not.

It is the teacher’s responsibility to help “students recognize various spheres of influence in their daily lives; analyze the relative risk factors in challenging discrimination or oppression in intimate relations, friendship networks, and institutional settings; and identify personal or small group actions for change” (Adams, 1997, p.38). Teachers must do these things in a manner that is safe and respectful for all students involved.

Connell (1993) uses the question “about who is the education system actually serving” to guide his work in *Schools and Social Justice* (p.11). Knowledge is “created by particular social processes, by particular people with particular points of view” (p.30). The decisions that are made as to how this knowledge is distributed and to whom is also determined by a particular group of people. He looks at justice in schools as “distributive justice” (p.16) of how schools systems
attempt to provide equal access and opportunity to education for all students. The myth of meritocracy is structured around the:

...belief that people who are advantaged in the distribution of social assets deserve their advantages. They deserve a better deal because they are more intelligent, or better trained, or more hardworking, or because they and their parents have sacrificed to get these assets. (p.27, original italics).

Meritocracy fools people into believing that they have earned their privilege and that those who do not benefit from privilege must not have worked hard enough or are less worthy.

Connell writes that the curriculum must be changed to reflect the needs of all students, especially those who continue to be disadvantaged by the school system. He stresses that curricular projects must be initiated from the starting point of social justice.

Connell also argues that teachers need to be part of the reform process in education. “It is simple realism to recognize that teachers make or break most educational reforms, depending on how they take them up” (p.57). Teachers approaching their students with practices and assessment strategies that are based on a homogenous culture result in failure for many. In order for educational reforms to take shape it needs to be understood “who teachers are and what they do” (p.73). He suggests that we need to “problematize things that are taken
for granted” in order for transformation to take place and social justice be achieved (p.122).

The struggle for social justice education in the classroom is about demanding and working toward an equitable education for all students. The participants in my research represent the hope for creating spaces where students can be fostered to think creatively and critically. Edelsky (1999) describes educators who “stick their necks out, and stick to their principles while working in generally uncharted territory, all in the service of a more democratic and just society” (p.5). These same descriptors can also be used to describe the practices of the teacher participants.

Boozer, Maras and Brummett (1999) reveal that “citizens must first reflect upon their own lives and the lives of others. In sharing these reflections and using others’ reflections to further our own, we are able to critique ourselves and the sociopolitical systems to which we belong” (p.55). It is through talking and conversation that ideas can be shared and visions can be created.

Boozer et al. use student-led inquiries to “challenge attitudes, behaviors, and systems that subjugate various groups of people” (p.56). The use of conversation allows students to exchange ideas and “come to understand each other’s position” (p.67). The key to conversation is support and trust. They have discovered that “revelations and their
subsequent transformations can only occur where there is a shared sense of community, a common respect for all individuals and their ideas, and an intense desire to understand those ideas" (p.74). If students do not feel they have a safe environment to share their feelings or ideas than they will not engage in conversation.

**What do our practices tell us?**

Christensen (1999) shares some poignant examples from her own school experiences that caused her to feel ashamed of herself and her family. The indignities that she experienced has led her to want her students to feel:

... outraged when they encounter texts, museums, commercials, classes, and rules that hide or disguise a social reality that glorifies one race, one culture, one social class, one gender, or one language, without acknowledging the historical context that gave it dominance. (p.210).

Students who feel outrage can begin to foster equality. The participants also share how their school experiences continue to shape their teaching practice. Similar to Christensen, they “want to teach a critical literacy that equips students to ‘read’ power relationships at the same time that it imparts academic skills” (p.210). It is vital to a student's education that they “explore and question” (p.222). In classrooms that employ a critical pedagogy students leave with understanding of their lives and
how their lives are embedded in society. Christensen concedes that:

... students must use the tools of critical literacy to dismantle the half-truths, inaccuracies, and lies that strangle their conceptions about themselves and others. They must use the tools of critical literacy to expose, to talk back to, to remedy any act of injustice or intolerance that they witness. (p.211).

Christensen points out that when an educator ignores or does not question “social and historical framework” they effectively condone it (p.212).

_The work that Christensen has done as a Language Arts teacher to teach critical literacy caused me to evaluate my own practice and the times that I have ignored text or content that subjugated others. It was easier to ignore what I knew should be done. It takes more time and effort to use discussion, reading and writing critically, but the results are well worth the effort._

Jarvis (1999) states that “some critical theorists and feminists assert that liberatory pedagogies can make a difference in helping to enable students to work toward creating and actively participating in a democracy” (p.258).

_I doubt the attempts of working toward a democracy, because I feel that even though we are told that we live in a democratic society there is no real democracy evident. People with power make the majority of decisions, while the multitude of oppressed suffer in poverty, discrimination and marginalization._
I can understand the “blank stares and bored silence” Jarvis received when she discussed the goals for the class (p.259). Students are not used to a pedagogy that is liberating. They have been educated and socialized not to question basic assumptions and do not know how to respond when given the opportunity.

Jarvis outlines some possible ingredients that should be included in a liberatory education: “the students desire to learn about the topic, ...our willingness to share and listen to others’ stories, ...knowledge of the subject, ...responsibility, ... support, ... and the time and space to talk” (p.263). She also comments that “most of the time, circumstances are not so ideal” (p.263). The constraints of time, or lack of knowledge in a particular area to teach it critically can hinder a liberatory experience (Jarvis, 1999).

Jarvis reveals that “the idea is to show students possibilities for hope and change; all the while also teaching survival skills” (p.271). The problem for educators is to transmit their knowledge about the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995) to better equip students with the resources they need to make their way through dominant society. Yet it is these struggles that frame our practice of teaching for social justice.

Comber and Nixon (1999) state that as language teachers they “employ discourses of liberation and hope that our work has a positive impact on the immediate and postschool lives of students” (p. 317). The
choices that teachers make in terms of discourse illuminate the
"realisation that language use always involves power relations" (p.317).
Comber and Nixon quote Foucoul in stating that as teachers we have
"known what we do and why we do it, but perhaps known less about
what we do does!" (p.317). How do our choices affect the students that
we teach? They suggest that "without any analysis of how language and
literate practices work in social and political contexts for and against
different groups, our philosophy is of limited use for a pedagogy for
social justice" (p.318).

Educators need to realize that "literacy practices are multiple,
historically contingent, and culturally specific" (p.319). Teachers'
choices that are consistent with dominant practices only allow students
who are already versed in those practices to feel successful.

Comber and Nixon recognize the difficulty in talking about topics,
such as racism, classism, poverty and injustice. But they emphasize
that "failure to talk about such topics in schools which proclaim their
democracy results in a romanticised and individualised view of
difference" (p.319). Without talking about these topics or issues will
cause attitudes, feelings, and emotions connected to them to go
underground.

"Making justice our project involves teachers exercising power in
positive ways to challenge untested and inequitable hegemonic
assumptions at work in classroom cultures” (p.347). Teachers who engage in a reflective practice use reflection to inform their practice as they work with their students to question assumptions and negotiate power.

Nager and Shapiro (2000) use the developmental-interaction approach where “the developing child and the adult are viewed as actively constructing meaning, and developmental progress is seen as multidetermined and characterized by qualitative change” (p.21). Nager and Shapiro refer to the work of psychologist Vygotsky, in that he “emphasized the nature of social interactions” in development and learning (p.26). Shapiro and Nager point out that “schooling becomes significant for children when everyday concepts provide the living knowledge for the understanding of schooled concepts” (p.26). Teachers need to fashion opportunities for their students to make connections between the concepts being taught and the lived experience.

Martin (2000) discusses the developmental-interactional approach within Vygotsky’s theoretical framework. Martin outlines Vygotsky’s view of development and learning as follows:

There is no development outside a social context; human culture and societies have universal and specific effects on the evolution of the mind; human interaction is related to psychological development: relations between people are internalized and
assimilated by the child. (p.76)

Children need to be involved in their learning. Learning happens when children interact with others.

Martin asserts that “Vygotskian theory gives theoretical and experimental support to the developmental-interaction approach” (p.85). This approach takes into consideration “what the learner, the teacher, and the traditions bring to the table” (p.83). She maintains that “a curriculum in this framework would relate to students’ experience, build on their strengths, and take into account the role of the materials and of the teacher” (p.83). A teacher who pays attention to the needs, previous experience, and knowledge of their students are better equipped to reflect on how their practice can better serve those needs.

In this chapter I have discussed some of the literature that I have been able to find that will serve my purpose in discussing Métis identity and education. Defining ourselves or others is done through a focus of what is valued. It is easy to define ourselves by what we are not, or through difference. It is also easy to define ourselves through group identity, or what we have in common with a group. When we permit others to define us we are not accepting of our identity. Everyone is bombarded with images and ideas of what people need to be. When these societal pressures are perceived as truth, then people are at risk of not truly being able to see who they are. If you do not know who you
are, then it is very difficult to interact with others. When social interaction is stifled, so is learning.

Aboriginal authors share their voice to facilitate transformation and understanding. Their writing works at breaking down racism and challenging the status-quo. In their writing, the notion of identity is paramount in sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Education and identity are both about process. A process of learning and becoming. The term construction reveals that a process does exist without their needing to be a finished product. The emphasis is on the process, not in the creation of a final product. The topics of identity and education can follow many paths. I hope that my thesis will pave the road for more of these paths to be followed in the area of Métis studies.

The dominant culture has created schools to reproduce dominant values and beliefs. The Aboriginal authors, writers from other cultures, and educational researchers provide different perspectives of education. Minority educators provide models for teaching in diverse settings. The success of students becomes dependent on how the teacher identifies to her or himself and relates to their students. The teacher needs to make a commitment to learning, the learning of their students, and to their own learning as part of the learning community. If teachers ignore what knowledge the children bring into the classroom then they are also
ignoring their students. They might as well be teaching an empty room.

How did we become or choose to be teachers? We need to critically examine who we are and how that shapes our practice. As a teacher, I can appreciate that my practice and teaching style is different from other teachers. Yet, there is an expectation for students to change to fit my style of teaching rather than for me to change to fit their style of learning. If students are required to change to fit, they will not find worth in themselves, but only value in assimilation. As teachers, we need to ask ourselves about the effect of what we are doing really does to our students. The demographics of Saskatchewan show that the population of Métis people is growing. In order to best serve the needs of this growing population, I feel that my thesis is not only timely but long overdue.
Chapter Three  An Impetus for Change

The water
in a cup
appears
unassuming
and
calm
similar to the water
in
lakes and smooth flowing rivers
on a quiet
sunny
summer
day.
The power of the water
is not measured
at one particular time
but over history.

The methodology that I used is like the water that forms the balance of life. Water has the ability to take on the shape of the container which holds it, as well it has the power to shape rocks, rivers and shorelines. My methodology brings shape to the data that I received as I paddled along the river of research.

As a teacher, I am excited about researching teacher practice. The
work that I am engaged in will not only benefit the practice of teachers, but also the study of Métis education. The study of Métis teachers is necessary to bring forward Aboriginal knowledge and perspective into research. Battiste (2000) asserts that “Indigenous scholarship, along with research that requires moral dialogue with and the participation of Indigenous communities, is the foundation for postcolonial transformation” (p. xx).

**Decolonizing Methodology**

The effects of colonization on Aboriginal people have required a process of decolonization. Like transformation, the process of decolonization, requires a recentering of how certain ways of knowing, learning and teaching have been excluded. The research that I have undertaken works to reframe how Métis teachers’ practice is viewed in cross-cultural classrooms. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes that “reframing is about taking much greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled” (p.153). The practice of Métis teachers is reframed where they “resist being boxed and labelled according to categories that do not fit” (p. 153). I use the methodology of reframing in analyzing the data produced from the interviews with the participants. “Reframing as a research methodology is about re-opening choices - for instance much of what we see, as ‘the way that things are’ is really just ‘the way that we choose to see them’
(Wason-Ellam, personal communication, 2003). The shifting of the paradigms that exclude others will bring about social justice. This research allows us to consider the narratives of those who have been marginalized. This is just one project that will contribute toward self-determination. The ultimate goal of social justice education is self-determination. Tuhiwai Smith uses the term self-determination because it generates:

A whole array of feelings, attitudes and values. They are words of emotion which draw attention to the thousands of ways in which indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses. (p.20)

So, it is through taking the knowledge I have gained and use it to reframe certain universal truths in an attempt to mobilize against social injustices.

**Teacher Research**

I will embed myself, as a Métis woman, and my teaching practice, as a Métis teacher, into the data. I am part of the research because I looked at the data through the lens of a teacher doing research. Spindler and Hammond (2000) explain the role a teacher-researcher plays in educational research: “Teacher research is important partially because it allows insider knowledge from classrooms
and communities to enter research circles so that their voices might influence a larger audience" (p.21). They also believe that teacher research not only benefits education, but also “encourage teachers to look at their own work from an etic perspective and to participate in dialogues beyond their school communities” (p.21). This outside view also allows me to become more reflective of my own teacher practice. Powell, Zehm and Garcia (1996) state that there are two key benefits from doing teacher research. It “helps you develop intercultural competence as a classroom teacher” and “doing research that focuses specifically on diversity issues helps you examine any discriminatory beliefs you might have unknowingly have for teaching culturally diverse students” (pp. 25-26).

Teacher research is sometimes to referred to as “action research” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This kind of research is performed by “people in the ‘real world’” and is “practical, directed a their own concerns and, for those who wish, a tool to bring about social change” (p.224). This research will hopefully evoke change in other teachers’ practice.

The opportunity to perform the work of an ethnography allowed me to take a closer look at the inner lives of the teacher participants. Britzman (1991) defines an ethnography as a “study of lived experience”. The participants’ practice of teaching will be examined on “how we come to construct and organize what has already been experienced” (p.9).
Powell, Zehm and Garcia (1996) state that “your life experiences and personal background contribute in important ways to kind of teacher you are, to your teaching self, and to the classroom environment you establish for your students” (p. 44). The life experiences and personal backgrounds of the participants is key to understanding their teacher practice.

**Conversation**

The research study consisted of a “guided conversational interview” with each participant (four Métis teachers). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe this form of interviewing “to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (p.94). The primary source of data collection was the interview. The interviews were fairly unstructured. I did have a set of questions, but they were used mostly as a guide. Lofland (as cited in Mishler, 1986) expresses that the unstructured interview is “characterized as a ‘flexible strategy of discovery ... its object is to carry on a guided conversation and to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis’” (p.27). The conversations were guided through the use of overarching questions. The overarching questions were ones that guided the purpose of this research. Also, by using an unstructured format of questioning it allowed the participants to feel more comfortable in
sharing their thoughts. Mishler also suggests that “we are more likely to find stories reported in studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses” (p.69).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) share their thoughts on how the researcher benefits from an unstructured or open-ended interview: “The researcher encourages the subject to talk in the area of interest and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues the respondent initiates” (p. 95). They continue their discussion on unstructured interviews by citing Rubin and Rubin’s description of this type of interview as a “guided conversation.” The open-ended questions allowed the participants to give various answers and determine the context. Mishler (1986) informs us that those kind of questions have “many possible meanings through which its intention may be realized” (p.53). He also advises us that:

... a question may more usefully be thought of as a part of a circular process through which its meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between the interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other. (pp.53-54)

The answers produced the data to be analyzed. The data provided
themes that were analyzed and interpreted using theoretical underpinnings from the literature. Mishler points out that in order “to come to a more adequate understanding of what respondents mean and to develop stronger theories as well as more valid generalizations in interview research, we must attend to the discursive nature of the interview process” (p.65).

The use of conversation will shift the power of myself as researcher to one of a collaborator along this research journey. Hollingsworth (1994) discusses the use of the “conversational approach” as learning in a safe environment:

The safety of our continuing relationship provided many occasions for raising questions, for sharing the passion and frustration of what we were learning in our own voices, and for confronting our anger about our silence and lack of appropriate support in other settings. (p.5)

I used conversation to move beyond a mere discussion of topics in order to create a “collaborative and sustained conversation” with “the exchange and reformulation of ideas, intimate talk, and reconstructive questions” (p.6). I used open-ended questions around the topics of culture and teaching with a focus on Métis perspective. Mishler (1986) writes that “questioning and answering are ways of speaking that are grounded in and depend on culturally shared and often tacit
assumptions about how to express and understand beliefs, experiences, feelings and intentions" (p.7). He also states that:

The original purpose of interviewing as a research method, namely, to understand what the respondents mean by what they say in response to our own queries and thereby arrive at a description of respondents' worlds of meaning that is adequate to the tasks of systematic analysis and theoretical interpretation.

(p.7)

Since the study is qualitative research, it has allowed me the opportunity to respond narratively to the participants' words.

**Narrative Form**

I want to respond to the participants' words and share their words in a narrative. Gee (cited in Mishler, 1986) asserted that "one of the primary ways ... human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form" (p. 68). The narrative form gives evidence of understanding and interpretation of experience as it is being told. Rogers (2000) cites Bruner in defining "narrative modes of learning":

Narrative modes of knowing privilege the particular details of lived experience. In narratives, meanings are constructed through social discourse, and events or stories are situated in particular contexts. Narrative modes of knowing are constructed
simultaneously on at least two levels of psychological research: by the individual who creates a story of her or his life, and by the researcher who bridges an understanding of this particular person's story with another narrative of interpretive analysis.

(p.45)

The reason for choosing qualitative research as a method of study is because it allowed me to visit the participants in a setting that is natural and comfortable to them. It also allows me to study in-depth the context in which these teachers see their professional lives. Haywood Metz (2000) explores the traditions of research. She states that qualitative researchers want to “discover insider perspectives by spending a long time in contact with a group: participating in their lives with them, and seeking to understand the mundane routines, special celebrations and rituals, and unplanned critical incidents” (p.39).

The “narrative accounts can be analyzed in systematic ways to generate meaningful and promising findings” (Mishler, 1986, p.76). The data included transcripts of each interview and anecdotal fieldnotes. I was then be able to analyze this data inductively. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) discuss this characteristic in qualitative study: “They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together” (p. 6). The
direction that the research traveled was determined by the data collected.

**Analysis**

"Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998, p.157). In analyzing the data I was able to look closely at the perspectives the teachers shared about their cultural and professional lives. I also had to look at what the participants didn’t say. The importance of meaning in qualitative research is highlighted with the concern of participant perspectives (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998). "Researchers who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives" (p. 7). Haywood Metz (2000) also addresses this perspective:

Researchers must listen for the interpretations that members of the group give for their own actions, the actions of other members of the group, and the actions real and imagined, of outsiders. They must both mark these as they occur in the flow of daily life and, eventually, elicit them more systematically to develop, test, and correct their own growing understandings. They must take careful note, captured in words or visual images, of the physical setting with all its culturally developed artifacts and must study
all kinds of documents both formal and informal. (p.39)

I compared the data to my own teacher practice. I asked myself similar questions that I posed to the participants. This became a guided reflection to help me better understand my own practice and form a comparison.

While reading the interview transcripts different ideas and patterns emerged. I listed these ideas and was able to collapse several of them under a few key umbrella themes. In going through the data again, I was then able to highlight the many codes using a different colour to correspond to each theme.

The reading over the data several times also allowed different ideas and understandings to emerge. As well, reading the data against the literature helped to further my understandings of the data. I critiqued the themes that emerged from the data against the backdrop of my own teacher practice.

The close relationship that I had with some of the participants aided my analysis of the data. There were many times throughout the interviews that our shared history enabled the conversation to forge deeper into topics that an unfamiliar relationship would not have allowed. As well, this shared history made it easier to analyze the perspectives that were shared and delve into the meaning that could exist behind their words.
Participants

The participants were four Métis teachers in Saskatoon from both the public and Catholic school divisions. These teachers have all identified themselves as Métis and are teaching colleagues that I have had the pleasure of knowing both professionally and personally. As the researcher and interviewer, I also became a co-participant. Mishler (1986) informs us that “the interviewer’s presence as a co-participant is an unavoidable and essential component of the discourse, and an interviewer’s mode of questioning influences a story’s production” (p.105).

The conversations were one to two hours in length and were audio recorded. Afterwards, the conversations were transcribed and the data was analyzed to see what themes would emerge. I also used fieldnotes and personal reflection. I took all the data and compared and contrasted the interviews with one another and with my fieldnotes.

The participants had the opportunity to sign consent forms and review the data collected. “Informed-consent procedures are intended to minimize negative social and personal consequences and serve the purpose of allowing subjects to assess the risks of their participation in a study” (Mishler, 1986, p.121). This follows an ethical code of conduct that Tuhiwai Smith (1999) believes to involve “a Western sense of the individual and of individualized property” (p.118). There are many
debates about the intellectual and cultural property of Indigenous people.

The Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples signed in Whakatane, New Zealand (1993) addresses these issues by declaring that ‘indigenous people of the world have the right to self-determination and in exercising that right must be recognized as the exclusive owners of their cultural intellectual property.’ (p.119)

The intellectual and cultural property shared in the participants’ conversations needs always to be honoured. Therefore, the participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts of our conversations to ensure that their voices were heard accurately. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) emphasize that “the goal of understanding how the person you are interviewing thinks is at the center of the interview.” (p.97)

I interviewed the participants in a familiar location, some in their home, classroom, or at another agreed upon location. The data gathered was analyzed to help me find meaning in the stories and knowledge that was shared. Mishler (1986) observes that the fact “that stories appear so often supports the view of some theorists that narratives are one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to order, organize, and express meaning” (p.106).

How these teachers see their cultural selves was at the heart of
our conversation. We also discussed how they view their professional lives in light of their reflection on their cultural selves. In using the participants’ narratives of experience I was able to get a better sense of their teacher practice. I used Ruthellen Josselson’s analysis strategy of “imagining the real” (cited in Rogers, 2000). The images that they reveal will cast light into a shadow of understanding by assisting me in revealing “what the other is wishing, feeling, perceiving and thinking” (p.55). This shadow of understanding will illuminate the thoughts and values in Métis education.
Chapter Four - A profound murmur

Dark, musty earth
   grooves of soil
stretching out like rippling
waves; seeds gently placed
   in hollowed out bellies.
The garden of life provides
   many places to plant
   and nurture seeds
so that they can become
everything you need.
The type of seed determines the type of home.
   Where will it grow,
   who will tend it,
what does it need to reach fruition.

I was born into a family of gardeners. So, I use a gardening
metaphor with a strong familial sense of belonging. I have planted,
watered and weeded more times than I wanted, and probably not as
often as my parents would have liked. The data that is being shared is
like a garden that I have tended to over the course of my research. I
decided what questions to sow and where to sow them. I deliberated
carefully on finding the best places to plant my crop in hopes of the
themes I would harvest. The literature I used was at times like the sun
encouraging thoughts to blossom, and at other times, it was the wind
causing me to search out shelter to support the developing produce. I
now can share with you fruits of experience, weeds and all.

**Cultural Identity**

The search for a definition of “culture” has revealed that it is dynamic, fluid and always changing. How each one of us defines culture reveals how we interpret our own cultural being. McLaren (1998) defines culture as “the particular ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its ‘given’ circumstances and conditions of life” (p.175). Our cultural self is derived from our membership to a specific cultural or ethnic group. Therefore, our cultural identity is shaped by our social and individual values and beliefs that tie us to a particular group. Ferdman (1990) explores “how a person’s identity as a member of an ethnocultural group is intertwined with the meaning and consequences of becoming and being literate.” He defines cultural identity through how “each of us maintains an image of the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms - in short, of the culture - appropriate to members of the ethnic group(s) to which we belong” (p.182). Ferdman adds that membership in a group is an important part of the individual’s identity. He states, “the relationship of the individual to the group forms the basis for cultural identity” (p. 189). We belong to many different groups. These different memberships give us multiple cultures that we can identify with.

It is through the lens of cultural identity that I research teacher
practice in Métis teachers. Each teacher has a view of what constitutes being Métis, and their perceived value of those attributes are maintained through ethnic and social ties. Therefore, cultural identity is shaped by the features, values and beliefs that each member of a group feels that they have in common and value as a member of that group. McLaren (1998) informs us that “cultural questions help us understand who has power and how it is reproduced and manifested in the social relations that link schooling to the wider social order” (p. 176).

Métis cultural identity has been explored through interviews of four teachers of Métis ancestry who work in a prairie city. I was interested in how their cultural perspective influenced their teaching practice, because all education is embedded in a particular socio-political context. “If who we are tells something about where we have been, then how we teach tells something about where we want to go” (Shah, 1996, p.43). Even though the teachers come from different Métis communities and therefore different cultures, they teach in an urban culture.

As a Métis teacher, I am quite aware of how my professional practice is entwined with my own cultural identity. I am familiar with how my culture has influenced how I follow through with curriculum, choose resources and implement my teaching philosophy. Connelly
and Clandinin (1988) emphasize that “a situation is composed of persons, in an immediate environment of things, interacting according to certain processes” (p.6). We all have a situated view or practice. They add that theory and practice come together in the form of “personal practical knowledge” as follows: “We learn something new and that may be said to be theory. It becomes practical when it seeps into our personal knowledge and becomes part of us so that we act in ways that reflect the new ideas” (p.89).

I wondered if other Métis teachers employ similar approaches to what I do in the classroom? How does their cultural identity influence their practice? This has become the overarching question in my thesis and has directed my interviews. Monique, Joseph, Maria and Gabriel all shared their knowledge, stories and time with me in a quest for understanding their practices.

It is important to understand that Métis culture is like all cultural and ethnic groups in that it is not static, but always changing over time. Nieto (2001) asks us to see “the idea of culture as lived, dynamic and reinvented by people across time, generations and experiences” (p.80). There are many Métis people who still pursue activities that are defined as a traditional Métis way of life. Activities that are defined as traditional are trapping fur-bearing animals, hunting wild game, preparing hides, making clothing, bead work, berry picking and
gardening. However, there is an ever-increasing urban Mètis population that has had little contact with traditional rural Mètis pursuits. In fact, it is this growing urban Mètis population that teachers in this prairie city are teaching. Statistics Canada reports an increase in the Aboriginal population (Federal Census 2001). In Saskatchewan, Statistics Canada reports 33% of the population identifying as Mètis. In the Federal 2001 Census, Statistics Canada also reports that 40% of Mètis are living in urban centres such as Saskatoon, Regina or Prince Albert.

**Monique**

The interview with Monique was the first interview that I conducted. It began in the comfort of her home on a sunny afternoon. As with all meaningful conversations between Mètis women, this one also took place across a dining table. It reminds me of the countless stories that I have heard while sitting at the kitchen table with other Mètis women within my kinship network; my grandmother, my aunts, cousins and my mother. The kitchen is the hub of the home. This is the place where people meet to eat, to plan, and most importantly, to visit. It is in the kitchen that the women can administer the home while kissing scraped knees, wiping sticky fingers and handout that tasty morsel of goodness before sending the little ones on to play. These are my memories from my mother’s, aunts’ and grandmother’s
kitchens that were always filled with the scents of warm, fresh bread generously served with home-made raspberry jam and love. The laughter and tears heard while visiting complement the sounds of a home where family connect and lives are lived and shared.

**Shaping our Practice: Monique**

Monique is an incredible teacher that I came to admire since I met her almost 10 years ago. She was always welcoming and caring. Her smile, laughter and happy disposition were infectious. It was wonderful to be in her presence. She made me believe that I would be truly able to accomplish anything, and that no task was too great. Monique shared with me the personal story of her educational journey and how she understood herself as a Métis woman. Her life experiences enabled her to meet Aboriginal students on common ground. Monique shared how her experiences as a Métis affected her teaching practice. She would tell Aboriginal students:

> "I know where you are coming from but don't worry because you can do this and you can do that, all you have to do is be happy about this role that you're playing, feel good about who you are and don't compare yourselves to other people." (Monique, p.34)

Monique discussed how she became a role model for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students not only need to see other Aboriginal people in mentor ship roles, but they also need to hear about the
experiences and struggles of Aboriginal people. Her willingness to share her story and the stories of our ancestors allowed other Aboriginal students to better understand who they are:

"So I think when they met me, it was like a whole new great thing for them because they were starting to see Aboriginal teachers coming into their schools and then they felt that maybe they could move beyond where they were and do other things for themselves. So I felt like sort of like a cultural role model." (Monique, p.35)

She explained to me how being a Métis has helped her to communicate this perspective in her life:

"I feel that as a Métis person I've been able to learn that life is so small and that we give thanks to our Creator for giving us that life and not to go out into the world and make it hard for others. You can just be friendly and kind to those that you meet all the time."

(Monique, p. 44)

Monique continued to share with me how her ability to treat students with respect and not try to dominate and exert control over every aspect of their school lives allowed the students to be comfortable with her. Monique looked at the individuality of each child and how each one of them has something wonderful to contribute.

"There is always this class analysis. The way that some of our
non-Aboriginal teachers carry themselves in the hall, the way they look down and frown upon children who are just playing, children who are just talking and having a good time. It’s like, ‘you’re not supposed to be here’ and ‘where are you supposed to be right now’ or ‘I’m going to send you to the office if you’re not blah, blah’ And I am thinking ‘man, when are you going to relax with these kids and go laugh with them or ask them how their day is?’ Could you ever just be a person with these children? Why do you always have to show that you’re a little bit more than them?” (Monique, p.43)

I, too had witnessed teachers who perceived their role as teacher to be similar to that of a warden. For example, students’ laughter in the halls could be misinterpreted as disruptive and some teachers would quickly quash their exuberance. It is important for students to understand why certain rules exist in a school and not feel that the teacher is there to invalidate their experience. Monique stated:

“... kids are comfortable with me. I don’t show them that I used to have this and this is what I’ve got now. I don’t pull up to the driveway with a Jaguar and say this is what you can get if you get high grades. I don’t even teach about high grades, I don’t teach about evaluation. I just teach about learning and loving and giving, and I do the same thing with my own sons. If you’re able to give back and be thankful for what you have, you’ll have a really good
Connelly and Clandinin (1999) conceptualize the lives of teachers as being on a "professional knowledge landscape." They argue that teachers see "the landscape as composed of different places - the in-classroom place and the out-classroom place" (p. 103). Monique moved in and out of these places on her landscape with the same respect for the individual that she exhibited on her "personal landscape" (p. 2).

I saw a picture of a small group of trees that were unique amidst a larger group of trees. This smaller group of trees had a taller tree that had graceful branches that reached toward the sky, but at the same time almost protected those smaller trees around it.

Monique could be this larger, distinct tree surrounded by a few smaller trees. She embodied this tree in that she held out her branches to share her identity with those trees that were different from her. She also used her branches to not only protect the smaller versions of trees like her, but to also show them how to be proud of who they were. Even though they were different than most of the other trees, that distinctness needs to be shared. Monique’s tree had grown to be so tall because of how her identity had been nurtured. She has endured droughts, storms and freezing temperatures but these things have only made her stronger. She stood in the forest as a model to those smaller trees. She showed them how they can too learn and grow from the
troubles that the changing weather had brought into their lives.

Monique reported that her belonging to an Aboriginal group is more than:

"walking into school one day with a Métis sash on. Or walking into school one day and say I’ve got Aboriginal colouring from the First Nations, but my sister looks like you, I don’t even go in with skin colour. It’s like I’ve had a whole livelihood of being who I am because I think that Aboriginal people are really different from non-Aboriginal people. There’s this passivity, there’s this feeling of gladness and happiness. There’s this whole internal view of just getting to know who me is, who I am, who my family is. It’s not this view of let’s go out and show off who our family is, let’s go out and work towards this to gain this. I think that there’s a view in Aboriginal pedagogy that this is who I am, and I’m so happy that I’m getting that. When you’re not getting it, that’s when there is sickness. It’s sorrowful and hurting when you don’t have a certain part of that wholeness. I think that’s for people that are Aboriginal, and especially Métis or even First Nation or Inuit, or the Indigenous people from all over the world, there’s this feeling of great happiness when you know who you are." (Monique, pp.46-47)

The sense of knowing who you are is part of cultural identity. Ferdman (1990) explains that “a person’s view of social reality is mediated by
collective representations of that reality" (p.186). The ability to communicate who you are through language solidifies this connection to culture. Christensen (1999) quotes Lois Yamanaka in saying, “With language rests culture. To sever the language from the mouth is to sever the ties to homes and relatives, family gatherings, food prepared and eaten, relationships to friends and neighbors. Cultural identity is utterly akin to linguistic identity” (p.217). The theft of language from Aboriginal homes continues to be a problem. More and more Aboriginal children are growing up without learning their language. The number of Indigenous language speakers are decreasing with the aging population.

**Gabriel**

The second interview was with Gabriel in the comfort of his home on a very hot summer evening. His family was quietly moving about his home as refreshing summer breezes passed through the windows to cool the warmth created by the hot, summer sun. Delicious smells streamed from the kitchen into the living room where we were seated. Gabriel’s generosity made me feeling at home and welcome. Many Métis homes, like my mother’s, greet visitors in a similar fashion. As soon as you sit down, the table is set with food. The kettle is boiling for tea and you can be sure that you will leave that home full from delightful refreshments for both the body and soul. I have also had the
pleasure of knowing Gabriel as long as I had known Monique. The comfort and casualness that we shared was the same as visiting with a cousin. I did not want to take away too much of Gabriel’s time from his family so we started our conversation. Gabriel told me how his Métis heritage "permeates your entire teaching." He continued:

"Being a Métis person, it is the way I view the world. It is the way I look at things, the way I describe things or the way I understand things. It is the way I interact with the world itself and my students." (Gabriel, p. 24)

Gabriel is an artist. He has an extraordinary ability to create beautiful images that evoke stories of the soul. His creativity has enabled him to reach his students and has provided them an opportunity to share their personal stories through art.

The ability to intertwine your personal self with your teaching self was evident in Gabriel’s accounts of his teaching practice. He described his teaching in respect to his own upbringing. "The Métis are a little more in-tune to their feelings. It is just the community from where we are from. [We] put our necks out a little more, but we get hurt a lot easier too" (Gabriel, p. 24).

As Monique made students comfortable with her, I believe that Gabriel did the same thing by making himself vulnerable. I reflected that, it was the times that I took risks and was willing to make mistakes
that I saw my students willing to do the same. It is in this way that
true learning takes place. Gabriel told me how his Aboriginal
upbringing allowed him to relate to other students and find common
ground:

“When I am dealing with Métis and Indian students it is almost
easier. You can say, ‘oh, come on, we all know where we we’re
from, what are you talking about? That’s not how your
grandmother taught you to talk, like what are you doing?’”

(Gabriel, p.25)

In making learning personal and emphasizing the importance of home
life students are better equipped to see the truth of their choices and
behaviours. School needs to be about taking the familiar and
extending it towards the unknown. Students need to be challenged to
move beyond what they know, but first they need to become aware of
how it connects to their everyday lives. Gabriel elaborated on his
teaching practice by expressing how his own education and
individuality influenced his teaching.

“I’m a very gregarious, very loud, and a very animated teacher. I
had boring teachers. This is just being a normal person, I had
incredibly boring teachers. I can remember sitting in class and
thinking ‘This is terrible. This is absolutely awful. There has got to
be a better way to learn grammar.’ There still isn’t, but you can at
least sound excited about it.” (Gabriel, p.39)

Gabriel’s sense of humour was part of his personal style. He brought his gifts as an artist, his confidence in his identity, and his creativity to find new ways to reach his students. His students could enjoy having a teacher who was not only willing to show them the joy in learning, but who was also willing to take risks.

“I would be speaking from my professional side when I say my strengths are getting kids interested in learning. Where I got those skills and where I got the ability to talk and where I got the flamboyance, if you want to use that word, would be from my cultural background.” (Gabriel, p.40)

The classroom is a place of diversity. Teachers face daily a variety of personalities, ethnic groups, learning styles and abilities. The common thread among this diversity is the joy of laughter. Each one of us employs laughter to relieve tension, put others at ease, create relationships and find enjoyment. Laughter allows all of us to come together and celebrate our humanness.

Gabriel has become an advocate for Aboriginal education in his classroom and brought it to the forefront. He emphasized the role of Aboriginal education in his curricular choices, especially in Social Studies.

“Well, it affects my teaching greatly, because whenever I do Social
Studies, I make it a priority. If you look at the curriculum, it always has the Indian component at the bottom, well, that's first. We will talk about Aboriginal perspective first, and then move on to other things.” (Gabriel, pp.45-46)

The Saskatchewan curriculum attempts to stress the contributions of First Nation and Métis peoples. The approach taken is primarily “additive” (Banks, 1989) which means teachers only focus on adding the history of a culture or literature from the culture without changing the structure of the curriculum. I have participated in many staff meetings at different school sites where many teachers only want to teach about the diet, dress and dances of an ethnic group. This approach is further reductive in that it only acknowledges the “contributions.” Banks (1989) identifies four ways many teachers approach multicultural education. These approaches consist of Contribution, Addition, Transformation or Social Action.

I have come to realize that some teachers may feel they are doing their part in furthering Aboriginal education by showcasing the cultural arts. They do not realize these superficial attempts only ossify a rich culture that has more to offer than colourful costumes. This approach is scarcely better than that of teachers who don’t integrate any Aboriginal component. The school system gives legitimacy to hegemonic control. McLaren (1998) states that hegemony is a process
by which the "dominant culture is able to exercise domination over subordinate classes or groups" (p. 177). Apple (1990) writes that "education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture. The curriculum ... is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge" (p.22). Teachers also unconsciously teach a "hidden curriculum" to their students (p.14). Teachers reproduce through socialization certain values, beliefs, and norms of the dominant group. These approaches are far from the social action approach that would bring about social change (Banks, 1989). Teachers need to move beyond hegemonic school practices. McLaren (1998) writes that "the challenge for teachers is to recognize and attempt to transform those undemocratic and oppressive features of hegemonic control that often structure everyday classroom existence in ways not readily apparent" (p.179).

Gabriel explained how his Métis education affected his teaching practice:

"In Social Studies and having the background knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives, I can go in there add to what the students are learning. It affects the way I teach religion. I think it probably makes it richer for the students because you get the two perspectives. I can give them the academic, what's in the books, and then I can give them the Métis perspective and how things
"went." (Gabriel, p.46)

As a teacher, I have always brought all my knowledge into the classroom. I also expected that my students would bring all their knowledge with them. I wanted to create a place that became a sharing circle. Texts, books, movies, computers were all different types of resources that were used in the classroom. We can’t forget about the most valuable resource we have which is one another.

When asked to describe the difference Gabriel saw between himself and teachers from dominant society he purported:

“They are not as patient and not as forgiving to the students. Kids don’t want to write, they haven’t been writing ever, and finally they get to Grade Five and they have to write. It is an absolute foreign subject to them. They don’t see writing at home. No one writes at home. Maybe some may see writing at home, but it is not something that has to be done. In my family school was important. You went to school and you learned. You did what the teacher said. If the teacher said read and write, you read and wrote.” (Gabriel, pp.50-51)

When I first started teaching, I remember making my students write stories. I determined what kind of stories would be acceptable. I had an idea of what made a good story and felt that unless my students wrote those stories they were not learning how to write. An important
part of teaching is reflecting on practice. Ladson-Billings (2001) reveals that “reflective practice” is a “willingness to look at what (you are) doing ... a view suggesting that the place for improving student performance begins with the teacher” (p.21). I realized that my teaching did not have the students interest at heart. I was focussed on the curriculum and not on the students. I wanted to make them writers, but I really wanted them to enjoy writing and see it as another way to communicate. I realized that I had to find a way to allow students to enjoy writing without seeing it as something that I required them to do for a particular grade.

It is so easy to get caught up in what needs to be taught without seeing who you are teaching. I removed the dialogue that empowers students to learn in my use of “teacher-talk, the one-way discourse of traditional classrooms that... alienates students, depresses their achievement, and supports inequality in school and society” (Shor, 1992, p.85).

**Storytelling: Gabriel**

Stories and the art of storytelling have been around for ages. I have had countless experiences listening to stories, not stories read from a book, but stories shared from within. The purposes of stories are many. They serve to teach, heal, entertain and document lives (Collins & Cooper, 1997). Aboriginal people, like Indigenous people
everywhere, use oral traditions to teach and pass along history. “Oral traditions are part of our backgrounds. Our families have stories and share these stories as a way of bonding, passing along family history, and perpetuating values and ideas” (Meyer, 1996, p.142). Teachers use storytelling as a wonderful teaching tool and method. It allows teachers to construct a relationship between themselves and their students.

The storytelling self is a social self, who declares and shapes important relationships through the mediating power of words. Thus, in sharing stories, we have the potential for forging new relationships, including local, classroom ‘cultures’ in which individuals are interconnected and new ‘we’s’ formed. (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 5)

Storytelling also creates a venue for teachers to share their own narratives. Teachers can use their own experiences to highlight a particular concept they are teaching their students. The use of narrative in the classroom allows students and teachers to witness the validity of their own experience.

For true learning, narrative knowledge is essential. Narrative knowledge is experiential and cultural knowing. It is the best means available for students to organize their experiences and make meaning for themselves. (Collins & Cooper, 1997, p. 4)
Gabriel articulated how he brought his knowledge and personal experience into the classroom as a teacher. He shared with his students the rich gift of storytelling given to him by his grandfather:

"I use my personal experience, stories, and my general interests into my teaching. What I can read in a book and then what I can piece together from the real story. You need to use three or four different books to tell the real story because history is always written by the victor." (Gabriel, p.47)

Gabriel had a close connection to his grandparents. He recounted to me the many summers he had spent on his grandparents farm near the river. It was in these treasured times that he was taught to trap fur-bearing animals, prepare hides, pick berries and work in the garden.

This quality time with his grandfather also left him with wonderful stories about the heritage of the land and struggles of Métis people. He shared with me a wonderful vignette his grandfather told him about the Batoche Bell. The Batoche Bell was in the church at Batoche until the Resistance in 1885. After the Métis conceded defeat in the Resistance, the Canadian soldiers from Eastern Canada took the bell from the church as a trophy. The Batoche Bell was taken to Ontario and kept in a Legion hall with other trophies of battle. The Batoche Bell was later taken from the Legion hall and has not been
seen since. Many Métis people talk of its return to its rightful place by
the brave people who stole it back from the hall.

"You hear especially stories where the bell is, that's the Batoche
Bell, where it actually is right now. You can tell about it from a
book, or you make it a big mystery. You can tell them it was stolen
from Ontario because the whole thing was a slap in the face to the
Métis. Somebody decided they were going to get it back. Or you
can tell them how we could have actually won the Resistance if
Louis Riel wasn't so God fearing. If Gabriel Dumont was turned
loose it would have been different. We would have been reading
about a lot more deaths than what you read about. Or just little
stories about Gabriel Dumont, that they never hear stories about.
Stories that are not in books, about how brave he was or how,
well, I guess crazy." (Gabriel, p.48)

Gabriel’s grandfather had passed along to him the gift of storytelling.
Collins and Cooper (1994) define storytelling as “a folk art form,
meaning it is an art form of the people. It is part of the fabric of our
lives” (p.24). The stories that we hear from our grandparents and
parents give us a glimpse into the lives of others. Meyer (1996)
discloses the value of these oral traditions:

Talk about your life, the stories that make your family so unique,
your experiences, and how you got to be you and not someone
else. It’s important that we value our oral stories -our oral traditions- because they tell us and others who we are. They set the stage for understanding oral traditions that develop in our classrooms. (p.140)

Gabriel shared yet another fabulous account of Gabriel Dumont:

“Well, the best one I ever heard, I remember this one because my grandpa told me once about the Sioux. The Sioux came up from the States and how they ate their meat. They didn’t skin it. They just cut the meat in chunks and the skin was still on and they cooked it that way. They would stick their knives in, pull it out, and they would tell a story and then they would eat. Well, Gabriel Dumont walked into this Sioux camp and he stuck his knife in and pulled it out and said ‘I killed six Sioux, what are you going to do about it?’ And because he was so brave the Sioux let him eat with them.”

(Gabriel, p.49)

It is this love of storytelling that shape many Métis teachers’ cultural identity and affects their practice. The personal stories that teachers share reveal to their students a lived experience to which many can relate to. It also provides students with an opportunity to listen about a life that may be quite different than their own. The narrative provides a chance for the speaker and listener to align the
past with the present.

**More Storytelling: Joseph**

I have also known Joseph for almost as long as I have known Monique and Gabriel. The number of Métis teachers in this prairie city is not that large and most of us know one another. I interviewed Joseph after school in his classroom. Joseph found it very easy to relate to his students, who were predominantly Aboriginal, living in an urban neighbourhood. Joseph emphasized the role that storytelling played as teaching stories in his classroom:

"I talk about my family. I tell stories. They are not so much true, the whole story. If I have something in the class that has happened and I know a story that kind of fits, I will kind of put me in it and it is a lesson story. It is a life story, and they learn from it. And I think that’s how my grandpa was too. They are lesson stories always and I always tell stories. I tell my kids stories. I tell them stories about me when I was a kid, embarrassing stories. You can be shy, you can be embarrassed, that is just part of being you. I think that is mostly what I do the whole time is tell stories."

(Joseph, p.6)

Storytelling is about taking risks. Personal narrative sharing makes you vulnerable. It exposes you to the world. The teacher that uses oral story inserts themselves in the lesson. They have fully engaged
themselves in the lives of their students.

Once the story it found, storytelling requires a willingness to share those experiences with others. It requires a desire to search for the value of experiences. It is difficult work, requiring much time and a high tolerance for risk. The learning and growth that occur as multiple voices join in searching for conversation is worth the effort. (Hole, 2003, p.49)

Joseph started his morning classes with conversations that led to personal experience stories:

"The first 20 minutes of the morning are just talking about what they did yesterday. I might bring up something how, 'oh I remember a long time ago' and I will tell a story. The kids like it. It is me being whoever and then they will tell a story about what they did. They are more used to it. Now in the morning sometimes I can't shut them up after a half-an-hour." (Joseph, p.6)

Joseph used his gift of storytelling to help bring meaning to the experiences of his students.

The oral story is a powerful way to bring alive the shared experiences and knowledge in a classroom setting. Oral story has been a way to teach important lessons while keeping your audience entertained. Oral story is potent way to share experiences and ideas. It
breeds enthusiasm toward learning. "They all want to talk and tell me something that has happened. At the beginning of the year, none of them would talk. Now I can't keep them quiet" (Joseph, pp.6-7). Joseph has created an environment where his students feel safe to share their stories. "Needless to say, trust is a key issue in storytelling. We need a caring, safe community in which to tell our stories" (Meyer, 1996, p.144). Students will start to trust after they feel safe. The feeling of safety allows students to become comfortable and no longer fear ridicule. Stories emerge from that comfortable place where trust is fostered.

Joseph pointed out that as a Métis teacher he doesn’t focus on the cultural arts, but instead specified his role as that of a teacher delivering a message of equality and social justice. Joseph pointed out that: "Our elder comes in and she tells stories then does crafts and talks with the kids. I leave that stuff to her. I don’t do any of that stuff. I am not good at it." (Joseph, p.5). Instead, Joseph used his gift as a storyteller to integrate the students home life and personal experiences into the classroom. Joseph found that many of the students already do beadwork:

"The kids are really good at it. For me to teach these kids how to bead or something isn’t going to work because they know how to do it. Somebody at home has taught them. They come with
beads, they come with the stuff. They have all of that.”

(Joseph, p.5)

The students not only want to share stories about their personal experiences, they are also interested in critical issues and finding their own voice. Students can explore the world through conversation and story. Stories allow them to become aware of other lived experiences and look at event through different points of view.

“If I am doing Social Studies or whatever, and the kids hear about something in the news, then we will talk about it. I think it was last year or two years ago, when the incident with the two police officers happened, that took up probably an hour of my morning every morning because the kids were interested and we talked about it. There were no books, there were no notes, it was just talking about what both sides of the story were. And I never said, it was bad, they picked on this Aboriginal guy and then knocked him out. There were two sides, there had to have been. We talked and we discussed and it was fun. You couldn’t do that out of a book or out of anything else.” (Joseph, p.5)

Jaffe (2000) reaffirms the use of storytelling in the classroom,

“Storytelling - an ancient yet contemporary art form - can serve as an important medium for effective communication of curriculum content, with long lasting repercussions for children as learners and participants
in a complex and demanding world” (p.174).

**Critical Pedagogy: Joseph**

Joseph took on the role of a critical educator. He provided opportunities for his students to question and discuss. Joseph used a “critical pedagogy” in which he took “the experiences and voices of students themselves as a starting point” (McLaren, 1998, p.225). McLaren cites Giroux in stating that “critical pedagogy must develop out of a politics of difference” and students

... despite their differences, must become unified in a common struggle to overcome the conditions that perpetuate their own suffering and the suffering of others. Critical pedagogy must be undertaken within a language of public life, emancipatory community, and individual and social commitment. (p. 226)

Students need to learn the language of dominance. Once students understand how the dominant discourse works then they can begin to criticize it. Joseph had worked at using his students’ stories as a starting point for his lessons. His methodology served to legitimize his students’ experiences.

A critical-interdisciplinary teacher also draws on themes and texts from student culture as well as from academic disciplines. Printed materials from daily life - newspapers, magazines, junk mail brochures, signs, bulletin boards - are some texts people live
with in the mainstream. The empowering class can turn to these materials as a starting point for critical study in language arts and in content areas. (Shor, 1992, p.186)

Using media from daily life allows teachers an opportunity to model critical thinking skills. Students can then transfer these skills into their everyday experience.

Joseph believed that knowing who he was was central to his teaching. He confirmed: "My identity is always there. I am Métis. I am an Aboriginal. I am always going to be. That is just the way I am. I talk about it" (Joseph, p.6). The importance of knowing who you are and where you come from better equips teachers to understand how they might bring their own beliefs and values into the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2001) informs us that “although it is important for teachers to understand their students' culture, the real benefit in understanding culture is to understand its impact on our own lives” (p.83). Joseph understood how his culture impacted his teaching. He knew how it shaped his life. Students always questioned his roots:

"The kids are always asking in the first week or so, 'Are you Métis?' or 'Are you Aboriginal?' or 'what are you?' They always want to know. They are not sure. They want to know what schools I went to and if I lived around here. They want to know if you are part of the community.” (Joseph, p.6)
Being a member of the community defines you. Ferdman (1990) points out that “to ignore group membership is to deny an important part of the individual” (p.183). Joseph’s students realized the importance of membership. They looked for a way to connect and build a relationship. In questioning his heritage, they were asking ‘can we trust you?’

Joseph explained the biggest strength as a Métis teacher was in being able to validate their experiences. He did this through the use of storytelling:

“\textit{The stories - the oral. I think that’s the biggest thing. My biggest thing is being able to tell these kids stories. I use the stories to relate to them and relate the stories to their lives and my life to their life. I always like to tell a story because what they are going through, I went through, and people before me went through. Everybody had gone through it, like being loved, or being this, or being embarrassed. Everybody has done it. At that time, they might think that they are the only ones, that they are the first, but they are not. I think that is my biggest thing, the storytelling.}”

(Joseph, p.7)

Joseph used oral stories to make connections to his students and their lives. Joseph realized the importance of connecting his stories to his students' lives. He used the oral stories to extend his teaching. The
oral stories gave his students something that they could relate to, rather than merely regurgitating facts.

These connections allow everyone the gift of stretching academically and emotionally to understand the lives of others beyond their own individual experiences. As educators, we need to have the capacity to value all children by valuing the connections they make with the stories teachers tell, which can enable children to succeed academically, emotionally and in life. Teachers set the example by sharing the lessons they learned from their own experiences in ways that make children think more deeply about themselves, their classmates, their families and the world in which they live. (Cardwell, 2002, p. 85)

Like Joseph, I have shared many stories with my students. It is important for them to see that I have been embarrassed, made mistakes and learned from my mistakes. Students are more willing to take risks once they realize they are no longer alone in their experience.

**Maria**

My last interview was with Maria. We met one day after school in a busy coffee spot. Before Maria arrived I checked my recording equipment. I was concerned that the din of the café would make it difficult to record audibly. I was satisfied with my sound check when she arrived. Maria and I enjoyed delicious coffee and cake during our
interview. I was happy to have these edible distractions in front of me to keep me from focussing on my nervousness. I didn’t want the questions to appear limiting and I also wanted Maria to be comfortable and open in our conversation. While sitting in the chair and awkwardly leaning toward Maria, I realized that perhaps this location was not the best environment to ease into such a personal subject as identity.

Maria shared with me that her love of learning and reading led her to become a teacher. She remarked: “I just loved school. I always enjoyed school. I loved learning, I loved reading and I just always did” (Maria, p.13). Maria’s enjoyment of school and love of learning probably led her to become an exceptional student. Students, like Maria, who become teachers can pass along a love for learning. Maria indicated that a teacher’s heritage influences their practice:

“Well, I think that it is the same way that it works for any teacher, but that’s part of who you are, it is a part of your frame of reference, it is part of you that you can share with the kids.” (Maria, p.14)

Maria also employed a critical pedagogy. She examined the roles people play to make visible the injustices of society. Maria described how her Métis heritage played a part in the kind of teacher she was:

“I think I am more sensitive to ensuring that I am teaching things that are sort of anti-racist education, promoting awareness of
different issues, I think that I am more sensitive to that, but I know teachers who are non-Aboriginal who do the same as me. I don’t know if it directly impacts on my practice. I always work for inclusion, and I am strongly involved in advocacy [of Aboriginal culture]. [Advocating] Indian and Métis content, how to teach it, why it is important to teach it.” (Maria, p. 14)

McLaren (1998) informs us that “critical theorists argue that teachers must understand the role that schooling plays in joining knowledge and power, in order to use that role for the development of critical and active citizens” (p.164).

**Anti-Oppressive Education: Maria**

Teachers who work for inclusion acknowledge that schools need to be a place where all students can experience self-worth. Florio-Ruane (2001) points out that “schooling is intended to level across cultural differences, at best rendering them irrelevant to students’ learning, educational advancement, and employability” (pp.33-34). In response to using personal reference and using inclusion in her teaching practice Maria stated, “I don’t know if that would be unique to a Métis teacher, I think that’s what a good teacher does” (Maria, p. 17).

Ladson-Billings (1994) agrees in revealing that “culturally relevant teaching is about questioning and preparing students to question the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exists in
society” (p.128). Maria also remarked:

"I love teaching, and I think I am pretty good at it. I know when I have a connection with kids. There are good teachers and then there are people who are sort of questionable teachers. I don't know if being Métis makes me a better teacher. I know that it makes me more aware of certain issues. It makes me more aware of affirming children's identity and having open dialogue in the classroom so that people can feel free to express who they are rather than being oppressed." (Maria, p.17)

McLaren (1998) cites Giroux's concept of voice in discussing the use of stories for both learning and teaching.

Giroux's concept of voice refers to the multifaceted and interlocking set of meanings through which students and teachers actively engage in dialogue with one another. Voice is an important pedagogical concept because it alerts teachers to the fact that all discourse is situated historically and mediated culturally and derives part of its meaning from interaction with others. (p.220)

Maria displayed the kind of “teacher voice” that McLaren describes as “emancipatory power” because she allowed the students’ voices “to assert itself so as to be both confirmed and analyzed, in terms of the particular values and ideologies it represents” (p.221).
Teachers who are aware of what they bring into the classroom are better equipped to see what each of their students bring through the classroom door. Ladson-Billings (1994) articulates that “Teaching well,...means making sure that students achieve, develop a positive sense of themselves, and develop a commitment to larger social and community concerns” (p.16).

The commonalities that I share with these four Métis teachers is a testament to how we have been nurtured by our parents and grandparents. Each of us has formed a connection to our culture and have found ways to express our cultural identity in our classrooms. I know what it feels like to not have your history, your people or experiences represented in the curriculum. McLaren (1998) specifies that teachers have the ability to “disconfirm the experiences and beliefs of students from subordinate groups” (p.221). The participants have also shared this oppression. In an effort to move beyond the systems that have kept us marginalized, I believe each one of us has used our gifts and passions to create a learning environment that is inclusive and works to move Métis people away from being a forgotten people in the Canadian landscape.

It is often through the mediation of teacher voice that the very nature of the schooling process is either sustained or challenged. The power of the teacher voice to shape schooling according to
the logic of emancipatory interests is inextricably related not only to a high degree of self-understanding, but also to the possibility for teachers to join together in a collective voice as part of a social movement dedicated to restructuring the ideological and material conditions both within and outside of schooling. (McLaren, 1998, p.222)

Child-centred teachers work toward a liberatory praxis. The process of learning needs to suit the child. As teachers, we can use our education along with our cultural identities to challenge the status quo. Teachers are situated in an ideal place for transformative education.

**The Forgotten People**

Defining Métis as a forgotten people shapes my teaching practice in choosing social justice education. The fact that Métis education is addressed as part of Aboriginal education, may leave teachers to feel that if they address First Nation history or perspective they have adequately taught Aboriginal education. Gabriel expressed his educational experience as a Métis student: “You are not coming from having as brown of skin as your Indian classmates, and for some reason Métis always get bunched in with Indian people” (Gabriel, p.5).

Métis people need to be seen and understood as a distinct culture from First Nation people. Yet, both need to be regarded as connected to one another, not only from a historical perspective but also in regards
to the similarities in cultural attributes and ways of life. Métis and
First Nation people share a natural alliance. Monique shared her
familial struggles:

"There were only three Métis families in our community. We were
discriminated against because we didn't have much and because
we were associated with the First Nations People. We were all
called Indians or welfare bums. I knew back then that I was Métis
and that I was different." (Monique, pp.3-4)

Métis education in Saskatchewan can be taught in five grade
levels within the Social Studies curriculum. In Grade Three the focus is
on comparing Canadian communities, Grade Four the focus is on
Saskatchewan, in Grade Five, Eight and Twelve the focus is on Canada.

Joseph remembered how Aboriginal Education was addressed
when he was in school: "I can remember, I think we were in Grade Five,
and we did the First Nations [unit] and so Granny brought bannock for a
traditional meal" (Joseph, p.1). He specified, "Grade five and that was it.
That Grade five unit and that was it. You did your Aboriginal theme and
went to Batoche. That was all you got" (Joseph, p.2).

It is within these curricular areas that Métis people are
introduced as a historical phenomenon of Canadian history. Louis Riel,
Gabriel Dumont, Batoche, and the 1885 Resistance are synonymous
with the Métis. But to truly understand the Métis people of Canada, we
need to teach about the contributions of all Métis from a contemporary context. As a people, Métis have great leaders in our history and in present society. It is these leaders and scholars who need to be respected for continuing the dream of Métis people in Canada. This requires a rewriting of history that is “no longer the single narrative story of important white imperial figures, adventurers and heroes” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.149). Métis people's contribution in Canada can be valued by “countering the dominant society's image of indigenous people, their lifestyles and belief systems” (p.151).

I have read that some regard the Métis people as the true Canadians (Purich, 1988; Sealey & Lussier, 1975) because we emerged out of the Canadian landscape from the inter-marriage of First Nation and European immigrants. Canada would not exist if it was not for the efforts of the Métis people (Adams, 1989; Purich, 1988; Peterson & Brown, 1985). Gabriel reaffirmed the history of the Métis culture by accounting Canada’s time line: “If you look at how long there was a Métis culture and how long we were here in Canada, even before it was Canada. It goes back quite far” (Gabriel, p.4). Yet in light of the contributions that Métis people have made toward the foundation of this country we are not truly recognized. There are many issues of justice that affect our communities. Our leaders, veterans and elders struggle to receive the same recognition that has been given to
dominant society and First Nation peoples. The biases in history are identified by Joseph:

“\textit{Well, you got the basic stuff. It was never taught that there were two sides to the story. There was only that one side. They came, the conquered, they discovered it. Then these M\text{\text-
ité}s people tried to revolt and take over the government. They were defeated and Riel was hanged. That is what you learned.}” (Joseph, p.3)

There are many inaccuracies in what is taught as Canadian history in schools. History has been written in favour of the dominant culture. “If only the oppressor makes history, he is also alone in having one: whoever masters the present moulds the past” (Noel, 1994, p.12).

So why are we not more highly featured in Canadian society, whether in education, politics, economics or governance? Why have M\text{\text-}
ités people been forgotten? Is it because of the loss of the Mechif language within our communities? Is it because we do not have a special relationship with the federal government that exists like our First Nation cousins? Is it because some of our people can easily step between two worlds, both dominant and Indigenous?

Every country has people of mixed heritage, yet M\text{\text-}
ités is unique to Canada. M\text{\text-}
ités people exist no longer as a mixture but a complete and unique nation of People created from the union of First Nation and European cultures. Maria described her family heritage: “\textit{Both my}
grandparents are Métis, both French Métis. When you look at the family
history it was always the Métis person marrying another Métis person”
(Maria, p.4). Gabriel also asserted that Métis is a distinct culture:

“You get educated and hear how it is a mixture of European and
Indian. We never looked at it that way. Métis was who we are and
that was our cultural background. We didn’t see Métis as being
half of this or half anything. We looked at it as being 100 percent
Métis. That is how we identified ourselves.” (Gabriel, p.3)

The federal government of Canada created divisions among
Indigenous people through its Constitution. The Indian Act created
Status and non-Status Indians.

The result for Métis and non-status Indians (i.e., those Aboriginal
persons and groups who cannot meet the criteria for registration
as an Indian under the Indian Act) is that Canada has not
provided them with a federally protected land base, access to
federal Indian programs and services, or standing to bring certain
types of claims against Canada (i.e., specific treaty entitlement
claims under Canada’s policy of the same name) or to participate
in land claims settlements on the same basis as status Indians.

(Giokas & Groves, 2002, p. 44)

The Indian Act created a definition that is widely accepted in Canada,
even though sections of the *Indian Act* have been found unconstitutional. Many First Nation women lost their status because they married non-Aboriginal males. Amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951 fortified the enfranchisement of Indian women who married non-Indian men. Women and the children of these unions were able to reclaim their status under Bill C-31 in 1985. This constitutional amendment has further fractured our communities. Many people who once defined themselves as Métis no longer do so because they have regained their status through Bill C-31 amendment to the *Indian Act* (Giokas & Chartrand, 2002).

Many Indigenous children with mixed ethnicity use the term Métis to describe themselves. We need to realize that not all non-status Indians have a connection to Métis culture. Maria, Joseph and Gabriel indicated that their identity as a Métis stems from their connection to Batoche or Red River communities. As Maria stated: "It is always who they were (in describing how her grandparents were Métis ). I had family that fought in Batoche. My family was in Red River" (Maria, p.3). Gabriel described his family heritage along similar lines: "We’ve grown up identifying ourselves as Métis people forever" (Gabriel, p.2). Joseph remembered going to Batoche Days as a child with his grandfather, to celebrate Métis identity and to reconnect with their roots:

"We always went back to Batoche. We were always there and it
was like a holiday. The whole family went, my uncles, aunties, everybody. And we all stayed in campers and tents. Everybody was there. It was like a big family.” (Joseph, p.2)

LaRoque (2003) has stated, “We cannot give power to Western canonical definitions that polarize Métis people between Indian or white.” It is in LaRoque’s statement that I realize that Métis and First Nation can accomplish so much more if we work together. We have so many similar struggles, yet a fracture exists between both nations. I believe that through educating people about the Métis culture they will recognize the parallels that exist between all ethnic groups.

Joseph shared with me how he doesn’t separate Métis from First Nation. He asserted:

“We talk Riel. I tie that all in together. I don’t know if I should or not, but I don’t separate First Nations and Métis. It is all just kind of one. We talk about everything. I don’t teach just one or the other.” (Joseph, pp.5-6)

Métis culture is not easy to define. Ethnic groups are usually defined through what they are not, rather than by what they are. Noel (1994) explains that:

the laws of Nature thus dictate the identity of the dominated individual, circumscribing it until it converges with what is good, inevitable, and normal. In doing so, they lay the foundation for
the completeness of the oppressor's existence, taken implicitly as a universal model, and the inferiority of the dominated, defined in terms of what they are missing or what constitutes a defect. (p. 19)

The process of "othering" creates a yardstick that we measure others against. The yardstick informs us what is considered normal, and those that don't measure up become the "other" (Norquay, 1993; Wendell, 1989). "When we make people 'other,' we group them together as objects of our experience instead of regarding them as fellow subjects of experience with whom we might identify" (Wendell, 1989, p.116).

**Analysis**

Many who define themselves as Métis come from various origins, whether Red River, Cree background or 1st generation Métis (LaRoque, 2003). "No other group is asked the same questions about their cultural identity that is asked of the Métis." Many Métis people are even unclear on what it means to be Métis because there is no agreed upon definition.

The commonalities that bring Métis communities together is that "the Métis peoples of Canada share a mixed heritage and cultural traditions, such as the focus on family and Métis networks, a special relationship to the land and its resources, and a tradition of political resistance and activism" (Payment, 2001, p.157).
Métis people are not from one specific place. They are not from a distinct language group. Métis people who originated from Red River had a different lifestyle than those Métis who lived in northern Saskatchewan. “Socially and economically, the fur trade played a central role in the ethnogenesis of the Northern Métis peoples” (Payment, 2001, p.160). The language groups were different across the continent, so even the languages spoken in the homes of Métis people were not similar.

Northern Métis speak one or more Athapaskan (Dene) languages, and many whose ancestors migrated from western Canada speak Algonquian languages (in particular Cree), in addition to English. Until the 1950s, Métis of Canadien ancestry also spoke French, and some ‘Halfbreeds’ of Scottish ancestry also spoke Gaelic or variations of the language. (Payment, 2001, p.158)

Mechif has been identified as the language of the Métis. The word Mechif is a variation of the pronunciation of Métis (Dorion & Prefontaine, 2001). Mechif is a mixture of Cree verbs and French nouns (Bakker, 2001).

Gabriel remembered how Mechif was spoken by his grandparents. He recalled that his parents were encouraged to speak English when people came over to their home: “A lot of times they wouldn’t speak Mechif. They were told to speak English at school or speak English at
home when people would come over” (Gabriel, p.7). Gabriel’s grandmother spoke Mechif, along with French and Cree. His grandfather did as well, and was helpful to Gabriel when he took Cree classes in university before his grandfather’s death: “My grandpa (spoke) too. When I was taking Cree in university, my grandpa passed away half-way through the first semester, but he helped with the language and we would all learn the different words” (Gabriel, p.7).

The loss of language seems to stem from the shame in being identified as Métis by the outside community. Métis families wanted their children to find acceptance and success in dominant society.

Monique shared the struggle within her family when her father wanted them to learn English and abandon their Mechif language. Monique said about her dad:

“He found that if his kids were going to succeed in anything, they had to learn English. They had to learn French and they had to walk away from their Cree and their Mechif. He even demanded that my mom quit speaking Cree to us and Mechif. If her sisters would phone, she would have to take the phone call out into the porch because my dad told her that the more you speak that or the more they go to kohkom’s house, the more they are going to learn that language and it’s going to hurt them in school.” (Monique, p.6)

Monique’s experience may be very similar to other Métis families. Her
mother spoke Mechif, but Monique emphasized that she does not use the Cree or Mechif language: "My mom still speaks it today. She is very active in the Mechif community as a Métis elder. I have the opportunity to understand French and Cree, but I don't. I don't communicate in there at all" (Monique, p.6). Monique felt no bitterness about her loss of language or towards her father's demands of keeping Cree and Mechif out of the home. She shared her understanding: "I think it is because they didn't feel comfortable speaking it because it was so discriminated against" (Monique, p.7).

Monique's experience is common in many Aboriginal homes. The Cree language was not kept out of my childhood home. My mother is a fluent Cree speaker. I understand many of the basic command words, but I am not able to communicate fully with my mother's family in Cree or Mechif.

**Denial**

Denial is the refusal to acknowledge or accept the truth. Racism and discrimination have led many Métis people to feel shame toward their native heritage and deny part of their identity. Adams (1989) expresses that some Aboriginal people "try to hide from their Indianness and dissociate themselves from everything that would classify them as members of the native society, even though their physical appearance and life style still show them to be Indian" (p. 145). The shame of being
Métis may have led to the denial of using the language.

Why is society set-up in a way that different groups of people are ashamed of who they are? Is it because of ignorance? If so, then education is the answer. Monique described to me that she was lost in searching for a place to belong: "I was lost because of the whole idea of assimilation" (Monique, p.8). Assimilation is based on a theory of "Indigenous incapacity" in which "the presumption of the inability of Indigenous people to do for themselves rationalised the work of governments and other humanitarians to do to, and for, Indigenous people" (McConaghy, 2000, p.152). The goal of assimilation is to make Aboriginal people more like dominant society. “The particular strategies by which the Indigenous other is to be (partially) remade in the image of the white self ... are citizenship training, vocationalism and theoretical assimilationism in Indigenous education” (p.158). Monique realized that she walked away from her identity in search of something else, perhaps something that was closer to dominant society: “I kind of walked away. I was reacting to the way I was raised. I thought that there might be something better out there for me” (Monique, p.8). Adams (1989) believes:

In their attempts to escape from themselves, natives try to destroy the characteristics that mark them as Indians, but their imposed inferiority and insecurity are revealed when they struggle
for status in the white society, and they become consumers of material goods that represent prestige symbols. These native persons are seeking recognition from the white world and lead a sham existence that leaves them disappointed and more frustrated than they were before. (pp.145-146)

Monique turned away from her culture as a method of hiding from the realities that she faced going to school. She informed me that she created "a facade" to endure.

"The community wasn't very large and it was easy to tell who the First Nation and Métis students were. There were not many of us in school. We looked so different from the other non-Aboriginal people. You would hear cat calls in the halls and 'ow, ow, ow, ow' from the odd kid. You would either put your head down or get very angry. At first, I put my head down and tried to walk away from it, but then you became angry and very sharp-witted, back-talking and rude to these people. The third was to hang out with kids that cared less about what the in-group was thinking. I developed a facade. I became a very witty and comical kid that people liked being around. I was creating chapters in my life and acting for people because I didn't know how to be me." (Monique, pp.21-22)

**Shame**

Maria pointed out that it was difficult for her to accept her
identity when participating with the larger, dominant society. She was accepted and proud of being Métis when she was with her family:

"Growing up I was taught to be ashamed of being Métis, like it was weird. When our family were all together we were proud of what we were" (Maria, p.5). She commented that it was fine to talk about who you were with others who were like you, but learned not to do that with non-Aboriginal people who would judge you:

"It was okay to talk about when you were with other people that were safe, but not to bring it out to the attention of those who were non-Aboriginal. Because then you would not be accepted. That was always the thing to be ashamed or to not feel proud." (Maria, p.5)

**The Struggle to Belong**

Maria and Monique both struggled to fit in and feel like they belonged. "I had to pretend in order to have friends. Everybody needs to feel like they belong somewhere, so I pretended to be somebody else just so I could have some feeling of belonging" (Monique, pp.24-25). Assimilation comes at the cost of denying your own identity. Ferdman (1990) explains that “an assimilation perspective emphasizes the dysfunctionality of differences and the maintenance of the dominant culture, and so demands that subordinate groups acculturate” (p.183).

"I guess the idea was always to try to fit in at any cost, to not
mention your culture. The community that I lived in was very racist. So, you didn’t feel safe to come out with what you were really about and you don’t have the support at home to feel proud of who you are. I didn’t really feel strong about who I was.” (Maria, p.9)

Joseph had also felt the burns of racism. He recalled feeling out of place and how hard it was in school. Joseph remembered feeling like everyone was looking at him when racist comments would be made in his presence:

“When they (teachers) would talk about history or Aboriginal people, then someone would make the comment ‘wagon-burner’ You would think that everyone is looking at you, like you are the one that did it. And that made me mad. It was hard. I was just quiet. I held back because I was a minority kid. It was just easier (to not do anything).” (Joseph, p.3)

Gabriel disclosed that his family has denied their Métis identity:

“What I get from conversations, is in the past they denied being Métis” (Gabriel, p.5). He pointed out that it was not always like this. His ancestors were so proud of their identity as Métis, that they decided not to sign on with Treaty Six: “They could have signed on with Treaty Six but they identified with being Métis. Then later, my family would say they were French. After a while they just said, no, we are not French.
"We are Métis" (Gabriel, p.6).

Monique shared a conversation she had with her child. They discussed pride in oneself:

"Were you always proud to be the colour that you are? And I said, no. I wasn't for the longest time proud of it because people discriminated against it just like they do now. (Then the child replied) I used to want to be white, mom, very bad. Now, I'm so proud about being Métis, I don't want to be white anymore."

(Monique, p.16)

Joseph pointed out through his grandfather's story, that life for the Métis had not always been about denial, but a struggle to be recognized: "He would tell you stories about when he was a kid, how they lived, how it was different, and how he had to struggle to be recognized" (Joseph, p.2).

**Regaining Self-worth**

Anderson (2000) outlines a process for coming to understand Native female identity through answering "Who Am I?" Self-worth is finding value in who you are. Anderson quotes Gertie Beaucage, "You need to be able to love yourself and believe in yourself. You need to believe that you are valuable, worthwhile, capable - all those things that define us as human beings" (p.231). She suggests that reclaiming your self-esteem needs to occur through nurturing your self:
Nurturing self is an act of self-love that helps build a positive identity. As women reclaim and reconstruct their identities, they are better able to move out into the world and nurture others as well as nurture their own visions of the future. (p. 233)

Self-worth and the belief in your abilities creates confidence. This confidence translates into the ability to share with others.

**Recognition**

The struggle to be recognized is a common theme amongst Métis people. Louis Riel led Métis people towards having the Métis people recognized as a nation, and their continued right to self-govern recognized (Chartrand, 2002; Adams, 1989; Purich, 1988; Peterson & Brown, 1985; Sealey & Lussier, 1975). Métis leaders had to fight for the establishment of SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teachers Education Program) which was not begun until several years after a similar program for Status Indians, ITEP (Indian Teacher Education Program), had been in existence.

I am a graduate of SUNTEP. It was in this university program that I found a place that I could exist, as myself, as a Métis woman. I did not have to hide within my skin and pretend to be someone else. It was at SUNTEP that I met other students like myself, with similar backgrounds, beliefs and ideas.

Joseph indicated that he had a similar experience at university.
He compared what it was like to be in classes of dominant society, as opposed to segregated courses for Aboriginal students:

"It is in the big classes, some of them would just be dominating and you would sit back and wouldn’t say anything. In small classes, you would have to talk because you couldn’t melt down and hide because everyone knew everyone. They would have an opinion. I liked that part. The small classes were great. Everyone identified together." (Joseph, p.5)

It is important to have the opportunity to relate to others, to know that you have shared experiences or common stories. Joseph used this common ground to instill in his students the importance of getting an education: "I try and instill in these kids that you have got to go to school. You have to be here everyday. You can’t learn unless you are here" (Joseph, p.7).

Monique found her identity affirmed as she entered adulthood. She entered a university program for Aboriginal students:

"I met nineteen other people who were like me. They were raised like me and we all shared common ground. I knew then that I could finally be proud of who I was. I could tell these other people that I grew up like that and I did those things too." (Monique, p.5)

It was the whole experience of being with others similar to yourself that
I felt my cultural identity respected. Ferdmand (1990) says that:

... cultural identity involves those parts of self - those behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms that a person considers to define himself or herself socially as a member of a particular ethnic group - and the value placed on those features in relation to those of other groups. (pp.193-194)

SUNTEP was a great place to be with others who accepted you for who you were; you no longer had to pretend.

Monique reinforced these sentiments. She talked about her experiences at a university program for Métis students: "There was an affirmation for me about my cultural identity. I felt included and people taught me things that I never knew existed" (Monique, p.30).

Maria found her university experiences filled with knowledge about and affirmation of Aboriginal peoples. She recognized the sharing and reflection she did about her identity with others led her to a place of acceptance.

"The fact that you are getting together with other people and you are from other cultures. You are actually talking about it and you are doing some reflection. You are having dialogue and you are studying about it. The history classes and Native studies were really helpful. I think that having non-Aboriginal people saying that there is something worth learning about, that this is something
worth celebrating. It was really good. When you are hearing that your own culture has some value, after you have been taught for so many years that nothing good comes out of Indian or Métis people, it is good to have non-Aboriginal people saying this was great. It changed my life and made me a better person. You have more reasons to be proud, and for me, that was really important.”

(Maria, pp. 11-12)

Gabriel was fortunate to have an Aboriginal teacher work in his high school. He explained that it wasn’t until high school that he found his identity affirmed.

“I didn’t really feel validated until high school because we had an Aboriginal Liaison worker. I could stop in and talk to her and she would understand. She was a Métis person, too. She totally understood, it was quite nice.” (Gabriel, p.13)

Gabriel reaffirmed the experiences that the other participants had in university within his own segregated classes.

“It was amazing to have that support system, to go back everyday and have that whole support system. After awhile I got tired of being in class with the same people all the time, so I started taking classes with the regular population. But to come back to that little nest, that kept me in school. In the larger classes you hear the
hate, you hear the hurt. Everybody else is there because they have to take a Native studies class, and they are just upset, angry and bitter. They are not taking the class because they want to, they are taking it because they have to. And to be in a class like that and then to be able to escape back and to talk to people who have had the same experiences that you had and went through everything the same as you. I liked it, it was great.” (Gabriel, pp.19-20)

Monique remembered how lost she felt when she didn’t feel self-worth. It was these memories that reminded her to be strong and help others feel affirmed in their identity:

“You need to be strong and culturally strong. You need to feel good about who you are, or you might go down a trail that is not happy and feel lost for a long time. I instill that you are brown-skin, or Métis, or a different culture and that you need to be proud of that. You need to be proud so you can stand up and say back to somebody how you feel.” (Monique, pp.12-13)

Teaching for Social Change

What do we need to do as teachers to create a classroom environment that is accepting and teaches respect? There have been many different models of inclusive education which are intended to promote a caring classroom. Multicultural education (Nieto,1999; Sleeter, 1993; Banks, 1989), culturally-relevant teaching (Ladson-
Billings, 2001), anti-racist education (Calliste & Dei, 2000), and teaching for social justice (Edelsky, 1999; hooks, 1994).

I have worked in my own classroom to create an environment where children can learn. I believe that teaching needs to be child-centred. Students need to feel safe and that they belong. It is through sharing my identity that I can create inclusive surroundings for my students.

Monique made a point in her teaching to be inclusive:

"I would make sure that all my lessons were always incorporated and ingrained in telling my students a little bit about who they were, who our people are and what our history was like, not only the Battle of Batoche, but what contemporary Métis live like now and what we have gained." (Monique, p.35)

It is our own experiences in school that shape our teaching. Monique remembered how she felt growing up without being taught in school that each culture offers something and needs to be valued. Apple (1990) observes that “schools seem to contribute to inequality in that they are tacitly organized to differentially distribute specific kinds of knowledge” (p.43). Monique remarked:

"I think I would have felt more affirmed as a Métis person growing up, and not have wanted to walk away from who I was if I would have been able to have the opportunity to learn about it in school."

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(Monique, pp.31-32)

It is not only having a teacher communicate the importance of respect and inclusiveness but also seeing your cultural group conveyed positively in media throughout the school community. Resources used in the classroom need to be inclusive and culturally relevant. Monique reaffirms, "Everything that I would teach the kids about, from holidays, themes of learning to read and write, I made sure that they were reading culturally appropriate to who they were" (Monique, p.36). The classroom becomes a diverse community. Teachers find themselves with a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Monique realized the struggle to teach for inclusion:

"How are you going to be able to show this whole class who they are and how they are going to feel proud of who they are. Is one group going to be outcast while you favourably present yourself and our Aboriginal ideas to the six that are in class and then there are 19 who would like to learn a little bit about who they are?"

(Monique, pp.38-39)

**Empowerment**

Students are empowered when they see that their culture, experiences and voice are valued. If a teacher is truly committed to teaching about fairness and social justice, her or his students will benefit from learning from one another. The teacher provides an
environment that has social, emotional and cognitive support. "I have learned about how you are able to do equitable teaching so that all children are involved and they are learning from one another" (Monique, p.39). The use of collaborative grouping allows students to learn from one another. Teachers need to be sensitive to the needs of all their students. Students need to be provided with an opportunity to share their experiences in the classroom, whether it is through class discussion, written work or sharing in groups. It is the teachers job to make connections between these experiences. I have wondered many times how I can make my classroom a place that fosters inclusion. "So I thought how can I be the culturally sensitive teacher to what I know these children need to learn about, but at the same time make sure that there is inclusion" (Monique, pp. 39-40).

When we fail to see the faces sitting in front of us then we are no longer teachers. I hate to think about the many times I have failed my students by merely placing information in front of them that was not relevant to their lives or their experiences and then expected them to understand what I wanted them to learn. "We are giving work to our children that is not about who they are and we are testing them on what they don't have any knowledge of and failing because of it" (Monique, p. 37). The role of the teacher is to not only be inclusive of the diversity that exists in her classroom, but also connect the material to be taught
to the context of the students’ lives (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Delpit, 1995). “Because many children from diverse backgrounds experience school failure, we need to address how cultural discontinuities between students’ homes and their schools affect learning” (Nieto, 1999, p.68). Storytelling enabled Monique to create a place where all her students could come to understand themselves. “It is through sharing my own stories and issues that might be in the forefront in today’s society. I would use role playing of different situations and simulations” (Monique, p.40). Ladson-Billings (2001) outlines many attributes that culturally relevant teachers possess. She says:

In the classroom of a culturally relevant teacher, academic achievement is measured through a variety of means. Students have opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do through samples of their work, performances, and exhibitions. These teachers also allow students multiple opportunities for academic success. No one-time assessment seals the academic fate of students. (p.76)

Monique shared not only this attribute of culturally relevant teachers that Ladson-Billings puts forth, but many others as well. Monique talked about not only teaching Métis arts and crafts but also engaging students to think critically about contemporary issues:
"I also did current and contemporary events where we would 
analyze what is really happening. I knew that I had to move to 
where kids could understand the whole issue because that's what 
they are learning at home and they hear parents speaking about it."

(Monique, p.41)

Students have the opportunity to learn a different perspective 
than what is portrayed in the media or texts. Delpit (1995) affirms that 
the role of the teacher is to “foster inquiry in who our students really 
are or encourage teachers to develop links to the often rich home lives 
of students” (p.179). According to Shor (1992), the goals of dialogue in 
the classroom is to be critical so that it has the potential to:

...change the students’ experience of learning, encouraging them 
to learn more and to develop the intellectual and affective powers 
to think about transforming society. The power to think critically 
and to act constructively; the power to study in depth, to 
understand school, society, work, politics, and our lives; and the 
power to feel hopeful about an equitable future... (p.111)

Joseph also used current events or news events to start many 
discussions, but a majority of his classroom discussion came from 
relating life stories to his students: “My biggest thing is being able to tell 
these kids stories, relate to them, relate stories to their lives and my life to
their life” (p.7). Florio-Ruane (2001) relates: “Gazing both inward and outward, and in dialogue with others, we might thus uncover culture not as a trait by which to label others, but as a shared human experience of making meaning” (p.44).

Monique took her role as a Métis teacher seriously in helping other students learn about themselves by learning about each other. She also looked forward to what she would learn from the students: “As a teacher we want to help others know their own identity. If they are Métis, you have this feeling with them. I hope to do this lesson so that they can see how good it is. Or what are they going to show me as a student to teach me about their Metis-ness, and what more am I going to learn from them?” (Monique, p.48)

Monique reaffirmed the history of Métis people, and how we have existed as a people before Canada existed as a country. The struggle that Métis people have had and continue to have is to be recognized as a distinct people, not white and not First Nations. She shared the story of her great uncle who still has his scrip: “he is still waiting to see when he is supposed to get the land.” She likes to share these stories of struggle and perseverance with her students. “You have to be able to give these stories to the children, and you have to be able to teach it to them otherwise nobody else will” (Monique, p.51).

It is passionate teachers, like the participants in this study who
create change. They want to educate their students to become critical thinkers, to question why things are the way they are, and start to wonder how things can be made different.

"Everything that I do is about teaching equity. I want the children to know that there is white privilege out there. I want them to know that when you’re in a dominant schooling of learning, the dominant society always wins. But at the same time, if you want to win with them, you don’t necessarily have to be assimilated into it. You just have to be proud of who you are." (Monique, p.52)

Florio-Ruane (2001) reports that:

... emerging research on ‘whiteness’ and on the discourse practices of White middle class women suggested that exploration of difference might be an especially challenging task for this population. Yet, as McLaren (1997) observes, it is precisely its invisibility that must be addressed if teachers are to learn about racism and construct a practice that is anti-racist. (p.52)

"You talk to children about inclusion of all peoples, and if you’re kind and good to one another you are able to see through the mask and fear of racism" (Monique, p.48).

Gabriel recalled his own experiences as a student and how Aboriginal education was included:

"I remember the novels we read. I remember reading A Light in the
Forest, a book about a white person being captured and raised by Indians. Teachers would bring in those types of stories and they thought that was inclusion. Books usually written by non-Aboriginal authors.” (Gabriel, pp. 13-14)

How many teachers feel they are giving justice to Aboriginal Education when one of the characters in the novel is Aboriginal? Do they address bias, stereotypes, point of view and different ways of knowing? It is ignorance in these areas, fostered by the hegemonic production and control of knowledge, that I feel continues to breed marginalization and racism.

Gabriel shared his frustration with colleagues whose narrow views prevented them from including any Aboriginal content when a majority of their students were Aboriginal. He emphasized: “We do have to include brown people in our stories” (Gabriel, p.22) Florio-Ruane (2001) identifies that “in order to create a profession more reflective of the strengths of our population’s history and diversity, we need to transform the texts and contexts of teachers’ learning to include multiple voices and stories of culture, literacy and education” (p.44).

Gabriel made a point of emphasizing Aboriginal education in his classroom. He loved to share his Métis perspective with his students: “When we study explorers, I make point of informing the students that the explorers weren’t discovering anything. It was already here” (Gabriel,
p.46). Gabriel also made a point of approaching history from an alternative point of view. Gabriel taught with creativity:

"When we learn about John A. MacDonald, and discuss how he was the first Prime Minister. I will introduce him as John A. MacDonald, the drunk. Even if it is my personal opinion, then I tell them why I said that." (Gabriel, p. 46)

Gabriel was aware of the beliefs, values and biases that he brought into the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2001) purports that “culturally relevant teachers understand that culture is a complex concept that affects every aspect of life. Such teachers are able to recognize their own cultural perspectives and biases” (p.98). Maria, like Gabriel, shared her experiences as a student in regards to former teachers who:

"provided an alternative perspective. It wasn’t until high school that I actually met teachers who provided an alternative perspective on the Aboriginal culture. Some teachers who provided us with opportunities to look at some of the issues and who Louis Riel was. It made me feel a bit more proud of who I was." (Maria, pp.9-10)

Maria saw her role of being an advocate for Aboriginal education extend beyond her classroom and into the classrooms of other teachers.

Maria’s inclusive education involved teaching the students critical thinking. She tried to bring in:

"content that reflects different frames of reference, whether written
by a Métis or an Aboriginal writer. We discuss how it is similar or
different to the students. I always try to make it individually based
so that people can draw reference and make their own
comparison.”  (Maria, p.15)

Part of Maria’s anti-racist education was teaching about “white
privilege” specifically:

“The impact of racism, how to combat racism, and look at if you are
a racist how does that affect you as a person, and if you are a
victim of racism, how does it affect you. You are getting inside the
whole issue of race and the role that it plays within ourselves.”

(Maria, pp.15-16)

McIntosh (1998) writes about white privilege and how she was “taught
to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by member of
(her) group, never in the invisible systems conferring unsought racial
dominance on (her) group from birth” (p.169). Maria made a point of
creating a classroom environment that was “affirming children’s identity
and having open dialogue in the classroom so that people can feel free to
express who they are rather than being oppressed by whatever” (Maria,
p.17).

Maria pointed out that the role of the school administrator plays
an important role in how teachers work towards inclusion in their
classrooms: “A principal that I worked with had a real respect and
wanted to learn more. *The whole thing in the school was how do we include more Indian and Métis content in the classroom*" (Maria, p.23).

Maria had conversations with colleagues who did not see the importance of an inclusive education. Other colleagues also lamented that a roadblock to creating an inclusive learning environment was a lack of resources:

"I have had discussions with people who don’t understand why there should be a special focus on Indian and Métis content. I have had discussions with people who are more frustrated by the fact that there seems to be a huge lack of resources and a lack of knowledge of how to do things that they wanted to do. Or they try to arrange something in the school with an Aboriginal resource and the Aboriginal organization doesn’t get back to them. It seems to reinforce stereotypes." (Maria, p.24)

Do these teachers really run into so many walls when contacting Aboriginal organizations or are the same stories being generated from one bad experience? Personally, I have had only positive results in my communications with many Aboriginal organizations. Maria reported her colleagues’ comments on their experiences with Aboriginal organizations and resource people:

"We can’t get a hold of anybody down there. What is going on?

Who are these people and why is this so unorganized? I have left
20 messages and they keep saying that they are going to call back and do this for us. They don’t show up or arrive late.” (Maria, p.25)

These comments could be attributed to cultural difference between the Aboriginal and dominant groups. Differences in “values, behaviour, ways of learning, and sociocultural practices” can make communication difficult or even create conflict (Ghosh, 1996, p.1).

Joseph used a lot of dialogue in his classroom to create an environment of inclusion:

“We talk and discuss. It makes it fun. You couldn’t learn a lot of that out of a book. I don’t take a side, Aboriginalists, and white-that, or Métis-this. It is always just people. We are all people. We are always learning. That’s the way I always do it.” (Joseph, p.5)

I don’t agree with Joseph’s comment about “It is always just people.” Too often many teachers take the stance of being colour-blind. They will often state that they don’t focus on the skin colour of child in an attempt to suppress negative images. The problem of viewing everyone the same denies that salience of race (Sleeter, 1993).

Joseph attributed his grandfather’s teaching as enabling him to become an effective teacher in creating an inclusive learning environment:

“My grandpa said that everyone has the right to have their own
stuff and to have rights. I think that everybody deserves the same chance, whether they are Aboriginal, Métis, white, whatever. I never judge anybody on anything first. It is the kind of person they are. It has nothing to do with their skin-colour. Everyone deserves to be treated the same, with the same dignity, and there wasn’t any of that for a long time.” (Joseph, p.8)

Joseph found many resources to ensure an inclusive environment, he also had many positive experiences using parents as resource people in his classroom:

“There are lots of resources you can use. And in this community, many parents are here who can share their knowledge. I have two parents that were in residential schools and they come in and talk. It was really good. The parents love to come. You don’t get that out of the curriculum.” (Joseph, p.12)

Parents and the community should be involved in the learning of students. Nieto (1999) cites Luis Moll’s research in discovering that “using the experiences and skills of all families to encourage student learning, is a more hopeful and productive way of approaching families” (p.93). Community resources and parent involvement develops trust and cooperation between teachers and the students’ families.

**Summary**
Each of these participants reflected on their own experiences and responded to their students' histories. They have accepted the responsibility to educate for social change. Their teaching was two-pronged. They were teaching their students and at the same time modelling for their colleagues. The experiences of racism and stereotyping were evident in their school communities. Each participant came into contact with individuals who generalized about Aboriginal people. Colleagues of Joseph let him feel the sting of their generalizations about Aboriginal peoples:

"They don't come right out and say 'these Indians are all like that' but it is close. I don't know if they might say it if I wasn't Métis. You hear from a few, but it is the insinuating that these kids aren't quite as good as the rest of the kids. They probably would come right out and say it I think if they didn't know that I was Métis."

(Joseph, p.8)

It is a wonder that educated individuals would make such a comment. Schick (2000) argues that “discourses employed” by white-identified teachers “are not exceptional to them, but productive of their social relations and the identifications that appear as normative” (p.304). It is even more heart-breaking that many of these individuals are teaching our children. Maria heard similar comments even from an administrator:
"I had one principal who I only worked with for two years, but she would make comments about Treaty Indians. She had this thing against Treaty Indians because she saw it as two-tiered. They would get this and the rest of the kids wouldn't, and that's where she came from." (Maria, p.22)

It is shocking that these individuals didn't even realize that they were making racist or stereotypical comments. They did not realize the pain they were leaving in the wake of their comments as minorities silently endured the cuts and slashes inflicted by their words.

"There is racism. There is hidden racism and there is out-right racism. You are either the 'expert' or else you are 'not one of them.' I have had that a couple of times, colleagues telling me at a staff social or somewhere out, 'you are not like them.' I always say that I'm not any different than the ones I know. I always say that. My family, the ones I know, are like me. I am no different, like anyone else. You are no different. I always tell them that, but I don't know if they understand it." (Joseph, pp.8-9)

I have been told so many times that I am "not like the rest of them", that my family is "not like all the others". The bearer of those words did not realize how those words cut me to the core. Their comments were oppressive and hurtful. Did they really think they were
complimenting me? "People make comments that are totally off base" (Maria, p.22). These ideas start with unexamined and unacknowledged bias that festers. “Thus, it is through another's eyes that the dominated receive their identity and, therefore their relative worth and place in society” (Noel, 1994, p.110).

Monique shared a story of a young child who was faced with a hurtful generalization from a peer. Stereotypes brought from home into the school community.

"He said that we don't pay taxes and that we don't work very hard and when we get older, we'll have school and everything paid for us. And we don't have to pay for anything. I don't understand why he was saying this to me all of a sudden." (Monique, p.11)

Noel (1994) reveals that “stereotypes are reassuring. They simplify things that otherwise would be complex and give people the impression that they have a grasp of reality” (p.116).

Joseph even wondered about his students' reaction after he informed them that he is Métis:

"I don't think they treated me any different but they could tell I was different after that. I don't know why, it must have been they probably went home and their parents started talking because I think that is where a majority of this stuff happens. Kids tend to feel that somebody is different because they hear it at home."
(Joseph, p.1)

The response of students, parents and colleagues always leaves open a site for teaching to take place. It becomes the role of Aboriginal teachers to break the generalization, to set things right and to push for change. Joseph and Gabriel disclosed shared experiences. They became the ‘token Indian’ who can be called upon to do one unit, which Banks (1989) described as the Contribution Approach:

"When you are the Aboriginal on staff, you must know everything there is to know about Aboriginal people. The big set back was you are supposed to be the authority on all things Aboriginal and you can teach it and we are doing a unit on this and you must have all the stuff." (Joseph, p.8)

There are expectations of Aboriginal teachers that are not expected of other teachers. The expectation is higher. St. Denis (2002) writes that “the emphasis on culturally relevant education encourages the assumption among their non-Aboriginal colleagues that Aboriginal teachers are fully informed about the ‘cultural’ explanation for the conditions of Aboriginal parents, students and the wider community” (p. 253). It would seem ludicrous to make certain requests from other groups, but this does not seem to hinder the demands made of some Aboriginal teachers.
“Non-Aboriginal teachers expect you to be the expert on staff. I am sure if I was the only black person on staff, I would be the expert on African or Jamaican culture. If I was the only Hindu person on staff, it would be the exact same thing, or the person in the wheelchair. I would know everything there is to know about disability and their issues. After awhile it gets hard to keep telling people who you are and what you are. They should know. You just want to be yourself, and not have to describe yourself. You don't always have to say, oh, well what would a Métis person do in a situation like this? I know what I would do.” (Gabriel, pp.26-27)

As educators, role models, and advocates of Aboriginal education, the participants in this study have a multitude of experiences to draw from. They have been on the front lines doing battle against barriers to an anti-oppressive education and a pedagogy for social justice. “I have had discussions with people who don’t understand why there should be a special focus on Indian and Métis content” (Maria, p.24).

Why does this ignorance persist? Are people frightened of change? Change upsets the balance of power. It leads us toward the unknown and toward uncomfortable places. Are they afraid that once they teach their students to question, they will be expected to have the answers?

“I see a resistance to bringing in First Nations, but I think they are just
scared to, they don't want to upset things. And no one is checking up on them” (Gabriel, p.23).

There is an abundance of resources, both media and people, that can assist in teaching for social change. It takes a lot more work than just filling students' books with dates and names. Freire (1993) refers to this as the “banking” method of education (p.72). Teaching for liberation is hard work, but the rewards are far greater. It is important to remind others that the work we do results in more Aboriginal students finding self-worth.

“But now when people say there is the Aboriginal Achievement Awards on TV, imagine having that, we don't have anything like that in our culture. Well, you don't need to because you guys have been awarded all your life. Finally we have stuff to be proud of, so why can't we celebrate it?” (Monique, p.54)

These teachers have taken it upon themselves to educate their students in a forum of respect. They respect the students in their classrooms and honour their diversity and voices. These teachers follow a student-centred curriculum to provide a learning environment that is cooperative and fosters inquiry. Nieto (1999) cites the work of Vygotsky's “zone of proximal development” in stating that “a Vygotskian perspective provides a hopeful framework for thinking about learning; that is, if learning can be influenced by social mediation, then
conditions can be created in schools that can help most students learn" (p.15). The learner in the student-centred classroom is not a passive recipient but is actively involved in creating the knowledge and the relationships that exist. These teachers believe in their students and in return their students find empowerment to transform the spaces they occupy.

These four Métis teachers have shared accounts of their struggle to belong and how the denial and shame of their identity affected their self-concept. It was through the process of regaining their self-worth and recognition of who they truly were that they were able to work for transformation. They decided to teach for social justice and give their students the opportunity of empowerment.
Chapter Five - Revelling in the Wind

Water sprays,  
wind drying sun-drenched  
skin, hands pulling  
tightly on bleached  
ropes. Navigating the buoyant  
structure over cresting  
waves. The heart-pounding  
thrill of pushing  
boundaries and reading the wind.  
The wind whispers  
prompting me to pull in.  
I sit reflecting on what  
I have observed  
and what still floats ahead  
on my sailing adventure.

I have spent many summers sailing at the lake. It was the  
privilege of growing up by the water. The first time I went out sailing on  
my own was exciting and scary. My dad was in the vicinity, coaxing,  
guiding and persuading me to continue. I don’t know who was more  
exhausted when we finished, him in the row boat nearby or me.

I have found the analysis of the data a very similar experience to  
sailing. It has taken a lot of navigating through the literature to discover  
the gems that will lead my boat into port. I have learned from my
misvoyages. I have reflected on where I have been to pilot me on my voyage. The strong winds have made the ride enjoyable but difficult. I have found that when I am faced with a challenge, I get to know more about where I have come from and how these elements have shaped me today.

**Reframing**

The use of reframing in my thesis allows me to rediscover the positive elements of cultural identity that historically have been relegated to an undesirable position. "Reframing is to make choices that are empowering rather than being the oppressed" (L. Wason-Ellam, personal communication, 2003). The process of reframing provides me with the opportunity to contribute to my self-determination, and hopefully the self-determination of others. The power of this research is to transform how we see ourselves and one another. "Reframing occurs also within the ways indigenous people write or engage with theories and accounts of what it means to be indigenous" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.154). Reframing is one way to bring about social justice through change.

**Cultural Identity: Where are you from?**

In *Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (2000), Anderson diagrams the formation of identity through a process of resist, reclaim, construct and act. She records the process of identity
formation as:

- resisting negative definitions of being;
- reclaiming Aboriginal tradition;
- constructing a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context; and
- acting on that identity in a way that nourishes the overall well-being of our communities (p.15).

In understanding who we are as individuals and members of our communities we need to know where we have come from. This calls to mind the innumerable times I have heard my parents or maternal grandparents ask me, “Where are they from?” Or “Who is their family?” It is the answers to these questions that help us to know with whom we are dealing. The questions that Anderson diagrams are: “Who am I not; Where have I come from? What are my responsibilities? and Where am I going?” (p. 16).

I have found that the participants went through the process that Anderson outlined. They have resisted “negative definitions of being” (p. 15). Monique related her experience with stories of shame that lead to perseverance. They reclaimed their “Aboriginal tradition” (p.15). Maria reported her acceptance by teachers that allowed her to feel self-worth. They constructed “a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context” (p.15). Gabriel shared oral histories of his family
that recounted a strength he could bring into his own story. They *acted* "on that identity in a way that nourishes the overall well-being of our communities" (p.15). Joseph demonstrated the role of storytelling in allowing students to use their voice.

The teacher participants shared their thoughts about what they felt shaped their cultural identities. As noted in my first chapter, culture is dynamic and identity is shaped by the dynamism of culture. It is shaped through the communities we live in and the experiences we share with others of a similar background (Nieto, 1999; Ward, Wason-Ellam & Williamson, 1997; Britzman, 1991). According to Hernandez (1989), "Culture is defined as a system of values, beliefs, and standards which guides people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour." It is this definition that I feel best describes how the participants' cultural identity influenced their teaching practices. Florio-Ruane (2001) reveals that culture is:

> Complex and powerful, it is an idea whose definition is contested and whose boundaries are mapped with difficulty. As a lived and living process of meaning and making meaning in contact with others, we all participate in learning and creating culture. (p.123)

The participants in the study learned about their own culture in relationship to their students' culture as they created a classroom
culture together. The teachers’ heritage and background impacted the way they taught. Monique emphasized this point: “There is this whole internal view of just getting to know who me is, who I am, who my family is” (p. 46). It is important for us, as teachers, to “inquire critically into those backgrounds as they have helped shape, texture, and bias the ways we live our lives as teachers and learners” (p.123). Nieto (1999) points out that:

“What happens in the classrooms is first and foremost about the personal and collective connections that exist among the individuals who inhabit those spaces. Consequently, teachers’ beliefs and values, how these are communicated to students through teaching practices and behaviors, and their impact on the lives of students - these are the factors that make teaching so consequential in the lives of many people. (p. 130)

The transformation of teaching practices cannot happen unless the teacher has experienced a personal transformation. Teachers have a responsibility to create a positive environment for learning, in spite of the obstacles placed before them.

**Hegemony**

The participants reflected on their teacher practice in their classroom and how their personal histories affected that practice. Jarvis (1999) states that “as adults, most of us have been so well trained to
accept the status quo that we simply replicate hegemonic thinking” (p.262). These four teachers are aware of the hegemonic practices that have shaped their school experiences.

The mainstream curriculum is hegemonic in schools in the sense that (a) it marginalizes other ways of organizing knowledge, (b) it is integrated with the structure of power in educational institutions, and (c) it occupies the high cultural ground, defining most people’s common-sense views of what learning ought to be. (Connell, 1993, p.38)

Joseph referred to how he was only taught about First Nations people in Grade Five. Gabriel remembered how he did not feel validated until high school. Maria echoed this in remembering how she was “taught for so many years that nothing good comes out of Indian or Métis people.”

The participants realized that they could not take a neutral stance in their roles as educators. Monique wanted her students to know that they were in a dominant school of learning and what they would need to do to feel good about themselves.

The participants trusted me with stories of their schooling and university experiences. They commented on how these experiences led them to become more just in their own practices. They taught their students critical literacy in an effort to help them question the status quo and work for change. Comber and Nixon (1994) point out “it is

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possible to question systemic sources of inequity that disadvantage indigenous and minority racial groups. But it is not always comfortable, not always safe, and does not inevitably lead to more equitable, democratic classroom" (p.330). These four Métis teachers were not deterred from taking risks in their practices, providing for critical inquiry and empowering student voice. Delpit (1995) refers to groups being “silenced” because they do not participate in “the culture of power” and outlines it as follows:

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.
2. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power."
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have the power.
4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
5. Those with power are frequently less aware of - or least willing to acknowledge - its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (p.24)

The participants’ acknowledged the culture of power and its influences on their personal and school experiences. Each participant referred to
experiences with colleagues or in the greater community that demonstrated to them the deficit of power they held because they were a member of a minority group. They each learned to persist by learning “the rules” to survive in the dominant culture. Delpit (1995) proposes: ...that students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher’s expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own ‘expertness’ as well; and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent. (p.45)

The rules to survive or the codes of power have also been called “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1986).

Students from socially or culturally dominant groups generally begin school with the kind of knowledge that will place them at an advantage to learn in that setting... (Nieto, 1999, p.6)

Students from marginalized groups come to school with a disadvantage. They do not have the same access to certain values and behaviours that their dominant peers do. Access to cultural capital maintains privilege.
Teachers need to teach their students how to critically question privilege, power and worth in society.

**Critical Pedagogy**

The four teachers that I conversed with follow a “critical pedagogy” that encouraged their students to become critical consumers of the information that was presented to them (McLaren, 1998; Giroux, 1992). They employed this pedagogy through storytelling in an effort to teach for social justice. Joseph used current events and news stories to discuss many areas of concern in the classroom. Jarvis (1999) observes:

> Crucial to my pedagogy is an ongoing effort to make conscious and explicit my assumptions and goals in teaching. Calls for teachers to examine their own positioning abound in discussions of feminist poststructural pedagogy. These researchers believe that examining positioning and subjectivity can help lead to an understanding of both how we are constructed and how, individually and collectively, we may oppress, be oppressed, and exercise agency. (p.259)

Gabriel brought his own biases into the lesson to raise consciousness about how history has served the dominant culture. Nieto (1999) reminds us of the biases in the curriculum:

> Because knowledge selected for inclusion in the curriculum as a rule reflects the perspectives, tastes, and world views of powerful
groups in society, the lives and concerns of the groups that are most marginalized are for the most part missing from the curriculum. (p.77)

Joseph confronted the biases in the curriculum through the use of storytelling.

**Storytelling**

The use of storytelling in the classroom moves beyond the teaching of printed stories from past or present writers. Storytelling in the classrooms of the participants was the sharing of personal experiences. It was a method of teaching that allowed the teachers and their students to make connections to the material under discussion and the world outside of the classroom. “The oral tradition can provide teachers with invaluable resources for deepening and extending their curriculum studies in form and content” (Jaffe, 2000, p.171). These participants have realized the fundamental truth that storytelling has provided in their classrooms. Joseph clearly articulated that the use of storytelling with his students allowed him to bring into the classroom things “you couldn’t do out of a book or out of anything else.”

The type of storytelling that these teachers engaged in was recounting their own personal experiences. They acknowledged that their students may have faced similar struggles to those that they had to endure. Jaffe (2000) writes:
Reclaiming these memories are often the first steps for teachers to see and remember the power of told stories in their own lives and experiences. Only then can they begin to discover a rationale for building similar experiences into the formal environment for the school and classroom. (p.165)

Joseph and Gabriel both delighted in sharing stories that their grandfathers told them. It was the combination of oral traditions and personal narratives that these teachers used to create a learning environment that respected the diversity of their students. Jaffe concludes:

When teachers begin to explore their own personal narratives within a structural, value-laden, and multilingual context, their associations take on more purposeful dimensions as they seek to find connections between family stories and their students’ learning and divergent interests and needs. (p.166)

Not only did storytelling allow the teachers to integrate different subject areas into the lives of their students, it also became a powerful form of communication (Jaffe, 2000). Storytelling transmits the values and beliefs of the storyteller to the listener.

Students can experience learning in a way that is lived and dynamic. These teachers provided their students the opportunity to transform their view of the complex world they lived in. Students
learned how to listen to each other and were provided with a glimpse into the lived experiences of others. Gabriel stressed the importance of giving his students the opportunity to hear a Métis perspective. Storytelling also provided them with the opportunity to make sense of their own beliefs and values.

Comber and Nixon (1999):

Children may bring a strong oral traditions; a knowledge of heroes and heroines of popular culture; songs, prayers, and poetry from religious and cultural communities; and the expertise of consumerism. They bring a multiplicity of language and literate practices, some of which are excluded from their school day and some of which are welcomed as “proper” and “appropriate.” (p.321)

They continue to state that “it is the privileging of such literate practices and their associated behaviours and knowledges at school which put children ‘at risk’” (p.321). Storytelling allows the students a means to communicate without being “silenced” or becoming “at-risk” (Comber & Nixon, 1999; Delpit, 1995).

If these teachers hadn’t created a trusting classroom atmosphere for their students then many stories would not have been shared or heard. Storytelling with “passion, commitment, motivation, and intensity” has the storyteller “taking a risk, making (them)self vulnerable, and asserting who (they are)” (Meyer, 1996, pp.119-120).
Storytelling permitted these participants to reflect on their lived experiences and how to make it meaningful, as well as their role in the classroom, and in the lives of their students. The use of storytelling allowed the teachers to honour who they were in the classroom and in turn respect the unique lives of their students.

**Forgotten People: Marginalization**

I have wondered what we need to do to move to a place where knowledge of Métis history and culture is no longer subjugated? What needs to be done in order for Métis people to be no longer forgotten?

I believe this can be accomplished by knowing one’s self, acknowledging where you have come from, recognizing what you value, and questioning what you know and how you came to know it. Reza (2001) believes that “language is powerful and essential in developing one’s voice, in defining one’s cultural identity, and in naming the world for oneself” (p.215). This idea of naming, defining, and developing all stem from a practice of literacy. Giroux (1992) writes that “literacy can offer new ways of reading the past and present as a way of reclaiming power, voice and sense of worth” (p. 245). The process of naming allows people who have been marginalized to rename the world around them (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Friere, 1993). Naming gives the oppressed the opportunity to take back their history through another process of self-defining what those names or categories mean to them. Gabriel recast
history for himself and his students by calling John A. MacDonald a drunk. Noel (1994) describes stages toward emancipation. She writes that in one of these stages:

... the oppressed will decide to give themselves a name, as a conclusive sign of their dealienation. Naming is one way of appropriating a living being or an object. By changing or taking over the name they have been given, the victims display their will to retake possession of themselves. By deciding to call themselves by a name of their own choosing, they take away the dominator's power to define them. (p.198)

Many Aboriginal groups have gone through this process of renaming. The Inuit, Dene and Dakota have renamed themselves. The process of redefining allows marginalized groups to restore balance in themselves.

**Denial: Out of Balance**

Monique and Maria had both experienced episodes in their lives when they did not want to reveal their Métis identity to people who were not part of their community. They wanted to fit in to dominant society. Delpit (1995) suggests that “to be disconnected from that identity means losing not only the ability to explain one’s essence to others but also any potential for self-knowledge as well” (p.77). Denial of who we are prevents true self-knowledge and self-empowerment. Denial takes us out of balance with ourselves, our family, history and environment.
If we think of the balance that exists in nature, all living things have a role to play. In order to perform their role they need have certain things. If a tree is not nurtured then it cannot create oxygen or become a home to animals. The balance has been disrupted.

I believe that this is similar with people denying their identity. They cannot fulfill their role and the balance is lost. Teachers need to know who they are, where they came from and what their role is in order to be in harmony with their students.

Discrimination and oppression prevent many people from affirming their identity in society. Maria ensured that her classroom teaching incorporated anti-oppressive education.

Noel (1994) explains that identity is the first thing that is taken from the oppressed. The oppressed begin to accept the labels that have been given to them by the dominator. People move further from themselves because “every day, the world around them and the discourse that supports it confirm their inadequacy and the negative reflection of their singularity” (p.79). The participants, like many other minority groups, have at some time in their lives denied their identity in an attempt to become less obvious as a member of a minority. Adams (1989) wrote of similar experience in colonization:

I was a fully colonized native at that time, pathetically subservient and silently hostile. I accepted my inferior place as an Indian.
There was no desire or confidence to stand up to this powerful boss, confront him, and struggle for justice. I wanted to do my work, quietly collect my pay, and sneak back home. Although my hostility seethed, I controlled it and submitted to racial indignities. (p. 165)

The oppressor is able to wield power over the oppressed through the use of generalizations and stereotypes. A generalization or stereotype is “a rigid mental category claiming to depict an entire group” (Noel, 1994, p. 109). Stereotypes paint an entire group with one paint brush. The behaviour of one person speaks for the entire group. Noel writes:

...repetition reinforces what seems obvious. Warned that the dominated have a particular character trait resulting from their “difference,” the dominator will not be surprised to observe its frequent manifestations. Having taken note of all those who adopt the behaviour he expects of them, he will feel entitled to conclude, in all impartiality, that the entire group to which they belong do the same thing. (pp. 116-117)

No one wants to belong to a group that is categorized as dirty, lazy, stupid, uncivilized, weak, backward, superstitious, dangerous, or cruel. If negative characteristics are all that an individual knows about the group(s) to which they belong, of course they will try to distance themselves or deny any association with that group.
**Self-Worth: Overcoming Oppression**

The road to overcome oppression is empowerment. Shor (1992) defines “empowering education” as:

...a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society. It approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other. (p.15)

The participants incorporated in their teaching practices the opportunity for change to occur. They taught their students to become participants in the classroom and society. Their participation in collaborative and cooperative learning, storytelling, and role-playing allowed their students to communicate and become reflective of their role in society. Monique used collaborative techniques to make her students take a vested interest in what they were learning. “Teachers who practice interactive and collaborative pedagogies engage their students as active co-investigators who learn to take multiple perspectives on their own prior knowledge and beliefs, on each others’ viewpoints, and on the course content” (Adams, 1997, p.35).

Noel (1994) points out that the “quest for identity” is part of emancipation and “involves both a challenge to the oppressor’s discourse and behaviour and the victim’s rediscovery of self” (p.201).
The oppressed find liberation from oppression "once pride has been affirmed" (p.201). Noel finds that taking pride of who you are and finding self-worth are "a precondition for dignity, for assuming one's identity" (p.204).

The teacher participants did not find pride in their cultural heritage until they were in university. They encountered school experiences in elementary and secondary school that subjugated their knowledge, and rendered them voiceless. Ghosh (1996) states that "the traditional curriculum has the effect of eroding the self-concept of students from other groups. Students are valued or devalued according to their presence and status in the curriculum" (p.57). Joseph recalled being taught that "Métis people tried to revolt and take over the government." He was never presented with any other information about Métis people. When Aboriginal people are relegated as an historical footnote in Canadian society, it is easy to understand why so many Aboriginal youth have difficulty in an institution that does not value their present contributions. Ghosh says that "schools play an important role in constructing a student's self-esteem and self-concept. This is true of all students. An individual's self-concept is based on experiences" (p.57). Because of the school experiences the participants endured they have made it a point to teach for social justice and change.
Teaching For Social Change: Empowering Students

These four teachers encouraged their students to work towards empowerment. "Empowerment can be brought about through decision making, critical thinking, and communication skills, along with a strong identity and positive self-concept" (Ghosh, 1996, pp.58-59).

Each participant employed methods to teach social justice in their classrooms. "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (Bell, 1997, p.3). Social justice in this context was to provide the opportunity for all students to use their voices, whether they chose to or not. Teaching for social justice means to acknowledge the knowledge, experiences, values, and beliefs that the students bring into the classroom.

We believe that we ignore the beliefs and knowledge students bring to our classes at our peril. It is our aim to help them develop credible sources, honest personal reflection, and critical thinking as the basis for a larger and more adequate view of their complex social roles and responsibilities as social agents. (Adams, 1997, p.42)

Critical thinking is the ability to ask questions about the knowledge and ideas presented to us in school, from our communities, and from the media. It is important that students are taught how to question the
dominant discourse in which they have been socialized.

Critical-democratic pedagogy is cultural action against the educational limits of the status quo. The basic process of dialogue - problem-posing - actively questions schooling, society, teacher-talk, and existing knowledge. It democratically invites students to make their education, to examine critically their experience and social conditions, and to consider acting in society from the knowledge they gain. (Shor, 1992, p.188)

Students need to be “desocialized” from the behaviours that they have learned to be acceptable and the assumptions that they have learned to accept (Shor, 1992). Critical education teaches to question what has made us to become who we are. “Critical literacy questions the basic assumptions of our society” (p.212). Maria believed in using an anti-racist framework to teach her students to think critically. She taught about racism in society and guided her students in examining the factors that contribute to racist beliefs. “Critical literacy does explore the social and historical framework. It moves beyond a description of society and into an interrogation of it” (p. 212).

Each participant used dialogue to engage in an analysis of the systems that exist. “As critical educators, we also recognize the role of conversation for understanding, critiquing, and transforming the systems which we help to create and in which we live” (Boozer, Maras &
Brummett, 1999, pp.74-75).

The discussion that occurred in the participants’ classrooms challenged assumptions and allowed the students to see a different place for themselves in society away from the margins by creating a new centre. Giroux (1992) informs us that:

If pedagogy is to be linked with the notion of learning for empowerment, it is important that educators understand theoretically how difference is constructed through various representations and practices that name, legitimate, marginalize, and exclude the cultural capital and voices of subordinated groups in American society. (p.103)

Freire (1993) described a “pedagogy of the oppressed” in which schools control the type of knowledge that is shared and who will have that knowledge. Neito (1999) writes that critical pedagogy “implies praxis, that is, developing the important social action predispositions and attitudes that are the backbone of a democratic society, and learning to use them to help alter patterns of domination and oppression” (p.104). Alternate pedagogies work at providing a model of anti-racist education that connect the student’s real life experiences with school. Comber and Nixon (1999) write:

If children are not allowed to talk about colour, how can an antiracism curriculum function? It may be that the sentiments
teachers fear go underground. We do not wish to suggest that it is easy for teachers to talk with children about race, class, culture, wealth, poverty, injustice, gender, and religion, but failure to talk about such topics in schools which proclaim their democracy results in a romanticised and individualised view of difference.

(p.319)

According to Nieto (1999) critical pedagogy starts where the students are at. “It is based on using students’ present reality as a foundation for further learning rather than doing away with or belittling what they know or who they are” (p.104). When teachers welcome students’ perspectives they will have to face the injustices that their students experience.

**Teaching the ‘other’ teachers**

Teaching for social change also involves educating colleagues. The teachers reported examples of situations where they were viewed as the expert. “Aboriginal and Métis teachers become ‘expert’ only when there is a thematic unit of study which addresses traditional myths and legends, hoop dancing and pow-wow” (Ward, Wason-Ellam & Williamson, 1997).

I have encountered this experience with people, both within and outside the teaching profession, who wanted me to speak for all Aboriginal people. I wish that they would realize that I cannot, nor can any one person speak for the entire group of Aboriginal people because it
is not monolithic. Gordon (2000) writes that “many non-native peoples, however, retain a romantic notion of Native culture, seeing it as both monolithic and tied to spiritual values” (p.49). I do not look like what an Indian is supposed to look like, and if I don’t live a traditional way of life then others have difficulty in accepting me as an Indian. I do not fit their romantic notions of what an Indian is supposed to be.

**Teacher Responsibilities**

The conversations that I had with the participants involved the measures that teachers need to take in classrooms to ensure a learning environment that meets the needs of all students. All students deserve to be in a classroom where they feel safe. Students need to take responsibility for their own learning, and respect one another. Students need to be taught how to function within the “dominant discourse.”

Delpit (1995) specifies that:

"Acquiring the ability to function in a dominant discourse need not mean that one must reject one’s home identity and values, for discourses are not static, but are shaped, however reluctantly, by those who participate within them and by the form of their participation. (p.163)

Delpit also reports that “students’ home discourses are vital to their perceptions of self and sense of community connectedness” (p.163). She adds that teachers need to realize that “the point not be to eliminate
students' home languages, but rather to add other voices and discourses to their repertoires” (p.163). Teachers also need to:

...understand that students who appear to be unable to learn are in many instances choosing to ‘not-learn’, choosing to maintain their sense of identity in the face of what they perceive as a painful choice between allegiance to ‘them’ or ‘us.’ The teacher, however, can reduce this sense of choice by transforming the new discourse so that it contains within it a place for students’ selves. (pp.163-164)

Teaching with the goal of social justice involves having students pose questions about where information has come from, develop social awareness, and create ideas to initiate social change. Comber and Nixon (1999) discuss teachers who:

In making decisions about what to do in their classrooms, they are informed by their commitment to working against injustice, now, by giving students the space to question the way things are and to take action within the spaces of schooling and community. (p.345)

What can we do? Delpit (1995) trusts that the answers “lie not in a proliferation of new reform programs but in some basic understandings of who we are and how we are connected to and disconnected from one another” (p.xv).

She adds “if minority people are to effect the change which will allow
them to truly progress we must insist on ‘skills’ *within the context of*
critical and creative thinking" (p. 19, original italics). Teachers need to
believe in their students. Their practice has a powerful effect on their
students.

Nieto (1999) writes how teachers can make a significant difference
in the lives of their students. Students will learn and find success:

If teachers begin by challenging social inequalities that inevitably
place some students at a disadvantage over others; if they struggle
against institutional policies and practices that are unjust; if they
begin with the strengths and talents of students and their families;
if they undergo a process of personal transformation based on their
own identities and experiences; and finally, if they engage with
colleagues in a collaborative and imaginative encounter to
transform their own practices and their schools to achieve equal
and higher-quality education for all students. (pp.175-176)

Teacher reform and school reform needs to start at a grassroots level. It
cannot be mandated from administrators or the government. When
teachers realize the influence they have to exert change, then
transformation can begin.

**Teacher Influence**

Teachers not only influence their students as role models, they
also influence how students perceive the world. The challenge for
teachers is to realize the personal and emotional levels that they are encountering in their students. Many teachers are not prepared to deal with their students on these levels. Monique reported that some teachers she has worked with do not get to know their students or laugh with them. Comber and Nixon (1999) write that “the everyday moment-by-moment choices teachers and students make, and how they talk about those choices, construct the literate practices of the classroom” (p. 319). They affirm that “literacy is socially constructed” and point out that educators need to question “how gender, race, class, religion, and geographic location make a difference in school literacy teaching and learning” (p.318). They also state that “a review of what can be talked, read, and written about in the classroom, and what is excluded, may be a good place to begin in evaluating literacy curriculum in terms of social justice” (p.319). Joseph used dialogue and storytelling to cover areas that could not be addressed by books.

Delpit (1995) believes that teachers are in “an ideal position” to:

initiate true dialogue....by seeking out those whose perspectives may differ the most, by learning to give their words complete attention, by understanding one’s own power, even if that power stems merely from being in the majority, by being unafraid to raise questions about discrimination and voicelessness with people of color, and to
listen to, to hear what they say. (p.47, original italics)

The thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values that these teachers brought from their cultural identities made the difference in their teacher practice. These participants believed in not just what and how they were teaching, but also in those whom they were teaching. Delpit reaffirms that “the key here is not the kind of instruction but the attitude underlying it” (p.175).

The participants used their own experiences to guide them in creating a classroom that respects diversity. They recognized the importance of integrating all cultures. Monique struggled with ensuring that no group was ever left out of her teaching. Smith (2001) states:

To be adequately prepared to teach all students, teachers must honestly question their personal cultural assumptions and social influences that directly affect their pedagogy and all areas of schooling they impart daily to their students. It is imperative that teachers develop a sensitivity toward their personal implication in the social conditions that create or destroy full democratic participation in schools and that they continually focus on understanding how to make meaning of one’s everyday life. (p.141)

These teachers of Métis heritage regarded their work as teachers of students, not of specific content areas. They provided examples of oppression for their students to question. They modelled patience and
understanding when dealing with the feelings of others. They paid attention to what their students were saying. They were not afraid to share their own struggles, or make mistakes. I see their practices as expanding the learning opportunities for all of their students. These teachers saw the worth of their students. They made their classroom places of promise and social justice.

In this thesis I answered many questions about Métis teachers practice. While those questions were satisfied other questions continually emerge. Further research will always be required as there will always be questions about teachers’ personal and professional practice.
Chapter 6 - Conclusions that Linger

What does it take to create a work of art?
How do you know where to start?
Can clay or rock hold what I want to create?
Should I scratch the paper with the fineness of graphite?
What instruments should I make use?
Do I let the paint ooze through my fingers?
If that, then what colours do I need?
Will I keep the colours separate?
or allow them to blend?
Will others see the purpose I intended?
Do I let them make their own choices
about the project?
Or do I press my view on them?
Have I created art or just a vivid communication?

Informing my practice: Teaching for Social Justice

Many times I have sat at my desk after school looking at the students desks. I sit back and ponder the day. What did I do today? I look at my planner and see it filled in with notes, arrows, lines and scribbles. What once started as an organized plan for instruction is now a mess of colours highlighting the main points of my day. Sometimes I even looked at my planner to realize that I didn't teach what I had planned. But sitting back in my chair, I realized that ....Yes, I did. I
taught my students. I planned to teach a certain concept, but they usually end up teaching.

If someone were to ask me how I teach, I am not sure I would be able to answer. I have found the answer is not simple. I know that I do it. In fact, I spend hours each day doing it, hours planning what to do, and hours correcting what has been done. But how do I teach? I have realized in my research that I teach with passion. I make myself vulnerable everyday to my students. I didn't know that I was doing this at first, but a reoccurring dream (or what some may define as a nightmare) helped me to see that each day I exposed my weaknesses to the students.

The dream, which I am sure many others have had before, is that I am in front of my class completely naked. But instead of feeling ashamed or naked, I feel fine. In fact, my students do not respond any differently. I know that I am naked, but the lesson carries on. The nakedness, I have been told, symbolizes that I make myself vulnerable. I believe this to be true. I put myself in a place where I am at the mercy of my students. I share with them my dreams, ideas and hopes. They do not respond with ridicule or judgement. Well, except for the time one student told me I shouldn't dance in front of people. But even that comment brought laughter, not pain. No, instead I get students who are just as willing to share with me, as I am with them.
The Golden Rule

When I was in elementary school, I loved it. I couldn't wait to go to school everyday. I love learning. Not all my memories of school are pleasant. I had a teacher who dropped his teacher-edition text on my head whenever I turned around to talk. Another teacher made me kneel at the board for talking in class. I had to wear gum on my nose for chewing it during class. I even experienced a teacher telling me that I would never be good at math. A prophecy that plagued me until high school.

The most hurtful experience was being told by my teachers that I did not know what it was like to be an Indian. My knowledge was not acknowledged. I had no authority of experience. It was settled, when I became a teacher I wanted to give students the opportunity to share as an authority of their experience. Wendell (1989) writes about the authority of experience in relation to being "the other:"

We are dis-abled. We live with particular social and physical struggles that are partly consequences of the conditions of our bodies and partly consequences of the structures and expectations of our societies, but they are struggles which only people with bodies like ours experience. (p. 117)

Connell (1993) suggest that "in general the position of those who carry the burdens of social inequality is a better starting-point for

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understanding the totality of the social world than is the position of those who enjoy its advantages” (p.39). I believe that my schooling has led me to a place where I could teach from my experiences.

I attended SUNTEP in Saskatoon. It was a wonderful opportunity to be in an environment where, for the first time, I did have knowledge that was valued. I was respected for who I was and what I had to offer. I couldn’t wait to be in the classroom and become an agent of change. The school systems wouldn’t know what hit them.

I started teaching with so many ideals. I had decided how my classroom would look and how it would function. I wanted students to thrive as independent learners as I facilitated them on their journey. It was a huge shock to find out how the school system did not support the learning of many students. I was given textbooks to use, and some students were assigned learning assistance. I followed the curricular objectives in planning units and lessons. Yet, with these programs in place, nothing seemed to change. The students did not flourish as I thought they would. How the students were taught only required them to use low level thinking skills. They were not required to think critically. I created what Giroux (cited in McLaren, 1998) called the “company store.” In this view, schools are defined as “service institutions charged with the task of providing students with the requisite technical expertise to enable them to find a place within the
corporate hierarchy" (p.6). Students who did well had the cultural
capital to succeed. Nieto (1999) emphasizes that “students from socially
or culturally dominant groups generally begin school with the kind of
knowledge that will place them at an advantage to learn in that setting”
(p.6).

**Critical Pedagogy**

The language that is used in schools communicates what has
authority and value. The content, the words used to teach that content,
and the methods employed are value-laden. They sustain the social
context where schooling takes place. “Critical theorists challenge the
often uncontested relationship between school and society, unmasking
mainstream pedagogy’s claim that it purveys equal opportunity and
provides access to egalitarian democracy and critical thinking” (p.167).
Teachers need to be more aware of the lives that their students live and
how they learn. I realized, as McLaren had, “the fact that my students
needed to be taught on their own terms first, and then taught to
critically transcend those terms in the interest of empowering
themselves and others” (p.155).

Bell (1997) writes that “practice is always shaped by theory,
whether formal or informal, tacit or expressed” (p.4). She also tells us
that “theory enables us to think clearly about our intentions and the
means we use to actualize them in the classroom. It provides a
framework for making choices about what we do and how, and for
distinguishing among different approaches" (p.4). I began to look at my
teaching practice and tried to determine what it was that I did to ensure
that my students were learning. Bell, Washington, Weinstein and Love
(1997) agree that:

In most traditional classrooms, our particular social and cultural
identities as teachers usually remain in the background, but in a
social justice classroom where social identity is central to the
content, the significance of who we are often takes center stage.
(p. 300)

Once I created a student-centred classroom, I discovered that my
cultural background had become a large part of my teaching practice.
In my writing, I have emphasized that identity, like culture, is dynamic
and constantly subject to change. Culture affects the way you interact
with students. It determines how you present knowledge and which
knowledge you choose to present. I used storytelling, role-playing,
cooperative and collaborative learning, and simulations. In addition to
the knowledge I acquired in my formal schooling, I began to include the
knowledge I was taught from my family and community, the way we talk
and share, and the values and beliefs of my cultural community. I
structured learning activities so students could engage in guided
discovery and reflect upon the experience. It was important to provide
the opportunity for the students to make connections between these experiences and their previous knowledge.

Bringing my cultural identity into the classroom was more than just sharing an autobiography. It was sharing a way of life and way of thinking. Like Joseph and Gabriel, my culture determined to a large extent what content areas I brought to the forefront. I needed to meet the needs of my students, and the best method I found was through my culture. I wanted my students to see that what they brought into the classroom had value and was important. I found it essential to connect with my students. Their learning became dependent on our relationship. Culture affects the kind of connection you make with students.

As teachers we can offer our experience with both dominant and targeted identities as a way to join with students, expand the boundaries in the room for discussing these subjects, and model being open to exploring our own relative positions of power and privilege in relation to different oppression issues. (Bell, Washington, Weinstein & Love, 1997, p.300)

I also had to be aware that my cultural identity influenced my teaching practice in the biases and assumptions that I brought into the classroom. Culture affects how you perceive events, think about ideas and what assumptions you make. Culture affects how you will respond
to a particular situation.

Being a Métis teacher is not about teaching Métis culture or history. It is about sharing another perspective, a Métis perspective. The difficulty surrounding the teaching of Métis culture or history is the diversity that exists with those who define themselves as Métis. For example, the Métis community of Île la Crosse has a stronger Cree influence than the Métis community near St. Laurent, with its strong French influence. Yet, both groups identify as Métis even though their experiences and lifestyles are different. This creates a conflict for the teacher when teaching in an urban setting or teaching Métis students raised in an urban context. What Métis history or culture would you teach about? Would you be creating a false sense of identity for some Métis students by teaching a narrowly defined history?

Another aspect of the Métis experience in Saskatchewan is through the colour of skin. Métis with a darker skin colour are perceived as First Nation versus the less racialized experience of having lighter skin.

As I strive to see the connection between my identity and teacher practice, I understand that I need to look at what is at the heart and soul of my teaching. My heart and soul define the kind of teacher I am. I am a child-centred teacher because I believe in the value of the individual and the value of collaboration and cooperation. Monique and
I share a common approach in using a collaborative pedagogy. Adams (1997) informs us that “teachers who practice interactive and collaborative pedagogies engage their students as active co-investigators who learn to take multiple perspectives on their own prior knowledge and beliefs, on each others’ viewpoints, and on the course content (see Maher, 1985)” (p. 35). The joy of working with students is actually working with them.

**Philosophy in Teaching**

My philosophy in teaching determines the type of teacher I am. I have to continually examine my teaching practice. It is important to my growth as a teacher that I constantly reflect on my teaching to see how it might be changed. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) inform us that “through reflection it is possible to reconstruct, to rebuild a narrative that ‘remakes’ the taken-for-granted, habitual ways we all have of responding to our curriculum situations” (p.81). Similarly, Bell (1997) points out that “theory also provides a framework for questioning and challenging our practices and creating new approaches as we encounter inevitable problems of cooptation (sic), resistance, insufficient knowledge, and changing social conditions” (p.4). Reflection allows me to form a practice that challenges inequalities. I can teach for social justice when I am better informed about myself and about the students I teach.
I completed this research only to begin a more difficult journey. This next journey involves taking that knowledge that I have gained and using it to guide my practice in the future. “Theory has the potential to help us stay conscious of our position as historical subjects, able to learn from the past as we try to meet current conditions in more effective and imaginative ways” (p.4). Giroux (1992) informs us that teaching “is very hard work.” I believe that good teachers already realize this.

That is why teachers need to be intellectuals, to realize that teaching is a form of mediation between different persons and different groups of persons and we can’t be good mediators unless we are aware of what the referents of the mediation we engage in are. Teaching is complex, much more complex than mastering a body of knowledge and implementing curriculums. (p.17)

The hardest part of teaching has been negotiating the relationships with my students in the classroom. As I have come to know myself, I have realized how hard it is to uncover how my students are thinking and feeling. I use my personal experiences to bridge that disruption. Nieto (1999) finds the metaphor of a bridge “appropriate for teachers who want to be effective with students of diverse backgrounds” (p.115). She uses the metaphor because:

A bridge provides access to a different shore without closing off
the possibility of returning home; a bridge is built on solid ground but soars toward the heavens; a bridge connects two places that might otherwise never be able to meet. The best thing about bridges is that they do not have to be burned once they are used; on the contrary, they become more valuable with use because they help visitors from both sides become adjusted to different contexts. (p.115)

I believe that I have become that bridge for my students. I had to build a bridge for myself to find success in schools. I used this bridge to take with me the knowledge that I received from my culture into the dominant society. As well, the bridge allows me to teach minority students “the cultural capital that they will need to help them negotiate society” (p.142).

As a Métis teacher, what have I named for myself? I have struggled over how to describe what makes me Métis. The answer of “how I was raised” does not seem to suffice. What are the particular characteristics that I share with other Métis people? The boundaries that separate the Métis and other cultural groups become very blurred in our western Canadian culture.

In my research I have come across many characteristics and descriptions of Métis. The Métis are a people with an enormous spirit. In the face of oppression and dispossession we have not abandoned our
culture. We are resilient, adaptive and hard working. Métis people have always found a way to survive, whether through agriculture, gathering, hunting or providing labour in seasonal employment (St. Onge, 2003). The cultural markers of diet, dress and dance are commonly celebrated in many ethnic groups. Many Métis share bullets and bangs (a meatball soup), fiddle music, jigging, Métis sash and a style of beadwork.

Métis people have always had a choice. We are able to choose who we are and what we do. We have never had to accept anyone's definition of us. We are not narrowly defined by the Indian Act, and therefore have been able to control our lives. We have controlled our education. Métis people need to take our power and make a choice of how we want to continue and realize our self-determination.

I have researched the teacher practice of four Métis teachers. These teachers integrate their culture into the curricular lives of their cross-cultural students. Not only do these teachers’ narratives critically question the status quo, they also provide an alternative story about teaching through the eyes of Métis teachers. The challenge of teaching for social justice in a system established by dominant society continues to be difficult. The goal of creating future citizens who will be able to right the injustices and create a higher standard of schooling fosters our resolve.
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APPENDIX "A"

Informed Consent
APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Teacher Practice of Métis Educators." Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

**Researcher:** Melanie MacLean, Department of Curriculum Studies, Master’s Degree Graduate Student, hm. # (306) 343-9731 or cell# (306) 220-9101 or email: melaniemaclean13@hotmail.com

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to examine the practice of Métis teachers to determine how or if they integrated their cultural self into their professional lives. The researcher will use literature in the area of teacher practice and cross-cultural education to analyze the data. The data will consist of field notes and transcripts from audio taped conversations between you, the participant, and myself, the researcher. You will be interviewed from one to two hours and the interview will be audio taped. You may discontinue the interview at anytime during the process if you so choose.

**Right to Withdraw:** You may decide to not answer any question if you so wish, or you may turn off the tape recorder at any time you so desire. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort and without loss of relevant entitlements, without affecting academic or employment status, without losing access to services at the University of Saskatchewan. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will not be used and will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** The findings of this research will be used for the purpose of the researcher’s Master’s thesis however, your identity and what you share will be kept confidential. Although, I will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (name of school, name of school division and name of city) will be removed from my report. Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms for the real names of the participants, school or other identifying information on the tapes, transcripts, analysis and any other written summaries which result from this study other than consent forms. All identifying information will be removed from any written summaries.

**Potential Risks:** Since we belong to a group of specialized teachers, there is a risk of identifying information from other members of our group. The tape will be transcribed and analyzed. To avoid the participant’s words from being misrepresented when transcribed, the participant will have an opportunity to read and revise the transcripts. After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. You will be able to receive a copy of the study after the thesis is completed. *You will be asked to sign a form of Consent for Release of Data/Transcripts.*
Potential Benefits: The benefits of this research for the participants will be that they will have the opportunity to have their voice heard as a Metis teacher. This research will also benefit the wider community in providing information regarding Métis Education, an area that has been not included in educational discourse. The publication of this research does not guarantee these benefits, although they are the desire of the researcher.

Storage of Data: The data collected (audio tapes, transcripts, and field notes) will remain in the possession of the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Wason-Ellam in the Department of Curriculum Studies, for a minimum of 5 years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines. They will be stored in a secure location to thwart damage and theft.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on May 1st, 2003. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084) or you can contact Melanie MacLean at home (343-9731) or my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies, 966-7578 (home 653-5844). Participants may find out about the results of the study by contacting the researcher directly.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Signature of Participant)  (Date)

(Signature of Researcher)  (Date)
APPENDIX B:
Consent for Data/Transcript Release
Appendix B: Consent for Data/Transcript Release

I appreciate your participation in the research study “Teacher Practice of Métis Educators”. I am returning the transcripts of your audio taped interviews for your perusal and the release of confidential information. I will adhere to the following guidelines that are designated to protect your anonymity, confidentiality and interests in the study.

1. Would you please read and recheck the transcripts for accuracy of information. You may add or clarify the transcripts to say what you intended to mean or include additional comments that will be your words. You may also delete any information that you may not want to be quoted in the study.

2. The interpretations from this study will be used only in the researcher’s thesis, journal articles or conference presentations. Except for the researcher in the study, you participation has remained confidential. Your name will not be used in the final report or in any scholarly articles or presentations if you do not wish to have it used.

3. In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Guidelines on Behavioural Ethics, the tape recordings and transcripts made during this study will be kept with the researcher’s supervisor, Dr. Wason-Ellam in the Department of Curriculum Studies for five years at the University of Saskatchewan.

4. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If this happens, the tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

5. This research study has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on May 1st, 2003.

I, ________________________________, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Melanie MacLean. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Melanie MacLean to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____________________________  _______________________
(Signature of Participant)       (Date)

_____________________________  _______________________
(Signature of Researcher)        (Date)

* As a research participant in the study, you may contact the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan (966-4053) if you have any questions about the study or you can reach me at home (343-9731) or email: melaniemaclean13@hotmail.com or my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies 966-7578 (home 653-3249)
APPENDIX C:
Research Interview Questions
Appendix C: Research Interview Questions

Personal History
1. How would you describe yourself?
2. Why do you define yourself as a Metis person?
3. Describe the community where you grew up.
4. What kind of involvement did you have in your community?
5. What cultural experiences did you have growing up?
6. What different groups (ethnic, class, religious, etc.) existed in your community?
7. How would you describe your interaction with groups different than your background?
8. How do you continue to foster your cultural identity?

School Experiences
1. Describe your school experiences as a student in your community.
2. What were the attitudes of your parents/grandparents toward education?
3. What values did your parents/grandparents have for school?
4. What was your parents/grandparents educational background?
5. What are some significant positive school experiences that you had?
6. What are some significant negative school experiences that you had?
7. Did your school acknowledge your cultural knowledge, beliefs and values?
8. In what way(s) did your school demonstrate or fail to demonstrate educational equity for all students?

Teaching Experiences
1. Why did you choose to become a teacher?
2. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
3. What student experiences did you have that have affected you as a teacher?
4. Do you feel a majority of students have a similar background to yourself?
5. What events were most salient in shaping your beliefs about teaching?
6. What do you see as your strengths as a Metis teacher?
7. What do you see as limitations or challenges as a Metis teacher?
8. Do you feel that your experiences are similar to other minority teachers?
9. Do you think that there are particular beliefs, attitudes or practices you might need to modify to become a more effective teacher?

Relationships
1. What prior or present experiences inside or outside school influence your beliefs about instruction and your social interactions with students?
2. How do you get to know your students (who they are, where they are from, language, etc.)?
3. What methods or strategies do you employ to meet the needs of students who are culturally different from you?
4. How does your autobiography (personal history, culture, gender, class, where you have lived, etc.) influence the values and beliefs you hold for making classroom decisions about curriculum and instruction?
APPENDIX “D”

University of Saskatchewan Ethics Approval
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics.shtml

NAME: Linda Wason-Ellam (Melanie MacLean)   BSC # 03-943
       Curriculum Studies

DATE: April 29, 2004

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the
Application for Ethics Approval for your study "The Teacher Practice of Metis Educators" (BSC
# 03-943).

1. Your study was APPROVED on May 02, 2003.

2. Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment
   procedures should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its
   implementation.

3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.

4. This approval is valid for one year. A status report form must be submitted annually to the
   Chair of the Committee in order to extend approval. This certificate will automatically be
   invalidated if a status report form is not received within one month of the anniversary date.
   Please refer to the website for further instructions
http://www.usask.ca/research/behavrsce.shtml

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Dr. David Hay, Acting Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

DH/ck