

LEARNING FOR MORE JUST RELATIONSHIPS:
NARRATIVES OF
TRANSFORMATION IN WHITE SETTLERS

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By

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, progress towards reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples has been slow, in part because of a lack of emphasis on interpersonal reconciliation—changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of non-Aboriginal Canadians. Physical distance, prejudicial public discourses, and insufficient, ineffective education for the public pose barriers to renewed relationships between settlers and Aboriginal Peoples. Drawing from transformative learning theory and pedagogy for the privileged, this narrative inquiry examines critical events in the lives of eight white settlers living in Mi'kmaw territory in Nova Scotia. The study uncovers factors which have prompted some Euro-Canadians to take up their responsibility for reconciliation and enabled them to stand as allies with the Mi'kmaq.

The transformation process in settler allies was catalyzed by a combination of personal, intrinsic, and extrinsic events. New relationships between settlers and the Mi'kmaq were founded around shared interests or goals, and friendships provided an important foundation for learning. Hearing the personal stories of Mi'kmaw people challenged stereotypes and misinformation about Aboriginal Peoples. Settlers' learning was further supported by immersion in Mi'kmaw communities or contexts, time spent on the land, and mentoring by Mi'kmaw people. Allies reported that the satisfaction they derived from relationships with Mi'kmaw people as well as a desire to do good and see justice done sustained these relationships over the longer term. The study suggests that a lengthy period of awareness raising and confidence building followed by opportunities for informal, experiential learning and face-to-face interactions are key elements in settler decolonization.

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This study is offered with respect to the people of Mi’kma’ki, to the Mi’kmaq and white settler allies working together for peace and friendship, the fulfillment of treaties, and the protection of land and water.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
1. IN SEARCH OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.....	1
1.1 Purpose of the Study	3
1.2 Background to the Study.....	6
1.3 Significance of the Study	10
1.4 Conceptual Framework for the Study	16
1.4.1 Narrative Inquiry as Method	20
1.5 Limitations of the Study.....	21
1.6 Organization of the Study	25
1.7 Definition of Terms.....	29
2. CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY: A PLACE CALLED MI'KMA'KI	36
2.1 Colonial Relationships on Mi'kma'ki.....	37
2.1.1 The Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools, and Centralization	40
2.1.2 Contemporary Exclusions	42
2.1.2.1 Failures of justice.....	44
2.1.2.2 Disregard for the treaties and Aboriginal rights	46
2.1.2.3 Social exclusion and marginalization	47
2.2 A Shift in the Tides.....	50
2.2.1 Recognition of Rights.....	50
2.2.2 Taking Control of the Financial Future.....	51
2.2.3 Alliances for Social Justice	52
3. LITERATURE REVIEW: RECONCILIATION AND SETTLER TRANSFORMATION..	56
3.1 Platforms for Reconciliation	58
3.1.1 Political Reconciliation: Treaty Negotiations	60
3.1.2 Social Reconciliation: Healing and Inclusion.	61
3.1.3 Interpersonal Reconciliation: Renewed Relationships.....	63
3.1.4 Unfulfilled Promises.....	69
3.2 Barriers to Reconciliation	70
3.2.1 Barriers Posed by Distance.....	71
3.2.2 Barriers Created by Discourses	73
3.2.3 Insufficient, Ineffective Public Education.....	78

3.3	Learning for Reconciliation	83
3.3.1	Intercultural Approaches	85
3.3.2	Multicultural Approaches.....	88
3.3.3	Anti-Racism Approaches	93
3.3.4	Challenges in Learning for Reconciliation.....	97
3.4	Summary	101
4.	METHODOLOGY: TRANSFORMING SELF AND SOCIETY.....	103
4.1	Situating Myself: The Researcher’s Context	105
4.2	Research Design.....	111
4.2.1	A Critical, Transformative Research Paradigm	112
4.2.1.1	Ontological assumptions.....	114
4.2.1.2	Epistemological approaches.....	115
4.3	Conceptual Framework: Transformative Learning and Pedagogy for the Privileged ...	117
4.3.1	Origins and Significance of Transformative Learning.....	117
4.3.1.1	Transformative learning concepts.....	119
4.3.1.2	How transformative learning occurs.....	120
4.3.2	Pedagogy for the Privileged: Learning to Become Allies.....	123
4.3.2.1	Ally contributions	124
4.3.2.2	Allies for self-interest	127
4.3.2.3	Allies for altruism.	128
4.3.2.4	Allies for social justice.....	129
4.4	The Research Method: Narrative Inquiry	132
4.4.1	The Uses of Narrative.....	133
4.4.2	Approaches to Data Collection.....	137
4.4.2.1	Participant interviews with settler allies.	138
4.4.2.2	Researcher self-reflexivity.....	140
4.4.2.3	Settler ally stories from the literature.....	140
4.4.3	Data Analysis and Presentation	141
4.4.3.1	Locating critical events.....	141
4.4.3.2	Constructing narratives about critical events.....	143
4.4.3.3	Interrogating the dynamics in settler ally narratives.....	145
4.5	Ethical Considerations: Working With Risky Stories	146
4.5.1	What Kind of Stories?	147
4.5.2	What Will be Done With These Stories?	148
4.5.3	Why Have These Stories Been Documented?.....	149
4.5.4	Making This Study More Trustworthy.....	150
4.6	Summary	151
5.	STORIES SETTLER ALLIES TELL.....	153
5.1	Doug: I Have More of a Smile Because I Like the People.....	156
5.2	Nancy: The Rocks Tell Me What to Do	158
5.3	Anne: The Best Way to Move is Through Friendship.....	164
5.4	Barbara and Wally: Don’t Criticize, Don’t Judge, Participate and Be Yourself	169
5.5	Lauren: My Parents Raised Us to Give Back	175

5.6 Richard: You Can Observe, But There’s a Point That I Have to Be Willing to Go Further.....	184
5.7 Karen: Oh Yes, the World Can Change.....	193
5.8 Irene: It’s About Rebuilding that Humanness, that Healing and the Whole of Social Justice.....	202
5.9 Summary.....	213
6. DATA ANALYSIS: TRANSFORMATION OF SETTLER ALLIES.....	214
6.1 Reflecting on the Data: Settlers Becoming Allies	215
6.1.1 Establishing Connections with Aboriginal Peoples	216
6.1.2 Identifying Changes in Settler Allies	220
6.1.2.1 Changes in behaviour.....	221
6.1.2.2 Changes in knowledge.....	226
6.1.3 Uncovering Reasons for Change.....	235
6.1.3.1 Shortcomings in the process of settler transformation.....	243
6.1.4 Fostering Commitment to Ally Relationships.....	244
6.1.5 Settler Ally Narratives as a Tool for Change	255
6.2 Stages in the Transformation of Settler Allies.....	257
6.3 Summary.....	266
7. REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	268
7.1 Summary of Findings.....	269
7.2 Evaluation of the Study.....	271
7.3 Implications for Theory	273
7.4 Implications for the Practice of Reconciliation	276
7.5 Future Research	279
7.6 Closing.....	281
REFERENCES	282
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION	358
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM	360
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE	363
APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT RELEASE.....	365
APPENDIX E: CRITICAL EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF SETTLER ALLIES	366

LIST OF TABLES

4.1. Relationships among events	142
4.2. Critical events template	145
4.3. Identities and access	148
5.1. Profile of participants	154
6.1. Stages in ally awareness and identity development	258

LIST OF FIGURES

4.1. Process of transformative learning	121
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CHAPTER ONE
IN SEARCH OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

I am the Indian, and the burden lies yet with me

(Joe, 1991, p. 13)

In the autumn of 2012, a grassroots movement called *Idle No More* sparked by four visionary women (three Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal) in Saskatchewan spread rapidly across Canada. Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and their supporters began to speak up and speak out about the myriad of ways that Aboriginal Peoples continue to be marginalized in this country (Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014). Demonstrators were concerned not only with the impacts of two federal omnibus budget bills, Bills C-38 and C-45, that proposed significant changes to the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act; they also wanted to draw attention to poverty in Aboriginal communities and other forms of systemic racism directed towards Aboriginal Peoples. A short time later, in December 2012, Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat First Nation began a fast on Victoria Island near Parliament Hill to attract attention to the long chain of unfulfilled and broken promises that have been made to Aboriginal Peoples (Stechyson, 2012).

Both Chief Spence and the *Idle No More* activities received visible (and vocal) support from non-Aboriginal supporters in Canada, in the United States, and abroad (<https://www.facebook.com/IdleNoMoreCommunity>). Sometimes carrying signs or wearing buttons that announced “I am an ally,” non-Aboriginal well-wishers, friends, and advocates marched side by side in demonstrations, lobbied government representatives, and organized educational events aimed at informing conversations about Aboriginal rights and our colonial past. Perhaps an even

larger number of non-Aboriginal onlookers, though, were disarmingly frank in their lack of sympathy for Chief Spence, the *Idle No More* cause, and Aboriginal Peoples in general. On blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and in letters to the editor, “mainstream” Canadians expressed puzzlement about Aboriginal Peoples’ concerns, and discomfiture with public acts of resistance. In response to a story about an *Idle No More* rail blockade (McCarthy & Bradshaw, 2012), one *Globe and Mail* reader who identified himself as “Paul eh” retorted:

My Great, Great, Great grandparents came to Canada in the 1840's because they were starving in Ireland. Neither I nor any of my family have ever lived anywhere else since then. This "Native Rights" stuff really gets tiresome. We're in the 21st century now and it's long past the time this was put to pasture. (comment 3)

In “an open letter to my non-Aboriginal neighbours,” however, Chief Franklin Shining Turtle (2013) from Whitefish River First Nation in Ontario addressed the “bitterness of angry and poisonous words” (para. 3) being expressed by non-Aboriginal Canadians. Pointing out that Aboriginal Peoples’ concerns are “about 'justice' for you, too,” (para. 4) Chief Shining Turtle invited settler Canadians, the descendants of European colonizers, and all other non-Aboriginal immigrants to Turtle Island to “heal this wound between us” (para. 3) by “joining together in the circle dance of respect for each other and the earth” (para. 11). Another name for this dance is reconciliation.

I related to these events and statements as a white, middle-aged woman of European Canadian background who has had the privilege of living on Mi’kmaw territory for almost two decades. Only recently did I begin to question why I and many other white settlers in Nova Scotia have seemingly been so uninterested in and disengaged from the traditional keepers of this land. Even more importantly, I started to wonder what would propel us into taking up our

responsibilities for reconciliation, what we needed to learn, and how this learning might take place. Drawing from stories told by white settlers who are recognized as allies with the Mi'kmaq, this study explores factors that have enabled these settlers to make shifts in their beliefs about, attitudes and behaviours towards Aboriginal Peoples. These changes are congruent with calls for decolonization in the consciousness of settler Canadians (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; L. Davis, 2010; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Regan, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2012) as a precondition for the success of reconciliation in Canada.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Settler identity can . . . be transformed from that of colonizer to ally. We can learn from peace warriors, whose moral imagination points us to a decolonizing pathway

(Regan, 2010, p. 16).

As the foundation for reconciliation, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) called for *mutual* recognition, *mutual* respect, *mutual* willingness to share the land and other benefits and *joint* responsibility for making needed changes [all emphasis added] (RCAP, 1996b, Vol.1, Pt. 3.16), asserting that “social and structural change will not take place unless Canadians want it to” (RCAP, 1996a, p. 144). In a later Statement of Reconciliation (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 1998) which accompanied the Government of Canada’s RCAP implementation plan, then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Jane Stewart called upon “all levels of government, the private and voluntary sectors, other interested parties and all Canadians” to become partners in the reconciliation process (Renewal section, para. 8). As Chair of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Justice Murray Sinclair asserted that reconciliation is primarily “a Canadian problem” (Sison, 2011) rather than the responsibility of Aboriginal Peoples. The purpose of this study is to inspire non-

Aboriginal Canadians to play a more active part in fostering reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples and to better understand what it takes to disrupt the consciousness of white settlers so that they become willing and able to make changes in themselves and their communities which make reconciliation possible.

Like ‘Paul-eh,’ quoted earlier, many Canadians still appear closed to frank discussions about the roots of the social, cultural, and economic problems facing many Aboriginal communities today. In a keynote address to a 2005 conference on Aboriginal child welfare, former RCAP co-chair Justice René Dussault (2007) was frank about why reconciliation has proven so challenging as well as so slow:

Over the past 25 years, efforts at reform, whether in political relations or social policies have repeatedly failed to effect substantial change, because Aboriginal and government stakeholders have frequently reached an impasse on matters of principle or perception even before practical problems could be addressed . . . you should not underestimate the task of changing people’s hearts and minds. (pp. 9-10)

In Canada, activists, educators, and scholars concur that bringing about shifts in the consciousness of non-Aboriginal Canadians is essential if there is to be any justice for Aboriginal Peoples, any genuine reconciliation and lasting peace (Alfred, 2010; Cannon, 2011, 2012; Dussault, 2007; Epp, 2003; Gerrior, 2013; Green, 2009; Rasmussen, 2005; Regan, 2010; RCAP, 1996a, Vol. 5, Chapter 4; Saul, 2009; Simpson, 2011; A. Smith, 2009; Waziyatawin, 2009). Anishinaabe word warrior Leanne Simpson (2011), for instance, has commented that the treaties signed with Aboriginal Peoples will remain meaningless if contemporary non-Aboriginal signatories fail to learn how to “act in a manner that is consistent with the relationships set out in the treaty negotiation process” (p. 21).

The example set by settler *Idle No More* allies suggests that some settler Canadians are learning to think and act in ways that run against the more common tides of prejudice, discrimination, and racism. According to Bishop (1994), an ally is a “member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege” (p. 126). In Nova Scotia, Mi’kmaq activist, leader, and healer Cathy Gerrior (2013) asks settlers, “What have you personally done for us to undo the harms?” (para. 12). As Mohawk scholar and activist Taiaiake Alfred (2009) has pointed out, reconciliation must be “constituted in reality by putting forward a promise to never again do harm and by *redirecting one’s actions to benefit the one who has been wronged* [emphasis added]” (p. 182).

In this study, I examine the experiences of white Euro-Canadians who have been publicly acknowledged by the Mi’kmaq as allies, as good neighbours, supportive friends or colleagues, effective community advocates, partners working for social justice. I situate myself as an aspiring ally who is learning to take up my responsibilities for reconciliation, but other participants have travelled further down this path. The research explores some of the factors that prompted these settlers to acknowledge complicity in the problem of Aboriginal inequality, to learn more about Aboriginal Peoples and their concerns, and begin to establish solidarity relationships with Aboriginal neighbours, communities, and organizations. The broad question that I used to frame this study therefore was:

What enabled white settler ally participants to make significant changes in their ways of thinking, acting, valuing, and feeling so that they are able to engage with Aboriginal Peoples in less dominating and more just ways?

I was particularly interested in uncovering what it is that catalyzed changes in the consciousness and behaviours of these white settlers. Four sub-questions were used to examine particular moments and stages in the transformation process:

- How did participants come to have an interest in Aboriginal Peoples, cultures, concerns, and rights issues?
- How does each participant describe and explain the changes that have taken place in themselves since they began to engage in relationships with Aboriginal Peoples?
- What sustains participants' commitment to relationships with Aboriginal Peoples?
- How do participants see their narratives as useful for non-formal educational interventions aimed at helping other white settlers participate in more just and equitable community-based partnerships with Aboriginal Peoples?

1.2 Background to the Study

We made this country together. We can re-make it in the spirit,
and the vision of our ancestors. (S. A. Atleo, 2012, p. 5)

In Canada, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples issued its report almost two decades ago, but justice for Aboriginal Peoples remains elusive. Research has shown that quality of life for Aboriginal Peoples still falls well short of Canadian norms (Amnesty International, 2012; Coates, 2003a, 2003b; McMillan, 2011; Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2008; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009). Amnesty International (2012) has been blunt in condemning the Canadian government for failing to fulfill commitments to Aboriginal Peoples:

By every measure, be it respect for treaty and land rights, levels of poverty, average life spans, violence against women and girls, dramatically disproportionate levels of arrest

and incarceration or access to government services such as housing, health care, education, water and child protection, indigenous peoples across Canada continue to face a grave human rights crisis. (p. 9)

On January 11, 2013, a delegation of First Nations' Chiefs took eight key points to a meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and were assured that further consultations would be scheduled soon (Assembly of First Nations, 2013). Almost all of these next steps, however, had been identified at an earlier 2012 Crown-First Nations gathering (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013) which then National Chief Shawn Atleo (2012) had described as a "new beginning" (para. 6). As 2013 drew to a close, the long promised and much hoped for nation-to-nation discussions required for reconciliation had not yet begun.

Earlier in my research, I mentioned reconciliation, but did not situate it as the central theme of the study. At about the mid-point in this research, a friend offered me a copy of *People to People, Nation to Nation* (RCAP, 1996a) that was being removed from the shelves of a local library. As I sat down to read, I suddenly became aware that for Indigenous Peoples around the world, reconciliation holds out hope for "partnership, equity and inclusiveness" (Maaka & Fleras, 2006, p. 345). Reconciliation provides a focal point for improvements in the quality of life enjoyed by Indigenous Peoples and a foundation for more equitable, more just and supportive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups and individuals (Maaka & Andersen, 2006). Internationally, reconciliation has been described as a process for restorative justice that rights past wrongs and reinstates the dignity of injured parties following periods of prolonged, violent conflict, including acts of genocide (Jacques, 2000, p. 43; Maaka & Fleras, 2006, pp. 342-345; Nagy, 2013; Porter, 2007, pp. 123-126; Short, 2005).

Speaking at the annual Vincent Lingiari¹ lecture in Australia, constitutional lawyer and former Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Patrick Dodson² (1999) outlined the necessity of efforts on three levels: in a country's legal frameworks; in the policies and programs that affect Indigenous Peoples' social, cultural, and economic wellbeing; and at the interpersonal level, the level of human encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In Canada, critical race scholar Joyce Green (2009) has identified the same three levels as key to the elimination of racism towards Aboriginal Peoples. Reconciliation, she says, "requires more than simply the goodwill of well-intentioned white people and the superficial recognition of Aboriginal cultural practices;" it demands the "systematic dismantling of colonialism" at interpersonal, societal, and government levels (p. 143).

Internationally, one of the most important lessons learned about interpersonal reconciliation is that its success (or failure) hinges on changes in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals from dominant groups in a society (Allpress, Barlow, Brown & Louis, 2010; Bloomfield, 2006, pp. 28-30; Daly & Sarkin, 2007, Chapter 3; Jacques, 2000; Leigh, 2002; Porter, 2007; Walters, 2008, pp. 166-167). As Dodson (1999) stated:

If there is ignorance, hostility, discrimination or racism experienced, then reconciliation will mean very little, but if there is concern, solidarity, inclusiveness and some respect, then reconciliation will have some positive responses. (p. 7)

¹ Gurindji stockman Vincent Lingiari initiated the longest strike in Australian labour history, a protest that lasted nine years, when he and other stockmen walked off the job demanding better wages and improved working conditions. Underlying these grievances was lack of access to land. In 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam signaled the first legal transfer of land to Australia's Indigenous Peoples by pouring red earth into Lingiari's hand.

² A member of the Yawuru tribe, the Indigenous title holders of northwestern Australia, Dodson continues to play a vital role in pressing for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The RCAP (1996a) agreed that significant “social and structural change will not take place unless Canadians want it to” (p. 144). In this study, therefore, I draw attention to reconciliation at the interpersonal level (Bloomfield, 2006; Daly & Sarkin, 2007, Chapter 2; Dodson, 1999), an aspect of the change process which the RCAP (1996a) realized would be the most challenging of all:

The tasks that we have laid out for renewing the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are huge—but they pale in comparison to the task of changing Canadian hearts and minds so that the majority understand the aspirations of Aboriginal People and accept their historical rights. (p. 144)

A few scholars have asserted that national events like the Prime Minister’s 2008 apology to Aboriginal Peoples for the pain and suffering caused by Indian Residential Schools have been instrumental in instilling a much needed sense of collective guilt in non-Aboriginal Canadians (D. M. Taylor, Caouette, Osborne & King, 2010, pp. 193-196). Other academics are less sanguine, noting that many settlers seem reluctant to even consider the possibility that we have unfulfilled legal—let alone moral—responsibilities towards Aboriginal Peoples (de Costa & Clark, 2011; Hiltz, 2009; Ladner, 2009; Mackey, 2002; Murphy, 2009; Nagy, 2013; Regan, 2010; Turner, 2006; Warry, 2007). More often than not, settler Canadians regard reconciliation as a process that has little, if anything, to do with them (Cannon, 2011, 2012; Chambers, 2009; de Costa & Clark, 2011; Hiltz, 2009; Ladner, 2009, pp. 286-288; Mackey, 2002; Martin, 2009; Mathur, Dewar, & DeGagné, 2011; Murphy, 2009; Nagy, 2013; Regan, 2010; Schick, 2009, 2014; Simpson, 2011, pp. 20-22; St. Denis, 2007).

The RCAP (1996b, Vol. 5) saw education as a key strategy for more just relationships between Aboriginal Peoples and settler Canadians. Even when settlers appear to have amassed a

body of facts about Aboriginal Peoples, this does not necessarily result in any corresponding attitudinal or behavioural change (Day, 2010; Hickey, 2011; Schick, 2000; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2011; Tupper, 2011). When non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Peoples do come together, encounters often are fraught with tensions, misunderstandings, and an imbalance of power (Bell & Kahane, 2004; L. Davis, 2010; Regan, 2010). How, then, can the “settler problem” in Canada be resolved (Alfred, 2010; Cannon, 2011, 2012; Epp, 2003, p. 228; Regan, 2010, pp. 10-12; Stackhouse, 2001)? Even well-resourced attempts at educating non-Aboriginal Canadians have fallen short when it comes to communicating the impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal Peoples, revealing the myths about Aboriginal Peoples, reinstating the treaties as the foundation for Aboriginal/settler relationships, and enabling settlers to acknowledge their position of power and privilege (Carr & Lund, 2007; Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Day, 2010; Donald, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Dua & Lawrence, 2000; Hickey, 2011; M. James, 2008; D. B. MacDonald, 2013; Regan, 2010; Schick & McNinch, 2009; Short, 2005; Tupper, 2011). What is still sorely needed are more effective approaches to settler education, strategies capable of disrupting settler certainty and fostering less dominating interactions with Aboriginal Peoples.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Compromise I say, and meet our requirement,

Place the learning seed of happiness between us.

(Joe, 1978, poem 21)

Adult educators Peter Reason and Judi Marshall (1987) have observed that research studies have three audiences which are not always recognized. When we write, Reason and Marshall say, we write “for me,” giving time and attention to concerns which have pierced our hearts. We also write “for us,” for the people around us, the communities we live and work in.

We also write “for them,” for others who share a stake in the questions we have asked. This study provided me with an invaluable opportunity for beginning to learn more about the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia, the history of this territory, and my place on it. It also opens a window for settler Canadians like me to begin to recognize our role in the reconciliation process. Last, both the stories and analysis contained here support an increasing number of calls for settlers to become allies with Aboriginal Peoples. In the remainder of this section, I describe some of the gaps in our understanding of reconciliation and what this research has to offer when it comes to addressing the settler problem.

In an article that has shaped research with a focus on Aboriginal Peoples for more than fifteen years, Aboriginal Elder, educator, and scholar Eber Hampton (1995) concluded that one of the main purposes of any research study is for the researcher to learn something about themselves and their responsibilities to others (p. 48). It was only after beginning my doctoral course work that I started to realize how little effort I had made to support the interests of First Peoples in Canada, and how little I knew about the Mi’kmaq. As the Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs (2013b) has stated, “Public opinion research clearly indicates that there is a low level of awareness [about the Mi’kmaq] among Nova Scotians” (para. 1). First and foremost, this study provided a spur for my own learning about the Mi’kmaq who are the keepers of the territory on which I live, and about my own privilege as a white Canadian settler living on Mi’kmaw land. In the foreword to a collection of essays about cultural restoration of Indigenous Peoples, Findlay (2000) said that his interactions with Indigenous Peoples, their cultures, worldviews, issues, and concerns have allowed him the privilege of “an education such as I have never had and cannot otherwise acquire” (p. x). I can only echo Findlay’s words. Information about the history of this territory and the contemporary situation of the Mi’kmaq included in this

study provides necessary background for understanding both the current need for reconciliation and the importance of reconciliation at an interpersonal level.

Recognizing the yawning gaps in status and opportunities which separate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia, this study begins with an outline of the ongoing legacy of colonial oppression. A growing number of academic studies are documenting the ways in which racism affects every aspect of Mi'kmaw people's quality of life (Battiste, 2012; Berneshawi, 1997; Coates, 2003a, 2003b; Hanrahan, 2008; N. MacDonald & MacDonald, 2007; I. McKay & Bates, 2010; McMillan, 2011; Prosper, McMillan, Davis, & Moffitt, 2011; Watson et al., 2012; Wildsmith, 1991). Outside academic circles, though, this discrimination appears to be a kind of "cultural secret . . . rarely felt, acknowledged, or spoken of in the dominant public discourse" (Berlak, 2004, p. 132). To many non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians, the Mi'kmaq remain "perfect strangers" (Dion, 2009, pp. 178-181). Through this research, however, I have come to recognize that the Mi'kmaw nation is neither broken nor defeated. Across Mi'kma'ki, remarkable individuals, communities, and organizations are engaged in some of the most inspiring and innovative social, cultural, political, and economic experiments of our time, which every community in the region can learn from. Throughout this study, I provide examples of contemporary Mi'kmaw leadership bringing benefit to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of Nova Scotia alike.

Written for others like me, for non-Aboriginal people who are residents of Nova Scotia, this study outlines the big picture for reconciliation with examples from Mi'kmaw territory in Nova Scotia. In the literature on reconciliation in Canada, there are divergent understandings of what reconciliation entails as well as differing views about who is (or should be) responsible for ensuring that changes take place. As Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission of Canada, Paulette Regan (2010), pointed out, conceptualizations of reconciliation have evolved in different fields of practice which “run on parallel tracks that rarely intersect” (p. 12). Some scholars have emphasized the importance of treaty negotiations and fundamental changes in our thinking about democracy (Alfred, 2009; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Borrows, 2000, 2007; Hartley, Joffe, & Preston, 2010; Ladner, 2009; Turner, 2011; Walters, 2008; Younging, Dewar, & DeGagné, 2009). Others have focused on the need for more inclusive institutions and more effective professional practice (Bolton, 2009; Kanu, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Schick & McNinch, 2009; Timpson, 2009a; Wotherspoon, 2002). Still others have highlighted the necessity of asking for forgiveness, the power of apology, and the need to heal the psychological, cultural, and social wounds caused by Indian Residential Schools (Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Epp, 2013; Nagy, 2013; Regan, 2010; Short, 2005; Stanton, 2011; Younging, Dewar, & DeGagné, 2009; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

In this study I approach reconciliation using a framework proposed by Dodson (1999) that sees reconciliation as a conjoint process of political, social, and interpersonal change. With the exception of the RCAP report (1996b) and, more recently, a groundbreaking work by Regan (2010), these three dimensions are not routinely acknowledged either in the academic literature or in public forums where settlers may go to learn more about reconciliation. In Nova Scotia, for example, the provincial Office of Aboriginal Affairs posts updates about treaty negotiations on its website (<http://novascotia.ca/abor/office/what-we-do/negotiations/>), but says little about other types of efforts towards reconciliation in the province. Looking at the Australian experience, Dodson (1999) has noted that “the quality of our Reconciliation will be dependent upon our capacity to embrace all its aspects however difficult each may seem” (p. 7).

In its report, the RCAP (1996b) agreed but highlighted the importance of interpersonal reconciliation as a foundation for social and political change. Surprisingly little seems to have been written about what interpersonal reconciliation between people from the two nations might look like, or about the varied public education³ initiatives created to promote more accurate understandings about Aboriginal Peoples and foster less dominating ways of relating in settlers. In the literature review (Chapter 3) I describe some efforts towards political, social, and interpersonal reconciliation underway in the province of Nova Scotia today with an emphasis on what has been done to promote learning and change in non-Aboriginal residents. I note, however, that few non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians seem to know much about these diverse learning opportunities.

This study also responds to calls for settler Canadians to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal Peoples in struggles for social justice (Gehl, 2011; Green, 2009; Regan, 2010; Simpson, 2011; A. Smith, 2009; St. Denis, 2007). Speaking to the crowd at an *Idle No More* rally on Parliament Hill, then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo, invited settler Canadians to become allies: "The year 2013, it harkens a moment of reckoning in this country. . . . Canadians, we are counting on you to stand with us and to do this now at this juncture in history" ("National Chief Urges Canadians," 2012, paras. 3, 6). How, though, do settlers transform themselves from being colonizers to being allies? While Memmi (1991) noted that occasionally there is a "colonizer who refuses" (pp. 19-44), someone who rejects colonial hierarchies and violence, he also observed that it was almost impossible for colonizers to cede their power and shuck off unearned privilege.

³ In this study, public education refers to activities, initiatives, programs, and resources intended for adult, non-Aboriginal Canadians in the public as a whole. In the Definition of Terms section I explain in more detail how I use this term.

Learning for purposes of social justice has been an important focal point for adult education in Canada (Fenwick, Nesbit, & Spencer, 2006; Hall, B., 2006; Spencer, 2006). A number of scholars, however, have noted the paucity of academic research which draws attention to situations where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have come together to build peace, carry out joint actions, or exert pressure on the state (L. Davis, 2010; Foley, 1999; Hall & Turay, 2006; Margaret, 2010; A. Smith, 2008, 2009; Wallace, 2009). In this study, I use “pedagogy for the privileged” (Bishop, 1994; Curry-Stevens, 2005a, 2005b; Edwards, 2006; Goodman, 2001) to explore and explain how some settlers have indeed undergone a transformation from colonizer to ally. Pedagogy for the privileged is an emerging form of anti-oppression practice congruent with Kumashiro’s (2000) notion of “Education that Changes Students and Society” (pp. 40-47), and what critical educator Henry Giroux (1988, 1991a, 1991b) refers to as a “border pedagogy” capable of permeating the membranes of culture, consciousness, and privilege. I believe that this study marks the first time that pedagogy for the privileged has used to analyze the process of decolonization in white settlers.

In the literature on reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, the need for imagination is a recurring theme. Canadian essayist John Ralston Saul (2009), for instance, reflected that the stumbling blocks to reconciliation in this country are “only partly about history and geography, they are also about the ideas central to the way in which we all imagine ourselves” (p. 318). L. Davis (2010) similarly pointed to a “failure of imagination in Euro-Canadian society to move beyond its colonial past” (p. 14). Regan (2010) urged settler Canadians to take a “genuine leap of imagination” (p. 227) in order to “re-story” false and faulty colonial discourses (pp. 225-228). In Chapter 4, I argue that the examples of white settler allies and the kinds of narratives presented in this study are sorely needed examples of reconciliation in

action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gold, 2002, pp. 49, 177; Nelson, 2001, pp. 81-82; Saul, 2009, p. 320; Woodward, 2002). As Saul (2009) commented, “people can only discover and live reconciliation if they understand what it would look like and feel like” (p. 320).

1.4 Conceptual Framework for the Study

The truth about stories is that’s all we are.

(T. King, 2003, p. 3)

This study is informed by a sense of urgency and an awareness of possibility. After an historic Crown-First Nations Gathering held January 24, 2012, Mi’kmaw Chiefs Lawrence Paul and Candice Paul commented that if the two nations are to build a future together, “it must happen soon. Not in 500 years, but in five years” (L. Paul & Paul, 2012, para. 14). Reconciliation can no longer be postponed to some indefinite time in the future when it might be more convenient, less costly or demanding on settler sensibilities. These concerns shaped my choice of research paradigm, my interpretive lens, and methodological approach. The framework for this investigation was informed by a transformative research paradigm (Mertens, 2005, 2007, 2009). As mentioned previously, I used pedagogy for the privileged (Bishop, 1994; Curry-Stevens, 2005a, 2005b; Edwards, 2006; Goodman, 2001) as a theoretical lens for looking at how white settlers learned to become allies. The methodological approach I chose was narrative inquiry, a storied approach to data collection and presentation (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Research theorists Norma Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln have pointed out that research that is for or about Indigenous Peoples is inevitably both “political and moral” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2). The current study has been shaped using a transformative research paradigm where the goal is to increase “respect, beneficence and justice” for groups that have been marginalized

or systemically disadvantaged (Mertens, 2007, p. 216). Transformative research is not neutral; its express purpose is to disrupt the status quo and promote benefits for people who have been oppressed. The use of an overtly political research paradigm is congruent with the RCAP's (1996b) social justice, social change agenda. Transformative research assumes that an imbalance of power lies at the root of persistent social problems and seeks to give voice to unacknowledged perspectives and approaches aimed at bringing about social change. As anti-oppression educator Kevin Kumashiro (2000) has noted, there can be "harmfulness of repetition" (p. 42) when successive studies do little more than reiterate the problems that exist rather than offering up fresh ideas for moving forward. There has been no shortage of research documenting the pernicious impacts of racism on Aboriginal Peoples (for instance, Amnesty International, 2012; Auditor General of Canada, 1999-2014; Coates, 2003a, 2003b; McMillan, 2011; Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2008; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009). White settler recalcitrance in the face of education or initiatives aimed at social justice for Aboriginal Peoples has also been widely noted (Cannon, 2011, 2012; Carr & Lund, 2007; Day, 2010; de Costa & Clark, 2011; Donald, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Dua & Lawrence, 2000; Hickey, 2011; M. James, 2008; D. B. MacDonald, 2013; Regan, 2010; Schick & McNinch, 2009; E. W. Taylor, 2009; Tupper, 2011).

Still missing, however, are detailed accounts about what is effective when it comes to promoting shifts in the consciousness and behaviours of white settler Canadians who are agents of oppression. In Chapter 3, I sketch some reasons why many white Nova Scotians have not yet become active participants in reconciliation. However, I am primarily interested in what the experiences of settler Canadians perceived as having been successful in renewing relationships with Aboriginal Peoples can tell us about the process of interpersonal reconciliation. Congruent

with Mertens' (2009) definition of transformative descriptive research, I see Eurocentric power and knowledge as having been socially constructed, and seek to lay out some of the factors which have been effective in sparking decolonization in settler Canadians. Part of this investigation includes a self-reflexive examination of my own story and positioning in relation to Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples.

Aboriginal educators Verna St. Denis (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007, 2011) and Marie Battiste (2004a, 2004b) have looked to antiracism education as a vehicle for transformation of settler society. While critical anti-racism approaches have had some success in highlighting discrimination, such approaches have not automatically led to recognition of white settler privilege and the role non-Aboriginal Canadians play in the reproduction of oppression (Dua, 2008; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005; Rutherford, 2010; Schick, 2009; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Looking for a way beyond this pedagogical impasse, Cannon (2011) asked:

What sorts of transformative and/or equity-minded frameworks will bring about changes in the structural and interpersonal advantages that accrue to settlers as a result of colonialism and in some cases, the fact of hegemonic whiteness? What sorts of equity-minded and transformative frameworks can people participate in as settlers? (para. 5)

Grounded in critical social theory, transformative learning theorists assert that “individual and social transformation are inherently linked” (E. W. Taylor, 2009, p. 5). Two scholars with an interest in reconciliation have pointed to a need for learning that is transformative (Czyzewski, 2011; Regan, 2010). Regan (2010), for example, observed that it is “transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world” (p. 23). Neither Regan nor

Czyzewski, however, has “unpacked” her assertions with reference to concepts and principles drawn from transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2006).

One emerging strand in the literature on transformative learning examines why and how people from dominant groups experience significant changes in their beliefs, attitudes and values so that they can stand as allies with people who have been marginalized. In this study, I use “pedagogy for the privileged” (Bishop, 1994; Curry-Stevens, 2005a, 2005b; Edwards, 2006; Goodman, 2001) as a conceptual model. Pedagogy for the privileged is a relatively new example of the “equity-minded” approaches educators like Cannon (2011) have been seeking. Pedagogy for the privileged encourages self-reflexivity and recognition that “white” is also an identity. Even more importantly, people from dominant groups are urged to actively take responsibility for their privilege and power and support others in bringing an end to discrimination and inequality. Pedagogy for the privileged has been applied as an approach for helping affluent white high school students (Nurenberg, 2011), white university students (Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Edwards, 2006), and grassroots community educators (Bishop, 1994; Curry-Stevens, 2007; Goodman, 2001) establish more just relationships across differences in race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Family background, low-risk opportunities for interaction with people from diverse backgrounds, exposure to anti-oppression theory and concepts, and participation in social justice alliances enable people from dominant groups to become more aware of the problem of oppression as well as their own positioning. In explaining why ideological, psychological, emotional, and behavioural change occurs, pedagogy for the privileged looks to critical educational frameworks, in particular transformative learning theory (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2000, 2006, 2009; E. W. Taylor, 2008, 2009).

1.4.1 Narrative Inquiry as Method

Education for social change demands holistic research that enables researchers, readers, and other learners to link the parts to the whole, the local and particular to the global (Dei, 1996, p. 30; Deshler & Selener, 1991). This study is a narrative inquiry which documents and analyzes real-life accounts of experiences shared by white settlers who stand as allies with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. Narratives are representations of experience which lay out the links among actions, causes, plans, and goals (Chase, 2005; Cortazzi, 1993, pp. 63-64; Riessman, 2008, Chapter 1). Narratives are thus important sources of information about the contours and nuances of experiences as seen from the inside. Although narrative inquiry has been more commonly associated with constructivist (rather than critical) research paradigms, theorists Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) assert that it is important for social justice researchers to “actively construct our research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies” (p. 317). The past decade has seen a significant reevaluation of the role of personal stories within human sciences as a container for knowledge, as a method for finding out, and as a way of knowing (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Moon, 2010; Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry has come to be widely used across a range of disciplines in the human sciences including women’s studies, psychology, sociology, and education (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). In and of themselves, narratives can be catalysts for change as they elicit imagination about other ways of framing and engaging with the world. Dei (1996), for example, has acknowledged that narratives have the power to “engage the different and multiple ways of knowing” (p. 30).

In qualitative research studies, purposeful sampling where researchers seek out cases and examples that shed light on particular phenomena is a common approach to data collection (Creswell, 2007, pp. 125-128; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this research, I identified settler allies who are perceived as “exemplary cases” (Yin, 2009). Looking at post-conflict recovery and reconciliation in a range of countries, Daly and Sarkin (2007) note that ally behaviour by members of dominant groups is still the exception rather than the rule, “far rarer than its opposite—distrust, mistrust or aggression” (p. 69). Individuals who participated in the present study have acquired knowledge and developed skills which allow them to participate in ally relationships with the Mi’kmaq. Participants in this study were perceived as having demonstrated “strong moral self-definition” (Nelson, 2001, pp. 15-18), consciously seeking out opportunities and courses of action where they could help promote social justice for Aboriginal Peoples. In order to better understand the experiences of these allies, I asked them to recount stories about “critical events” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 71-88), the high points, low points, and turning points in their learning about and relationships with the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. I adopted a widely used structural approach to data analysis which extracts key components in order to construct a complete narrative (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1997).

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to
move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained
to these stories as long as I live. (T. King, 2003, p. 9)

All research is limited by a lack of time, resources, ingenuity, and human energy. As this research progressed, I became aware of three significant limitations. First, the study focuses on only one form or level of reconciliation (albeit one recognized by some authors as fundamental).

Second, the sample of participant voices in this study is not as fully representative of settler Nova Scotians as it might be. Last, I am acutely aware that lack of knowledge and self-awareness on the part of settler allies I interviewed, and on my part as a researcher, means that some bias and error have inevitably become woven into this text.

In an essay prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Saul (2009) asserted that the desire of non-Aboriginal Canadians to live differently with Aboriginal Peoples was the key to lasting change (p. 311). While justice for Aboriginal Peoples certainly requires willingness and cooperation on the part of individual settler Canadians, interpersonal change must necessarily be accompanied by political and social reforms (Alfred, 2006; Dodson, 1999; Green, 2009; Hartley et al., 2010; Ladner, 2009; Maaka & Fleras, 2006; Turner, 2006). A more complete discussion of these aspects of reconciliation, however, was seen as being outside the scope of this thesis.

Participants in this study should not be regarded as representative of all non-Aboriginal Canadians, or even all non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians. In this inquiry, allies I spoke with were people much like me, mature adults from European-Canadian backgrounds, working in professional occupations. We are visibly people of privilege, who enjoy a measure of material wellbeing and the advantages that accompany the accident of white skin. As individuals, we are neither marginalized nor have we found ourselves in positions of opposition or struggle with our Aboriginal neighbours over access to land or other resources. Although not a criterion for participation, I later realized that participants were also largely “come-from-aways,” people born elsewhere in Canada who have relocated to Nova Scotia for personal reasons or for purposes of employment.

These stories, then, may not ring true outside Mi’kma’ki or with non-white and immigrant Canadians who must come to terms with their own role in the perpetuation of

colonialism, based in part on their own experiences as racialized Canadians and visible minorities (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Dua, 2008; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Mackey, 2002; Mathur et al., 2011; Sehdev, 2010). Readers should consequently be cautious about overgeneralization (W. Jackson, 1999), about assuming that any lessons learned in Mi'kma'ki are replicable in other Aboriginal territories in Canada or with other groups of settlers. The contexts for Aboriginal relations are distinct in different Aboriginal territories and with different groups of Aboriginal Peoples.

Another constraint that may not be immediately evident is that this study has a gender bias. In the popular literature, it seems that more male than female settler allies have published autobiographical accounts of relationship building with Aboriginal Peoples. In contrast, female voices—including my own voice as a researcher and study participant—are predominant in this study. In identifying settler allies to interview, I compiled a significantly longer list of white female than male Nova Scotian allies. The participant sample was neither sufficiently large nor representative enough to determine if triggers for transformation in settler Canadians are gender specific, or if female and male settler allies experience interpersonal reconciliation differently.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of this study is the historical domination of colonial voices in the discourse about Aboriginal Peoples. As I will show in the literature review, false, faulty, and distorted Euro-Canadian discourses have been, and still are, a major roadblock to reconciliation and the restoration of more just relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. The value of settler Canadians' insights about what is needed for us to change, therefore, may seem questionable at best. A significant limitation to this study is that narratives from settler allies are not balanced with input from Aboriginal people they interact with. While this would have

enriched the final product, my graduate committee believed that including Aboriginal participants in the study would pose additional methodological complexity as well as risk.

As I will argue in the chapter on methodology, even if the testimony of these allies and my interpretations are not absolutely factual in every detail, I believe that these narratives have “truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296) and are a source of trustworthy insights into interpersonal reconciliation as the process takes place in Euro-Canadians. Across Turtle Island, there are an increasing number of similar accounts by and about exemplary non-Aboriginal allies which have received the approbation of Aboriginal Peoples. In this study, participating allies were selected because their example shows that the bar for attitudinal and behavioural change in Canadian settler society is higher than might otherwise have been thought. I analyze critical events in the lives of settler allies using a series of questions proposed by teacher educator Angelides (2001, p. 436). These questions helped me assess the extent to which narratives shared here were indeed supportive of reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples, or if these accounts were little more than self-serving rationalizations of the status quo.

To further demonstrate the truth value of these narratives and make them as accessible as possible (within ethical guidelines), I have included relevant details of time, place, and events so that readers can judge these stories for themselves. I also provide examples of “like” and “other” events (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 78-82). Where there were gaps in the data, contradictions, or loose ends, I have allowed these to remain, in part because it is precisely these inconsistencies that may provoke even deeper reflection.

Given that I consider these settlers to be positive role models, I have tried to remain mindful of “good cause syndrome” (W. Jackson, 1999), the tendency to seek out evidence which supports my belief that settlers can “change their spots,” while discounting the all too real

difficulties and challenges involved in shifting asymmetrical power relationships and working across cultural differences. The study also includes narratives about mistakes that I and other settlers have made over the course of our learning journeys.

One of the primary purposes of narrative studies is to create a space that invites readers to reflect (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008, pp. 7-10). While my decision to focus on critical events (Webster & Mertova, 2007) in allies' lives yielded some insights into the change process, it was less easy to make evidence-based comparisons about other elements which may have been instrumental in shaping participants' openness to relationships with Aboriginal Peoples—for example, family background, educational opportunities, and previous occupations. In retrospect, a life histories approach (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995) which documents life events chronologically might have revealed other important, shared experiences.

Finally, as a post-script, despite the recommendation that researchers limit the use of non-peer reviewed materials, websites were a significant source of emerging evidence. Most of these websites represent Aboriginal organizations or government sources.

1.6 Organization of the Study

Stories do not simply contain knowledge, they are themselves
the knowledge we want to possess. (P. W. Jackson, 1995, p. 5)

Over a decade ago, well before widespread broadband access, journalist and broadcaster Robert Fulford (1999) predicted that storytelling would become the single most important defining characteristic of twentieth century mass culture. In contemporary times, films like *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006) may have been more effective than any academic program or textbook in catapulting a new generation into action around climate change. As Professor of Literature Joseph Gold (2002) observes, stories are the “most effective and the

oldest form of teaching” (p. 15). We are tellers of stories and, in turn, the stories we tell make us. Within the parameters of academic guidelines, I have attempted to use a storytelling approach in presenting this inquiry. Indeed, “the principal attraction of narrative as method is its capacity to render life experiences, both personal and social, in relevant and meaningful ways” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10).

The study, as a whole and in individual chapters, is intended to reflect the elements of a structurally “complete narrative” (Labov & Waletzky, 1997; Riessman, 2008, pp. 91-92). In each chapter, I open with a quotation that suggests the key message. This is followed by a narrative which orients readers to time, place, situation, and issues: what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as the “concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry” (p. 51). Next, there is a more extended presentation of the “complicating action,” followed by analysis and evaluation of its significance. Last, I provide some resolution to the story along with a final coda which serves as a bridge to other events or to future action. Throughout the thesis, I return to the story of the people of Mi’kma’ki past, present, and future, as the ground which nurtures the testimony of settler allies.

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the research purpose—transformation in settler Canadians—and the research problem, the difficulty of fostering interpersonal reconciliation through change at the level of the individual. I sketched the significance of this study for renewed relationships between people from the two nations before moving on to outline my conceptual frameworks: a transformative research paradigm, pedagogy for privileged as an interpretative lens, and narrative inquiry as research methodology.

In Chapter 2, I lay out some details about the place where this study takes place in order to help readers understand the historical context for reconciliation with the Mi’kmaq, the

traditional keepers of this territory. Among the signs of hope to be found on Mi'kma'ki are emerging alliances which include both Aboriginal and settler Nova Scotians.

To date, there have been diverse efforts towards reconciliation at different levels and locations in Canadian society. In the literature review in Chapter 3, I describe three key approaches to reconciliation, highlighting initiatives in the province of Nova Scotia. Physical distance and separation, problematic public discourses, and insufficient, ineffective public education are barriers to more equitable interactions. A number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators have said that what is most needed now is an “identity change” in settler Canada. I end this chapter by identifying some of the principles and practices of pedagogy for the privileged and transformative learning that I will use to analyze changes white settler allies have experienced.

In Chapter 4, I present myself as a researcher in more detail, describing who I am and some of the perspectives and biases I bring to this study. Next, I discuss the frameworks that I used to design this study, why I believe a transformative research paradigm and narrative inquiry are appropriate methodological tools for investigating settler learning.

In Chapter 5, I introduce white ally storytellers from Mi'kmaw territory who participated in this study. In this section, I present critical incidents extracted from interviews with these allies. The first set of stories show what it means to be an ally, the kinds of interactions allies have with Aboriginal neighbours, partners, and colleagues, and what settlers do that demonstrates support and solidarity. Then, I take a step back to look at who has helped them along the way, why and how they have reached this point. Allies, however, recognize that they have learned much from encounters that ended in disappointment or incomprehension, or when they “failed.” Next, I present some of the pitfalls allies have encountered during their learning

journeys. I and other settler allies look forward to the future, with aspirations and hopes for the relationships we have with Aboriginal Peoples, and for the ongoing process of nation-to-nation reconciliation. Throughout the chapter, I look to published narratives by two recognized settler allies, Rupert Ross (1992) and Paulette Regan (2010) for additional data which confirms or expands on the accounts of allies in Nova Scotia.

In Chapter 6, I step back from the narrators' stories to address my original research questions. I am particularly interested in what these stories tell us about pedagogy for the privileged. In this chapter, I draw insights from authors with an interest in decolonizing non-Aboriginal Canada (M. R. Atleo, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; M. R. Atleo & Fitznor, 2009; Bartlett, 2009; Graveline, 1998; M. J. Hampton & Hampton, 2010; Hatcher, Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2009; Moore, Tulk, & Mitchell, 2005; Tanaka et al., 2007) who have proposed approaches that resonate with pedagogy for the privileged. I pull these diverse strands together and propose some principles for pedagogy for the privileged, with an eye to decolonization and fostering ally relationships with Aboriginal Peoples.

In the Conclusions, I highlight some events that have been taking place in Mi'kmaw territory in the advent of *Idle No More*. My hope is that these kinds of alliances may—one day—become a defining characteristic of what it means to be “Canadian,” part of a truly diverse nation where its people travel side by side. I then evaluate the extent to which this study has achieved the goals outlined earlier in this chapter and consider some of the implications of the study for the literature and for interpersonal reconciliation. Aboriginal narratives, face-to-face interactions, and experiential learning are often overlooked keys to the success of interpersonal reconciliation. Future avenues for public education include cultural tourism and other forms of place-based (or land-based) activities.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Untranslatability is an ancient value.

(Chamberlin, 2003, p. 14)

In the quotation above, Professor of English and storyteller Edward Chamberlin (2003) summed up an early encounter with cross-cultural difference that illustrates the difficulties we face as we attempt to move outside and across cultural borders. At the crux is a problem with words, what they are intended to mean and what they actually mean to us. Words can heal or they can wound. Words can rouse us to action or lull us to sleep. In writing this dissertation, I have attempted to use the appropriate words, but I am also acutely aware that in some cases there may be no perfect choice of language which speaks in the same way to everyone. In particular, words like “Aboriginal” and “settler” are highly charged and have social, cultural, and political implications both for individuals and for groups. There are also words that are largely “untranslatable” if the experiences that shaped them are not known or not understood (Chamberlin, 2003, pp. 13-25). Although words are hard to fix in time and space, in this study I use the terms below in these ways.

Aboriginal: In this dissertation, Aboriginal or Aboriginal Peoples is used when I am speaking about individuals or groups who identify as being indigenous to Canada. This includes First Nations (both Status and Non-Status), Inuit, and Métis. This use of Aboriginal is consistent with the use of the term by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996a, 1996b). I recognize, however, that each Indigenous group on Turtle Island has its own heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs, and that, within each of these groups, there are other distinct sub-groups (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, 2013a).

Alliances: In the literature reviewed for this study, Aboriginal/settler groups working together use the terms “alliance” and “partnership” synonymously to describe their relationship (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, 2010, p. 2; L. Davis, 2010, p. 7; Graham, 2008). Alliances involve diverse individuals, organizations, institutions, and partners who are overtly working to overcome systemic issues linked to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, or ability (Bishop, 1994; Broido & Reason, 2005; L. Davis, 2010; Edwards, 2006; Margaret, 2010).

Ally: Bishop (1994) refines the colloquial meaning given to “ally” as “someone who cooperates with another” by describing an ally as a “member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege—for example, a white person who works to end racism” (p. 126).

Biological racism asserts that inferiority of Aboriginal Peoples is innate: that Aboriginal Peoples are, for example, naturally “child-like,” “savage,” or less than human, and have no capacity to “improve” (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006; Slapin & Seale, 1992).

Colonialism refers to the imposition of a system of government or control by people from one nation over another group, replacing other forms of governance, laws, and cultural and social practices with those of the colonizer. Colonialism is typically reinforced and enacted by the practice of bringing settlers from other lands, thereby displacing people and groups indigenous to an area.

Counter-stories are narratives which are deliberately told as a way of providing new information and alternative interpretations, revealing unarticulated possibilities and laying out more life-giving approaches and responses (Andrews, Sclater, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2004; Episkenew, 2009; Nelson, 2001; Van Manen, 1997).

Cultural racism, also referred to as “Social Darwinism,” comes from a belief that Aboriginal Peoples as individuals may have the same potential as people from other races, but that their culture “holds them back” and limits their ability to succeed (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006; Slapin & Seale, 1992; Vickers & Isaac, 2012, p. 256).

Decolonization is “the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, p. 63). Marie Battiste (2008) expands on this idea, observing that decolonization is much more than just transfer of political authority; it is a transformative process which demands “multiple responses in multiple sites” (p. 169). According to Battiste, decolonization is primarily a social and cultural process in which individuals and groups “re-examine the foundation of their cognitive dependencies on Eurocentric ideologies” (p. 169), learn to take Indigenous perspectives seriously, and integrate Indigenous forms of knowledge into beliefs and values, day to day practices, institutional policies, and the broader functioning of society.

Discourse is generally accepted understandings of the world communicated verbally through speech or in print, or non-verbally through the use of body language (McGregor, 2003; van Dijk, 1993, 2001, 2004). Discourse includes not only what is said but what is not said, that which is overlooked, assumed, or left unspoken. The deliberate or unconscious application of discourse can be used to make unbalanced power relations or prejudicial images of particular individuals or groups appear normal, natural, “commonsense” understanding, even in the face of deeply rooted inequities, systemic marginalization, and violence.

Equality is the state of being equal, having the same access, opportunity, or agency where individuals receive equal benefits.

Equity is used to describe a condition where the focus is not on equality but on distribution of resources or benefits so that balance is restored and so that things become more fair and just. Depending upon the criteria that are used, equity means that individuals or groups may receive qualitatively and quantitatively different benefits.

Eurocentric: A focus on European culture, cultural practices, or history which implicitly excludes consideration of other traditions and perspectives, implying that European standards or outlooks are the “norm.”

First Nations refers to both Status and Non-Status Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. The term is also used more specifically to refer to the more than 600 First Nations communities in Canada

Indigenous: In this study, “Indigenous” refers to First Nations Peoples who self-identity using criteria set out by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (http://www.wipce2008.com/enews/pdf/wipce_fact_sheet_21-10-07.pdf) as well as to Indigenous Peoples whose traditional territories lie outside mainland continental North America.

Informal learning is “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment—at home, at work, at play” (Coombs & Ahmed 1974, p. 8). It is the most common form of learning which allows adults to solve day to day problems, cope with needed changes, satisfy personal goals or interests (A. Rogers, 2003, 2004), and is often—but not always—“unintentional,” “unorganized,” and “unsystematic” (Selman, Selman, Cooke, & Dampier, 1998, p. 26).

Oppression refers to the complex web of inequalities infused in consciousness, bound up in cultural practices, and embedded in institutions and institutional practices, where “one social

group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit” (Bell, 1997; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 17). Enacted through exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence, oppression marginalizes non-dominant groups and causes them to feel powerless (Young, 2009, p. 69). Over time, exploitation or marginalization of “the other” becomes institutionalized so that stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination, and inequity come to be regarded as natural or normal (Bishop, 1994; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Kivel, 1996).

Narratives, more colloquially referred to as stories, are commonly defined as first person oral or written accounts of experiences organized along distinct storylines that involve specific characters in distinct contexts with events that unfold over time (Riessman, 2008, pp. 3-7).

Non-Aboriginal refers to people who are the descendants of British and French colonizers, as well as more recent immigrants to Canada from other countries. Non-Aboriginal, therefore, includes people of colour.

Partnerships: See “alliances.”

Power is most commonly defined as a form of control that one person or group holds over others, or “Power over,” where an individual or group affects the actions and thoughts of those who have less influence (<http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/understanding-power/>).

Public education in the context of this study refers to educational initiatives aimed at the public or civil society in general, rather than publicly funded elementary, secondary, or post-secondary education. Public education is most often non-formal, where short-term learning activities are offered as a component of ongoing professional development or inservice by an employer, a government agency, union, or community group. Public education may be instrumental—for example, public health education focused on disease reduction—or it may

have a more emancipatory goals, such as creating a more aware, critical citizenry or even transformation of the current social order (Selman et al., 1998, Chapter 2; Welton, 1998). Another term sometimes used as a synonym is “community education,” where programs or activities are aimed at “working for change and improvement in community life” (Selman et al., p. 20). Canada has a long history of public/community education aimed at equality, equity, and social justice.

Reconciliation: Jacques (2000) speaks of reconciliation as “a process of restoring broken relationships and, beyond that, of re-creating right relationships between individuals and peoples” (p. 43). Although used only infrequently in the 1996 RCAP report, the term appears to have come into more common use with the January 7, 1998 “Statement of Reconciliation” developed by the Working Group on Truth and Reconciliation.

Settler/white settler is used to describe individuals and groups who are descendants of British and French colonizers as well as other white European immigrants to Canada. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005) have explained, the dichotomy that poses the biggest problem is not simply one of race, but one of power. The term “settler” draws attention to the presumptive occupation of lands and assumption of control over resources and other benefits that continues to the present day. As a result of racial origins and skin colour, white Euro-Canadians collectively benefited from power and privilege which was not granted by the original inhabitants of this territory, nor has it been earned.

Social justice is an umbrella term that is “more fundamental than equality as a guide to how we should act in relation to society and its educational institutions” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 86). Social justice, therefore, is both a vision and a process which looks towards fulfillment of human rights (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006), the redistribution of

benefits and resources in ways that maximize health, empowerment, and future sustainability of the natural world.

Transformative education is an approach to learning where the goal is to emancipate individuals from constraints and problems that have their roots in inaccurate or incomplete worldviews. Personal experience and critical reflection on taken-for-granted assumptions about reality are central to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2006).

White is used to describe individuals or groups of people who are Caucasian, having European ancestry, and skin which is “white” in colour. People who are white often regard themselves as racially neutral or unmarked as contrasted with “people of colour,”: for example, people who are identified as Black, Asian, Aboriginal, etc.

Whiteness refers to different forms of unearned social, cultural, economic, and political advantages and privileges which accompany the accident of white skin (Caouette & Taylor, 2007; Harris, 2003; Kivel, 1996, pp. 17-25; Schick, 2009, p. 119). Whiteness is more than a physical characteristic: it is a culturally defined way of enforcing racial hierarchies. Prevailing social discourses uphold and reinforce the assumed rightness and goodness of “white” viewpoints, cultural practices, and values such as “purity,” intelligence, discipline, rationality, adherence to law and order, etc. (Henry & Tator, 2006, pp. 46-47; 353).

Worldviews are the presumptions and assumptions an individual or a group of people makes about the world based on their own experience as well as on culturally shaped “habits of mind”—beliefs, values, and attitudes—that often remain largely unconscious and unexamined (Mezirow, 1991). In research, the paradigm used to frame a study is often referred to as a worldview (Creswell, 2008, pp. 5-18); for example, a “post-positivist worldview.”

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

A PLACE CALLED MI'KMA'KI

That all Transactions during the Late War shall on both sides be buried in Oblivion
with the Hatchet, And that said Indians shall have all the favour,
Friendship & Protection shewn them from His Majesty's Government.

(1752 Articles of Peace Friendship Renewed)

Mention Nova Scotia and images of picturesque fishing villages, cobblestone beaches, the iconic Bluenose schooner under full sail, or kilted pipe bands often come first to mind. These and other symbols of Gaelic culture are at the forefront of tourism media campaigns (I. McKay & Bates, 2010), including tourism guides like *Doers and Dreamers* (Government of Nova Scotia, 2012) which inform visitors about the “culture, history and natural features” (p. 2) of the province. When the First Peoples of this territory are mentioned at all they are typically portrayed as an element of Nova Scotia’s “unspoiled wilderness and natural beauty” (Government of Nova Scotia, 2012, p. 170). This impression is further reinforced by museum displays of pottery, baskets, birch bark canoes, and illustrations of Kluscap⁴ which leave viewers with the impression that the Mi'kmaq are figures from some long distant, largely “mythic past” (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 123).

In Nova Scotia, many non-Aboriginal settlers know little about the Mi'kmaq or the province's colonial past (“Call for More Mi'kmaq Education,” 2013; Environics Institute, 2011; Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 1974, 2013). Relatively few white Nova Scotians realize that the Mi'kmaq barely survived what amounted to a genocide (Coates, 2000, Chapter 2;

⁴ Kluscap is a “powerful mythological hero” (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 33) prominent in many traditional Mi'kmaw stories. Other common spellings include “Glooscap” and “Glooskap.”

Neu & Therrien, 2003; Parnaby, 2008; D. N. Paul, 2006, 2011). The violence that wrenched this land from the Mi'kmaq and molded it into British colony (later a province in a nation called Canada) is seldom spoken about in public (I. McKay, 1992; I. McKay & Bates, 2010; D. N. Paul, 2006, 2011). Nor do most settlers realize that we are living on unceded territory with responsibilities defined in a covenant chain of Peace and Friendship treaties signed from 1725 to 1776 (Grand Council of Micmacs, Union of Nova Scotia Indians, & Native Council of Nova Scotia, 1987; Marshall, Denny & Marshall, 1989; D. N. Paul, 2006). This chapter, therefore, begins by sketching some key events in the history of the place called Mi'kma'ki.

Place is an important component of any story or study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 104-107). In academic terms, “place” refers to the “specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51), including the webs of relationships that bind individuals and groups together in a particular landscape. Colombian born anthropologist and activist Arturo Escobar (2001), who writes about globalization and social movements, says that it is the places we know best that provide a foundation for “theory construction and political action” (p. 139); place “grounds” us and keeps us “connected to everyday life” (p. 140). Narrative educators Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000) assert that researchers need not only to describe the places in which narratives are set, they also need to make the “many layered narratives at work in their inquiry space” (p. 70) plain for themselves and readers to see.

2.1 Colonial Relationships on Mi'kma'ki

But if the Indians could not flee from the whites to new hunting grounds, neither could the whites avoid the Indians. A pattern of relations was established which was to endure for generations (Upton, 1975, p. 8).

This study takes place on Canada's east coast in the province of Nova Scotia, on the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq. The archeological record reveals that Canada's eastern seaboard has been settled by humans for at least ten thousand years (D. N. Paul, 2006; Reid, 2009; Sable & Francis, 2012). By the time European explorers reached these shores in the 16th century, the Mi'kmaq controlled all of modern day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, as well as the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. Organized into seven districts, each with its own District Chief and Council, the pre-contact Mi'kmaw population is estimated as having been as high as 12,000 (Reid, 2009, p. 19).

As elsewhere on Turtle Island, British authorities used both physical violence and legalized domination to eliminate Mi'kmaw opposition to colonial occupation and the spread of European settlement (Coates, 2000, Chapter 2; D. N. Paul, 2006; Reid, 2009, Chapter 1; Sable & Francis, 2012). By the mid-1700s, war, disease and loss of territory had reduced the Mi'kmaq to fewer than three thousand people (D. N. Paul, 2006; Reid, 2009). The 1752, 1760, and 1761 Peace and Friendship Treaties resulted in a cessation of open warfare between the Mi'kmaq and the British colonizers, but they also opened the way for European settlement. The biggest influx of settlers, some 30,000, set ashore on Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island) between 1815 and 1838 (D. N. Paul, 2006). Although the Mi'kmaq had been promised that they would be free to pursue traditional livelihoods, immigrants from the British Isles competed with the Mi'kmaq for wild game from the forests and fish from the lakes and the rivers. In 1840, Unama'ki Mi'kmaw Chief Pemmenawet sent a letter to Queen Victoria pleading for her intervention:

I cannot cross the great Lake to talk to you for my canoe is too small, and I am old and weak . . . I therefore, send this wampum and paper talk to tell the Queen I am in trouble. My people are in trouble . . . all these woods were once ours. Our Fathers possessed them

all . . . white man has taken all that was ours . . . let us not perish (Chief Pemmenaweet cited in Gould & Semple, 1980, p. 50).

As successive waves of Scottish and Irish settlers made their way across the ocean, colonial officials began to issue tracts of land to newcomers willing to “improve” it by clearing forests and planting crops. By 1842, when census records show fewer than 1,400 Mi’kmaq, the Nova Scotia provincial government passed the *Instruction and Permanent Settlement of Indians Act* which forced the remaining Mi’kmaq onto reservations (Parnaby, 2008).

Even on the newly established reservations the Mi’kmaq were not free from encroachment. On Cape Breton Island, for example, Mi’kmaq land holdings shrank by an additional 20% during the latter part of the 1800s, the population reduced to fewer than 500 people reported as living in "miserable," "wretched," “desperate” conditions (Parnaby, 2008, p. 75). Numerous appeals were sent to provincial officials in Halifax asking for food aid, medical supplies, and new grants for land for the Mi’kmaq.⁵ With the introduction of the *Consolidated Indian Act* in 1876, increasingly repressive policies and ever shifting rules and regulations (such as cutting off community access to traditional foods and livelihood endeavours) provided new mechanisms for eliminating the “Indian problem.” In 1928, for instance, Mi’kmaq Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy was charged with trapping muskrat out of season. In response, Sylliboy launched the first treaty-based defense in Canada, arguing that the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1752 promised that the Mi’kmaq would always have the right to secure a living from the land. The Nova Scotia Provincial Court disagreed and ruled that the conditions under which the treaty was signed no longer existed (Reid, 2009, pp. 33-34; Wicken, 2012). The Mi’kmaq, therefore,

⁵ See, for example, petitions to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly from 1816 to 1928 (<http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/mikmaq/results.asp?Search=AR3&TABLE2=on&SearchList1=all&Start=1#results>).

were subject to the same regulations as other Nova Scotians, regardless of the hardships these imposed.

2.1.1 The Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools, and Centralization

Three other forces, however, had even more pernicious impacts on Mi'kmaw culture and identity, and the survival of Mi'kmaw communities: the *Indian Act*, Indian Residential Schools, and centralization. The federal *Indian Act* of 1876 marked the beginning of a coordinated national project aimed at the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples and cultures (Milloy, 2008; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, pp. 235-308). As the result of the introduction of requirements around blood quantum, a large number of Aboriginal Peoples were denied both Indian status and benefits, however minimal (Gould & Semple, 1980, pp. 71-101). In addition, subsequent amendments to the *Indian Act* declared traditional cultural practices and governance structures to be illegal, further restricting the autonomy of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. On the west coast, for instance, an 1885 amendment resulted in the banning of potlatch ceremonies (R. Fisher, 1992; Lutz, 2008, p. 94). In the Maritimes, Mi'kmaw religious ceremonies, traditional songs, dances, and drumming were similarly forbidden outright or harshly discouraged (D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 358-360).

Legislated prohibitions around cultural practices and cultural expression were further reinforced by Indian Residential Schools established for the express purpose of “civilizing” Aboriginal Peoples, breaking students’ connections with their families and with distinct Aboriginal worldviews embedded in language, relationship structures, livelihood practices, and approaches to spirituality (Knockwood, 2001; D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 283-291). From 1930 to 1966, over 1,000 Mi'kmaw children attended the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School (Knockwood, 2001; D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 283-291). Under a partnership arrangement between

the federal government and Christian churches, Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and communities, often forcibly, and placed in Indian Residential Schools which attempted to eradicate their identity by inculcating them in the “white man’s learning” (J. R. Miller, 1996, p. 152). Indian Residential Schools disrupted child/family/community relationships and the transmission of traditional knowledge and language. Many if not most of the children who were forced to attend left with physical and/or emotional scars which were passed down to subsequent generations (Knockwood, 2001; J. R. Miller, 1996; D. N. Paul, 2006).

The assault on Mi’kmaw identity perpetrated by Indian Residential Schools was further exacerbated by a regional Centralization Policy (1942-1949). Promises of a better life, reinforced by threats, coercion, and violence, were used to forcibly resettle the Mi’kmaq into two communities, one on the mainland at Shubenacadie, and one on Unama’ki at Eskasoni (Marshall et al., 1989, pp. 88-90; D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 291-319; Reid, 2009, pp. 32-33). Neither the promised economic benefits from agriculture and employment nor the long awaited improvements in living conditions materialized. By the end of World War II, ever increasing numbers of Mi’kmaq were heading south to the “Boston States” in search of a better life. In 1957, even the Department of Indian Affairs acknowledged that centralization had failed and began to involve communities in discussions about re-establishing Mi’kmaw communities in their traditional districts. By this point, though, families and communities had been divided and traditional leadership structures weakened. Nova Scotian historian John Reid (2009) concluded that for the Mi’kmaq:

The human cost of economic deprivation and social disruption was real and tragic. It was compounded by a consistently recurring racism, sometimes casual, sometimes aggressive, that was difficult to resist at a time when survival was in question. (p. 33)

By the 1960s, the Department of Indian Affairs and Mi'kmaw leaders finally reached agreement on the establishment of six Mi'kmaw Bands on the mainland and five Bands on Unama'ki (D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 325-327). Today, there are 13 Mi'kmaw Bands with 34 reserve locations across Nova Scotia.

2.1.2 Contemporary Exclusions

Census statistics show that from the turn of the century to the 1960s there was relatively little growth in the Mi'kmaw population.⁶ In 1901, there were only 1,500 registered “Indians” in Nova Scotia (Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, Vol. 1, Table 11, p. 297). Some six decades later, the population had barely doubled; compared with 700,000 non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians, only 3,271 were listed as being of Aboriginal origin (Government of Canada, 1963, Table 82, pp. 82-86). Today, the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal people in the province has increased. In 2011, the total population of Nova Scotia had risen to 906,170. More than 24,000 people self-identified as Aboriginal; almost 15,000 of these were “registered,” “treaty Indians” as recognized by government (<http://www.novascotia.ca/abor/aboriginal-people/demographics/>). Although the Aboriginal population in Nova Scotia is rebounding, what still lags behind is a corresponding improvement in Aboriginal people's quality of life, especially for those living on reserve. More than 16 years have passed since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996a) issued a call for Canadians to “share lands, resources, power and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences” (p. ix), yet the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia still do not enjoy the same quality of

⁶ Population figures should be read as approximate rather than actual because government definitions of Indian and Aboriginal status and census reporting procedures varied from census to census. In addition, the Canadian Institute of Child Health (2000, Chapter 6) has pointed to a number of additional reasons why census data have routinely failed to correctly capture the realities of Aboriginal Peoples (pp. 146-148), including the exclusion of people living off-reserve or in rural and remote locations.

life as non-Aboriginal residents. Glaring disparities are evident in every area ranging from income to education and access to justice.

Worldwide, the United Nations Development Programme (2004) says that cultural, ethnic, or racial minorities have been denied freedom to express who they are as peoples and have been excluded from full participation in society as a whole. Participation exclusion is any form of social, economic, and political marginalization which occurs “along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines” or as result of racial origins or cultural identity (p. 27). For the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia, participation exclusion can be seen in the widespread problem of material poverty, in the recurrent failures of the criminal justice system, and in a blatant lack of acknowledgement of the treaties.

Statistics from 2006 reveal that quality of life for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities is far from equal (O’Sullivan, 2011). Similar to the United Nations *Human Development Index*, the *Community Well-Being Index* developed by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada draws from census data about income, education, labour force activity, and housing conditions to assess community well-being. On this index, six Mi’kmaq communities in Nova Scotia scored less than 59, some of the lowest scores for all communities in the province. Only two Mi’kmaq communities scored between 70 and 79, on a par with non-Aboriginal communities (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2006, pp.14-17). In 2011, a housing crisis in Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario drew national attention to the sub-standard living conditions that plague many Aboriginal communities in Canada. Similarly, the Nova Scotia provincial government has acknowledged that at least 15% of on-reserve houses are in need of major repairs (Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 2010). On-reserve household income also remains well below provincial norms. In 2006, for example,

Government of Nova Scotia figures show that average family income at Eskasoni Mi'kmaw Nation, the largest Mi'kmaw community in the province, was less than half that of non-Aboriginal Nova Scotian households (Government of Nova Scotia, 2014, Figure 2).

These figures reflect, at least in part, the difficulties Mi'kmaw people frequently have in securing well-paid employment. On-reserve unemployment levels are almost three times the provincial average, 24.6% compared to 9.1% for all other Nova Scotians (Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 2010). Lower levels of educational attainment are a barrier to off-reserve labour force participation where wages tend to be higher (Clairmont & McMillan, 2006, pp. 28-29; Saulnier, 2009, p. 7). Almost a third of Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia do not complete secondary school (Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 2010). Aboriginal Peoples have been clear that higher education is an important goal for themselves and their children (Environics Institute, 2011, p. 56), but post-secondary enrollment and completion still lags behind. Compared with 20% of the non-Aboriginal population, only 12% of Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia have a college or university degree (Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 2010). Inadequate funding and lack of appropriate services and supports, such as affordable child care, are among a long list of deterrents (Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008).

2.1.2.1 Failures of justice.

In Canada, Aboriginal Peoples must not only struggle with straitened economic opportunities, they are also more than three times more likely to experience some form of physical violence (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006). The list of murdered or missing Aboriginal women and men in Canada is a litany of national shame (Chartrand, Whitecloud, McKay, & Young, 2001; Green, 2009; Linden, 2007). In 2009, Tanya Brooks, a Mi'kmaw woman from Millbrook First Nation in Nova Scotia disappeared, only one of more than 582

Sisters in Spirit (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, p. 26) whose whereabouts are still unknown. Although the plight of these Aboriginal women, their families and communities has attracted international attention, federal funding for the *Sisters in Spirit* initiative was cut in 2010 and the federal government subsequently dismissed repeated calls for an inquiry, including a request by provincial Premiers in 2013 ("Premiers Back National Inquiry," 2013). Violence directed towards Aboriginal Peoples, in particular Aboriginal women, has tended to go unremarked (Gilchrist, 2010). A number of independent investigations have pointed out that racial profiling is endemic to policing in Canada, and that neither the police nor the justice system has treated Aboriginal Peoples with impartiality and due regard for law (Chartrand et al., 2001; Comack, 2012; Green, 2009; Linden, 2007). Little wonder, then, that almost half of all respondents to a survey of Aboriginal Peoples in Halifax reported that they have little or no confidence in the criminal justice system (Enviroics Institute, 2011, pp. 60-61).

Canada's First Peoples also suffer disproportionately from environmental injustice (Dhillon & Young, 2010). Pictou Landing Mi'kmaw Nation has been lobbying provincial and federal governments for some four decades in an effort to stop the discharge of pulp mill effluent into Boat Harbor, an estuary bordering the reservation (E. Bennett, 2013; Brannen, 2013; S. Thompson, 2003). Pollutants began pouring into Boat Harbour in the late 1960s, destroying an important source of traditional foods and cultural space. Residents trace the rapid rise in health problems such as asthma and cancer to airborne and waterborne contaminants. As the producer of a new documentary about Boat Harbour observed, "This is a natural disaster that has no end in sight" (Brannen, 2013, para. 18). Exacerbated by lack of consultation, a stubborn refusal to listen to community voices, limited oversight, and ineffective regulatory mechanisms (Dhillon & Young, 2010), situations like the one at Pictou Landing First Nation demonstrate a clear

disregard for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to clear air and water, healthy soil, and social, cultural, spiritual, and physical health.

2.1.2.2 Disregard for the treaties and Aboriginal rights.

The Government of Canada has been repeatedly criticized by international bodies (Amnesty International, 2012; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009), by the Auditor General of Canada (1999-2014), and by its own members (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2008) for failing to fulfill its obligations under human rights law, riding roughshod over the treaties signed with Aboriginal Peoples. This critique includes many factors: failure to allocate adequate and appropriate resources; lack of policy or conflicting policies and practices among departments; inadequate coordination among responsible agencies; failure to consult and limited accountability for outcomes. One of the biggest issues, though, is the glacial pace of change. In 1977 the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, in conjunction with the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, submitted a comprehensive land claim to the federal government. After more than 12 years of fruitless negotiations, their application was rejected as having been “superseded by law” (Marshall et al., 1989, p. 101). Lack of responsiveness on the part of part of federal and provincial governments has forced First Nations to seek redress through the courts rather than at the negotiation table (Bell & Kahane, 2004; Ladner, 2009; Land Claims Agreement Coalition, 2013; Turner, 2006).

In 1993, Donald Marshall Jr. from Membertou Mi'kmaq Nation was charged with fishing eels out of season, fishing without a license, and selling eels which had been caught illegally (Coates, 2000). Marshall's gear and boat were impounded and he was fined. In response, Marshall launched a constitutional challenge arguing that he was exercising rights which were guaranteed by treaty. In 1999 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in Marshall's favour, opening the way for talks about participatory, community-based resource management

regimes (Doyle-Bedwell & Cohen, 2001; Kearney, 2005; Obeidi, Hipel, & Kilgour, 2006; Wiber, Berkes, Charles, & Kearney, 2004). In what has come to known as the *Marshall Decision*, the Supreme Court affirmed that Aboriginal Peoples have a right to a “moderate livelihood” from hunting, fishing, gathering, or trading for both personal consumption and commercial purposes (Coates, 2000; Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries, 2001; Wicken, 2002).

Mechanisms which allow the Mi’kmaq to pursue these moderate livelihoods, however, have yet to be put in place. In February, 2013, twelve Mi’kmaq communities filed an appeal with the Nova Scotia Supreme Court demanding that the provincial government, its departments and agencies be called to account for failing to develop concrete plans which would allow the *Marshall Decision* to be implemented (“Mi’kmaq Call on Canada,” 2013). Some 14 years after the furor that accompanied the *Marshall Decision*, the Mi’kmaq still do not have equal access to or control of lands and waters (Capistrano & Charles, 2012; Prosper, McMillan, Davis, & Moffitt, 2011; Wiber & Milley, 2007).

2.1.2.3 Social exclusion and marginalization.

While participation exclusion affects the types of resources groups have access to and opportunities to exercise agency aimed at meeting their needs and achieving their goals, living mode exclusion affects a people’s very identity, including the capacity to express who they are as a people both in private and in public. Living mode exclusion “denigrates or suppresses a group’s culture, including its language, religion or traditional customs or lifestyles” (United Nations Development Programme, 2004, p. 27) and makes itself felt in a “chilly climate” in civil society where Aboriginal identities are either not upheld or are denigrated. For centuries, there have been policies and laws focused on the eradication of Aboriginal Peoples’ cultural traditions

and practices. Today, the child welfare system has had a similar impact. As result of intergenerational trauma, increasing numbers of Aboriginal youth have lost confidence in themselves and all hope for a better future.

Some of the most overt restrictions on Aboriginal Peoples' freedom of expression slowly began to be rescinded beginning in the 1950s. The only Indian Residential School in the Maritimes, at Shubenacadie, was finally closed in the mid-1960s. However, other institutions and practices aimed at assimilation have taken their place. A number of scholars and professionals have compared the impacts of contemporary child welfare practices to those of Indian Residential Schools: loss of language; loss of cultural affinity; and loss of hope (Beaucage, 2011; Blackstock, 2011; N. MacDonald & MacDonald, 2007; McMillan, 2011). In contemporary Canada, there are now more Aboriginal children in the care of the state or in non-Aboriginal foster homes than at the height of the Indian Residential School system or the "Sixties Scoop" which followed (Beaucage, 2011). Aboriginal children make up almost half of all children who are wards of the state (Statistics Canada, 2013). In Nova Scotia, up to seven times as many Mi'kmaw children as non-Aboriginal children have been placed in the care of the state (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, First Nations Child and Family Services Program, 2008).

A leader in efforts aimed at saving Boat Harbour, Pictou Landing First Nation band member Maurina Beadle has also been at the forefront of a fight by Mi'kmaw families to keep their children at home, in their own communities (Blackstock, 2011; M. Peters, 2012). Beadle's son Jeremy has special needs. Arguing that Jeremy should be placed in a foster home or institution, social service agencies have consequently denied Beadle additional money needed to provide Jeremy with appropriate care at home. In 2011, Beadle and the Pictou Landing Band

Council filed a precedent-setting case with the federal government. Invoking “Jordan’s Principle,” Beadle and her legal team charged the Government of Canada with failing to provide Jeremy with the same degree of support non-Aboriginal children and families would reasonably expect to receive. Named after Jordan River Anderson from Norway House Cree First Nation in Manitoba, Jordan’s Principle obliges different levels of government, service providers, and other agencies to put the needs of vulnerable children first and provide appropriate services and care, regardless of whether or not they are legally responsible for doing so. Arrangements for payment and jurisdictional authority which often pose impediments to timely, effective intervention are secondary to meeting the needs of Aboriginal children (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, 2013b). In April, 2013, a federal court ruled in Beadle’s favour and ordered Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Health Canada to reimburse the band council for costs incurred for Jeremy’s care. Beadle’s victory, however, was short lived. Only a month later, the federal government appealed. As of May, 2013, it appeared unlikely that Beadle or the Pictou Landing First Nation Band would receive additional money any time soon (M. Peters, 2013).

In Mi’kmaq territory, Aboriginal Peoples have been clear that material poverty and other forms of marginalization are important determinants of their mental and physical health (Horizons Community Development Associates, 2008). Nationally, the suicide rate in Aboriginal communities is almost double that of the Canadian population as a whole (Kirmayer et al., 2007). Among Aboriginal youth, some estimate that the rate is as much as five to six times higher than that in the non-Aboriginal population (Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2006). In 1997, one Nova Scotia study found that “almost one quarter of Mi’kmaq males and almost half the females aged 12 to 18 years have experienced depression and related symptoms” (Canadian

Institute of Child Health, 2000, p. 164). Findings of a later survey suggested that there may have been modest improvement in rates of depression, but uncovered alarming statistics about attempted suicide among Mi'kmaw youth: 11% for females and 5% among males (Mi'kmaq Health Research Group, 2007, pp. 9, 83). In the same study, almost a quarter of male youth reported that someone close to them had ended their own life within the past year. When life is lived in a climate of insecurity, one outcome is despair and loss of hope for a more positive future.

2.2 A Shift in the Tides

Go into the forest, you see the birch, maple, pine. Look underground and
all those trees are holding hands. We as people have to do the same.

Chief Charles Labrador, Acadia First Nation, Nova Scotia (Kierans, 2003)

In recent years, there have been signs which show that the Mi'kmaq are reclaiming their identity as a People and their authority as a Nation. Not only have the Mi'kmaq survived, at long last they are starting to thrive. Although the total number of Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia is small compared to provinces like Ontario (250,000) or Canada's western provinces (700,000) (Statistics Canada, 2013, para. 1), some of Canada's most notable Aboriginal "success stories" have taken place on Mi'kmaw territory. Mi'kmaw people and Mi'kmaw First Nations are breaking ground when it comes to recognition of rights, securing their economic future, reclaiming Aboriginal identities, language, and cultural practices, as well as reaching out to non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians, forming partnerships with a focus on justice, equity, and friendship.

2.2.1 Recognition of Rights

Some precedent-setting victories for Aboriginal treaty rights have taken place on Canada's east coast. In 1985, in a case not dissimilar to that of Chief Gabriel Sylliboy some fifty years

earlier, the Supreme Court of Canada acquitted James Matthew Simon of charges of illegal hunting, acknowledging that rights guaranteed by the Crown under the Treaty of 1752 were still valid (Grand Council of Micmacs et al., 1987, pp. 1-2, 20-21). The subsequent 1999 *Marshall Decision* marked a legal turning point in Canada. Building on recognition of the Government of Nova Scotia's acknowledgement of treaty rights, the Supreme Court of Canada further ruled that Aboriginal treaty rights are constitutionally guaranteed and protected. These principles provided a foundation for comprehensive treaty negotiations among Mi'kmaw First Nations, the federal and provincial governments which began in 2002.⁷ More recently, in 2008, Mi'kmaw Nations in Nova Scotia issued a *Nationhood Proclamation* (<http://mikmaqhistorymonth.com/history/proclamations/>). While the express purpose of this document is to commit First Nations Bands in Nova Scotia to the development of a governance structure that will enhance wellbeing of Mi'kmaw people, the proclamation also asserts Mi'kmaw authority over traditional lands and waters. As George Erasmus (1989), former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations observed, when treaty rights are not recognized Aboriginal Peoples become "virtual beggars in our own traditional lands and territories" (p. 95).

2.2.2 Taking Control of the Financial Future

Mi'kma'ki has also been the site of some remarkable economic successes that challenge the misconception that First Nations communities are financially inept and destined to remain in poverty. Membertou Mi'kmaw Nation on Cape Breton Island is an urban community located within Sydney, Nova Scotia city boundaries. Although the Band has fewer than 1,300 members, in 2002 Membertou was the first Aboriginal government in the world to receive ISO 9001:2000

⁷ In Chapter 3, I discuss the significance of the *Made in Nova Scotia Process* in more detail.

certification⁸ (Donnelly, 2012; Helin, 2007; Kayseas, Hindle, & Anderson, 2006; Raybould, 2006). In 1995, Membertou had a \$4 million deficit. Today, the Band is one of the largest employers in the region, with some 531 people on staff working in range of businesses including a market, a trade and convention centre, information technology, and management services. In addition, the Band has formed a Corporate Division which manages partnerships with the private sector in areas such as oil and gas and engineering. As well as benefitting from the income from these activities, Band members have access to entrepreneurship training that allows them to become active participants in the Band's success. On the Nova Scotia mainland, Millbrook First Nation has experienced similar positive economic growth and prosperity (Poliandri, 2011). Both Membertou and Millbrook have been held up as sources of inspiration and information about strategies which lead to First Nations economic empowerment (Helin, 2007; Orr, J., Weir, W., & Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program, 2013; Raybould, 2006).

2.2.3 Alliances for Social Justice

Emerging alliances between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians which bring treaty promises of peace and friendship to life are another reason for optimism. In his opening address to a 2006 conference on re-envisioning relationships between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, Mohawk Elder Jake Swamp (2010) described collaborations between Aboriginal Peoples and settler Canadians as "a great force, a force that will be able to change our world as it is run now" (p. 22). In Nova Scotia, for instance, Elder Nora Bernard and Halifax lawyer John McKiggan were at the forefront of the fight for a national *Residential Schools Class Action*

⁸ International Organization for Standardization (ISO) criteria are used to assess business practices and performance of large and small companies including financial institutions, manufacturers and government agencies. 9000 level certification indicates that the Band has met stringent criteria set for quality fiscal management and customer service.

settlement (“Bernard’s Lawsuit,” 2007; “Judges Approve,” 2006; McKiggan, 2011; “Native Rights Activist,” 2008). In the 1980s, Bernard had begun to interview survivors of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School and discuss ways that survivors might obtain some recognition for their ordeal, as well as compensation from the Crown. Bernard contacted a number of lawyers but was unable to find anyone willing to take on the case until she called McKiggan. In the mid-1990s, McKiggan filed a lawsuit on behalf of 500 survivors of the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, inspiring other groups across Canada to do the same. At the time, McKiggan said, the idea “was novel, no one else would take it; there was no case law,” but he agreed to represent the Shubenacadie group because “what happened to those children was incredibly wrong” (“Bernard’s Lawsuit,” 2007, para 8). It took twelve years of struggle before all parties came to an agreement in 2006 on a settlement that included financial compensation, commemoration, and support for healing, including the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Common Experience Payment for all eligible former students of Indian Residential Schools (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010). Bernard died in 2007. At an honouring ceremony held during the 2011 Truth and Reconciliation hearings in Halifax, McKiggan (2011) testified:

Nora changed the lives of thousands of Residential School Survivors. She changed my life as well. She made me realize the power that a single person can have and what a privilege we lawyers have to help people like Nora, who want to make the world a better place. (para. 7)

There are numerous similar examples of alliances where individual Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have worked closely in partnership (Brody, 1981; Christian & Freeman, 2010; Gallagher, 2003; Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009; Regan, 2010; Ross, 1992, 2006; Stiegman &

Pictou, 2010), as well as examples of voluntary civil society groups that are lending their support to struggles for Aboriginal justice (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, 2010; Benjamin, Preston, & Léger, 2010; M. J. Hampton & Hampton, 2010; Larsen, 2003; M. Smith & Sterritt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). In the preface to a new guide aimed at promoting dialogue about the impacts of Indian Residential Schools (Morrow, 2011) Executive Director of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Michael DeGagné commended the role that non-Aboriginal Canadians have been playing at a grassroots level, saying that “Over the years much has been accomplished by communities committed to the groundwork of healing and reconciliation” (p. 1).

In Canada, faith-based organizations were among some the earliest groups to respond to calls for new relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. In the late 1980s, for example, nine Canadian Churches came together to form the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC) (<http://memorybc.ca/aboriginal-rights-coalition-fonds;rad>). In the Maritimes, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition – Atlantic (ARC-A) was formed in 1995. In its brochure, ARC-A (n.d.) describes itself as a “coalition of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Atlantic Canadians working together toward justice for First Nations peoples” (para.1). The group’s focus has been on educating the non-Aboriginal public about Aboriginal land and treaty rights in Atlantic Canada, as well as providing support for Aboriginal-led initiatives aimed at economic and political development of First Nations. In conjunction with the Tatamagouche Centre (<https://tatacentre.ca/>), a lay education centre of the United Church of Canada, ARC-A hosted the *Observer Project* (S. J. King, 2011; Seed, 2002; Zemel, 2000) from 1999-2000. In the aftermath of the 1999 *Marshall Decision*, violence erupted over access to fishing grounds in the community of Esgenoôpetitj,⁹ New Brunswick. Fisheries officials impounded Mi’kmaw fishers’

⁹ The Mi’kmaw community of Esgenoôpetitj was formerly known as Burnt Church.

equipment, while non-Aboriginal residents from neighbouring towns began harassing and threatening people from the First Nation. Non-Aboriginal participants in the *Observer Project* volunteered to witness and document events as they unfolded, providing a buffer in what proved to be a highly charged, volatile situation. Members of Esgenoôpetitj First Nation later expressed appreciation for the presence of non-Aboriginal observers during the conflict noting that "If you had not been here, there would have been blood in the water" (Christian Peacemaker Teams, 2010, para 2).

In the remainder of this narrative inquiry, I look more closely at why some non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians who are people of privilege have been motivated to ally themselves with Mi'kmaw people in ways that uphold the RCAP's (1996a) "grand notion" of "peace and harmony" (p. ix). I am interested in understanding what motivated non-Aboriginal supporters like McKiggan and *Observer Project* participants to learn more about First Peoples and become active in initiatives which promote reconciliation. As I will argue, the examples of these allies provide insight into the process of interpersonal reconciliation, and into the factors which support and sustain attitudinal and behavioural changes in white settlers.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

RECONCILIATION AND SETTLER TRANSFORMATION

Now is the time to build a new relationship between natives and "nons." It's to everyone's advantage. . . . Let's cross our fingers and hope that this time, things go along a bit better. (Kinew, 2011, paras. 1, 3)

In 2010, an advertisement for a Halifax city beauty salon featured four laughing models posed around a statue in a downtown square (Tattrie, 2010). Each model held up a package of long human hair extensions. When the ad appeared in a Nova Scotia magazine, Mi'kmaq historian Dr. Daniel Paul contacted the publisher and the salon owner in order to ask if they knew that the statue depicted Nova Scotia's first British administrator, General Edward Cornwallis. For the Mi'kmaq, Cornwallis is an agent of genocide. Soon after assuming control, Cornwallis offered a bounty of £10 (later raised to £50) for the scalp of every Mi'kmaq man, woman and child or prisoner taken alive (D. N. Paul, 2006, Chapter 7; Reid, 2009, p. 22). When asked about the grossly inappropriate juxtaposition of images in the advertisement, the salon owner pleaded ignorance:

Whose statue it was, we knew nothing about. Absolutely nothing. . . . Who would suspect? It's a public park. If there's such an offensive connection to it, why's it there? Why aren't there warning signs on it? (Tattrie, 2010, para 3, 7)

In the United States, lawyer and race relations advocate Harris (2003) has noted that whites were able to remain blind to the presence of Blacks, their history and realities for centuries. White Euro-Canadian settlers in Nova Scotia have similarly been "oblivious to the worlds within

worlds that existed just beyond the edge of their awareness and yet were present in their very midst” (p. 76).

This chapter has three sections. In the first, I focus on three platforms for reconciliation. I begin by sketching the impetus and vision for Aboriginal/settler reconciliation laid out by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). I then highlight the importance of political, social, and interpersonal platforms for reconciliation, and give examples of initiatives being carried out in Nova Scotia and in other parts of Canada. In particular, I focus on the importance of settler participation in the reconciliation process. Across Canada, however, the promise of reconciliation has yet to be fulfilled.

In the second section of this literature review, I examine some of the barriers to reconciliation between non-Aboriginal people and the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. Often, individuals and groups from the two nations have little contact with one another, particularly in social settings. The seeming naturalness of this physical distance is reinforced by public discourses which either erase the Mi’kmaq or paint a picture of settler/Mi’kmaq relationships as benign if not peaceful and collaborative. These problems are further exacerbated by insufficient, ineffective public education. If reconciliation is to be successful, there needs to be an increased focus on the interpersonal: on bringing about changes in the consciousness of settler Canadians.

In the third section of this literature review, I look at learning for reconciliation. Intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism frameworks have been used to promote settlers’ understanding of and comfort with diversity. Even in formal settings with trained teachers, however, attempts at decolonizing settler Canadians have been disappointing. Educators are still struggling to understand how to promote critical self-reflexivity in settlers. There is a need for new approaches that are capable of defusing settler resistance and reshaping settlers’ identities.

3.1 Platforms for Reconciliation

Together we find the wishing game
That all the people know each other well
Together we find the wishing game
That in this country we live in peaceful way

(Joe, 1991, p. 67)

Shortly after he assumed the role of National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo asserted that the time has come for the two nations to stop “lurching from conflict to conflict” and “begin the hard work of reconciliation” (Mansbridge, 2009). In countries around the world, reconciliation processes have been used as a basis for social, economic, and political justice and a platform for more equitable, peaceful relationships among people who come from different groups with divergent, even conflicting, interests (Bloomfield, 2006, pp. 7-8; Daly & Sarkin, 2007, Chapter 1). Associated with values such as truth, justice, and fairness, reconciliation refers both to a vision of the future and the mechanisms that will bring that future into being (Bloomfield, 2006, pp. 11-13). In this section, I sketch the history that led to an awareness of the need for reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada starting with the events that led to the creation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Then, I examine how Canada has responded to RCAP recommendations in the intervening decades, through three platforms for reconciliation: political, social, and interpersonal.

Beginning in the 1700s, nation-to-nation commitments between Aboriginal Peoples and European colonizers were laid out in treaty agreements which were later guaranteed under Section 35 of the 1982 Canadian *Constitution Act* (Henderson, 2000d; Maaka & Fleras, 2006; Newman, 2009; Turner, 2006). Early attempts by First Nations at pushing the Canadian

government to implement these treaty rights, however, met with only limited success (Marshall, Denny, & Marshall, 1989; D. N. Paul, 2006, Chapter 14; Richardson, 1989). In 1990, a violent 78-day siege at Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Nation (the “Oka Crisis”) at last compelled the Canadian government to recognize the need for negotiations (Koenig & Obomsawin, 1993; Simpson & Ladner, 2010; Swain, 2010). As a first step, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in August 1991 in order to identify “fair and lasting terms of coexistence with Aboriginal Peoples” (RCAPa, 1996, p. 1). Seven commissioners, four Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal, travelled across Canada gathering input from over two thousand individuals and organizations, and commissioning research focused on concerns identified by Aboriginal Peoples. The results of this “monumental” (Castellano, 2001, p. 1), “unprecedented” (McBride, 2001, p. 23) undertaking was a report published in five volumes (RCAP, 1996b). Not only did the Commission detail the history of Aboriginal/settler relationships, it also analyzed the impacts of colonialism and made 444 recommendations for change. The RCAP (1996b) described reconciliation as having two conjoint strands wherein a “sincere acknowledgment” of past wrongs was accompanied by a “profound and unambiguous commitment to establishing a new relationship for the future” (Vol. 5, p. 4). Recent research on reconciliation concludes that “top-down” political and policy reforms must be simultaneously informed by “bottom-up” initiatives aimed at informing public opinion, perceptions, and practices (Daly & Sarkin, 2007; Maaka & Fleras, 2006; Staub, 2006). Efforts towards reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are currently underway at three levels: political, social, and interpersonal.

3.1.1 Political Reconciliation: Treaty Negotiations

One of the most important and highly charged aspects of reconciliation focuses on political reconciliation, on Aboriginal treaty rights, Aboriginal self-governance, and sovereignty (Alfred, 2006; Assembly of First Nations, 2006; Hartley, Joffe, & Preston, 2010; Ladner, 2009; Maaka & Fleras, 2006; Turner, 2006; Walters, 2008). The Land Claims Agreements Coalition (2013), a group of organizations authorized to negotiate on behalf of specific First Nations, has noted that “taken collectively, modern treaties affect nearly half of Canada’s lands, waters and resources” (p. 2). The legal status of Aboriginal Peoples is distinct, and rights to Aboriginal sovereignty (Turner, 2006) and self-determination have been encoded in the Canadian constitution and in international covenants (Hartley et al., 2010). The treaties describe the foundation for relationships between the two nations. Since the RCAP released its report, negotiations aimed at resolving competing claims for rights, lands, and benefits have been launched at federal, provincial, and territorial levels (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003; Ladner, 2009; Morellato, 2008; Murphy, 2009; Turner, 2011; Walters, 2008).

Two types of treaty negotiations are currently underway (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003; J. R. Miller, 2009). Negotiations around self-governance focus primarily on Aboriginal sovereignty as well as the structures and mechanisms First Nations will use to manage their own affairs, including education, child welfare, health care, policing, transportation, etc. In contrast, comprehensive land claims negotiations address Aboriginal rights and entitlements to lands not specifically addressed in earlier treaties or other legal processes. This includes the authority to manage and the right to receive benefits (material or physical, financial, cultural, and spiritual) from the use of ‘Crown lands’ (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003).

Both comprehensive land claims and self-governance negotiations are components of the “Made-in-Nova Scotia Process.” In 1997, the Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq, the provincial and federal governments came together to form the Mi’kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum (www.tripartiteforum.com) in order to negotiate and coordinate efforts around change in areas such as education, health, justice, economic development, and natural resources. In 2007, these three parties agreed on a framework for treaty negotiations aimed at identifying ways that the Mi’kmaq will “exercise constitutionally protected rights respecting land, resources and governance” in contemporary times (“Mi’kmaq–Nova Scotia–Canada,” 2007, p. 5, Section 10).

3.1.2 Social Reconciliation: Healing and Inclusion.

Although political reforms are an essential component, reconciliation at a social level is also required to allow for healing and empowerment of people who have suffered, and to improve their quality of life (du Toit, 2003; Hatch, 2009, Chapter 4; Maaka & Fleras, 2006, p. 343). Public apologies and truth commissions (Corntassel & Holder, 2008) as well as institutional responsiveness are required to foster equity for Indigenous Peoples, to begin to provide “relief from the concerns that hit Aboriginal people so hard day after day” (Dodson, 1999, para. 67), for example, the harmful intergenerational impacts of residential schools, inequities in health, education, employment, and justice.

Public apology is one approach to redressing collective wrongs (Allpress, Barlow, Brown, & Louis, 2010; Chrisjohn & Wasacase, 2009; Daly & Sarkin, 2007, pp. 162-168; Hollinsworth, 2009; Maaka & Fleras, 2006, p. 343; Regan, 2010, pp. 177-189). In their report, the RCAP (1996b) called for a “sincere acknowledgment” of the harm caused by forced displacement and assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples through the imposition of the Indian Residential School system. In Canada, healing of survivors of Indian Residential Schools, their

families, and communities is seen as essential for reconciliation (Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Nagy, 2013; Regan, 2010; Short, 2005; Stanton, 2011; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004; Younging, Dewar & DeGagné, 2009). In 1986, the United Church of Canada issued the first in a series of three statements apologizing for its role in the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples. Over the next two decades, other churches and agencies have offered up expressions of remorse for the abuses Aboriginal Peoples were subjected to in Indian Residential Schools (Corntassel & Holder, 2008; O'Connor, 2000). Perhaps the best known apology for the abuses of Indian Residential Schools was delivered by the Prime Minister of Canada (Harper, 2008).

As part of this national process of atonement, the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* (2006) offered financial compensation to survivors and their families. Furthermore, this agreement specified that a commission for truth and reconciliation with authority to investigate the experiences and impacts of Indian Residential Schools would be established. In other countries, truth commissions have been set up to investigate violations of human rights, assign blame, determine culpability, and lay out steps for the restoration of justice (Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Daly & Sarkin, 2007; Short, 2005, pp. 268-270; Stanton, 2011, p. 4). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was launched in 2008 to document the shameful legacy of Indian Residential Schools and create a forum which would support the healing of survivors (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2012). From 2010 to 2014, the Commission held public hearings in cities and towns across Canada in order to collect the testimonies of survivors and to create a space where individuals and institutions could make apologies and offer gestures of reconciliation of their own (Czyzewski, 2011; Nagy, 2013; Stanton, 2011).

If statements of regret are not to ring hollow, however, sincere words must also be accompanied by concrete changes in the structures of mainstream institutions and in their day to day operations (Bolton, 2009; Kanu, 2011; Rice, 2013; Schick & McNinch, 2009; Timpson, 2009b; Wadden, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2002). Reconciliation at a social level also emphasizes the need for organizations to ensure that they and their services are responsive, inclusive, and culturally sensitive to the needs of non-dominant groups. In Canada, public institutions responsible for essential services have taken steps towards making their services and supports more accessible, effective, and culturally sensitive for Aboriginal Peoples. This includes efforts in a number of sectors: health care (Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 2009; Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2005; Stout & Downey, 2006; Walker, Cromarty, Kelly, & St Pierre-Hansen, 2009); justice (Legal Aid Ontario, 2008); policing (Ontario Provincial Police, 2006); education (Dion, 2009; Heber, 2008; Kanu, 2011; Mendelson, 2006; Tupper, 2011); and social work (Hart, 2002; Sinclair, 2004).

3.1.3 Interpersonal Reconciliation: Renewed Relationships

As Hardiman and Jackson (1997) illustrated in their “social oppression matrix” (pp. 18-19), equity for marginalized groups requires not only political and social change, but changes in dominant societal groups. Activist and historian Freeman (2000) is clear about settler culpability for the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples:

The colonization of North America has been the result of millions of actions, or non-actions, great and small, by thousands, even millions, of people over hundreds of years. It is not a case of a few immoral leaders committing crimes that the general populace is ignorant of or of the particular cruelty of certain individuals. Ordinary people have been

part and parcel of the process, making decisions that deny another people's being or which allow a destructive process to continue. (p. 452)

The success of efforts towards reconciliation therefore hinges on the desire of non-Aboriginal Canadians to “live differently” with the First Peoples of this land (Saul, 2009, p. 311). In Canada, Aboriginal Peoples are a minority with limited power when it comes to influencing policy level decisions (Cairns, 2000, pp. 27-29). Andrea Smith (2009) has also pointed to the need for “mass-based movements” (pp. 85-87), strategic alliances between Aboriginal Peoples, white settlers, and recent immigrants, as a way of securing Aboriginal rights and infusing post-colonial perspectives into the fabric of Canadian society. This observation resonates with advice offered by former Assembly of First Nations National Chief Ovide Mercredi, who encouraged Aboriginal organizations to engage with non-Aboriginal Canadians, saying, “Your strongest ally in the end will be public opinion. Not the government's, but public opinion. . . . You have to organize so that they become your friends, your supporters” (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 5, pp. 91-92). In the federal government's statement of apology for Indian Residential Schools, Harper (2008) acknowledged that Canadians share responsibility for moving the reconciliation process forward, saying to Aboriginal Peoples, “The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long” (para. 9). Aboriginal Peoples have also recognized the need for increased support from non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Atonement for past wrongs, monetary restitution, reforms in laws, and shifts in institutional functioning are all helpful steps on the journey towards reconciliation. The success of these efforts, however, hinges on interpersonal reconciliation: in the ways that parties who were formerly in conflict learn to interact with one another (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Bloomfield, 2003, pp. 12-14; Daly & Sarkin, 2007; De la Rey, 2001; Hamber & Kelly, 2004;

Jacques, 2000; Lederach, 1997; Leigh, 2002; Porter, 2007). Reflecting on the aspects of the process that have proven most problematic when it comes to promoting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Australia, Leigh (2002) stressed that:

Remedying the appalling disparities in health and education may prove an important precondition for reconciliation, and may also be an outcome of the reconciliation process. But it should not be mistaken for the adaptive work of reconciliation, which involves forging stronger interpersonal relations and creating a better sense of understanding between black and white Australians. (p. 132)

The overarching vision of the RCAP (1996b) was for “renewed relationships” (Vol. 1, p. 643) between Aboriginal Peoples and settler Canadians. The emphasis on the need for a new “post-colonial social contract” (Maaka & Fleras, 2006, p. 345) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is a recurring theme in literature about reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (Alfred, 2010; Bianchi, Hanrahan, Henry, Neufeldt, & Wright, 2008; Neveu, 2010, p. 243; Chambers, 2009; Crean, 2009; L. Davis, 2010; Dockstator, 2005; Dussault, 2007; Erasmus, 2009; Regan, 2010; Saul, 2009; Klein, 2013; A. Smith, 2009; Venables, 2008; Wagamese, 2008; Waziyatawin, 2009).

One image that has been used to illustrate what these renewed relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People might look like is the Two Row Wampum Belt (Bianchi et al., 2008; L. Davis, 2010; Dockstator, 2005; RCAP, 1996a, pp. 9-10; Mercredi & Turpel, 1993, p. 35; Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 38; Venables, 2008). Created as a record of a 1613 treaty¹⁰

¹⁰ In Mi'kmaw territory, wampum belts were also used as a material record of treaty agreements between tribes and between the Mi'kmaq and European colonial powers (Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, 2007, pp. 20-21, 75-81; Prins, 1996, pp. 159, 162; Tully, 1995, pp. 127-130).

between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee, parallel rows of beadwork on the wampum belt represent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people traveling side by side in peace. It was believed that the two groups, rather than remaining separate, would move closer together with the passage of time, forming mutually beneficial cultural, social, political, and economic relationships (Dockstator, 2005). At a minimum, reconciliation requires Aboriginal Peoples and settlers in Canada to interact with one another. Reflecting on decades of activism in Mi'kma'ki, Wampanoag activist and scholar gkisedtanamoogk (2010) observed that:

There is no way you [settlers] can run away. If you intend to stay here, you have the choice of being our friends or being our enemies, and being our enemies can simply mean *You do nothing with us.* (p. 52)

L. Davis (2010), however, has pointed out that increased contact is no guarantee that relationships will be more egalitarian and more just. Aboriginal Peoples are only too familiar with the shortcomings of top-down relationships “formed under coercive conditions because conflicting or overlapping interests make some form of cooperation or consultation unavoidable” (p. 4).

The RCAP (1996b) asserted that what Aboriginal Peoples are seeking is not just more engagement, but the “transformation of the colonial relationship of guardian and ward into one of true partnership” (Vol. 1, p. 656). The Commission (RCAP, 1996a) described this new relationship as “much more than a political or institutional one. It must be a heartfelt commitment among peoples to live together in peace, harmony and mutual support” (p. 20).

The RCAP (1996b) emphasized reconciliation would flounder in the absence of shared values:

In four years of consultations, research and reflection we have come to see clearly that the problems that plague the relationship cannot be addressed exclusively or primarily as

Aboriginal issues. The questions we probed during our inquiry and the solutions that emerged from our deliberations led us back insistently to . . . the human values that Canadians see as the core of their identity. (Vol. 1, p. 12)

In an early article examining institutional roadblocks to Aboriginal Peoples' participation in higher education, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) proposed "4 Rs" that have subsequently become touchstones for collaborative relationships with Aboriginal Peoples, their communities, and organizations: relevance, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Estey, Smylie, & Macaulay, 2009; Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996; Pidgeon, 2008). Substituting "recognition" for "relevance", the RCAP (1996b) identified recognition, respect, sharing, and responsibility (Vol. 1, pp. 643-660) as moments in a journey around a circle where each informs and reinforces the next. If these values were practiced over time, the RCAP believed that conflicts would slowly be resolved and relationships between the two nations would become more balanced and harmonious.

As a first step in rebuilding relationships between the two nations, the RCAP (1996a) urged government, organizations, and individuals to "become involved in a broad and creative campaign of public education" (p. 144) in spaces ranging from union halls to factory floors, office cubicles, and places of worship. Over time, these efforts would lead to "a shared sense of advocacy and public support" (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 5, p. 241). The RCAP report (1996b) listed a number of priority stakeholder groups. These included institutions with a mandate to serve the public, groups with an interest in environmental protection, church members, unions, private business, and industry (Vol. 5, pp. 87-91). The Commission further highlighted the importance of opportunities for dialogue and interaction between people from the two nations.

Recommended activities included:

news coverage and media activity of all sorts; conferences and seminars; awareness activities in schools, workplaces and communities and in local and national organizations; the use of symbols and cultural activities; and special initiatives such as exchanges between families, communities and associations and twinning between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities or organizations. (Vol. 5, p. 83).

Almost two decades later, there are formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities and resources which settler Canadians can access in order to learn more about Aboriginal Peoples, their cultures, issues, and concerns.

The majority of Canada's post-secondary institutions, including universities in Nova Scotia, have courses or programs with a concentration on Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples. Aboriginal Peoples' organizations across the country have also taken a lead role in developing materials and resources which challenge distorted perceptions. For example, only a couple of years after the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that pre-confederation treaty agreements are still in effect and mutually binding, the Grand Council of Micmacs, Union of Nova Scotia Indians, and the Native Council of Nova Scotia (1987) produced *The Mi'kmaq Treaty Handbook* detailing the covenant chain of agreements between signatories in the hope that "these events will make other Nova Scotians more aware of us as a people and will help them understand the origins and nature of Mi'kmaq rights" (p. 13). More recently, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (2007) has developed a learning package titled *Kekina'muek: Learning about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia*. Modules include history of the Mi'kmaq and colonial settlement, the treaties, traditional and contemporary governance, identity, and citizenship. In addition, several Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq First Nations have established cultural and heritage centres which give

non-Aboriginal Canadians an opportunity to learn about and experience some elements of Mi'kmaw culture first hand (Lynch, Duinker, Sheehan, & Chute, 2011).

There are also informal, less structured opportunities for learning about Aboriginal Peoples, for example by viewing displays in museums or art galleries. The past decade has also seen an increase in Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) programming that is by and about Aboriginal Peoples. During Mi'kmaw History Month in October 2013, CBC Nova Scotia broadcast a series which examined the question *Who is Mi'kmaq?* Prepared by Mi'kmaw journalist Trina Roach, programs examined the foundations for Mi'kmaw identity in contemporary society, highlighted examples of cultural resilience and revitalization in Mi'kma'ki today, and discussed why Mi'kmaw people are becoming involved in mass solidarity actions like *Idle No More*. With the exception of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Czyzewski, 2011; Nagy, 2013; TRC, 2012), however, public education for reconciliation which takes place outside schools, colleges, and universities does not appear to have been documented in the academic literature.

3.1.4 Unfulfilled Promises

As a result of Made-in-Nova Scotia treaty negotiations, tri-partite government consultations, and public awareness raising initiatives, the Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs (2013a) has concluded that non-Aboriginal people are at last “on the road to developing a new relationship, one based on partnership, respect and mutual understanding” with the Mi'kmaq (para. 1). As I showed in Chapter 2, though, while there seem to be some signs that Mi'kmaw quality of life has at last begun to improve, violence also persists. McMillan (2011), Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Communities, has asserted that racism

towards Aboriginal Peoples in Nova Scotia is systemic, embedded in norms, policies, practices, procedures, and in the hearts and minds of Nova Scotians.

Other scholars agree that the promise of reconciliation has not been fulfilled. In a book commemorating the 20th anniversary of the resistance at Kanehsatà:ke, Simpson and Ladner (2010) contended that the issues which led to the siege at Oka, Quebec, are still a fact of life for Aboriginal Peoples in this country. Campaigns like *Idle No More*, demonstrations, blockades, treks, and vigils lend weight to the conclusion that balance and peace between the two nations has not been restored (T. King, 2012; Rebeck, 2009; Wilkes, 2006; Wilkes & Ricard, 2007). Ten years after the RCAP released its findings, the Assembly of First Nations (2006) issued a “report card” assessing Canada’s progress in carrying out recommendations made by the Royal Commission. The Assembly gave Canada a failing grade in over half of the 65 categories it assessed. Even comparatively well-resourced spaces like post-secondary institutions (Doyle-Bedwell, 2010; Heber, 2008; Holmes, 2006) or the legal justice system (Comeau, 2007; Reilly, 2010; Turner, 2011) have seemingly been reluctant to take concrete steps which promote Aboriginal Peoples’ rights and interests. In the next section, I look at some reasons why progress towards reconciliation has been so halting and so slow.

3.2 Barriers to Reconciliation

a community procession of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe . . . walked down the main street of Nogojiwanong . . . Settler-Canadians poked their heads out of office buildings and stared at us from sidelines. “Indians. What did they want now? What did they want this time?” (Simpson, 2011, p. 11)

In the United States, Australia, and Canada, contemporary societies which ostensibly uphold equal rights and democratic principles, colonialism has yet to fade away (Vickers & Isaac, 2012). Discriminatory “race regimes” are reproduced not only through unjust laws or ineffective institutional practices, but also through a number of forces that shape public perception. In this section, I look at the how physical distance and public discourses have influenced settler perceptions of Aboriginal Peoples and our relationships with one another. Last, I observe that efforts around public education have been less than fully successful when it comes to raising awareness among settler Canadians or propelling people of privilege to change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. In Nova Scotia, public awareness raising with an eye to Aboriginal justice has not only been insufficient, it has proven inadequate when it comes to addressing profound differences in worldviews and ineffective when it comes to prompting self-reflexivity and responsibility in non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians.

3.2.1 Barriers Posed by Distance

The relative numbers and physical locations of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States and Canada has had an effect on the interest and willingness of people from dominant white groups to engage in cross-cultural relationships (Vickers & Isaac, 2012, pp. 70-102). Compared to the situation in Canada’s western provinces, the Mi’kmaq and other Aboriginal Peoples in Nova Scotia (including the Métis) remain a small demographic minority (Statistics Canada, 2013, para. 1). This lack of critical Aboriginal mass makes it possible for the majority of white residents of Mi’kma’ki to avoid much regular contact or engagement with the Aboriginal “other.” In Halifax, for example, over 50% of non-Aboriginal respondents to the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (Environics Institute, 2011) reported that they had some occasional

contact with Aboriginal people, but only a few said that Aboriginal people were their colleagues at work, their neighbours, or friends (p. 71).

Even before the introduction of the federal *Indian Act* in 1876, colonial administrators had begun to establish Indian “reserves” as a way of securing physical distance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples. A subsequent 1905 amendment to the *Indian Act* allowed for the forced dislocation of Aboriginal Peoples living on reserves located near white towns with more than 8,000 residents. From 1900 to 1926, for instance, Membertou First Nation Band on Cape Breton Island (Unama’ki), repeatedly resisted attempts by city and federal government officials to move them from their traditional lands along the harbour to their present day location at the city periphery (D. N. Paul, 2006, pp. 312-313). Citing a need for administrative “efficiency,” the 1942 Centralization Policy (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, p. 2) gave provincial administrators permission to remove the Mi’kmaq almost entirely out of sight, forcing them to amalgamate in two locations, one on mainland Nova Scotia and one on Unama’ki. By the 1960s, however, the Mi’kmaq had been resettled in thirteen communities across the province,

Increased physical proximity, though, does not necessarily lead to an increase in interaction. As one intervener at an RCAP (1996b) hearing commented, “Even people who live right next to an Indian reserve will not have the slightest idea what Native people are all about” (Vol. 5, p. 82). Similarly, an acquaintance of mine mused that even though her husband was born (and still lives) less than ten kilometers from one of Nova Scotia’s thirteen Mi’kmaw communities, he has “never even talked to a Mi’kmaw person” (Personal communication, September, 2011). As Saul (2009) has pointed out, segregation is more than physical distance; it is also an “absence of practical shared public mechanisms” (p. 318) which bring people together. Even when opportunities have been created for Aboriginal people and settlers to meet face-to-

face, non-Aboriginal Canadians have not always been eager to take up the invitation. In activities organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, for example, one researcher noted the relatively low turnout of non-Aboriginal people (Nagy, 2013, p. 69).

Even if people from the two nations live side by side, relationships may not improve. In the United States, Canada, and Australia, Vickers and Isaac (2012) found that “white attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples tend to be more progressive where there are fewer Indigenous People living among them” (p. 176). Other studies confirm this finding. In a provocatively titled thesis, *Canadian Apartheid: Boundaries and Bridges in Aboriginal-White Relations*, Denis (2011) explored numerous examples where Aboriginal people and whites had formed close, long term interpersonal relationships with one another, including couples who were life partners. Even here, it was not uncommon for white partners to express prejudicial beliefs about their Aboriginal partner and Aboriginal Peoples as a race. In Nova Scotia, this appears to hold true at a community level (Donnelly, 2012; Kayseas, Hindle & Anderson, 2006; Poliandri, 2011, Chapter 2; Raybould, 2006). Although Membertou First Nation is located within the boundaries of the city of Sydney, Nova Scotia, and band members have been employed off-reserve for more than a century, until quite recently the Membertou community had “few if any links to Sydney businesses and, on the whole, relations with the urban community were often characterized by feelings of mistrust and incidents of racism”(Wien, cited in Kayseas et al., 2006, p. 7).

3.2.2 Barriers Created by Discourses

With the advent of British rule in Canada, conquest, assimilation, and extermination were used to secure control not only over Aboriginal territory but also over settlers’ perceptions of Aboriginal Peoples (Day, 2000; Mackey, 2002). Prevailing public discourses, the talk and the silences in public broadcast media as well as exhibits in museums and art galleries reinforce false

beliefs about Aboriginal Peoples, about the colonial past, and about contemporary Aboriginal/settler relationships (Alfred, 2005; Bolton, 2009; Crean, 2009; Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006, pp. 14-21; Lischke & McNab, 2005, Introduction; Mackey, 2002) The most powerful weapons for the exclusion of Aboriginal Peoples today are not physical but psychological:

Contemporary Settlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers' colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as human bodies, but by trying to eradicate their existence as peoples through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self. (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 598)

Henry and Tator (2006) have highlighted a long list of “discourses of democratic racism” (pp. 22-29) used to erase, diminish, or denigrate minority groups in Canada. Discourses of binary polarization, terra nullius, and multi-culturalism have not been confined to books, but have become embedded in popular perceptions of provincial history and settler/Mi'kmaq relationships. Oblivious to the ways in which conquest, assimilation, and extermination have been used as weapons for Aboriginal repression and control (Day, 2000; J. P. Miller, 2007; D. N. Paul, 2006; Reid, 1995), settlers may even be unjustifiably proud of their “superior” treatment of Aboriginal and First Nations Peoples (Mackey, 2002, p. 34-36).

Discourses of binary polarization (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 28) divide people into opposing categories and camps where people perceived as white (either by birthright or skin colour) are perceived as having a host of positive attributes including intelligence, healthy lifestyles, and sound moral worldviews. In contrast, Memmi (2000) argued that colonizers have routinely depicted the colonized as primitive, simple, superstitious, biologically subhuman, and culturally backward. This notion that whites are “naturally” superior has a long provided a basis

for the creation of an imaginary, homogenous white settler identity, binding together groups who otherwise might have had little in common (Day, 2000; Mackey, 2002; Reid, 1995; Shore, 2002).

In Nova Scotia, discourses of binary polarization were evident in public school textbooks for over a century. Glossing over old world rivalries in which settlers like the Scots and the Irish were sworn enemies, late 19th-century Nova Scotia school books began to depict European settlers as a solid white phalanx pitted against hostile Indians. Images of Aboriginal Peoples aimed to provoke both disgust and fear:

Before a battle they held a grand feast followed by wild war dances during which they filled the air with hideous shouts and yells. Prisoners taken in war they tortured to death and then feasted on their bodies. (Calkin, 1898, pp. 2-3)

John B. Calkin was virtually the sole author of history and geography texts authorized for use in Nova Scotia schools for some fifty years (Robinson, 1979; Welsh, 2005). From the late 1920s onwards, Calkin's texts were gradually supplanted by other resources (Robinson, 1979), but overtly racist representations of Aboriginal Peoples persisted for decades. As late as the 1970s, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (1974) found that half of all textbooks selected for review contained racist images, stereotyped or misleading language, or failed to acknowledge the perspectives or concerns of minorities (pp. 68-71).

Another troubling discourse that is still evident both in schools and public spaces is the discourse of *terra nullius* (Henry & Tator, 2006 pp. 28-29). When non-dominant or minority groups are expunged from the historical record, it appears that Canada was *terra nullius*, an empty land, when Europeans arrived (Haig Brown & Nock, 2006; Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 107; Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 1974). Indigenous presence, needs, and perspectives

are therefore positioned as subordinate, if they are considered at all. For example, in *A History of Nova-Scotia or Acadie* (Murdoch, 1866), the Mi'kmaq were depicted as mere on-lookers to struggles between the French and British colonizers. The Peace and Friendship treaties with the Mi'kmaq which shifted the balance of control towards the British were not mentioned in the body of the text but were relegated to an untitled appendix (Murdoch, 1866, pp. 167-168). Murdoch's interpretations carried considerable authority in the public realm (Clarke, 1991). A lawyer, Member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, and long term secretary of the Central Board of Education in Halifax, Murdoch was subsequently acclaimed Nova Scotia's foremost "national historian" (Clarke, 1991, p. 87).

In both academic and popular histories, the Mi'kmaq remained an afterthought for almost a century. In the mid-1980s, a bibliography of holdings at the Nova Scotia Legislative Library (Elliott, 1986) listed a significant number of biographies of prominent European figures in Nova Scotia's past (6 ½ pages) as well as works about local and provincial history (21 pages), the experiences of British, Scottish, and Acadian colonists. In contrast, there were a mere fifteen titles with reference to "Micmac Indians," almost exclusively focused on ancient pre-history or the period of first contact, and all written by non-Aboriginal authors (Elliott, 1986, pp. 87-88).

The Mi'kmaq were even further expunged from the public eye and public historical memory through the creation of a provincial tourism brand which portrayed Nova Scotia as a British stronghold and Celtic refuge (I. McKay, 1993; I. McKay & Bates, 2010). Drawing from the works of popular authors such as Thomas Raddall who told tales about "the triumph of the English-speaking Nova Scotians over their adversaries: Americans, Frenchman, natives" (I. McKay, 1993, p. 121), tourism posters and guidebooks suggested as points of attraction historical monuments that valorized the virtues of white settlers. The result is a popular

perception of a peaceful colonial past, largely devoid of struggle, that of a “harmonious Golden Age” (I. McKay, 1993, p. 113). As I noted at the beginning of Chapter 2, these same kinds of images are widely used in Nova Scotia tourism campaigns today.

Perhaps the most common contemporary discourse about the Mi’kmaq is a “discourse of multiculturalism” (Henry & Tator, 2006, pp. 27-28) which suggests that Aboriginal Peoples, their cultures and rights are respected as being equal to white Europeans (Mackey, 2002; Schick, 2000; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). The impression created is that Canada’s multicultural mosaic has been equally benign for all (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010; Schick, 2000; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Even as overtly racist images of Aboriginal Peoples are gradually removed (Clark, 2007; Tupper, 2011),¹¹ this discourse is still evident in school texts (Bickmore, 2006). It is also evident in public repositories of national memory such as museums which tell stories about Canada as “a nation of peacemakers” (Regan, 2010, Chapter 3) renowned for our “national tolerance” (Alfred, 2005; Bolton, 2009; Crean, 2009; Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006; Lischke & McNab, 2005, Introduction; Mackey, 2002, Chapter 2). A 2011 Art Gallery of Nova Scotia exhibit titled *Burying the Hatchet, and the Sword* is one such example. The exhibit featured prints and drawings of Mi’kmaw dress, encampments, and livelihood activities created by white settlers in the decades immediately after the signing of the 1752 Peace and Friendship Treaty. Although the title referred to peacemaking, there was little indication in the exhibit itself that relationships between white settlers and the Mi’kmaq had ever been less than benign. With the exception of a single sentence in the exhibit prospectus which admitted the “rapacious demand of new settlers for more land” (2011, p. 2), there was no recognition of the hardships the Mi’kmaq

¹¹ Images such as “Red Coats and Redskins” (Francis, 1992), the “Exotic Other” or “Problem Protestor” (Clark, 2007) may now be less evident, but have not been eliminated entirely.

endured under British rule. As the result of discourses which enforce rigid self/other distinction, promote false beliefs about an empty land or the peacefulness of colonial rule, the Mi'kmaq have been “reduced to small groups of racially and culturally defined and marginalized individuals drowning in sea of settlers—who needn't be taken seriously” (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 123).

3.2.3 Insufficient, Ineffective Public Education

Failure on the part of non-Aboriginal Canadians to take up their responsibilities for renewed relationships is a serious impediment to reconciliation (Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 2001; Assembly of First Nations, 2006; Nagy, 2013; TRC, 2012; Vickers & Isaac, 2012; Younging et al., 2009). Schick and McNinch (2009), for instance, have observed that while there has been a shift in the use of language since 1996, the “majority of interactions . . . continue to reflect differences in social, political and economic power” (p. xii). In a 2006-2008 study carried out in Val-d'Or, Quebec, 52% of Aboriginal respondents described their relationships with non-Aboriginals as characterized by “unfamiliarity and tension” (Dugré, Gagnon, Leblanc, Sioui, & Thomas, 2010, p. 4); 75% of non-Aboriginal residents participating in the study felt there was “conflict, rejection and indifference” (p. 4) between the two groups. Nationally, over 70% of Aboriginal respondents in the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (Enviroics Institute, 2010) said that settlers saw them in a negative light (p. 73). In Halifax, Aboriginal people were somewhat more optimistic about the perceptions of non-Aboriginal residents but asserted that stereotyping was still a problem (Enviroics Institute, 2011, p. 38). Aboriginal respondents were unexpectedly positive about the services they received from institutions like banks and schools. When encounters were negative, however, Aboriginal respondents said the problem lay with particular employees who were “judgmental or lacked empathy” (pp. 43-45). Similarly, in a consumer satisfaction survey carried out by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (2013),

Aboriginal people reported incidents of racial profiling, slow service, and offensive language when dealing with local businesses. Part of the difficulty in addressing systemic racism is that the onus for change ultimately rests with individuals who must be willing and able to do things differently (Essed, 2002; Frye, 1983; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, pp. 18-19; Memmi, 2000; Sue, 2010; Young, 2006).

In the face of poorly informed government officials (Dussault, 2007, pp. 10-11) as well as non-Aboriginal citizens who lack empathy and withhold their cooperation (Cairns, 2000, pp. 209-210), progress towards reconciliation has been slow. As Alfred (2009) has argued:

The complete ignorance of Canadian society about the facts of their relationship with Indigenous peoples and the willful denial of historical reality by Canadians detracts from the possibility of any meaningful discussion on true reconciliation. (p. 181)

Speaking with CBC journalist Michael Enright, for example, three former Ministers of Indian Affairs—David Crombie (1984 to 1986), Tom Siddon (1990 and 1993), and Robert Nault, (1999 to 2003)—were frank about how little they knew when they assumed their post (“Idle No More,” 2013). Many adult Canadian settlers still know little or nothing about Aboriginal Peoples, or the treaties, or about Canada’s colonial past and the intergenerational impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal Peoples (de Costa & Clark, 2011; Dion, 2009; Dugré et al., 2010; Kanu, 2011; Mackey, 2002; J. P. Miller, 2007; Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 2013; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2011).

White settlers born in Canada appear to know less than recent immigrants about the treaties and about the contemporary issues and concerns of Aboriginal Peoples (de Costa & Clark, 2011). In Halifax, for instance, one in three non-Aboriginal respondents could not name even one issue important to urban Aboriginal people today (Environics Institute, 2011, p. 72).

The same study showed that non-Aboriginal respondents were also uncertain when it came to issues of Aboriginal rights, what (if anything) Aboriginal Peoples are entitled to as First Peoples, or if they are just the same as other ethnic groups (p. 11). The survey concluded that while non-Aboriginal residents in Halifax were more predisposed towards Aboriginal Peoples than people in some other cities, they were less than well informed. Frequently, their opinions were based on what they heard in the media or other second hand sources.

What is even more troubling than this lack of knowledge is that many white people of privilege are seemingly reluctant to learn more even when opportunities are provided. In Saskatchewan, for example, educators have described how non-Aboriginal teacher candidates, teachers, and students absent themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally from mandated treaty instruction (Schick, 2014; Tupper, 2011). Rather than empathetic involvement, Aboriginal people's stories and interpretations prompted even more "resistance and resentment" on the part of non-Aboriginal learners, teachers, and community members (Schick, 2014, p. 88). It is not uncommon for people of privilege to regard invitations to talk about race-based issues as requiring some "sacrifice" on their part (C. E. James, 2007, p. 119; A. Thompson, 2003, p. 16). When it comes to discussing the harsh realities of genocide and abuse that Aboriginal Peoples have suffered, settlers are more likely to shut down and turn away than to engage (Martin, 2009; Regan, 2010; Schick, 2014).

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for settler Canadians to deny that Aboriginal Peoples are discriminated against at all. In one graduate level Sociology of Education course, for example, participants either said that racism wasn't a problem or they insisted that any inequality was the result of "individual, family, community or cultural" differences (Tompkins, 2002, p. 406). A recent survey suggests that this belief is widespread across Canada. In an Ipsos Reid

(2013) poll, 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “Most of the problems of native people are brought on by themselves” (Detailed Tables, 2_9, p. 13). Indeed, Ipsos Reid’s CEO of Public Affairs commented that “there seems to have been a hardening of Canadian public opinion on Aboriginal issues” (Mahoney, 2013).

As Donald (2009a, 2009b, 2012) observed, relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples reflect a worn out “fort/frontier” mentality where settlers have barricaded themselves behind high walls in an effort to maintain their distance and preserve an uneasy *status quo*. The burden for bridging historic social, cultural, and political differences between the two nations still rests on the shoulders of Aboriginal Peoples (Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery, 2004; Henderson, 2000b, 2000d; Maaka & Anderson, 2006; Wallace, 2010). Saskatchewan Treaty Commissioner David Arnot (cited in Saul, 2008) has commented that:

Non-Aboriginals appear to be moving ever so tentatively toward reconciliation, which would be a first step toward understanding the situation differently. As always in our history, the elegance and generosity when it is a matter of reconciliation comes largely from the indigenous side, from those who have been wronged. (p. 98)

Looking with fresh eyes, one new immigrant from the UK observed that non-Aboriginal Canadians seem to believe that they have nothing in common with the First Peoples of Turtle Island, that they see the “issues facing Indigenous Peoples [as] largely irrelevant to the lives, health and happiness of themselves and their children” (Chambers, 2009, p. 285). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, many settlers believe that reconciliation is the responsibility of the government, rather than a personal obligation as a citizen of this country (de Costa & Clark, 2011; Environics Institute, 2011, p. 75; Hiltz, 2009; Ipsos Reid, 2013; Mackey, 2002; Murphy, 2009; Simpson, 2011, pp. 20-22).

The problem of settler ignorance has been traced to a failure of education. In a study by the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (2002), for instance, one participant commented:

I was barely taught ANYTHING regarding Aboriginal Peoples in school . . . I am absolutely clueless with regard to these issues. I am uneducated on these matters and as such feel ill equipped to even have an opinion much less come to an understanding. (p. 129)

At the time, the Coalition found that “fully two-thirds (67%) of [public school] students may never have discussed contemporary issues of concern to Aboriginal Peoples” (p. 2). From elementary to post-secondary levels, curricula still do not provide appropriate, balanced recognition of Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal history, rights, issues, and concerns (Clark, 2007; Godlewska et al., 2010; Kanu, 2011; Tupper, 2011). More recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012) concluded that the information gap was not getting smaller: “Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples” (p. 25). One of the goals of the TRC was to provide this kind of education to non-Aboriginal Canadians (Czyzewski, 2011; Nagy, 2013; Stanton, 2011), but the extent to which Commission events have prompted settler Canadians to demand that our governments become more socially accountable for Aboriginal rights and justice is unclear (Nagy, 2013, pp. 64-66). In Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia, an Office of the Treaty Commissioner distributes updates and provides access to educational resources. In Saskatchewan, treaty education has become a mandatory curriculum topic for grades K-12 and efforts are underway to teach teachers about the importance of the treaties (Tupper, 2011). These kinds of initiatives are almost entirely absent in

Nova Scotia. Although resources for learning about the Mi'kmaq and the treaties in Mi'kma'ki do exist, few people seem to know them.

In this section I've talked about three barriers that stand in the way of renewed relationships between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians. First was the problem of distance, the lack of contact and personal, professional, and social interactions between people from the two nations. This separation often goes unnoticed by non-Aboriginal Canadians because discourses like that of multiculturalism draw a veil over the past, reassuring settlers of the rightness of their current position and privilege. In the absence of any assertive public counter-narratives, these distorted perceptions remain comfortably intact. At the heart of the problem of reconciliation, however, lies the need for shifts in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of people from dominant groups (Auerbach, 2009; Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Bloomfield, 2003; Daly & Sarkin, 2007; De la Rey, 2001; Hamber & Kelly, 2004; Lederach, 1997; Leigh, 2002). As one authority in the field of reconciliation attested, reconciliation is "a deep process . . . which demands changes in our aspirations, our emotions and feelings" (Bloomfield, 2003, p. 12). Even today settlers are grossly uninformed and misinformed about Aboriginal Peoples and treaty obligations. In the last section of this literature review, I outline three approaches to learning for reconciliation, examining their contributions and drawbacks when it comes to improving settlers' knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples, building relationship skills, and shifting settlers' perceptions of themselves.

3.3 Learning for Reconciliation

This accommodation of Aboriginal nationhood can be achieved without undermining Canadian society. We all want a future based on respect for diversity, a future that is tolerant, co-operative and respectful of other peoples' need to live

and govern themselves in the territory we have come to share.

(RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, p. 587)

In order to challenge longstanding stereotypes and deeply embedded prejudices and bring about an attitudinal change in settler Canada, the RCAP (1996b) recommended that education for reconciliation increase understanding of Aboriginal rights, cultures, and concerns. (Vol. 1, pp. 82-105). To facilitate these shifts, the RCAP (1996b) also suggested that some training in cross-cultural communication skills would be required (Vol. 5, pp. 85-87). As I moved ahead with this study, I became aware of the resources, programs, and courses developed to help settler Canadians like me acquire this knowledge and develop these skills. I examined materials available on the internet and in libraries, and participated in several awareness raising programs offered by different organizations. What I noticed was that resources and courses with an eye to reconciliation varied greatly and emphasized different topics, types of knowledge, and skills. Initially, I felt confused. Did one program contain content or skills that were more important? Was there a sequence in which content and skills should be learned? What became apparent was that these programs and resources were grounded in different assumptions about the types of relationships settlers were anticipated to have with Aboriginal Peoples as well as the outcomes or goals of these relationships. Seldom, however, was there any explicit mention of the underlying principles that shaped the selection of content or approach to teaching and learning.

A typology proposed by anti-oppression educators Guo and Jamal (2007) has identified three ways in which Canadian post-secondary institutions have attempted to promote awareness and understanding of cultural differences in students and faculty: intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism education. I found this model helpful in recognizing the underlying assumptions of Aboriginal awareness raising programs and resources. In some instances, materials or courses

draw from more than one approach: not surprising, as dividing lines among these approaches have been blurred for some time (Coulby, 2006; Rezai-Rashti, 1995). In the remainder of this section, I describe how intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism approaches to education are reflected in programs and resources aimed at settler Canadians, and analyze some of the respective strengths and weaknesses of each pedagogical lens.

3.3.1 Intercultural Approaches

One explicit RCAP (1996b) recommendation was to “sensitize persons whose work brings them into contact” with Aboriginal Peoples (Vol. 5, p. 86). Intercultural approaches to education promote the acquisition of cross-cultural communication skills required for more effective, efficient, and satisfying interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986; Fuglesang, 1982; Grote, 2008; Guo & Jamal, 2007, pp. 33-37; Jandt, 2007; St. Onge et al., 2009). Kumashiro (2000) has described intercultural approaches as a form of “Education for the Other” where the goal is to become aware of the needs, interests, and preferences of people from non-dominant groups and to make accommodations so that learning can take place.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians need to develop skills which enable them to form and sustain personal relationships with Aboriginal Peoples (Hanson, 2009; Mussel, 2008; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, pp. 582-587, 643-662 ; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 5, pp. 1-20 ; Ross, 1992). Over the past decade there has been an upsurge in awareness of a need for “cultural competence” in relation to Aboriginal Peoples in fields such as: health care¹² (Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 2009; Hanson, 2009;

¹² In the field of nursing, in particular, there has also a corresponding emphasis on “cultural safety,” a need for health professionals to respect differences, to be aware of the ramifications of cultural differences, and as part of their professional responsibilities to address broader systemic inequities which affect Aboriginal Peoples’ health (Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 2009, pp. 1-2; Walker et al., 2009).

Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2005; Walker et al., 2009); education (M. R. Atleo & Fitznor, 2009; Berger & Epp, 2005; Kanu, 2011; Mixon, 2009); social work (Gray, Coates, & Hetherington, 2007) policing (Ontario Provincial Police, 2006); justice and legal aid (Legal Aid Ontario, 2008). Here the focus is on smoothing interactions in workplace or business contexts and on more effective, efficient, and appropriate service delivery.

Intercultural approaches assume that a lack of knowledge about “the other” can result in ineffective practice, as well as stereotyping and prejudice (Brislin et al., 1986; Fuglesang, 1982, pp. 33-37; Grote, 2008; Guo & Jamal, 2007; Jandt, 2007; St. Onge et al., 2009). As a foundation for interactions with Aboriginal Peoples, settlers need to be able to use proper terminology and colloquialisms, pronounce the names of people, places, and other terms (Joseph & Joseph, 2005; Spielmann, 2009, pp. 83-105). In a guide for health practitioners, the Nova Scotia Department of Health (2005) provides definitions and demographic information about Aboriginal Peoples in the province, as well as a list of health concerns identified by Aboriginal communities (p. 12).

Communicative competence also means adapting common tasks and procedures. The guide suggests, for instance, that health professionals make the patient interview process more inclusive by creating an opportunity for other family members to be included (p. 16). An ability to interpret non-verbal messages and use body language appropriately is also a key intercultural skill (LeBaron, 2004, pp. 12-13; Regan, 2010, pp. 88-98; Spielmann, 2009, pp. 130-139). The Nova Scotia Department of Health (2005) consequently advises health practitioners that some items which appear to be “jewelry” may have spiritual significances and should not be touched or removed except by the person who is wearing them (p. 16).

Some of the personal traits associated with intercultural effectiveness include openness, curiosity, flexibility, and motivation (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Kealey & Protheroe, 1995; St.

Onge et al., 2009). People from dominant groups also need to be able to live with ambiguity: the discomfort of not knowing and potentially saying or doing the wrong thing (LeBaron, 2004, pp. 16-17). Health care professionals in Nova Scotia are cautioned against imposing their values by “avoid[ing] arguing and defending” their viewpoint (Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2005, p. 17). Instead they should “show empathy” and “listen not just to the words, but to the feelings behind the words” (p. 17). As nursing educator and Elder Gaye Hanson (2009) has asserted, settlers need to demonstrate “willingness to connect and respond to the dynamics of a relationship . . . even in the absence of acceptance and forgiveness” (p. 244).

One international review, however, concluded that intercultural approaches seem to have had limited effectiveness (Grote, 2008, p. 46). When it comes to improving relationships with Aboriginal Peoples, intercultural approaches have been critiqued because they downplay the breadth of cultural difference as well as the difficulty of learning required to become culturally competent (Bell & Kahane, 2004; Jeffery & Nelson, 2009; LeBaron, 2004; Pon, 2009; Schick, 2009). An in-depth knowledge of another culture is a prerequisite for effective interactions (Fuglesang, 1982; Gorski, 2008; Jandt, 2007; LeBaron & Pillay, 2006) but the *Cultural Competence Guide for Primary Health Care Professionals* (Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2005) contains only a single page of information specific to Aboriginal Peoples (p. 12). Another concern is that Aboriginal Peoples have been subsumed into a single homogenous group which ignores differences in nation, location, language, individual preferences, family and community influence, education, or professional training (Kumaş-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007).

Nor is there much mention in intercultural resources of the need to redress inequities at an institutional and societal level (Gorski, 2008; Jeffery & Nelson, 2009; Kumaş-Tan et al.,

2007; Pon, 2009). Schick and McNinch (2009) conclude that the current emphasis on cultural competency glosses over imbalances of power and privilege. Instead, intercultural programs seem to assume a kind of “democratic cultural pluralism” (Roediger, 1991) where people from different cultural groups are social, political, and economic equals. In the Nova Scotia Department of Health (2005) guide, for instance, First Nations Peoples are only one of a number of “diverse” communities, including Francophone Canadians, people of Black, Chinese, South Asian, and Arabic ancestry. Although the guide provides definitions of power, privilege, racism, and oppression, the ways in which these factors play out in patient care and the health system are not addressed. Becoming genuinely culturally competent may not only be difficult, but emotionally painful and spiritually demanding as well (Applebaum, 2007; M. J. Bennett, 1993; Goodman, 2001; LeBaron & Pillay, 2006; Nagata, 2006; St. Onge et al., 2009). Participants need to come to terms with differences that may not be comfortable, and with their own fears about interactions and encounters that must be conducted on unknown, potentially threatening terrain (Leki, 2010; St. Onge et al., 2009, p. 9).

3.3.2 Multicultural Approaches

Multicultural educational approaches set out to create more equal opportunities by making the broader society more welcoming, inclusive, and representative of people from non-dominant groups. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1971, Revised 1985, Amended 1993) signaled that Canadian identity is not singular but plural, and enshrined protection for expression of diverse cultural preferences and lifestyles where “no one group should have or maintain cultural superiority” (Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, 1978, p. 1). This vision of multiculturalism was rapidly embraced by groups with an interest in human rights, including the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (1974) who asserted there was an urgent need to

“educate fully . . . all students in the cultures and history of our minorities” (p. 21).

Multiculturalism places an emphasis not only on developing more in-depth knowledge of other cultures, but on learning to understand and value cultural differences for their own sake (Banks, 1996; C. Bennett, 2001; Guo & Jamal, 2007; C. E. James, 2005; Leman, 1999). The contention is that if people from dominant groups understand diversity, conditions will be created which allow individuals from non-dominant groups to succeed (Banks, 2010; Guo & Jamal, 2007, pp. 37-40).

Leading proponents of multicultural education James and Cherry Banks (2010) have pointed to a range of strategies used to foster appreciation of cultural diversity. One of the most widely used strategies, content integration, seeks to infuse non-dominant knowledge and perspectives into mainstream institutions and discourses. Content integration is congruent with Kumashiro’s (2000) “Education About the Other,” where integration of the histories, ideas, and perspectives of non-dominant groups into school curricula and public spaces leads to a reduction in prejudice. In Nova Scotia, the provincial Office of Aboriginal Affairs has a mandate to raise public awareness of the Mi’kmaq, and in 1993 the Nova Scotia government declared October to be Mi’kmaq History Month. Since 1998, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs has produced a series of commemorative posters for Mi’kmaq History Month, each depicting a particular aspect of Mi’kmaw culture. Other provincial institutions also play a role in increasing awareness of Aboriginal Peoples. In 2014, for example, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia officially opened a larger, more visible space dedicated to works by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis artists. At the opening, the provincial Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage commented that “Nova Scotia has worked for years to build a strong, healthy relationship with Aboriginal people. . . . Building and showing the province’s collection of Aboriginal art helps us accomplish our goals

and helps visitors to better understand this vital relationship” (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2014, para. 2).

A second strategic approach to multiculturalism focuses on helping people from dominant groups acquire a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ways in which other cultures construct knowledge and perceive the world (Banks & Banks, 2010). In Canada, settlers often know little about Aboriginal Peoples, their cultures and territories (Alfred, 2006; Cajete, 2000; Henderson, 2000c; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Little Bear, 2000; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, pp. 20-93, 588-643; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 4; Sable & Francis, 2012). Over the past decade, academics, professionals, and governments have begun to acknowledge that Aboriginal traditions and worldviews are derived from fundamentally different principles than those which shaped white European thinking. In areas such as education, natural resource management, and governance the two nations have divergent understandings of what is important and take different approaches to life, living, and relationships (E. R. Atleo, 2004; Bell & Kahane, 2004; Berkes, 1999; Goulet, 1998; Henderson, 2000a; Kendrick, 2003; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Lutz, 2007; Natcher, 2008; Simpson, 2011). Several Nova Scotia Mi’kmaw First Nations have established cultural and heritage programs. On the mainland, for example, Millbrook First Nation operates the *Glooscap Heritage Centre* (<http://www.glooscapheritagecentre.com>). On Cape Breton Island, there are two centres, the *Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre* (<http://www.wagmatcookcentre.com>), and *Membertou Heritage Park* (<http://www.membertouheritagepark.com>). These centres house permanent exhibits on pre- and post-contact history, traditional livelihood practices, tools and technologies, and rotating exhibits on current topics such as Indian Residential Schools. Visitors can participate in hands-on activities such as drum making, basket weaving, or quillwork. In addition, *Eskasoni Cultural*

Tours (<http://www.eskasoniculturaljourneys.ca>) offers guided visits to significant Mi'kmaw cultural sites, traditional storytelling, a feast featuring local foods, and cultural performances.

Multicultural educational approaches have been criticized for an undue emphasis on visible, material differences (such as baskets, clothing, food, or tools) and performative actions such as art or music which deflect attention away from deeper challenges posed by Aboriginal Peoples' ontological and epistemological perspectives (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, pp. 19-21; Mackey, 2002, pp. 117-118; Schick, 2014, p. 93). As Little Bear (2000) illustrated, when Indigenous Peoples' perspectives come up against Eurocentric interpretations the effect is one of "jagged worldviews colliding" (p. 77). A cultural framework developed by Dumont (2005) highlights the profound differences between Eurocentric and Aboriginal worldviews, in particular the importance of "Indigenous Intelligences." This is consistent with other research which has found that cultural differences begin at the level of physical perception and cognition (Brislin et al., 1986, pp. 41-42; Fuglesang, 1982; Hofstede, 1984; Jandt, 2007, Chapter 3). Recognizing, let alone interpreting and beginning to understand differences in worldviews, meaning systems, values, and perceptions demands time and commitment on the part of learners as well as a period of immersion in the new cultural context (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Gorski, 2008; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, pp. 19-21; St. Onge et al., 2009). For non-Aboriginal people, deep learning about Indigenous cultures could be "a lifetime project that requires time and patience" (Henderson, 2000a, p. 261). In one study of white teachers working in Aboriginal communities in northern Canada, for instance, researchers concluded that "most of the curriculum was beyond the students' abilities, or, since it dealt with traditional Inuit knowledge, beyond Paul's ability to teach" (Berger & Epp, 2005, p. 44).

In addition, Aboriginal scholars like St. Denis (2007) have pointed out that an emphasis on traditional cultural practices raises thorny questions about authenticity, the assumption that Aboriginal people who are traditional are somehow more “real” and deserving than Aboriginal people who have assimilated or accommodated themselves to the Eurocentric norm (pp. 1075-1081). In his popular history of Aboriginal/settler relationships in Canada, Thomas King (2012) points out that colourful displays of traditional Aboriginal cultural practices by “Dead Indians” pose little threat to the status quo (pp. 53-59). As I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 2, for instance, one of the few depictions of the Mi’kmaq in the 2012 Nova Scotia *Doers and Dreamers Guide* (Government of Nova Scotia, 2012) was a Parks Canada advertisement that featured a Mi’kmaw woman wearing a skin dress and beating a drum. Multicultural knowledge about Aboriginal Peoples presented in schools and public spaces is frequently partial at best because it has been written by white settlers (Bolton, 2009; Dion, 2009; Episknew, 2009; Hulan & Eigenbrod, 2008). Frequently omitted are the many unpalatable, hard-to-hear truths about violence and genocide (Dion, 2009; Episknew, 2009; T. King, 2012; Lutz, 2007).

Even when the explicit focus is on understanding these deep cultural differences, heightened awareness on the part of people from dominant groups does not necessarily result in any corresponding recognition of cultural conditioning or changes in self-positioning. In a study carried out by Kanu (2011), for example, teachers appeared willing to integrate more content about Aboriginal Peoples into curricula, but the underlying values and assumptions remained unchanged. Neither teachers nor students took much action when it came to changing interaction patterns in the classroom, the school, or the community (p. 172). As Thomas King (2012) has noted, however, “Live Indians” (Aboriginal Peoples who live in communities and cities across Turtle Island), and “Legal Indians” (Aboriginal Peoples with specific rights) pose significant

challenges to taken for granted Canadian norms. Turner (2006, 2011), for example, has argued that nothing less than a fundamental re-thinking of western liberal democracy needs to take place before there will be any social justice for Aboriginal Peoples, but says that he sees little willingness on the part of lawmakers to even consider the implications of Aboriginal perspectives for white, Canadian approaches to democracy.

3.3.3 Anti-Racism Approaches

Anti-racism education is the third approach to promoting understanding of diversity identified by Guo and Jamal (2007). Other educators have also looked to anti-racism education as a fresh way for decolonizing settler Canada and promoting more balanced relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Battiste, 2004a, 2004b; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007, 2011). Facilitators at a forum called “Indigenous Worldviews on Truth and Reconciliation” (Interfaith Summer Institute for Justice, Peace and Social Movements, 2008), for instance, concluded that “anti-racism training and learning about white privilege would greatly benefit white people who want to attend truth and reconciliation forums” (p. 1). Anti-racism approaches draw from social justice theory and critical theory in order to reveal inequalities experienced by oppressed groups (Dei, 1996; Guo & Jamal, 2007). The goal is to eliminate racial inequalities by bringing about changes in racist systems, institutional structures, policies, and people. Racism is any form of inequitable treatment which denies individuals or groups access to rights, resources, and opportunities on the basis of racial origins or skin colour (Bell, 1997, p. 6; Memmi, 2000; Vickers & Isaac, 2012, pp. 267-270).

Dei (1996) has drawn attention to a number of principles which characterize anti-racism approaches, including:

- Recognition of the impacts of race on the everyday, lived experiences of people from non-dominant groups;
- An understanding of how racism intersects with other forms of oppression, for example, gender, sexual orientation, age;
- Understanding why inequality persists, why particular groups continue to be marginalized despite attempts at reforms; and
- Recognition of white privilege, awareness of the ways in which whites have benefited from unearned social, cultural, economic, and political power and privilege.

Anti-racism education, therefore, raises awareness of how racial inequalities are enforced, including the ways in which the beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes of individuals contribute to the reproduction of inequality (Bell, 1997; Dei, 1996; Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997).

Kumashiro's (2000) interpretation of anti-racism is that this is "Education Critical of Privileging" which requires "critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies" (p. 36). Speaking about the barriers to equity and justice for Aboriginal Peoples, Green (2009) agreed that the transformation process:

Requires more than simply the goodwill of well-intentioned white people and the superficial recognition of Aboriginal cultural practices . . . [it] means a diminishment of power on the part of those who have always assumed that their merit and goodness, rather than their race (and gender) privilege are the reasons they enjoy the lion's share of social goods. (p. 143)

As Haig-Brown (2008) has noted, Canada is "a nation built on persisting colonial relations" (p. 16). In colonial societies, racism is a historical, social, and cultural construct which has become so interwoven in the societal fabric that both racism and its effects become invisible to the

privileged (Memmi, 1991, 2000). Frequently though, Canadians know little about this country's colonial past: the violence used to secure settlement and wrest control from Aboriginal Peoples, and the intergenerational harm inflicted on Aboriginal Peoples through the imposition of Indian Residential Schools, the Indian Act, and relocation. (Henderson, 2000b; Jacobs & Williams, 2008; T. King, 2012; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; D. N. Paul, 2006; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1; Ross, 1992; Simpson & Ladner, 2010; Younging et al., 2009).

In addition to supporting healing of Indian Residential School survivors and their families, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada had a mandate to carry out public education aimed at helping settler Canadians recognize the harmful ripple effects of attempts to assimilate Aboriginal Peoples in Indian Residential Schools (T. King, 2012; Nagy, 2013; Regan, 2010; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004; Younging et al., 2009). TRC activities open to the public included testimony by survivors, films, displays, and ceremonies honouring the contributions of survivors such as Mi'kmaw Elder Nora Bernard who initiated the fight for a nationwide settlement agreement for survivors. Many non-Aboriginal Canadians have little knowledge about what happened in Indian Residential Schools, let alone the web of interconnections between Indian Residential Schools, the *Indian Act*, and contemporary socio-cultural problems Aboriginal nations and communities are only now coming to grips with (de Costa & Clark, 2011; Stanton, 2011, pp. 7-8).

One important function of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to prompt a greater sense of "social accountability" (Nagy, 2013, pp. 64-65) in non-Aboriginal Canadians. It was hoped that by participation in TRC activities, settlers would demand their government address Aboriginal Peoples' problems: problems caused by government policies, programs, and decisions. Participation of non-Aboriginal Canadians in TRC activities and events, however,

was less than might have been expected (Nagy, 2013; Czyzewski, 2011; Stanton, 2011). In a treaty education program in Saskatchewan, Tupper (2011) similarly reported that non-Aboriginal learners resisted new learning. Lack of support for the treaty education program on the part of school administrators and teachers was one reason why this was allowed to happen. Nagy (2013) similarly commented that a “conservative political environment” and a “weak public profile” (p. 52) discouraged public participation in TRC events.

Another reason non-Aboriginal Canadians may have failed to take part was because they felt that the concerns of Aboriginal Peoples and the legacy of Indian Residential Schools had little to do with them (Chambers, 2009; Nagy, 2013; Stanton, 2011). One of the privileges of “whiteness” is being able to act as if race doesn’t exist (Caouette & Taylor, 2007; Castagno, 2008) or to frame racism as a problem that arises from a small number of bigoted individuals (Caouette & Taylor, 2007, p. 86; Schick, 2000, p. 95). When confronted by difficult stories about the past, like those told by Indian Residential School survivors, settlers are more likely to pull away than they are to engage.

Even when critical anti-racism approaches successfully prompt people of privilege to acknowledge that discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples is real, this awareness does not automatically lead to any recognition of white privilege or the domination of Eurocentric cultures (Caouette & Taylor, 2007; Comeau, 2007; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007). Failure to recognize common cause and reasons for interdependence is a common form of white resistance (Applebaum, 2007; A. Thompson, 2003). The most important, most often cited basis for interdependence with Aboriginal Peoples arises from the treaties (Arnot, 2010; Epp, 2003; gkisedtanamoogk, 2010; Henderson, 2000b, 2000d; S. McKay, 2008; RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013; Tupper & Cappello, 2008; Wicken, 2002).

Lawrence and Dua (2005), however, have noted that anti-racist theory has overlooked Aboriginal Peoples' long standing presence on the land and the agreements which lay out the terms for settler occupation. Nor have anti-racism approaches found effective ways to defuse the pain that accompanies uncomfortable revelations about white privilege. For change to happen, some degree of discomfort or disequilibrium is necessary. In formal education programs, feeling as a way of knowing and engaging learners has often been excluded on the grounds that it is "irrational, uncivilized" (O'Brien, 2004, p. 69). Educators frequently feel obliged to minimize any potential for upset, chaos, or disruption (Applebaum, 2007; Berlak, 2004; Castagno, 2008; O'Brien, 2004; Schick, 2014; Tupper, 2011).

3.3.4 Challenges in Learning for Reconciliation

Even though incidents like the "Oka Crisis" have sometimes been regarded as a Canadian wake-up call, one white journalist who covered the 1990 resistance at Kanehsatà:ke muses that little seems to have changed in the intervening years, that settlers seem to have been struck with "paradigm paralysis" (Orsini, 2010, p. 257), unable (or still unwilling) to engage with Aboriginal Peoples from any new position other than that of dominance. Encounters between Aboriginal Peoples and settlers continue to be troubled by misinterpretations and misunderstandings about goals and outcomes, approaches to problems, even about what the "problem" actually is. Saul (2009) has suggested that perhaps the two nations could create a "common language" (pp. 314-317) which would allow them to bridge these deep differences. Maaka and Fleras (2006), however, are skeptical, noting that "the reality gap between indigenous peoples and central authorities may be too divergent for clear communication to be possible" (p. 345).

As a basis for social justice, Young (2008) has stressed that people from dominant groups need to be able to recognize, respect, and respond to both "cultural differences" and the

“positional” differences” (p. 91) which are the wellsprings of their own privilege. Kumashiro (2000) has called this an “Education that Changes Students and Society” (pp. 40-47). One challenge when attempting to engage people of privilege is finding ways to frame the struggle as one that involves all of “us” (Bishop, 1994, pp. 45-58; Goodman, 2001, pp. 103-124; Kivel, 1996). At least one educator, though, has concluded that nothing less than an “identity crisis” is required before people of privilege accept their responsibilities for redressing racial inequalities (Allen, 2004, p. 133). In Canada, Alfred (2010) and Regan (2010) who have been active in seeking pathways to reconciliation similarly agree that that the transformation process hinges on a reshaping of white settler identities.

Identity is a term that refers to the aspects of ourselves, locations and lives that bind us to particular groups of people and distinguish us from others (Tilly, 2005; Woodward, 1997). In the past, identities were assumed to be essential, inherited through our DNA: for example, race, sex, gender or caste, as well as an individual’s personal gifts such as physical strength or musical talent. One illustration of identity (Tilly, 2005, p. 8) shows Group X on one side and Group Y on the other. A thick black line which separates the two indicates that there are fundamental differences that keep them apart. These psychological boundaries were assumed to be not only sharply defined but also largely impermeable to change. One of the functions of identity is to mark our “borders” and demarcate safe socio-cultural and psychological spaces.

New tools for understanding the self, however, have fostered recognition of the fact that identities are far from fixed. While biological inheritance plays a role, identities are also socially shaped by the groups we are born into and the people who care about us, as well as the commonplace ideologies and taken-for-granted practices present in the communities around us (Tilly, 2005; Woodward, 1997). Secondary socialization—exposure to other communities and

the broader world—further shapes an individual’s sense of who she is. Access to mass media and mass migration can even encourage “border crossing” and the development of hybrid identities. Identities, then, are fluid, “contingent upon time, circumstance, place” (J. Giles & Middleton, 2008, p. 60).

New models of identity show an overlap, a zone of where Group X and Group Y share some aspects of identity in common (Tilly, 2005, p. 8). Instead of a thick wall between people of different identities, current models see these boundaries as porous and open to change.

Essed (2007) has observed that there appears to be a worldwide “transcultural” trend underway in which individuals and groups are questioning the identities they have acquired or have been ascribed and are learning to extend their interests, energy, and affections towards others of a different race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (pp. 242-244).

For people from non-dominant groups, the ability to cross identity borders is a necessary survival strategy (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003; Harris, 2003; hooks, 1990). As hooks wrote, peoples who have been subject to oppression soon develop a “double consciousness” in order to navigate in the “master’s worlds.” In contrast, people from dominant groups (like white settler Canadians) are seldom required to venture outside the familiarity of an all pervasive Eurocentric bubble (Battiste, 2005, 2012). In his classic work on the machinery of colonialism, Memmi (1991) asserted that colonizers who accept their privileges and an inequitable status quo are responsible for the reproduction of systemic inequalities (pp. 45-75). Some reframing of identity, then, is likely required before people of privilege become active supporters, participants, leaders, and allies in social justice causes (Alcoff, 2003; Bishop, 1994; Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Giddings, 2005; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Tilly, 2005; Woodward, 1997; Young, 2008).

Dei (2005) has asserted that there is “an urgent need for all engaged in the pursuit of social justice and equity to work across the differences and intellectual divides that hamper our ability to develop a collective resistance” (p. 135). Scholars with an interest in Aboriginal justice and empowerment have proposed similar models as a way of thinking about how non-Aboriginal people might acquire a deeper understanding and sense of solidarity with Aboriginal Peoples (M. R. Atleo, 2008b, 2008c; M. R. Atleo & Fitznor, 2009; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Ermine et al., 2004). In an article comparing and contrasting traditional Indigenous Knowledge and western science, Barnhardt and Kawagley observed that the shared zone between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is actual, physical common ground and all the experiences and attachments people have had there. M. R. Atleo (2008c) and M. R. Atleo and Fitznor (2009) saw this shared space as a shared commitment to dialogue. Drawing from the work of philosopher Roger Poole (1972), Ermine et al. (2004) also pointed out that shared space needs to be “ethical space” (p. 20) where participants are aware of and sensitive to the “separate realities of histories, knowledge traditions, values, interests, and social, economic and political imperatives” (p. 20).

These models resonate with what Giroux (1991b) has called forms of "border pedagogy," where learners can:

engage knowledge as border-crossers, as people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power . . . these are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into borders of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize them become destabilized and reshaped. (p. 511)

Anti-oppression scholars like Kincheloe (2005) agree that new forms of pedagogy capable of “inducing Whites to listen, learn and change” (p. 157) are sorely needed, but are not yet well-articulated in the academic literature. A few scholars, however, have begun to propose some pedagogical approaches for helping settlers learn how to work in shared space, ethical space. In the north, for example, Moore, Tulk, and Mitchell (2005) observed that Qallunaat (white) professionals working with Inuit organizations and clients responded to a “transdisciplinary approach” (p. 118) that incorporated factual information about the local community along with cross-cultural communications training, treaty education, and stories about the land where they were living and working. In a postsecondary classroom, Graveline (1998) used the Medicine Wheel to emphasize the need for changes across four domains: mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical. Tanaka et al., (2007) have been exploring the impacts of learning by being with and doing with Aboriginal Peoples on the west coast. In collaboration with an Aboriginal artist in residence, pre-service teacher candidates were involved in carving a totem pole and reflecting on the insights that arose as they participated in the process. These new approaches to decolonization and identity change in settlers, however, seem to stand on their own with few links to other forms of border pedagogy—for instance, transformative learning or pedagogy for the privileged.

3.4 Summary

In this literature review, I began by outlining events which eventually led to the formation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Their groundbreaking work highlighted the importance of three platforms for reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples: political, social, and interpersonal. Although changes are required at all three levels, political and social reconciliation cannot take place in the absence of significant shifts at the interpersonal

level in the beliefs, attitudes, and values of settler Canadians. There are some long standing barriers to renewed relationships between people from the two nations: physical distance; prejudicial public discourses; and inadequate, ineffective public education. Current approaches to teaching and learning about diversity—intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism education—all have something to offer to settlers who are willing and interested in forming relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. As stand-alone approaches, however, they all have significant drawbacks. Some educators have proposed that the way forward demands changes in settler identity, but there is no single body of literature which describes what this change process would look like. In the next chapter, I lay out the design for this study and present a conceptual framework which can be used to explore and explain settler learning for reconciliation. Transformative learning and pedagogy for the privileged are used to examine the process of ally formation.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

TRANSFORMING SELF AND SOCIETY

What is peace? What is friendship? From the Mi'kmaw perspective, it means we
walk hand in hand.

(Sante Mawiomi¹³ Grand Keptin Alexander Denny)

From 2011 to 2013, the Canso Causeway was the site for demonstrations demanding an end to oil and gas exploration on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia (Beswick, 2013; A. Giles, 2012; Howe, 2012; M. Peters, 2011; Wiseman, 2012). On September 23, 2012, for example, non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians and representatives from local groups like Save Lake Ainslie (<http://www.savelakeainslie.org/>) as well as national organizations such as the Council of Canadians joined Mi'kmaw protest organizers, people from several Mi'kmaw First Nations communities in the Maritimes, and the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society in a day of “Global Frackdown.” Protestors lined the road and held up posters, banners, and flags. They distributed information leaflets, chanted and sang, and participated in a water ceremony. Echoing words spoken by Mi'kmaw warrior Anna Mae Pictou Aquash,¹⁴ rally organizer Elizabeth Marshall from the Mi'kmaw Treaty Beneficiary Association said:

¹³ The Sante Mawiomi, or Mi'kmaw Grand Council, is the traditional political governance structure. Denny was speaking at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia at an event marking Mi'kmaw History Month.

¹⁴ Marshall is referring to a passage in a letter written by Anna Mae Pictou Aquash who became a key figure in the American Indian Movement only to be murdered when she was thirty years old (Brand, 1993). As Aquash wrote to her family, “This whole country changed with only a handful of raggedy-assed pilgrims that came over here in the 1500s. And it can take a handful of raggedy-assed Indians to do the same, and I intend to be one of those raggedy-assed Indians” (in Brand, 1993, p. 136). Decades later, the example of Aquash continues to inspire struggles for Aboriginal rights.

I thought this was just going to be a bunch of raggedy-assed Indians . . . And you showed us that the raggedy assed Indians have a bunch of raggedy-assed residents backing us up. We're not going to give up, because we love our ancestors, we love our future generations, and we love our children and grandchildren. (Howe, 2012, para. 4)

Solidarity actions such as this suggest that some settler Canadians have undergone a not insignificant process of attitudinal and behavioural change, even if this transformation is not yet complete.

In the popular literature as well as in academic articles, white settlers talk about experiences which helped them come into more just relationship with Aboriginal Peoples (for example, L. Davis, 2010; Freeman, 2000; Ross, 1992). These stories are congruent with the idea of more “constructive engagement” between people from the two nations (Maaka & Fleras, 2006, pp. 344-345). I argue that these kinds of personal stories have “catalytic validity” (Bailey, 2010), providing an effective and appropriate spur for reflection, reflexivity, and change in non-Aboriginal Canadians. In any research which affects the interests and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, however, Maori scholar and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has asserted that “getting the approach right” (p. 190) is an essential first step. This study, then, was framed using a transformative research paradigm, an approach to research grounded in a human rights agenda and focused on benefit for groups that have been marginalized (Mertens, 2005, 2009).

After the selection of an appropriate framework, the second consideration in research design is “employing the most appropriate methods and people” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 190). In this study, I turned to narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007) as a way of collecting and exploring the lived experiences of some white settlers recognized as allies with the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. In particular, I looked

for settlers whose actions provide a “counter-story” (Beverly, 2005; McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2006; Nelson, 2001) to the still common “fort” and “frontier” (Donald, 2009b) model of Aboriginal/settler relationships. Settlers interviewed in this study have been active in attempting to learn about Aboriginal Peoples. They have also recognized the need to make changes in themselves so that they can live, work, and lobby alongside Aboriginal Peoples in more equitable and positive ways. In this research, I focus on “critical events” (Webster & Mertova, 2007), experiences fundamental to settler ally learning. In order to probe power relations at play, I used a series of questions identified by another narrative researcher working in the field of education (Angelides, 2001, p. 436). I took other steps to ensure that both the study design and the results are as trustworthy as possible, and neither reinforce stereotypes about Aboriginal Peoples nor uphold actions which bolster white privilege. More reliable, ethical, and just research begins with researcher reflexivity. I open this chapter by explaining a bit about who I am, how I came to have an interest in reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples, and what stake I have in this study, both as an individual and as an educator.

4.1 Situating Myself: The Researcher’s Context

Stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never
been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained
to these stories as long as I live.

(T. King, 2003, p. 9)

Researcher self-location and self-reflexivity have come to be expected components of research in general, so that readers are better able to assess the extent to which the research approach, interpretations, and conclusions are indeed trustworthy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Anti-oppression researcher Wanda Pillow (2003), for instance, urges researchers to reflect on

“who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel” (p. 176). Similarly Elder Eber Hampton (1995) has said that researchers needs to begin by asking themselves, “What do I as a human being have to contribute to this topic?” (p. 47). When research involves Indigenous Peoples or affects their interests in any way, the research demands even greater personal integrity as well as a willingness to self-reflect and engage in the hard work of personal growth (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; E. Hampton, 1995; Menzies, 2001; Meyer, 2008; L. T. Smith, 1999; Steinhauer, 2001; Struthers, 2001). To show that this research is informed by what I believe is the “right spirit” (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 481; Meyer, p. 218), I sketch a little about my family background and the experiences which led me to back to university. Last, I talk a little about why this study is personally important to me.

I am a white Canadian female with a graduate level education. I have now reached an age when others describe me as “mature,” but I am not yet old enough to claim the benefits of being a senior. Activist and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), however, has pointed out that Indigenous Peoples use some specific protocols when it comes to self-location. In Maori tradition, this involves describing “where we are from and how we connect to everybody else” (p. 169). This is not unlike the practice in Nova Scotia where I live now, and where a still common query at a first meeting is “Who’s your father?” I’m the eldest and the only daughter of John, who was born into a Mennonite family living on a farm near the town of Boissevain, Manitoba. My mother’s name is Edna, and she grew up in what was then called “the Finn colony” in the Clayridge district of rural Saskatchewan. Neither of my parents spoke much English when they started school and only became fluent in English when they left home in their teens to find work and, eventually, find each other. As a child I became accustomed to hearing

people around me speak languages that I did not understand, but at the time I didn't have much interest in learning to speak the languages my parents spoke, either German or Finnish.

The question "Where do you come from?" should be straightforward, but I often hesitate. I was born in Ontario but I have lived in three U.S. states and four Canadian provinces, as well as in Nepal and Thailand for significant periods of my adult life. By birth, by chance, and by choice much of life has been spent in places where English was not the only language: in locations that Statistics Canada (2002) describes as "rural" or "remote," in spaces where "white" was not the only culture. I now make my home in northeastern Nova Scotia. The house is encircled by hills covered with maple, birch, fir, pine, and spruce. White Europeans began arriving in this area almost 400 years ago, but this is still Mi'kmaw territory, a place where the Mi'kmaq have walked, camped, hunted, and fished for generations. In contrast, my "internal" landscape has its roots in the sights, sounds, and smells of Saskatchewan parkland: the rustle of trembling aspen in the summer; the tang of chokecherries after a frost; a beaver chewed stump on the muddy banks of a tea brown river; the yip of coyotes on blue white winter nights when the moon casts long shadows.

A concise answer to another common Canadian positioning question, "What do you do?" also frequently eludes me. Neither of my parents received much in the way of formal education. Instead, they hoped their children would acquire social and cultural credentialing that wasn't open to them when they were young. I have two Education degrees and have taught in primary and middle schools in rural and northern Saskatchewan, in non-Aboriginal and First Nations communities. In the 1980s, I moved to Edmonton where I taught English as a Second Language to adults and coordinated programs for immigrants. In conjunction with a Master's degree in Adult Education, I began working in the field of international development in the 1990s,

exploring the use of popular education techniques to catalyze discussions about gender equity and women's empowerment. After completing field research in Thailand, I returned to Nova Scotia. Since 1996, I've been a part-time facilitator at an educational institution that provides training for development professionals from the global south. During this same period, I worked as a gender coordinator with an international development agency in Nepal. For the past few years, I've offered consultancy support (on both a paid and voluntary basis) to community groups working for social change in my local area.

The present study was sparked by my experiences in a place far removed from Mi'kma'ki. Northern Thailand is home to more than one million Indigenous Peoples, ten different Hilltribe¹⁵ groups. From 2002 to 2007, I coordinated an Indigenous Studies year abroad program based at a university in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Participants were undergraduate students registered at an Ontario university. The program provided learners with an opportunity to learn about the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia, as well as some of the ways that Indigenous Peoples have been responding to the pressing issues of our time: sustainable development, climate change, struggles for rights, and political empowerment. The students' first term included formal course work, guest lectures, visits to non-governmental development organizations, and field visits to Hilltribe communities. In the second term, students either lived in a Hilltribe community or volunteered with an Indigenous organization or NGO for twelve weeks while completing an independent study project. My qualifications for this job included an ability to speak basic Thai and some familiarity with community development in Thailand, as well as personal connections with Thai non-governmental organizations. As part of

¹⁵ The *Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association* (<http://www.impect.org/index.php>), which represents Indigenous Peoples in Thailand, uses the collective term "Hilltribe" to refer to ten Indigenous groups.

the work for my earlier Master of Adult Education degree, I had helped to design and facilitate gender equity training for the staff of community development organizations in Thailand. I had visited some Hilltribe villages and had a few Hilltribe acquaintances, but—as I openly admitted—I knew almost nothing about Indigenous Peoples living in the region.

Not long after I arrived in northern Thailand, the enormity of the learning task ahead of me slowly started to become clear. I experienced a number of “unsettling” encounters with participating students, with my Thai program colleagues, and with Hilltribe Peoples. These experiences brought the differences between Asian and western, Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing, and value systems into sharp relief. Even more troubling was the unconscious sense of western entitlement which came to the fore in interactions with Hilltribe Peoples and local Thai nationals alike. Although I had some 20 years’ experience as an educator and facilitator, including work in cross-cultural contexts, I found myself grappling to find pedagogical approaches that would allow us to bridge these differences.

Neither textbooks nor the stories we heard from Hilltribe Peoples, however, were enough to answer two questions we were routinely asked in almost every Hilltribe village: “Why have you come to see us?” and “What is that *we* can teach *you*?” If the program was not just another tourism experience or opportunity for personal enrichment, what were we doing there? Did the knowledge that we acquired at such cost to our hosts justify our presence on these territories? What was it that we could and should do differently as a result? Reflection on these questions, fuelled by a desire to give something back to the Hilltribe organizations, communities, and individuals who welcomed the students and me into their homes and were such generous, gracious, patient teachers led me to apply for further post-graduate studies

“Relational accountability” (Louis, 2007, p. 133; Wilson, 2008, p. 77), the goal of fulfilling personal or professional responsibilities towards others and sharing with others as a gesture of reciprocity and respect is one recognized impetus for research. I have had several excellent teachers, both inside and outside of classrooms, who have quietly insisted I accept responsibility for the privileges I have as a white settler. One important thread in my adult life has been the desire to play a role in the promotion of social justice. Often equated with the notion of fairness, social justice implies both the more equitable distribution of material goods and access to opportunities, privileges, and benefits (Fraser, 2008; Goodman, 2001, pp. 4-5; Young, 2006). One fundamental condition for social justice is an acknowledgement of mutual interdependence, recognition that our personal well-being is intrinsically bound up with people from countless other groups, both like and different from ourselves. After my doctoral course work began, however, I found myself confronted with a dilemma. How, exactly, would the research I proposed to do benefit Hilltribe Peoples who live thousands of miles away? Returning to Thailand seemed unlikely. As Kovach (2005) has highlighted, I was forced to ask myself “Am I creating space *or* taking space?” (p. 26).

Around the same time, I began to recognize another significant contradiction. While I aspired to help others learn about Indigenous Peoples in Thailand, I knew almost nothing about the Mi’kmaq who are traditional keepers of the land where I live. Nor had I been involved in any actions which promoted Mikmaw rights and cultural concerns. Reading a book by John Ralston Saul (2008), I began to question what it would take for Canada to become not only a “fair country” which upholds Aboriginal rights, but a truly “métis civilization” which celebrates and embraces Aboriginal outlooks, values, beliefs, and practices. Although I will always owe a debt of gratitude to Hilltribe Peoples, I concluded that the best way I could help to create space for

Indigenous justice was to begin where I was, with me and with others like me living in Mi'kma'ki. I subsequently decided that the focus of my research proposal would be on understanding how settlers like me can help bring an end to the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples, and on the kinds of learning that will enable settlers to take on an ally role in the reconciliation process.

4.2 Research Design

Our recommendations are motivated first and foremost by a
desire for social justice and for a restoration of rights, dignity and self-reliance to

Aboriginal People

(RCAP, 1996b, V. 5, Section 3, p. 54)

Research involving Indigenous and Aboriginal Peoples is never neutral. Research approaches and research results have real world implications which are both “moral and political” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 8). One of the first imperatives for any researcher, therefore, is to be clear about the paradigm, the worldview used to shape an investigation. A paradigm lays out fundamental assumptions about what the world is like, how we go about understanding what happens in it, and the values which inform our judgments and choices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2007). Paradigms are instrumental in establishing not only the purposes for research, but the kinds of questions that are asked and of whom, how the data will be collected and interpreted, and how research results will be used. Positivist research paradigms with an emphasis on hard, empirical data were well suited for investigations in the physical sciences, but less effective when it came to exploring or explaining psychological concerns or social phenomena. Postpositivist, constructivist, pragmatic, and critical or transformative

paradigms consequently emerged in response to the needs of researchers in the social sciences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Research that draws from personal stories, such as I decided to do, is more often than not shaped using a constructivist research paradigm (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005; Schwandt, 1994). A constructivist approach can be helpful in uncovering multiple interpretations and presenting diverse viewpoints for the purpose of better understanding different facets of a phenomenon, event, or situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 4-5; Schwandt, 1994, pp. 126-127; 130-131). Constructivist paradigms, however, tend not to seek out patterns or “lessons learned” from the data. Instead, they argue that truth depends upon an individual’s perspective and positioning. Constructivist researchers, therefore, typically adopt a “neutral” stance, neither judging the value of particular accounts nor suggesting how research data may be applied. In contrast, a transformative research paradigm is value laden. From the beginning, the goal is to think about ways to make change happen. In this study, therefore, I drew from a transformative research paradigm which I see as congruent with the RCAPs (1996b) social justice agenda and my own personal goal of relational accountability to Aboriginal Peoples.

4.2.1 A Critical, Transformative Research Paradigm

Critical approaches to research which trace their origins to the Frankfurt School of theorists in post-World War I Germany have become associated with both intellectual resistance and popular public resistance on the part of workers, people of colour, and other groups who have been dispossessed as a result their gender, sexuality, or other factors (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Rather than asserting objectivity or neutrality, critical researchers have seen themselves as part of larger political processes which seek to transform relationships between “haves” and “have nots.” Critical research aims to redress social, cultural, political, and

economic inequities by fostering recognition of inequitable power relationships and supporting collective freedom to act outside of socially sanctioned life scripts (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). The belief is that social critique and awareness of the systemic nature of power enhances social consciousness and fosters a sense of solidarity among the oppressed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Over the decades, a number of distinct approaches to critical research (for example, feminist, Freirean, or Neo-Marxist approaches) have been developed in order to address the needs of particular groups (Creswell, 2012, pp. 25-27; Mertens, 2005, pp. 17-21; Mertens, Holmes, & Harris, 2009).

As calls for social justice, social action, and social change increased, however, the conceptual boundaries among stand-alone approaches with emancipatory goals have become less distinct (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). In addition, schisms have emerged between research theorists and social change activists in the field (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 8-9). Critical research paradigms have been criticized as too abstract, using vocabulary that fails to speak to people in a meaningful way. Nor is conscientization, or heightened awareness of oppression, enough to bring about changes in the lives of the oppressed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In this study, I looked to the work of researcher and educator Donna Mertens (2009) who uses the term “transformative research” to draw attention to the similarities among paradigms with an eye to social justice, where researchers feel a “moral imperative to challenge the status quo for the purpose of contributing to a more just society” (Mertens et al., 2009, p. 98).

Transformative research aims to promote the human rights of marginalized groups by fostering shifts in policies, systems, programs, and people (Mertens, 2009, pp. 48-52). One important principle for transformative research is to focus not only on problems, but on “resilience,” on strengths or strategies which foster empowerment (Mertens, 2009, pp. 17-21).

This is consistent with teaching by Mi'kmaw Elder and poet Rita Joe, who said that "If one wishes to be healed, one must dwell on the positive" (in Lawlor, 2007, para 23). Mertens (2009) has also recommended that researchers who are people of privilege turn the research gaze onto themselves and the role they play in creating and redressing oppression (pp. 19-20). In the remainder of this section, I outline what a transformative paradigm means to me, a few fundamental assumptions about how the world works, how I approach the task of knowing, and some values that have guided my research decisions.

4.2.1.1 Ontological assumptions.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) say that one of the three important questions that need to be asked of any paradigm is an ontological question: "What is the form and nature of reality?" (p. 108). A transformative research paradigm acknowledges that when it comes to understanding the world, there are "multiple realities" (Mertens, 2005, p. 9; Mertens, 2009, pp. 49-56). Differences in identity (gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, educational level, ethnicity, etc.) are important determinants of the ways in which individuals and groups experience the world. In and of themselves these differences are not a problem. The difficulty lies in the fact that differences have become linked with access to resources and opportunities. As social justice educators have made plain, people who are white, people who come European backgrounds, and people who are male tend to have greater power, privilege, and authority while the voices and interests of women, people of colour, and Indigenous Peoples may be muted or silenced altogether (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997; Bishop, 1994; Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Mertens, 2009). In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I have reviewed some of the ways in which Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are still subject to oppression. White domination and Eurocentric discourses, however,

allow social, cultural, political, and economic inequities to go unnoticed or even to be denied by non-Aboriginal citizens.

Mertens (2009) urges researchers to use their skills and influence to become trail blazers, role models, and advocates working alongside or on behalf others who are less privileged (pp. 48-52). Ideally, transformative researchers will be familiar with and have established connections with the people and issues they propose to study; for example, researchers may share some aspects of their identity with their research participants, or have similar experiences (Bridges, 2001, p. 373; Menzies, 2001, p. 30; Mertens, 2009, Chapter 3). Pre-existing personal or professional ties provide a basis for more reciprocal research interactions. In their watershed report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996a) recognized that “all of us have a part in securing the new relationship” (p. 148). In this research, my ties with Aboriginal Peoples include: treaties, the “living instruments that bind peoples together” (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, p. 658); mutual responsibility for reconciliation (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, pp. 655-657); and a mutual interest in continued sharing of this land and its resources.

4.2.1.2 Epistemological approaches.

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) second query about research paradigms is particularly important: “What is the nature of the relationship between knower or would-be knower and what can be known?” (p. 108). Transformative research pays close attention to concerns about “authenticity,” about who has (or should have) authority and permission to speak about particular issues (Mertens, 2005, p. 9; Mertens, 2009, pp. 39-40). Differences in identity and unearned privilege can render researchers oblivious to realities other than their own (Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Louis, 2007; L. T. Smith, 1999). Not only do transformative researchers have to be clear about how they are positioned in relation to participants; cultural competence is a must for

establishing and navigating research relationships and ensuring that research data are interpreted appropriately (Mertens, 2009, pp. 89-92).

When white researchers attempt to carry out research with Aboriginal people or Aboriginal communities, bias and hierarchical power relationship pose a serious barrier. In the section on ethical considerations, I describe how the ways in which I selected research participants, approaches to data analysis, and other measures were used as ways of uncovering and countering bias and presenting a more balanced perspective. Stories told by settlers in this study, however, also respond to calls by Aboriginal scholars who are seeking new approaches for decolonizing Eurocentric consciousness. Battiste (2004b) has described this as a two pronged project where the first step is to deconstruct the “political, moral and theoretical inadequacies of colonialism” (slide 4). For example, observing the rapacious western materialism and consumerism which is fueling global warming, settler allies like Rasmussen (2005) have acknowledged that Indigenous Peoples worldwide would be better served if settlers would “cease to do evil” (p. 115) and change their own destructive behavior, rather than rushing in to ameliorate the damage they have done. Participants in this study, in our own ways, attempt to explain why it is that we have reached the same conclusion. Once this realization has occurred, the second phase in the decolonization project, Battiste says, is to reconstruct or transform mainstream society by incorporating traditional and contemporary Aboriginal knowledge, perspectives, and values on an equal footing with Eurocentric heritage. At least some of the participants in this study have begun to travel this path and are open about why they have chosen what it is still very much a “road less travelled” by settler Canadians.

4.3 Conceptual Framework: Transformative Learning and Pedagogy for the Privileged

Long standing beliefs, habits, and practices which fuel conflicts are deeply embedded in the psyche of individuals and nations; there can be “no reconciliation without transformation” (Jacques, 2000, p. 55). As a basis for reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and settlers in Canada, Regan (2010) has also concluded that “transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world” (p. 23) holds the key. Regan, however, did not fully “unpack” settler experiences with reference to transformative learning theory. In my Master’s thesis on transformative gender education (N. Peters, 1998), I used transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2006; Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009) to explore pedagogical approaches capable of fostering shifts in people’s attitudes towards and beliefs about women in rural Thai communities. In the present study, I turn again to Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning as a framework for understanding what kinds of changes have taken place in some settler allies, and the elements which supported the learning process. In this section, I first provide an overview of transformative learning theory, including particular key concepts and a sketch of how transformative learning is believed to occur. Pedagogy for the privileged (Curry-Stevens, 2007) is one specific form of transformative learning. Next, I highlight particular elements involved in the process of ally formation.

4.3.1 Origins and Significance of Transformative Learning

The goal of transformative learning is to help adults develop more accurate and inclusive frames of references for understanding the world. Adults who undergo a “perspective transformation” experience a structural reorganization in their understanding of external reality and themselves (Mezirow, 1978). Calling into question not only what we know, but also how we know, transformative learning seeks to challenge culturally engrained habits of mind or patterns

of thought (Cranton, 2006, pp. 24-28; Mezirow, 2006, pp. 26-27). Liberated from constraints inherited from our families of origin, imposed by institutions, or promulgated through the mass media, adults become more informed, free, and effective agents (Cranton, 2006, pp. 13-14; Mezirow, 2009). With roots in critical social theory, transformative learning also recognizes that “individual and social transformation are inherently linked” (E. W. Taylor, 2009, p. 5).

Over the past two decades, the field of transformative learning has been used to catalyze individual personal growth and development, as well as socio-cultural change (Cranton, 2006, pp. 39-56; E. W. Taylor, 2005, 2008). Although Mezirow’s original conceptualization of transformative learning has been criticized as being primarily about self-actualization, transformative approaches have been applied with an eye to collective change in sites ranging from higher education to workplaces to community spaces (Cranton, 2011; Dirkx, 1998; Mezirow et al., 2009; E. W. Taylor, 2008; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003, p. 370). Transformative education has been used as a tool for intercultural learning (Nagata, 2006; Taylor, 1994) and as a framework for investigating “race-centric” perspectives (E. W. Taylor, 2008, p. 9). In addition, O’Sullivan (1999) has written about how this type of learning fosters “ecological consciousness” in ways that appear similar to Aboriginal beliefs about human/nature interdependence. Transformative learning results in more than an increase in “head knowledge;” it fosters changes in how individuals act in and on the world, addressing conditions which support or constrain their agency (Cranton, 2011; Mezirow, 1978; 1991; Mezirow et al., 2009; O’Sullivan, 1999; O’Sullivan, Morrell, & O’Connor, 2002; O’Sullivan & Taylor, 2004; E. W. Taylor, 2007, 2008).

Transformative learning is appropriate as a framework for investigating profound attitudinal and behavioural changes in settlers because it addresses some of the seemingly intransigent barriers to reconciliation identified earlier in the literature review. First,

transformative learning is seen as a process which is holistic, affective, and embodied (Cranton, 2011; Fenwick, 2003; E. W. Taylor, 2008). Significant shifts in identity are believed to be the result of factors such as place-based personal experience, holistic knowing, and the influence of interpersonal relationships. This echoes M. R. Atleo's (2008a) assertion that learning about Aboriginal paradigms must be a "dialogic, constructivist" process. Transformative learning, then, can be effective in breaking through and breaking down learner resistance, especially strong emotional reactions like fear, denial, apathy, and "white guilt." Second, transformative learning is recognized to be grounded in relationships: relationships with the self as well as with others (Cranton, 2011; Fenwick, 2003; E. W. Taylor, 2008). It is seen as responsive to the local and the particular. In addition, significant learning is recognized as taking place outside structured educational interventions, even in the absence of formal classrooms or teachers. Last, transformative learning postulates that learners will attempt to make changes in their world, to bring the external world into harmony with their new perspectives.

4.3.1.1 Transformative learning concepts.

Brookfield (2000) has stated that "learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts. If something is transformed, it is different from what it was before at a very basic level" (p. 139). This demands nothing less than awareness of the fundamental premises that shape our attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. Mezirow (2000) calls these foundational presuppositions about reality "habits of mind" (p. 17). Habits of mind shape our: psychological self-image; socio-linguistic norms, those cultural expectations that inform our actions, interactions, and communicative practices; epistemic frameworks—how we know, and what counts as important knowledge; morals, ethical values, and principles that guide our conduct; philosophical outlook or worldview; and aesthetic

tastes and judgments. Habits of mind are “cultural paradigms . . . unintentionally assimilated from the culture” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 16-17). Learners can be trapped by faulty meaning perspectives associated with unexamined traumatic experiences, distorted belief systems imposed by intimate others and institutions, our own biology, and other factors.

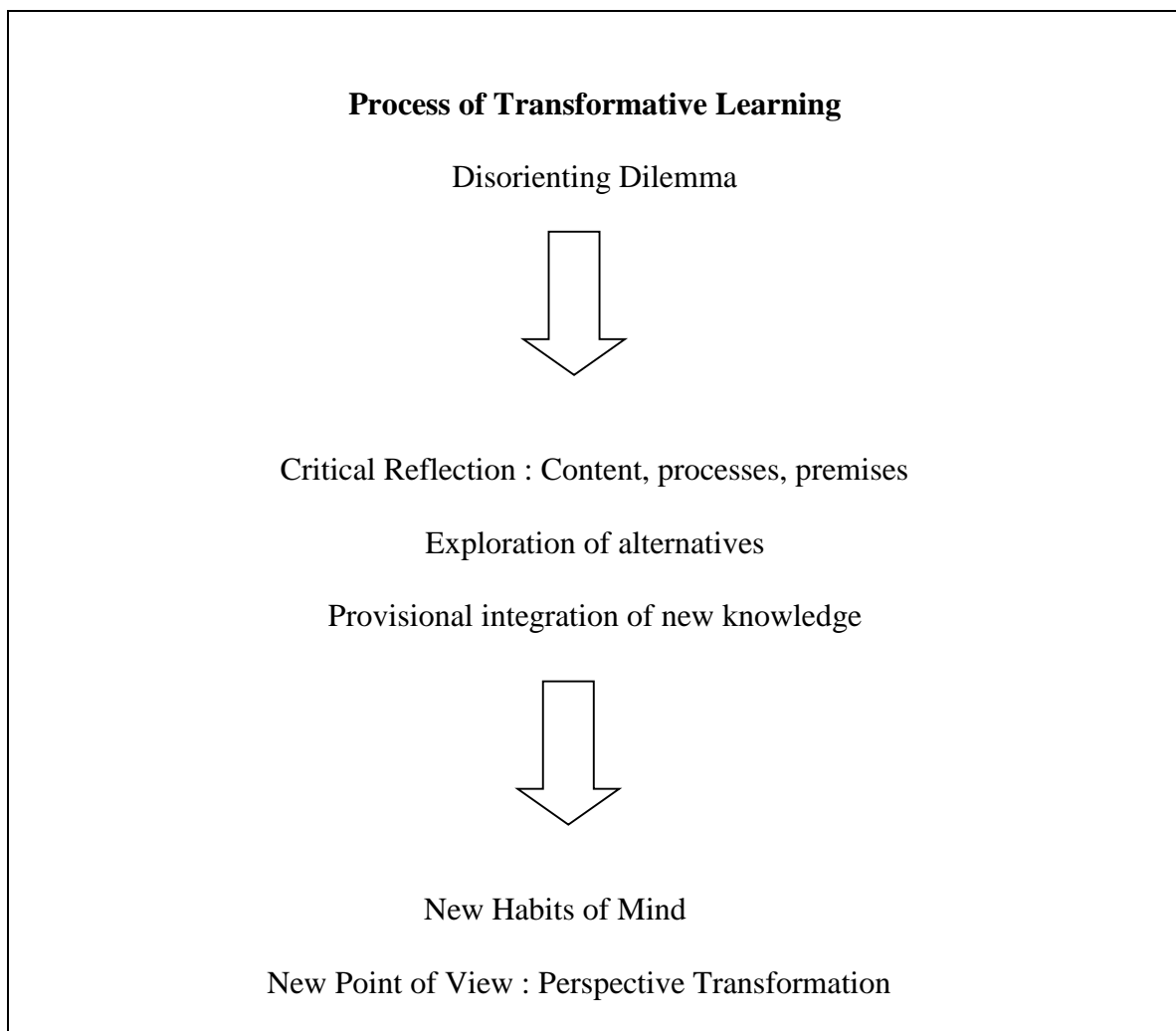
Significant changes in a person’s belief systems, however, are seen as gradually declining from the mid-20s onwards (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, pp. 46-47). One psychologist noted that our frames of reference are maintained through mechanisms which are both “cold” and “hot” (Mills, 2007). “Cold” mechanisms freeze us into old positions and allow us to insulate ourselves from truths outside our immediate experience or the prevailing cultural discourse. In contrast, “hot” mechanisms are other motivational factors which make change undesirable, including potential loss of control, benefits, reputation, or other damage to self-image, social standing, or economic well-being (Mills, p. 34). What is it, then, that challenges unquestioned habits of mind and sets off a process of learning and change?

4.3.1.2 How transformative learning occurs.

Transformative learning theory points to the importance of trigger events (Cranton, 2006, pp. 61-63; Lyon, 2002) which jolt learners from a place of relative psychological or physical comfort and safety and push them to the very “edge of meaning” (E. W. Taylor, 2008, p.10). In the literature, disorienting dilemmas (Cranton, 2006, pp. 61-63, 94; Mezirow, 1990, p. 13; E. W. Taylor, 1997, 2008) can be provoked by commonplace life transitions such as a change in job, location, or relationship status (for example, divorce or becoming a parent) as well as a serious illness or becoming a caretaker for someone else. Other disorienting events include a return to school, engagement in social justice actions, new personal relationships, or even work-related activities (E. W. Taylor, 2009).

Disorienting events may be episodic and sudden, but they can also be gradual. Shifts in perspective occur as individuals mature and move through the life cycle. Typically, disorienting events have a strong emotional component (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006, p. 132). Learning is more likely to occur when people are pushed outside their comfort zone, but only if the challenge was self-initiated and the learner has a measure of control over the situation (Cranton, 2006, p. 7; E. W. Taylor & Jarecke, 2009). A. Fisher (2002) has observed that there is an “optimal experiential ‘distance’” that prevents us from being “either overwhelmed through direct intrusion or becoming unbearably tense through starvation or both” (p. 73).

Figure 4.1. Process of transformative learning



Disorienting events prompt learners to reflect critically on the content, process, and premises surrounding the new experience (Brookfield, 1987; Cranton, 2006, C.8; Mezirow, 2000). Content reflection looks at “what:” the facts of the experience, what others say or believe about it, what the individual has assumed to be true. Process reflection examines how knowledge about the event was acquired in the first place and if other information has been taken into account. Premise reflection asks why a particular event, belief, or perception is important, why we believe particular conclusions are valid, and whether or not it is time to re-think our assumptions. As Mezirow (1991) observed, however, people tend to “resort to reflection only when we require guidance in negotiating a step in a series of actions or run into difficulty in understanding a new experience” (p. 107). K. Taylor (2000) has pointed out that a learner’s feelings and emotions are one factor which determines whether or not critical reflection takes place. Conscious reflection on one or more habits of mind is required for new knowledge to be produced.

New meaning perspectives are “more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14). Individuals who undergo a perspective transformation are then better able to make a conscious choice about whether or not they will revise their ideological frameworks (Cranton, 2006, pp. 36-37). Transformative learning, however, is not necessarily linear or sudden (p. 24). When disorienting events and critical reflection open up painful or hurtful emotions, additional time and space may be required for healing and reintegration. Cranton talks about the slow creep of transformative learning, a process that is “gradual and cumulative” (p. 23), a developmental journey which occurs over time.

E. W. Taylor (2009) has pointed out that context is another determining factor in the process. The presence of influential others and supportive interpersonal relationships are

supporting factors. A group setting, as well as people who act as mentors while new knowledge is emerging are also key (Daloz, 2000). Like Foley (1999), E. W. Taylor (2009) drew attention to transformations that take place in community-based social justice activities and social movements. Collaborative projects aimed at social, economic, cultural, and political empowerment are an inherent source of disorienting dilemmas (Daloz, 2000; Mezirow, 2009). Social justice initiatives also provide a context in which learners can begin to consolidate and apply their learning (Daloz, 2000).

4.3.2 Pedagogy for the Privileged: Learning to Become Allies

In this study, I situate pedagogy for the privileged as an example of a “border pedagogy” (Giroux, 1988) which explains why some settlers become interested in and able to engage with Aboriginal Peoples in shared space (M. R. Atleo, 2008b, 2008c; M. R. Atleo & Fitznor, 2009; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery, 2004). Pedagogy for the privileged resonates with Kumashiro’s (2000) call for “Education that Change Students and Society” (pp. 40-47). One of the observed weaknesses of anti-oppression education is that it often fails to overcome resistance on the part of people of privilege; nor does it often inspire them to take concrete, positive action (Cannon, 2011, 2012; Carr & Lund, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Schick & McNinch, 2009; Tompkins, 2002).

Pedagogy with a focus on privileged learners is not entirely new (Adams et al., 1997; Bishop, 1994; Goodman, 2001). The term “pedagogy for the privileged,” though, appears to have been coined by Curry-Stevens (2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010) and has been adopted as a short form way of describing research, learning, or teaching focused on privileged individuals who unite with people from marginalized groups across racial, ethnic, class, gender, and political differences for the purpose of social justice (D. Davis & Steyn, 2012; Washburn, 2007). Interest

in ally formation has been expressed in different locations including post-secondary institutions (Broido & Reason, 2005; Edwards, 2006; R. D. Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005), the workplace (Brooks & Edwards, 2009), in community (Bishop, 1994; Curry-Stevens, 2007; Goodman, 2001), and in social movements (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; L. Davis, 2010; Tilly, 2005). There have been examinations of ally relationships that take place across differences in race (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006; Margaret, 2010; R. D. Reason et al., 2005), sex and gender orientation (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003; Flood, 2011), and ability (Evans, Assadi, & Herriott, 2005).

Pedagogy for the privileged draws principles and practice from social justice pedagogy (Adams et al., 1997; Bishop, 1994), including Paulo Freire's (1970) consciousness raising, and from Mezirow's (1991, 2000, 2006; Mezirow et al., 2009) theory of transformative learning. A considerable part of the literature on pedagogy for the privileged is based on case study and life history research of individuals who have become allies (Broido & Reason, 2005; Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Curry-Stevens, 2005a; Fabiano et al., 2003; Margaret, 2010). This literature seeks to understand why some individuals of privilege come to question their social conditioning and positioning, and what enables them to take on ally roles. Based on these real life examples, there is also a smaller body of literature which is laying out the theory and principles of pedagogy for the privileged (Broido & Reason, 2005; Curry-Stevens, 2007; D. Davis & Steyn, 2012; Edwards, 2006; Giddings, 2005; Tilly, 2005).

4.3.2.1 Ally contributions.

Being an ally means taking up the challenge to think differently, act differently, and be differently in the world (Bishop, 1994, pp. 93-95; Regan, 2010, p. 230). Activist and educator Bishop (1994) concludes that "to do nothing is to reinforce the status quo; not to decide is to

decide; if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem” (p. 94). Being a true ally requires a conscious commitment not only to overcoming oppression in society at large, but to transformation from within, addressing one’s own beliefs, behaviours, values, and attitudes that contribute to the oppression of others and the self (Bishop, 1994, pp. 93-101; Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 17; Fabiano et al., 2003; Goodman, 2001, p. 164; Regan, 2010, Chapter 8). Congruent with these definitions of ally, the contributions allies of privilege can make has been depicted as a continuum which begins with an awareness of oppression and extends to encouraging other oppressors to initiate action for change (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997, p. 109). Allies who focus on changing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of people “like them” have been described taking an “agent-agent” role (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 22). As Young (2006) observed, “those with the greatest interest in perpetuating the structures are also those with the greatest power to influence their transformation” (p. 128).

One way that an ally can carry out their responsibilities as agent is by being an “ethical witness” (Regan, 2010, pp. 15, 18, 213) to the truth of Aboriginal Peoples’ perspectives, stories, and calls for justice. At Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada hearings held across Canada, a number of prominent honorary witnesses, including Governor General Michaëlle Jean, were called upon to uphold the legitimacy and significance of the hearings, to be knowledge keepers of stories told at this historic event, and to use their influence to share what they learned with others (Martin, 2009, p. 51). Regan (2010) has called upon all Canadians, regardless of their station in life and geographic location to learn, reflect, share, and help to “restory” Canada’s past and its future (pp. 228-230). Allies of privilege also have positional power (Young, 2006, pp. 127–128) including greater access to social capital and economic resources, and access to people, places, and spaces in which decisions are made (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001;

Goodman, 2001; Margaret, 2010; A. Smith, 2009; Turner, 2006). As a result, they may be able to mobilize funding more easily, obtain needed information or specialized skills (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Goodman, 2001, pp. 2-3). In Aboriginal/settler ally relationships, practical contributions of hospitality, food, and accommodation for Aboriginal partners are needed for more equitable participation (Da Silva, 2010; L. Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010, p. 343; Margaret, 2010).

In order to be effective, allies of privilege must be clear about the common ground they share with others, acknowledging interdependence (Bishop, 1994; Goodman, 2001, pp. 190-198; Young, 2008). As Goodman (2001) has pointed out, though, interdependence ranges along a continuum from more individualistic concerns about “me” and how “I” will benefit, to identification with the group and how events affect “us,” where the well-being of the self becomes inseparable from that of others (pp. 134-138). Edwards (2006) has made a similar distinction among three orientations to solidarity relationships: allies for self-interest, allies for altruism, and allies for social justice. Each stance is characterized by a particular set of beliefs about the self and “the other,” as well as a particular motivation for forming ally relationships. These orientations address, at least in part, M. R. Atleo’s (2008b, 2008c) call for greater clarity about the foundation for relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and participants’ responsibilities towards one another. Like similar frameworks (for example, Hardiman & Jackson, 1997), Edwards (2006) commented that an ally’s status is neither linear nor fixed (p. 53). Ally orientations appear to be context dependent and may vary depending upon the group an ally is interacting with as well as with the issues under consideration (Barvosa-Carter, 2001, pp. 22-23).

4.3.2.2 Allies for self-interest.

L. Davis (2010) has observed that “mutual benefits to working together” (p. 4) have prompted the formation of a number of contemporary Aboriginal/settler alliances. Benefits of interacting with others different from the self are not only material, they are also social, intellectual, moral, spiritual, or psychological (Goodman, 2001, pp. 103-124, 198-209). In social movement activities, for instance, participants have reported that the “pleasure, comfort, intellectual stimulation and increasing self-esteem through association with others” encouraged allies to persist, even when the task or the ally relationships proved difficult (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001, p. 3). Although self-interest may appear to be a questionable basis for ally relationships, Edwards (2006) asserted that it can be an important driver for becoming interested in forming new relationships. Sociologists like Tilly (2005) also see self-interest as an important “incentive shift” (p. 141) which encourages people to engage in activities that pose a degree of personal risk or require some sacrifice. Goodman (2001) similarly notes that it is natural for “people [to be] concerned with how things will affect them” (p. 155). When an ally is presumed to be disinterested, questions may arise about how they can be held accountable for actions in the short term, and if they can be counted on for support over the long haul (A. Barker, 2010, pp. 320-321; Gorski, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Kivel, 1996, pp. 86-108).

Social justice educators Hardiman and Jackson (1997) have described people who “operate from their own needs, interests, and curiosity about social group differences” as being at a “naïve” stage of identity development (pp. 23-24). These allies may be largely unaware of their position of power and privilege and how their positioning enhances or detracts from the relationship (L. Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010, p. 338; Margaret, 2010, pp. 16-19). Allies for self-interest, therefore, are more likely to exhibit “power over” in their interactions and find it

difficult to hear perspectives that are different from their own. Allies for self-interest may not be deeply concerned with social issues. Instead, they may single out individuals (or groups) perceived as marginalized because of unfortunate circumstances (Edwards, 2006, pp. 46-49). At this stage, allies attempt to support others by removing or addressing the external causes of harm (for instance, by helping someone living in poverty obtain paid employment) or by stopping specific perpetrators of violence. In explaining why they have stepped forward to help, these allies point to established social norms as well as to the consequences that inaction would have on themselves: negative feelings of personal distress, anxiety, guilt, fear, or shame, or positive consequences such as approbation from others (Edwards, 2006; Goodman, 2001, pp. 128-130; Pinker, 2011, pp. 582-590).

4.3.2.3 Allies for altruism.

In contrast, “allies for altruism” (Edwards, 2006, pp. 49-51) demonstrate a seemingly unselfish desire to help. One ally sums up this motivation saying, “If you’re trying to do the right thing, then the reward is having done it. Because it was right. The reward is to know you did the right thing” (Brooks & Edwards, 2009, p. 143). Rather than working “over” partners, allies for altruism see themselves as working “for” others by resisting actions, attitudes, or conditions which appear to pose a threat their partner’s well-being (Edwards, 2006, p. 47; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 26). The source of harm is still situated as external, usually in the power of dominant groups to which the ally does not belong (Edwards, 2006, p. 49; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, pp. 26-27). This orientation to the ally relationship is congruent with definitions proposed by social justice educators Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) who emphasize that an ally is “someone who speaks up or takes action against oppression not targeted at themselves” (p. 249).

Allies for altruism cite specific ideological or moral codes, for example rights-based discourses, professional guidelines, or spiritual or religious teachings, as reasons for involvement. Consequently, these allies act more from feelings of sympathy for the plight of others than concern for their own comfort or expectations of concrete gain (Goodman, 2001, pp. 128-130; Pinker, 2011, pp. 582-590). However, an altruistic desire to “do good” is no guarantee that allies from dominant groups can be counted on for support. Corntassel (2006) has described what he calls the “Free Tibet syndrome” (p. 36). This is when people of privilege waving placards demanding rights for others (usually others far away) have only limited understanding of these issues, let alone awareness of social justice issues in their own communities. When altruism is a driver for ally relationships, allies of privilege may believe that their personal goodness sets them apart from other oppressors, and subsequently fail to interrogate their own intentions and actions (Christian & Freeman, 2010).

4.3.2.4 Allies for social justice.

Rather than attempting to ameliorate the problems of particular individuals, allies for social justice focus on dismantling oppressive systems and on creating new structures, practices, and policies which promote equity and equality (Edwards, 2006, pp. 51-52). Propelled by a “sustainable passion for them, for me, for us, for the future” (Edwards, 2006, p. 47), allies for social justice are believed to have developed an expanded social consciousness which enables them to use their position of power and privilege strategically and purposefully for the benefit of others (Giddings, 2005; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, pp. 27-29). Unlike allies for self-interest or allies for altruism, allies for social justice do not see themselves as apart from or different from other oppressors. Instead, they see themselves as part of the problem. Perhaps the defining characteristic of these allies is a “sense of connection with other people, all people, [and] a grasp

of the concept of collectivity and collective responsibility” (Bishop, 1994, p. 95), otherwise known as empathy (Bishop, 1994, pp. 94-96, 110-113; Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001, p. 8; Goodman, 2001, pp. 126-130; Somerville, 2006, pp. 222-227). Empathy has been defined as an ability to imaginatively enter into and engage with the feelings, perspectives and beliefs of another (Goodman, 2001, p. 126). Believed to be at least partly innate, a biological response to the physical, psychological, or emotional needs of others (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), empathy promotes a sense of belonging and human bonding (Goodman, 2001, pp. 146-151). Empathy has also been positively correlated with support for social justice (Eisenberg & Morris, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Noddings, 2010; Slote, 2007, pp. 94-103). Scholars with an interest in Aboriginal justice have also noted the importance of empathy in prompting settler interest in reconciliation (Cairns, 2000, pp. 12, 15; Dion, 2009, p. 107; Regan, 2010, pp. 48-49).

Where individuals and groups have been successful in staying together despite their differences, participants have also reported that a range of personal and professional affiliations as well as shared goals helped to link people with one another (Barvosa-Carter, 2001, p. 31; Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001, pp. 9-10). These “emplacements” (Brown Childs, 2003, pp. 21-27) are “sites of collective life shared by a group of people that provides them with a rooted and demarcated sense of shared perspective and affiliation” (p. 25). In some cases, allies report that their curiosity was piqued when they discovered historical, racial, or ethnic connections between their own immediate or extended family and a marginalized group (Barta-Smith, 2001; Crean, 2009; Regan, 2010; Root & Dannenmann, 2009). As a result of a dimly remembered childhood account of her grandparents’ involvement in Indian Residential Schools, for instance, Freeman (2000) says she “was not utterly indifferent” when she was invited to help an Aboriginal community prepare a claim for restitution (p. 438). Another important emplacement that enables

settlers and Aboriginal Peoples to come together is a shared attachment to a particular landscape or territory (Larsen, 2003; Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009; Root & Dannenmann, 2009; M. Smith & Sterritt, 2010; Wallace, Struthers & Bauman, 2010). In *Mi'kma'ki, gkisedtanamoogk* (2010) affirms the importance of land as a potential source of affiliation for Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, saying that “the true meaning of being neighbours” means accepting our responsibility for caring for the earth and following her natural laws (p. 53).

Perhaps one overarching emplacement for social justice allies is some first hand experience with oppression. Allies for social justice may have had their social consciousness awakened as a result of witnessing injustice directed towards others (Giddings, 2005). Bishop (1994), however, observes that “people who approach other oppressed people as allies are those who are involved in their own process of liberation from oppression” (p. 95). As Hardiman and Jackson’s social oppression matrix (1997, pp. 18-23) and Bishop’s (1994) model of diagonal oppressions (pp. 64-66) show, oppression and discrimination are manifest in every location in society. We all have experience of being oppressors and with the experience of being oppressed, albeit in qualitatively different ways. In a university/community project intended to support healing of Indian Residential School survivors, a partner originally from Africa reported that her own lived experiences with colonialism were a determining factor in her decision to participate in the project. This personal experience, she said, enabled her to connect with Aboriginal partners’ concerns in way that was qualitatively different than other white partners (Lafrenière, Diallo & Dubie, 2005, p. 175).

Empathy, however, is highly subjective; it differs according to our perceptions of the people we encounter as well as the types of spaces and places in which we meet them. Voluntary and subjective, empathy is more likely to be extended to people close to us, people we are

attached to and with whom we are voluntarily bonded (Goodman, 2001, pp. 146-151; Rifkin, 2009, pp. 110-128). It is more likely to be triggered by face-to-face encounters with people we perceive as “like us” rather than distant strangers with whom we have little in common (Goodman, 2001, p. 149; Pinker, 2011, pp. 541, 580). Educator Megan Boler (1997) has consequently commented that “One can only hope then that empathy is not the only viable route to inspiring change” (p. 255). Boler further notes that empathy is no guarantee that people of privilege will see themselves as implicated in systemic injustice and take concrete steps towards making change. In a later article, Zorn and Boler (2007) note the need for more “self-reflective participation involving the active task of challenging one’s own assumptions and world views” (p. 143). Recognizing these challenges, Goodman (2001, Chapter 8) has acknowledged that empathy needs to be bolstered by the expectation of reward (or punishment), as well as by a supportive social context and by an individual’s moral values, ethics, or professional codes which alert them to the importance of taking action, even if doing so comes at some personal cost.

4.4 The Research Method: Narrative Inquiry

Everyday stories, too, have transformative powers.

(Episknew, 2009, p.15)

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) third question about research paradigms focuses on methodology. They ask how can the researcher “go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understanding?”(p. 108). This study is a narrative inquiry—in part because stories have been (and still are) the way I learn best. As I described earlier in this chapter, the study had its start in some stories that I lived during my time with a program focusing on Indigenous Peoples. And, as I later discovered, narrative may hold the key to the transformation of Aboriginal/settler

relationships. As I illustrated in Chapter 3, public discourses have been used to promulgate stereotypes about Aboriginal Peoples and inculcate prejudice in settler Canadians. In the aftermath of any conflict, one of the enabling conditions for peace is a “psychological shift of dominant narratives” (Porter, 2007, p. 158). Numerous scholars have similarly pointed to the need for more and more accurate stories by and about Aboriginal Peoples as a vehicle for improved nation-to-nation relationships (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, T’lakwadzi, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 12-13; Episkenew, 2009; Lafrenière et al., 2005; Tupper, 2011).

Next, I take a brief look at what I mean when I use the terms “story” and “narrative.” I describe some of the characteristics of narratives and why they can be a source of ferment for social change. I then move on to describe my sources of data and how I went about the process of extracting, reconstructing, and interpreting narratives about critical events from the data.

4.4.1 The Uses of Narrative

Stories are the oldest and the most powerful tools we have for learning and change (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gold, 2002; Moon, 2010; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The postmodern era has seen a significant reevaluation of stories as a container for knowledge, as a way of knowing, and as a method for finding out (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Moon, 2010; Riessman, 2008). Narrative approaches have been adopted in a number of ways: as a framework for understanding identity formation and human development over the course of the human life span (McAdams et al., 2006); as a therapeutic approach to healing and personal empowerment (White, 2004); as an approach to adult learning and teaching as well as professional/personal development for educators (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Rossiter & Clark, 2007); and as a qualitative research method (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). While

personal stories are now being taken seriously as a form of research text, in the literature the distinctions between “narrative” and “story” are frequently not clearly defined. Both stories and narratives are representations of an experience created after the fact, but there are some important differences.

In an early work that laid the foundations for narrative research practice, Polkinghorne (1988) defined story as an account of a sequence of events (p. 13). In contrast, narrative focuses on a specific event (or events), extracting meaning from and imposing meaning on a story. Narrative researcher and educator Chase (2005) has described narratives as a way of “shaping or ordering past experiences . . . organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (p. 656).

In narrative inquiries, data is extracted from oral or written stories and then reconstructed in order to highlight particular facets of an experience that might otherwise be hidden (Pinar, 1975; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The purpose is to better enable readers to discern why these events are important, as well as why they unfolded as they did (P. W. Jackson, 1995; Moon, 2010, pp. 101-114; Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 161-162). Another function of narrative inquiries is to draw attention to examples which reveal new ways of doing things (P. W. Jackson, 1995; Moon, 2010, pp. 125-130; Rossiter & Clark, 2007, pp. 71-73). One narrative educator has asserted that stories “do not simply contain knowledge, they are themselves the knowledge we want [people] to possess” (P. W. Jackson, 1995, p. 5). In the foreword to *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Regan, 2010), for instance, Taiaiake Alfred says that Regan “embodies the warrior spirit too,” and that her words of witness “point the way toward something completely new in the five-hundred-year history of interactions between Indigenous people and settlers in this land” (p. xi). Narrative psychologists (for example, Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000; Gergen & Gergen, 2006;

Rappaport, 1995) have noted that any reshaping of entrenched behavioural patterns requires not only information about what we have been doing wrong, but also concrete examples of what we need to do differently. Narrative methods, then, can not only be helpful in eliciting reflection on what we are doing now, they also prompt readers to speculate “what if” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 35-38).

One challenge in designing narrative studies is identifying the types of stories that are most likely to yield insights to the problem and its solution. The types of stories that can be used as a foundation for narrative inquiry are many and varied, both fiction and non-fiction. These include songs, textbooks, case studies, biography and autobiography, reports, prose and poetry, interviews, novels, plays, films, news stories, blog posts, jokes, gossip, legends and myths, letters, sermons, memos, diaries, and histories, as well as different forms of visual art including photographs, advertisements, comics, cartoons, and paintings (Moon, 2010, p. 26). As Polkinghorne (1988) commented, “story is a large tent with many usages” (p. 156). In this study, I looked for a particular type of story about Aboriginal/settler relationships, a counter-story to the all too familiar tale of “fort” and “frontier” interactions (Donald, 2012).

Counter-stories challenge the status quo by revealing fresh possibilities, more life giving responses, and previously unarticulated interpretations (Beverly, 2005; Episknew, 2009; McAdams et al., 2006; Nelson, 2001). Typically, counter-stories are told by people from subaltern groups who assert the truth of their perspectives, experiences, interpretations, and visions (Beverly, 2005; De Costa, 2002; Delgado, 1989; Episknew, 2009; Nelson, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Episknew (2009), for example, describes a popular theatre production which contrasted Aboriginal and colonial accounts of settlement that proved simultaneously “healing and empowering for the Indigenous community . . . educational and

humbling for the settlers” (p. 153) in the viewing audience. As Donald (2012) has asserted, bridging the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people demands new stories that shed light on:

more complex understandings of human relationality that traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present by demonstrating that perceived civilizational frontiers are actually permeable and that perspectives on history, memory, and experience are connected and interreferential. (p. 534)

When it comes to re-framing the identities of people of privilege, counter-stories by people who have been oppressed may not be sufficient. Attitudinal and behavioural change also requires input from people with whom we have a shared identity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 6; Gold, 2002, pp. 49, 177; Nelson, 2001, pp. 81-82; Woodward, 2002). In this study, therefore, I examined counter-stories told by white settlers who have become allies with Aboriginal people. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) urged, non-Indigenous researchers need to actively seek out and construct “dialogical counternarratives, stories of resistance, of struggle, of hope, stories that create spaces for multicultural conversations, stories embedded in the critical democratic imagination” (p. 6).

One example of this kind of counter-story is *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality*, by former Crown Attorney Rupert Ross (1992). Sharing his experiences in First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario, Ross reflected deeply on what he was learning about Aboriginal Peoples, learning which gradually began to shift not only his perspectives, but also his approach to professional practice and interpersonal relationships. In a preface to *Dancing with a Ghost*, Basil Johnson, an acclaimed Anishinaabe writer and scholar, affirmed both the value of and the need for Ross’s efforts, saying that:

Mr. Rupert Ross has succeeded where most others have fallen short . . . If through this book he can convince his learned friends to look anew at the adversarial character of litigation and to examine the First Nations peoples concept of human nature and human misconduct . . . he will have performed a service of great benefit. (in Ross, 1992, p. xv)

I therefore see counter-stories by white allies like Ross as an effective tool for helping settler Canadians “examine our dual positions as colonizer-perpetrators and colonizer-allies” (Regan, 2010, p. 28). Complex socially, culturally, and historically situated accounts that show white settlers struggling (and sometimes failing) in their efforts to build more just interpersonal and professional relationships with Aboriginal Peoples have potential to break through “the binary between ‘good white antiracists’ and ‘bad white racists’ . . . [that] encourages denials of white complicity” (Applebaum, 2007, p. 455). Teaching undergraduate Indigenous Studies courses, Day (2010) also found:

a full-frontal attack—using logic, reason, analysis—simply strengthens the colonial *habitus*, as Pierre Bourdieu has called it. One must be more subtle than this. I have found, for example, that working at an unconscious, emotional level can momentarily dissolve the settler’s shield in a way that no argument ever could. (p. 264)

Counter-stories can be powerful because they invite readers to step into the storyteller’s shoes while maintaining a degree of distance from emotionally charged experiences. As a result, readers may let down their defenses (at least temporarily) and “risk revealing [them]selves as vulnerable ‘not-knowers’” (Regan, 2010, p. 28).

4.4.2 Approaches to Data Collection

This study drew from a purposeful sample of white settler ally counter-stories. I gathered these stories through interviews with participating allies living in Mi’kmaw territory. I also

looked back at my own writing over the course of this study, as well as published accounts by settler allies such as the one by Ross (1992).

4.4.2.1 Participant interviews with settler allies.

A transformative research paradigm claims that people who embody a particular identity are best equipped to speak from and for that position (Mertens, 2005, p. 21). I therefore asked white settlers recognized as being allies with Mi'kmaw people to share their stories with me. I interviewed eight people in total, five women and three men, who have had close personal and/or professional relationships with Mi'kmaw people for at least 3 years in a range of communities, contexts, and settings. At the beginning of the study, I intended to interview an equal number of women and men. As I listed the allies I knew about as well as allies others suggested, I soon had a longer list of women than men. In order to decide which allies I would most like to interview, I reviewed publicly available information about each ally in order to learn a bit about their involvement with the Mi'kmaq and their commitment to interpersonal reconciliation. This documentation included news stories, published reports, as well as speeches, awards, and other forms of commendation by Aboriginal friends, associates, or community organizations. I also thought about what I heard other non-Aboriginal people say about these allies.

My first contact with participants was by phone or in person. Then, I sent a printed information package which included a Letter of Invitation (Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the study and a Consent Form (Appendix B). Participation was entirely voluntary and participants did not receive any compensation for their time.

All participant interviews but one were carried out in person. Most interviews were conducted at the participant's work place. By request, two interviews were done at the participant's home. At the beginning of each interview, I sketched the purpose of the study and

the ethical protocols that had been put in place to maintain confidentiality. I emphasized that pseudonyms would be used and details about particular people and locations removed. I also asked for and received permission to audio-record the interview before requesting a signature on the Consent Form. Each interview lasted approximately 2 hours. I began the interview by explaining how I came to be interested in the topic of improved settler/Aboriginal relationships. Interviews were structured using five broad questions which began with “Tell me about . . .” (Appendix C). For each question, I identified follow-up questions which could be used to probe for more information or for clarification (Riessman, 1993, p. 55). Once the preliminaries were completed, though, most participants spoke with almost no interruption and little follow-up on my part was required. Participants appeared to welcome a chance to talk about their experiences with Mi’kmaw people. In a couple of interviews, I did share some of my own experiences, made supportive comments and asked open-ended questions in order to encourage participants to expand on particular events or to check my perceptions about the participant’s reactions to some event (Rogan & de Kock, 2005, p. 633; Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 86).

Interviews were transcribed by a professional academic editor who had experience with transcription and with narrative research. Rather than smoothing disfluencies or pauses during transcription of interview data, interruptions were recorded as interpretive cues (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 108-109). After the transcription was completed, I listened to each interview several times while following the transcript, making a few minor changes. The transcripts were returned to participants for comments along with a Transcript Release Form (Appendix D). Requests for revisions were minor, for instance, misspellings, or requests to remove some names or other identifiers. In one case, though, I was asked to omit a sensitive story which the participant did not have permission to speak about publicly. Of the eight people I interviewed,

one person withdrew their data from the study. This was the only participant interviewed by telephone, and technical problems made clear communications difficult. I returned the interview transcript to them but did not receive a reply even after a follow-up email.

4.4.2.2 Researcher self-reflexivity.

The second source of data in this study were stories I wrote myself. This is in line with reflexive ethnographies whereby the researcher studies her own experiences alongside those others, using her own insights to illuminate issues under study (Ellis & Bouchner, 2003, p. 211). As part of my self-study, I examined materials that had been prepared for other purposes, for instance, academic assignments, email correspondence, presentations, and reflective notes. Here, I was interested in looking at the stories I had told about myself and how they changed over time. What did I know? What did I not know? How did I explain who I was in relation to Indigenous and Aboriginal Peoples?

4.4.2.3 Settler ally stories from the literature.

Autobiographical narratives detailing first person accounts of real life experiences are a recognized narrative research text (Beverly, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; De Costa, 2002). These include both scholarly (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Lotz, 1997) and popular accounts by allies who have defied prevailing social, cultural, and political imperatives in order to support the well-being of “the other.” Books like *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Dallaire & Beardsley, 2003), for instance, not only have become bestsellers, but also have been made into films. Similar stories about white settlers who have become allies with Aboriginal people have been documented: even during the early colonial period in Canada, there were stories which invited settlers to confront and grapple with different perspectives on Aboriginal Peoples and their relationships with them (Kuttainen, 2010). In this study, I drew from stories told by

historian Victoria Freeman (2000) and by Assistant Crown Attorney Rupert Ross (1992) as a way of “cross-checking” interview data, confirming that particular types of experiences could take place as well as looking for gaps or silences, issues that neither interview participants nor I addressed in our stories.

4.4.3 Data Analysis and Presentation

In this study I used three steps identified by Pinar (1975) as a guide to data construction, interpretation, and analysis. Early on in the exploration of narrative as a tool for education, Pinar described three distinct phases in the recovery of meaning:

First to render one’s educational experience . . . into words . . . The second is to use one’s critical faculties to understand what principles and patterns have been operative in one’s educational life . . . illuminating parts of the inner world and deepening one’s self-understanding generally. The third task is to analyze others’ experiences to reveal what I call basic educational structures or processes that cross biographical lines (p. 389).

Congruent with Pinar’s recommendations, I began by locating “critical events” (McAdams, 1988, pp. 133-172; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 71-88) that resulted in substantive change in the narrator’s thoughts, behaviours or feelings. Next, I constructed an “interpretive story” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Richmond, 2002) which explained each critical event. Last, I stepped back from each narrative and assessed whether or not it was trustworthy, if this information and these insights would help settlers become less dominating and more culturally sensitive in relationships with Aboriginal Peoples.

4.4.3.1 Locating critical events.

Some narrative inquiries work with a narrator’s life story as a whole. In contrast, I focused on critical events in the lives of the settler allies I interviewed or read about, as well as in

my own personal writing. These critical events were high points, low points, and turning points (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 91) that resulted in some change in beliefs about, attitudes, or behaviours towards Aboriginal Peoples, as well as allies' perceptions of themselves. Frequently perceived as a deviation in the routine course of life, critical events often have a strong affective dimension that enables them to be more readily recalled, in greater detail, than incidents or encounters which unfold smoothly with little trouble or challenge (Cortazzi, 1993). Typically, critical events become identifiable only in hindsight, with the passage of time (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74).

In the dense web of story, however, it is not always easy to distinguish exactly which stories are indeed “critical” in relation to the research question. Webster and Mertova (2007) consequently make a distinction among stories that are “critical,” “like,” and “other” (pp. 77-79). “Like events” parallel or closely resemble critical events, but involve different people, at another time or in another setting. The presence of like events provides evidence that a particular experience was not simply a “one off” occurrence, but a recurring thread in the narrator’s life experience. In contrast, “other events” take place as a result of a critical event. Other events reinforce, explain, or expand on the reasons behind a critical event. As a way of mapping the interconnected stories participants shared with me, I prepared the following table for each ally I interviewed:

Table 4.1. Relationships among events

Narrator’s Name:		
Critical Event	Like Events	Other Events
C1	L1a L1b	O1a O1b
C2	L2a L2b	O2a O2b

(Adapted from: Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw, & Creswell, 2002)

I later used these tables to compare and contrast the experiences of different settler allies as well as to locate patterns.

4.4.3.2 Constructing narratives about critical events.

Narratives are “extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units” (Riessman, 2008, p. 12). In other projects, I had attempted to work with narrative and had come to recognize just how complex and subjective the process of interpretation was. In this study I looked to the literature for templates, models, and instructions to help me better assess and construct interpretative narratives. Narrative theorist and researcher Catherine Riessman (2008) describes four approaches to narrative analysis: thematic, structural, performance, and visual. One of the debates in the literature on narrative inquiry is the extent to which analysis should prioritize any one of these approaches over the other. I anticipated that ally stories would be oral or in the form of a typed text, so I concluded a visual analysis was not appropriate. Dialogic or performance analysis looks at linguistic cues and clues which reveal hidden meanings and voices in the text (Riessman, 2008). Here I felt out of my comfort zone as a researcher; nor did I feel that a performance analysis would speak to readers outside the academy. In my research proposal, I consequently outlined a “menu” of structural and thematic analysis techniques that—at the time—I thought might prove useful. Thematic analysis looks at what was said in order to determine what narratives have in common (Rogan & de Kock, 2005) and the factors that shape the telling of a narrative (Riessman, 2008, Chapter 3). A not insignificant challenge when conducting a thematic analysis, however, lies in delineating the boundaries of one narrative from another, tracing the ripple effects of a specific event (Riessman, 2008). Structural analysis techniques offered a way of locating a complete narrative from within the data.

Structural analysis examines *how* a story is told in order to uncover aspects not explicitly named by the speaker (Riessman, 2008, Chapter 4). The purpose of structural analysis is to make links among events, people, and space plain; to show why things unfolded the way they did (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 89-111). I adapted an approach to structural analysis originally proposed by Labov (1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1997) where the researcher uses her own judgment and cues in the text to extract complete narratives about an event. Each narrative consists of:

- Abstract (summary of key message);
- Orientation (time, place, situation, participants);
- Complicating action (sequence of events);
- Evaluation (significance and meaning of events; narrator's attitude);
- Resolution (what happened; impact of this event); and
- Coda (bridge to present or link to other events).

Labov's approach is consistent with the definition of narrative as a story which lays out details about people, place, time, and space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, Chapter 4; Polkinghorne, 1995; Rossiter, 2005; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). In Labov's model, narratives also have "a plot, a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Denzin, 1989, p. 37). Variations on Labov's model have been used by other narrative researchers (McAdams, 1988, pp. 133-172; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 71-88). I also gave each event a title and categorized the type of event it appeared to be (Robichaux, 2003):

- Extrinsic: Having an external cause, such as an historic event or a change in policy or laws;
- Intrinsic: Resulting from experiences in the course of adult life, such as a career change or shifts in place of residence or employment; and

• Personal: Associated with individual experiences or circumstances, for example, illness (Measor, 1985; Webster and Mertova, 2007, pp. 74-75). For each critical event selected for inclusion in this study, I prepared the following summary:

Table 4.2. Critical events template

Narrator: <i>Title:</i> Type of event: Extrinsic / Intrinsic / Personal		
Narrative Element	Examples from the interview	Summary
Abstract (AB): What is the story about? (core message)	• Representative or evocative phrases selected as an aide to memory and for purposes of story reconstruction.	• Here I used my own words to describe each narrative component
Orientation (OR): Who (people); Where (place); When (time); Intentions or purposes		
Complicating Action (CA): What happened, the sequence of events, cause and effect relationships		
Evaluation (EV): How does the narrator feel or what does the narrator say about this event?		
Resolution (RE): So what? What was the significance of this event? What are the “consequences of the event for human needs and desires” (Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 5)?		
Coda (CO): So what happened next? How did this event provide a bridge or link to other events?		

4.4.3.3 Interrogating the dynamics in settler ally narratives.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that ally counter-stories are positive examples of settler interactions with Aboriginal Peoples. Critical race theorist Delgado (1989), however, has questioned the validity of stories people of privilege tell, observing that these may be little more than “stock explanations that construct reality in ways favorable to [the powerful]” (p. 2437). I

found questions developed for educators by Angelides (2001) effective in helping me look beneath the surface of events, challenging some of my presumptions, biases, and beliefs. When we look at critical events, Angelides said, we need to ask:

1. Whose interests are served or denied by the actions of these critical incidents?
2. What conditions sustain and preserve these actions?
3. What power relationships between the headteacher, teachers, pupils, and parents are expressed in them? and
4. What structural, organizational, and cultural factors are likely to prevent teachers and pupils from engaging in alternative ways? (p. 436)

The only modification I made to these questions was to substitute “Aboriginal Peoples and settlers” for “headteacher, teachers, pupils, and parents.” In addition, I have been mindful of two guiding principles for this work: first, the need to “do no harm” to Aboriginal Peoples and second, to find ways to ensure that narratives contained in this inquiry are trustworthy.

4.5 Ethical Considerations: Working With Risky Stories

So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have
to watch out for the stories that you are told.

(T. King, 2003, p. 10)

Qualitative research poses particular challenges when it comes to ensuring that data and interpretations are correct and that, under similar circumstances, similar results would be obtained (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 31-32; Riessman, 1993, pp. 21-23). Even when research problems are shared ones, care must be taken to interrogate researcher positioning and ensure that the research data and interpretations are as trustworthy, credible, dependable, and confirmable as possible. L. Davis (2004) has asserted that research which involves Aboriginal

Peoples is inevitably risky. Regardless of the type of research being carried out, the stories that researchers tell can cause real harm to real people (p. 10). Researchers who work with Indigenous Peoples (Absolon & Willett, 2004; E. Hampton, 1995; Wilson, 2008) assert that the key lies in thoughtful consideration of who speaks through the research, to whom and why, as well as some forethought about how data will be used. Narrative theorist Nelson (2001) asks an almost identical set of questions: “What kind of stories are these?” “What will be done with these stories?” and “Why is something being done?” (pp. 36-37). These queries draw attention to the moral purpose or axiology behind research, to questions around representation, voice, and values (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 100). In the remainder of this section, I lay out some of the constraints around this study as well as steps that I have taken to make this narrative inquiry less risky.

4.5.1 What Kind of Stories?

Narrative educators Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000) have described narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research situated at the borders of fact and fiction (pp. 179-181). Narratives, they remind us, reflect experience but are not the actual experience itself. Omitted are many sights, sounds, and emotions that accompanied the original event, as well as nuances of context which shaped what the narrator attended to at the time, and the ways the event was subsequently interpreted. Memories not only become blunted with the passage of time; recollections are also filtered through the various facets of our identity—race, gender, age, ethnicity, place of birth, geographic location, and experiences of the world (Nelson, 2001, Chapter 3; Riessman, 2008, Chapter 7). In any re-telling, narratives may shift their shape in response to who is listening, why, and where a particular story is being told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 110-112). There is also the question of what researchers perceive as being important and how they choose to represent stories told to them, the voice that is used, the words

that are selected (or omitted), and explicit or implicit links that are made among events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 130-161; Riessman, 2008, Chapter 2). Josselson (2007) cautions researchers and readers of narrative inquiries to be wary of narratives, and recognize that they are a snapshot of “the researcher’s understanding or interpretation” (p. 549) at a particular place and moment in time.

This study is risky not only because it contains narratives but also because the voices that are privileged in this study are those of people from dominant groups: white, Euro-Canadian settlers. As I noted earlier in this chapter, the relationship between myself and the research participants was horizontal, “agent-agent” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 22). Settlers I interviewed and the ally stories I read were about people very much like me. While the research participants and I were on an equal footing, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) have also pointed out that agents tend to consciously (or unconsciously) reinforce taken for granted habits of domination. Who reads these stories, and how, determines just how much harm bias in the stories actually creates.

4.5.2 What Will be Done With These Stories?

L. Davis (2004) says that the potential for harm depends upon the intended audience and the extent to which the research is openly accessible.

Table 4.3 Identities and access

Access	Identities	
Non-Public	Insider “Own” Research Contract Research 1	Outsider Contract Research 2
Public Sphere	“Own” Research Contract Research Academic Research 3	“Own” Research Contract Research Academic Research 4

(Source: L. Davis, 2004, p. 6)

As the shading in the table above indicates, this study is potentially risky because it was self-initiated research and because it tells stories that will be made public. At a minimum, this thesis will be made available as an electronic document. Results will also be formatted for articles in scholarly journals, and posted to web-based forums such as *Idle No More* where Aboriginal Peoples and settlers are sharing guidelines and reflecting on ways to more effectively live and work together. I also intend to make presentations to interested educators and academics in Nova Scotia and my local community, sharing what I have learned. I am committed to providing education and creating resources aimed at fostering interpersonal reconciliation with settler Nova Scotians. One reasonable concern, then, is what will happen when these results are made public and Aboriginal Peoples have no control over how the information will be distributed or used.

4.5.3 Why Have These Stories Been Documented?

In Chapter 1, I explained that the purpose of this research is to understand how settler Canadians learn to participate in reconciliation at an interpersonal level. As a group of Elders from the Indigenous Residential School Survivors Society urged, the time has come for non-Aboriginal Canadians to “take responsibility for educating yourself and your children” (in Corntassel et al., 2009, p. 142). These stories have been documented as a way of urging settlers to do just that. As a way of tearing down the walls which separate settlers and Aboriginal Peoples, however, Donald (2012) has also emphasized that we need new stories which show non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Peoples coming together:

We need more complex understandings of human relationality that traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present by demonstrating that perceived civilizational frontiers are actually permeable and that perspectives on history, memory, and experience are connected and interreferential. (p. 534)

The other reasons that these stories have been documented is to show settlers that renewed relationships are not only possible, but something to aspire to. These stories reveal, as Donald has said, the shared spaces between Aboriginal Peoples and settlers where “history, memory, and experience are connected.”

4.5.4 Making This Study More Trustworthy

At a minimum, potential for harm has been mitigated by following guidelines and recommendations set out by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. This study was also submitted to and approved by Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch (<http://mrc.cbu.ca/prinpro.html>) which reviews and authorizes research involving or concerning Mi’kmaw people. The study does not include stories about experiences or knowledge that are sacred to Aboriginal Peoples or about events which should rightfully be narrated by Aboriginal voices alone (L. Davis, 2004) In order to protect against any possibility that this study might “deepen divisions or expose a community to unwanted attention from outsiders” (L. Davis, 2004, p.10), names of the allies I interviewed, their Mi’kmaw partners and colleagues and communities have been changed or omitted to maintain confidentiality. Even if some readers are able to make informed guesses about who is speaking or where some stories took place, the narratives shared here pose little risk either of embarrassing the narrators or “telling tales” that will bring disrepute to Aboriginal neighbours, partners, or colleagues.

In addition, I considered the implications of these narratives in relation to their intended function as tools for change in settler Canadians. Throughout the study, I attempted to remain mindful that the knowledge presented here is partial and must be open to an “ideological critique of its role in perpetuating oppressive social structures and policies” (Mertens, 2005, p. 23). To ensure that these narratives are as trustworthy as possible, I drew data from different sources and explored

stories told by a number of narrators (Chase, 2005; Josselson, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 89-94; Yin, 2009, pp. 114-123). I also attempted to describe events in sufficient detail so that readers can judge for themselves if these stories are plausible (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Riessman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). While narrative coherence is often seen as desirable, I agree with other researchers that narratives with “holes” may ultimately be more accurate and more honest (Riessman, 2008, pp. 189-190; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 100-101). Nelson (2001) says that effective counter-stories leave space for readers to tie the threads of meaning together (pp. 11-15). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conclude, though, there are limits to the checks and balances narrative researchers can put in place:

The attitude in a narrative inquiry is one of doing one’s best under the circumstances, knowing all the while that other possibilities, other interpretations, other ways of explaining things are possible. (p. 31)

I anticipate that the publication and presentation process that will occur after this thesis is approved will open up these interpretations for discussion and critique.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I laid out the design of the study. In response to calls for social justice for Aboriginal Peoples, this investigation was shaped using a transformative research paradigm and draws from transformative learning and pedagogy for the privileged as conceptual frameworks for interpreting the data. I chose narrative inquiry as my method and focus on counter-stories told by eight settlers in Nova Scotia who position themselves as allies with Aboriginal Peoples. As a way of understanding the factors and conditions which shaped the learning of these settler allies, I extracted and re-storied critical events from participant interview data. Stories told by people of privilege which involve Aboriginal Peoples are potentially risky so precautions have been taken

to minimize any potential harm. In the next chapter, I present a narrative account of the critical events shared by each of the study participants, situating and positioning each settler ally and highlighting some key moments in their learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

STORIES SETTLER ALLIES TELL

We're all neighbours: that's the reality ... When you know your neighbours,
when you can lean over the fence and hear each other's stories,
you foster understanding, harmony and community.

(Wagamese, 2008, p. 4).

In this chapter I tell each participant's ally story, drawn from a selection of critical events reconstructed from interviews with study participants. As I outlined in Chapter 4, a critical event is an experience that had a significant emotional impact on the speaker; it provides an illuminating example from the person's life, indicative of a larger pattern of behaviour or stage in the person's life development. Often, the critical event was instrumental in setting off a chain of other events, including self-reflection and learning. I reconstructed the critical events in participants' lives using the procedures described in Chapter 4. The minimum number of critical events extracted from an interview was three, from Doug who is the newest of the settler allies. The maximum number of critical events was seven, relayed by Irene who has been an ally with Aboriginal Peoples for more than 20 years. The full text of critical events reported by each participant is included in Appendix E.

In this chapter, I tell how allies have been interacting with the Mi'kmaq in personal, professional, and community contexts and explain some of the reasons they have been motivated to become allies. Settler participants also recalled some of the experiences, people, and places that have influenced their interest in and commitment to Aboriginal Peoples as well as how relationships with Aboriginal people have affected them personally. Participants also were frank

about some of the challenges and difficulties that ally work entails and some of the knowledge, training, or conditions needed to support learning.

Eight white settlers participated in this study. In Table 5.1, I provide a profile of participants according to age, the number of years they have been engaged in ally relationships with the Mi'kmaq, participants' occupations, and their places of birth.

Table 5.1. Profile of participants

Participant	Age	Number of years in relationship with the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq	Current Occupation	Place of Birth
Doug	40s	Fewer than 5 years	Musician & music educator	Nova Scotia
Nancy (Myself)	50s	Fewer than 5 years	Community educator	Other province in Canada
Anne	60s	5 to 10 years	Literacy program coordinator	Other province in Canada
Barbara & Wally	40s	5 to 10 years	Admin assistant & public service employee	Other province in Canada; Europe
Lauren	40s	15 to 20 years	Professor of Education	Other Maritime province
Richard	50s	15 to 20 years	Family violence prevention counselor	Other province in Canada
Karen	60s	More than 20 years	Professor of Biology (recently retired)	Other province in Canada
Irene	50s	More than 20 years	Community education program coordinator	Other province in Canada

Names of the study participants, their organizations and communities, their Mi'kmaw partners have all been changed or omitted in order to protect confidentiality. As Table 5.1 shows, both female and male participants in this study were mature adults with established careers. In one instance, I interviewed a married couple, Barbara and Wally. One other participant, Richard, also had a partner who has ally relationships with the Mi'kmaq but she was not interviewed. Participants' ally relationships occurred in different settings and contexts, ranging from the interpersonal to the professional. Once the interviews were completed, I realized that only two participants, Doug and Lauren, had actually been born in Mi'kma'ki: Doug in Nova Scotia and Lauren in another Maritime province which is part of Mi'kmaw territory. Other participants were born in parts of Canada or, in one instance, in Europe (Wally), and moved to Nova Scotia as adults. All of the participants identified as being white Canadians, although one participant, Lauren, emphasized her Acadian roots and the recent discovery that she likely has some Aboriginal ancestry.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the critical events I heard as significant in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours of these white allies. The accounts are ordered according to the number of years that settlers have been in relationship with the Mi'kmaq, beginning with Doug, the newest of the allies, and finishing with Irene who has positioned herself as ally with Aboriginal Peoples for most of her adult life. Throughout the chapter, I provide references to particular critical events that allies shared, which are provided in full in Appendix E. Critical events have been assigned an initial and a number: for example, critical event 1 for Doug is noted as D1, critical event 3 in Lauren's story is L3, and so on.

5.1 Doug: I Have More of a Smile Because

I Like the People

Doug is a professional musician in his forties who has been teaching music at a Nova Scotia university for almost a decade. He recently began playing with One Sky, a Mi'kmaw-led musical group which includes both Mi'kmaw and non-Aboriginal musicians, professionals and amateurs. The band blends jazz and folk rock with Aboriginal drumming, but what makes One Sky most powerful are songs which convey little known stories about Mi'kmaw people and events. I was interested in talking with one of the non-Aboriginal members of One Sky because music by or about the Mi'kmaq is seldom heard on the public airwaves in Nova Scotia; nor is it often performed outside pow-wows or special events with an Aboriginal focus. One Sky, however, has quietly begun making a name for themselves in Mi'kmaw communities and non-Aboriginal audiences across Nova Scotia. During our talk, Doug shared three critical events with me: about his engagement with One Sky, about how he has been learning more about the Mi'kmaq, and about informal conversations with Donald Marshall Jr. that took place some years ago.

A few years ago, Doug encountered some personal and financial problems. For him, one way of coping with stress is by playing music so he began to look around for opportunities which wouldn't conflict with his teaching responsibilities. Doug recalled that a mutual friend initiated his connection with Arthur, the Mi'kmaw leader who formed One Sky. During Doug's first year with the group, One Sky recorded their first album which subsequently received a prestigious music award. Doug noted that there were already some talented musicians in the group, but Arthur expressed appreciation for his help in bringing up the quality of the band's performance. Doug also related that he wants to "make sure that the band is not getting taken advantage of"

(D1) so he is attempting to locate other venues where the group can play, events that pay a little better. Doug went on to emphasize, however, that financial gain is not the motivation for his participation in One Sky:

It's not about the money when I play with them, you know? When I put myself into that situation, it's about being around positive instead of negative. And me, I just want the negative out of my life, and I'm trying to find a way to do that. (D1)

When Doug is playing with One Sky, he feels good.

When I'm up there playing with the band, I got a smile on my face. I have a smile anyway, but I have more of a smile because I like the people. Just, like I said, it just gets rid of the negative right off the bat. (D1)

Doug credited Arthur and his son for making him feel at home in the group noting that "they liked me and I liked them." He also recounted that he experiences a similar sense of welcome when he is with other Aboriginal people, commenting that "In the Native community I find that they're there to help other people, make you feel good about yourself . . . And I really noticed that at couple of concerts in Mi'kmaw communities, the Mi'kmaq welcome whatever race in the world into their world" (D2).

Doug intends to continue performing with One Sky, participating and supporting the group because:

It's a nice little unit that I really enjoy; just trying to work with them is an honour.

There's no like racial discrimination or anything like that. That's what I like about the band; they're just great gentle people to work with. I'm not saying, you know, "those people," I'm just saying they're friends of mine. That's what I'm saying. (D 1)

Doug was frank, though, that when it comes to the Mi'kmaq he “knows nothing, really not a lot about it,” he’s “just new at this, this whole thing, you know,” and “just trying to figure it out” (D2). At the same time, however, Doug also reported that he doesn’t feel “hampered or intimidated” (D2) by his lack of knowledge or experience working with Aboriginal People. Being with the group as they “talk about stories” (D2) is significant, helping Doug gradually learn more about Mi'kmaw history, people and places in the province. Usually, Doug said, he doesn’t pay much attention to song lyrics, but when he’s playing with One Sky, “here’s a difference—I listen to the words. And some days I’ll say ‘Whoa, this is heavy’” (D2). Coming back from a concert, One Sky travelled the back roads stopping at Mi'kmaw communities, churches, and graveyards, a trip Doug found to be “enjoyable.” He noted that “in the Native communities I find that they’re there to help other people” (D2).

Doug contrasted his present experiences with the atmosphere that prevailed when he was growing up, when racial prejudice directed towards the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians was overt (D3). Informal conversations with Donald Marshall Jr. after he was acquitted and released from prison, however, made a profound impression on Doug. Doug described Marshall as the “nicest guy you’d ever want to meet” (D3) and asserted that Marshall “was judged because he was Native.” Racism, Doug concluded, “really pushes my buttons I guess because I’m not prejudiced against anyone” (D3).

5.2 Nancy: The Rocks Tell Me What to Do

I am a white, middle-aged, Canadian female, and a “come-from-away” to Nova Scotia. I have been privileged to live on Mi'kmaw territory for over seventeen years. It was only recently, though, that I became interested in learning about the Mi'kmaq who are the traditional keepers of the territory I now call home. This interest, let alone a desire to stand as an ally with the

Mi'kmaq, might never have arisen at all if not for the time I spent in Thailand from 2002 to 2007, as the academic coordinator for an Indigenous Studies year abroad program. As I outlined in Chapter 4, it was my experiences with this program that made me stop and question my abilities as an educator. It also confronted me with my own unconscious presumptions about the nature of the world and my own approaches to knowing. I selected four critical events of my own for inclusion in this study.

One story that I found myself repeating, both before and during my doctoral studies, concerned an event that happened during my fourth year with the year abroad program (N1). The students and I were visiting a Hilltribe community in northern Thailand. Members of the local community would take time out of their day to speak to us about different aspects of community life, share their histories and stories, and give us a chance to ask questions:

Then, one day a Hilltribe shaman explained how he decided where floodways should go in order to prevent his village from being washed away. He said, "The rocks tell me what to do." Suddenly animism wasn't just something you read about in books. I realized that Hilltribe Peoples knew things and were able to do things that people from my culture assumed were impossible. Hilltribe people could even form relationships and interact with other-than-human beings I perceived as being "dead." (N1)

In other villages, our hosts had shared their beliefs in an animate world, but I suddenly realized I had unconsciously dismissed these forms of knowledge and ways of knowing as little more than superstition: superstition which had beneficial impacts on people's behaviour in relation to the environment, but superstition none the less.

It wasn't until I started to read *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Ross, 1992) that I began to acknowledge just how profound are the differences between Indigenous

and white, western European worldviews. These differences are not academic, nor are they intellectual, but embodied and experiential. What I was later surprised to discover is that animist worldviews like those of Hilltribe Peoples in Thailand are no longer inevitably regarded as “anti-scientific.” There is a growing body of research about sacred ecologies and deep ecology which regards talking rocks as a matter of fact, even if animate qualities and relationships are yet poorly understood and even less appreciated.

In 2010 I shared the story about the shaman (N1) when I attended a four day workshop on Indigenous knowledge. Participants came from Africa, South Asia, the South Pacific, and the Caribbean; only two identified as Indigenous. I was the only participant from Canada. My story reflected on when and how I became aware of Indigenous knowledge systems and why I felt Indigenous knowledge was important. For me, the outcome of this event has been a more conscious awareness of the need to keep my mind and my heart open when I listen to Indigenous and Aboriginal stories about the natural world and about humans interacting with nature. I am starting to see Indigenous knowledge not merely as instrumental, but as a vehicle for the transformation of western consciousness.

The recognition of how little I had understood of Indigenous realities as well as how hard it sometimes seemed to communicate across cultural differences was a factor that prompted me to apply to do doctoral studies. At the time I applied, my purpose was to better understand Indigenous worldviews and how non-Indigenous people like myself can come to grips with them. When it came time to struggle with the first draft of my research proposal, there was yet another significant moment. As I described in the section on “reciprocity” in Chapter 4, I recognized that while I been concerned with lending my support to Hilltribe Peoples in Thailand, I had never even considered that this might be something I could do or should do where I live.

Returning home to Nova Scotia was the beginning of what proved to be a lengthy learning journey as I set out to understand more about the Mi'kmaq, the history of Mi'kma'ki, and my own role, place and position on this territory.

Over the past couple of years, I've have a chance to participate in several educational programs aimed at fostering peace and friendship between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians. A few years ago, I started attending meetings of an Aboriginal rights support coalition that has been working here in the Maritimes since the 1990s. I've also been able to attend some Tatamagouche Centre social justice workshops focusing on Peace and Friendship treaties and skills for cross-cultural solidarity. What's been most important in shaping my understanding and developing some of the "backbone" required for sustaining my commitment to ally work has been a chance to simply be with Aboriginal people. I have been fortunate that I've been able to take part in annual Peace and Friendship gatherings with Aboriginal people from the region, to sit in circle, sit in ceremony, share food together and simply listen. (N2)

What slowly started to become clear to me was that understanding Indigenous worldviews was not the only thing separating Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country. The silent legacy of colonization, racism, and indifference also needed to be identified and overcome. In a submission to an on-line discussion with several white settlers who stand as allies with Aboriginal Peoples, I wrote that "Like the little kid who shouted out that the emperor was walking naked through the streets, I have a part to play in naming reality rather than sustaining our collective delusions" (N2).

Looking at examples of how settlers had been working to support Aboriginal Peoples I started to realize the even bigger issue is a need for reconciliation. As the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission of Canada began to hold hearings across the country, I increasingly wondered just what is needed to restore relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and what relationships might look like if indeed the two nations could ever become reconciled. In my research proposal I introduced the notion of being an ally, examining what it might look like if settlers learn to live out reconciliation in actual fact.

Another turning point in my understanding occurred when I was accepted as a research assistant with *Animating the Mi'kmaw Humanities in Atlantic Canada* from 2010 to 2012. Early in this project, I had the privilege of attending two dialogue sessions along with invited Mi'kmaw participants (N3). The focus of the conversation was on what it means, from a Mi'kmaw perspective, to be both human and humane. Participants shared traditional stories as well as their personal experiences, reflecting on traditional Indigenous knowledge and on ways that Mi'kmaw people have lived—and still live—with the natural world, with each other, and with newcomers on their traditional territories. I was particularly struck by a statement one Mi'kmaw Elder made, that “We come from a Nation of people who care for one another” (N3). In my own interactions with Mi'kmaw people, it was exactly this caring, generosity, and good humour that had always impressed me most. This contrasted with stories that I had heard or read about the Mi'kmaq: stories about loss, about dislocation, and dispossession. Instead, I had heard the stories of a people who are proud, resilient, and capable.

At the same time, I was also learning about the harsh reality of racial hatred and how the embers of racism have been fanned for generations. As part of the background for the *Animating the Mi'kmaw Humanities* project, I was asked to conduct a critical discourse analysis of images of the Mi'kmaq in curricular documents, including textbooks and teacher resource materials.

What I found shocked me to the core. When speaking about the Mi'kmaq for some 500 years, white settlers have dismissed, diminished, ignored, and vilified the Mi'kmaq:

I don't which has been worse, the complete silences about the Mi'kmaq—erased as if they had never even existed—or the fearful, fear-mongering invective which has been printed on the pages of school texts. I can't imagine what it must be like for someone who is Mi'kmaq, coming across these images which are purported to be of your ancestors, your family, or your community. Why is it that I know so little about what's happened in this province? Was it because no one told me, or is it that I didn't want to pay attention? (N4)

Looking at the authors of these texts gave concrete meaning to concepts like white privilege. Thomas Raddall, for example, whose works were riddled with overtly racist images, was not only a Governor General's award winner for fiction, he also sat on a board responsible for naming historic sites in Nova Scotia. He was also influential in establishing an approach to tourism in which Aboriginal Peoples were practically invisible.

The reports, letters and novels I read also countered any lingering illusions I may have had about Nova Scotia's colonial rulers as well-intentioned people who "didn't know any better." I was left with no doubt racism in this province has been consciously, deliberately enacted. Public discourse has been not only highly volatile, but shifting. Originally portrayed as helpful guides or subjects of paternalistic care, the Mi'kmaq were readily recast as "Savage Warriors" as the drive to colonize Nova Scotia picked up speed. As soon as Mi'kmaq opposition was suppressed, these original keepers of the land were dismissed as little more than fictional characters in children's tales.

Reading these stories by white settlers made me feel “exhausted and sad in equal measure. But even more than that, I feel so profoundly ashamed” (N4). I started to think more deeply about whether or not my own good intentions were trustworthy and how I could be sure. Reacting against the beliefs, attitudes, and values of earlier times which denigrated the Mi’kmaq, I also started to question what might have been different if even one of these authors had taken a stand that went against prevailing social norms. Whites like me, I saw, do possess agency, we do make the rules. If history hinges on the stories that are told, I reasoned, telling some new stories—positive stories—about settler relationships with the Mi’kmaq might be one way to foster reconciliation, peace, and friendship.

5.3 Anne: The Best Way to Move is Through Friendship

Anne has been the coordinator of a community-based literacy program in a medium sized town in Nova Scotia for almost eight years. She’s in her sixties and is looking forward to retiring in five years, but anticipates that she’ll never stop doing volunteer work or cease to pursue her passion for lifelong learning. Anne has been involved in literacy work in different parts of Canada, in varying contexts and locations, including prisons. At the time that I spoke to Anne, her organization had been attracting positive attention for their involvement in a new type of family literacy program, one focused on restoring the Mi’kmaw language. Since the 1950s, there has been a decline in the number of fluent Mi’kmaw speakers, and programs like the one that Anne’s organization helped to facilitate were aimed not only at teaching oral and written Mi’kmaw, but also on transmitting and reinforcing Mi’kmaw cultural practices, behaviours, and values in which language is embedded. In our talk, Anne shared her experiences with this program and how it has affected her as a person. While emphasizing the importance of relationships grounded in friendship, Anne admitted that working in collaboration has proven

more complex than she had imagined. Her ongoing desire to support people who have been marginalized, she reflected, originated with challenges she experienced growing up, as well as her interest in particular religious outlooks and philosophies. Anne highlighted five critical events from her life that have deepened her understanding of ally work.

She began by explaining that her organization has a mandate to serve the learning needs of people in her town and the surrounding county which includes a Mi'kmaw Nation, but Anne mentioned that her initial impetus to work with the Mi'kmaw community came about because she had previously been "befriended" (A5). Some years prior, while working as a university tutor, Anne worked with Carol, a mature Mi'kmaw student who has children of her own. Through Carol, Anne later met Muriel, Carol's aunt, with whom she feels she has more in common. When Anne became aware of funding available for the restoration of Aboriginal languages she began to discuss possibilities with Muriel and Carol, who eventually became the facilitators of a Mi'kmaw family literacy program. Working in conjunction with the Band Council, community representatives, and a Mi'kmaw Elder, Muriel and Carol created an on-reserve Mi'kmaw language program for families with young children.

Anne was enthusiastic about the way in which "everyone just mingles and they all learn together and there's this coming and going and this lovely sense of play" (A1). In this program, Anne positioned herself as being the "behind the scenes person" who supported Muriel and Carol and helped them accomplish their goals, lending a hand when additional resources or other skills or information were required: for example, with the writing of funding proposals (A1). One example of what it means for Anne to work this way came at an unexpected moment at the end of a family literacy session:

It was when I was cleaning up one day. I had been attending the group consistently and being sort of helpful. People were telling me things and I felt we were getting deeper and were sharing. But you still know in your intuition, that your otherness is still putting you apart. Right? And this time, I was no longer other, I was just in there helping clean up underneath the table where a little girl had been sick. And it was another bonding moment (A1).

Anne described this as being “a magical moment when you’re there and, all of a sudden, you’ve proven yourself and you’re okay and you’ve been accepted . . . the chill is no longer in the air and you’re just person to person” (A1).

In this narrative, Anne indicated that the very ordinariness of her behavior—and others’ willingness to let her get on with the task—was a mark of her acceptance as one of the group. Several times during the interview Anne reiterated the importance of standing back, observing, listening, and simply being present for long periods of time:

I think what works for me is to not put myself in the centre of a room or the stage, but instead to just listen and observe and quietly affirm until people get used to me being there. You know? That my intentions are none other than just to be present with what they’re doing and support. Which can take a long time, and, in some cases, may never take. I feel like once you show that your intention is none other than what would be allowable and what would be wanted, and you do it in a respectful manner, then you do gain friends. (A1)

This is also how Anne sees herself working with the community in the future. Her goal, she said, had been “kind of working to get out of the way” (A1) so that Muriel and others in the community take on leadership and accountability. Anne wants to remain engaged with Muriel,

Carol, and others in the Mi'kmaw community, but on a more personal rather than an organizational basis. However, Anne asserted, both she and her agency would continue to be available to support the community for as long as they were wanted or needed, that she “won’t break the relationship” (A1). Anne mused, “it’s a funny kind of balance that I’m always walking” (A5). Working in partnership has posed unexpected problems. Although she asserts that she hopes her engagement is, at the very least, “harmless” (A1), not everyone in the Mi'kmaw community welcomes her organization’s presence:

I really feel because I don’t want to appear like I’m doing something that should ultimately be done better, could be done better, by Mi'kmaw people. Sometimes I butt heads with people because they feel they should be doing the activities. And then I feel I shouldn’t be there and I just kind of want to remove myself professionally, but not personally. Does that make sense? I feel like I’m in a bit of a quagmire. I don’t want to be stepping on toes, that’s not the purpose. (A5)

At the time of our interview, Anne had no definite plan for how the family literacy project could move forward in the future, noting that “It’s very, very complicated” (A5).

Being with Muriel and visiting Muriel in her home has opened Anne’s eyes to the “social unfairness of it all” (A5), to the day-to-day challenges Mi'kmaw people face “in terms of housing, basic survival” as well as to more systemic injustices brought about by Indian Residential Schools. Anne attributes her need to respond to social justice issues to experiences she had within her own family where she “saw so many people who were so profoundly unhappy” (A2). She recalled that she began to want to “somehow work against the cruelty and not let it get you.” At the same time, she reports that there was considerable “idealism” in her home and she remembers that she liked to “read philosophy . . . about the religious traditions

and different religions,” in particular the work of Martin Buber, who introduced the concept of “I and Thou” (A2), that boundaries between the self and the other need to be dissolved through conscious, embodied, spiritual engagement with others as a basis for relationships that are human and humane. Today, Anne identifies most with Quaker principles and commented that:

It just feels wrong to be walking on the earth with big feet and stomping over other people. I think that all of us can create more opportunities for others to shine, so that no one is ignored or not acknowledged or isolated or reduced in their humanity in any way.

Anne consequently places a high value on being “fully present” and on treating “everybody with accord and respect regardless of anything on the surface. You try to see closer to their heart as opposed to what clothes they’re wearing or anything else” (A2).

Anne has held several positions where she has worked with people and groups who are on “the edges,” outside of “the mainstream” (A3). In addition to her own identity, what has brought Anne into these spaces and situations are relationships with individuals that gradually evolved into friendships. When Anne was in her twenties, she met a Mi’kmaq woman who has become a lifelong friend, creating a genuine “life understanding” (A3). Anne remembered that:

We met each other, believe it or not, in a coffee shop. We were probably just trying to find a nice warm place to be, where people wouldn’t kick us out. I said, “May I sit here?” because it was so busy, and then we just sort of started talking and after that we became friends. In my twenties, I was struggling, and my friend was struggling, we both were struggling. And we were just trying to deal with how to survive and with our own issues. She was a young mom and had a child who was really, really, really demanding. And so I would often just help her with the babysitting. Because we had a friendship, we’d end up talking about everything, her experience of growing up and what she was dealing with,

and questions around living on and off the reserve. When you're Aboriginal, you're negotiating so much so much in terms of your own identity, just because of government bureaucracy. (A3)

As a result of this earlier friendship, Anne said that when she later began to interact with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia, these encounters didn't feel like "a brand new situation or something alien to me" (A3).

Anne reiterated that "Ultimately, the best way to [build ally relationships] any time is through friendship" (A4). But, she qualified, "you cannot have a relationship based on just talk," there have to be "activities that are considered mutually beneficial," activities where allies are "doing with" (A4). For example, Anne recalled that when she, Muriel, and Carol attended an awards ceremony for the Mi'kmaw family literacy program:

There was lots of laughter before and afterwards. At the award ceremony, Muriel got up and spoke in Mi'kmaw right in front of all these dignitaries and it was quite wonderful. It was probably the first time that anybody had actually done that . . . She just loved the fact that they were going to do sign language translation, but they couldn't do sign language for Mi'kmaw! It was a really neat moment. And I'm just standing up there with her, grinning foolishly. It was fun. Sometimes I think it's absurdity that brings us together.

Anne noted that these kinds of moments where allies both find themselves "out of their comfort zone" can be a time where relationships truly come together.

5.4 Barbara and Wally: Don't Criticize, Don't Judge,

Participate and Be Yourself

Barbara and Wally are a married couple in their forties who have three children, the youngest of whom is still in school and living at home. The family moved from Ontario to a rural

area in Nova Scotia about ten years ago. Both Barbara and Wally are employed in a nearby town, but identify themselves as being from the Mi'kmaw community immediately adjacent to their home. In conversations with their colleagues at work and with white friends and acquaintances, Barbara and Wally frequently talk about experiences they have shared with their Mi'kmaw neighbours and with the Mi'kmaq elsewhere in the province, for example at pow-wows. I was curious about how it was Barbara and Wally had become so actively involved in a Mi'kmaw community in ways seemingly unlike that of other white families in the area. Of the five critical events that Barbara and Wally highlighted during our conversation most were stories about community interactions, but they also narrated what they had been learning about the Mi'kmaq, reflecting on reasons why their family came to be comfortable with and accepted by their Mi'kmaw neighbours.

When Barbara and Wally moved in to their new house, they had no idea that their property was next door to a Mi'kmaw Nation. This changed when a white neighbour dropped by and warned Barbara “not to let [her] children play with ‘those Indians.’” Barbara asserted that, “I wasn’t raised with racism, so when I get confronted with racism, of course I’m going to go totally opposite.” And when Wally returned home, “we went looking for the reserve. We decided to go for a walk and to see what our community was like and basically said ‘Here we are. Deal with it.’ And the rest as they say was history” (BW1). Barbara described the process of getting to know the community as something that “started step by step” where “we started with one little thing and then we got more involved with the community by asking questions and it progressed from there” (BW2). The first event that they recall was a pow-wow:

not knowing that we were allowed to go up, we thought it was a community thing and, you know, everybody else stay away. But we were invited to go up by somebody and so

we started to take part. And the next thing was what can we do to help? People started to ask us, “Do you have any wood for the ceremonial fire?” “Sure not a problem.” “Can you bring your horses up for pony rides?” “Not a problem.” And now it’s “You’re in charge of the food for the pow-wow.” “Not a problem!!!” (BW2)

Later, Barbara and Wally asked and were given permission to enroll their daughter at the child care centre on the reserve. Now, the family participates in a whole range of community events on an ongoing basis. They routinely let people know that they’re “available at this time and what can we do to help?” (BW2).

Several times during our conversation, Barbara and Wally described themselves as being part of the community. They also provided examples which suggest that others in their local Mi’kmaw community see them in that way too (BW2, 3, 4). For instance, they said that one family has adopted them as unofficial grandparents to their little boy (BW4). In addition, Barbara remembered that:

We were at a karaoke, and one of the councilors had a friend from another reserve there. And he looked at Wally and me, and he looked at his friend and he says “I’d like to introduce you to our token White people.” You know when people tease you like that you know you’re part of the community. (BW4)

Wally said that he was honoured when he was asked to carry the Canadian flag in the Grand Entry to the pow-wow and that it was great to know that their daughter would be able to participate in the local youth group. They have also been pleased to receive a portion of the annual lobster catch which is shared out among families living on the reserve. This sense of being in solidarity with people in their nearby Mi’kmaw community propelled Barbara into action when two young non-Aboriginal youth from the area were killed in car accident. Barbara

stepped in and, on short notice, helped to organize a *salite*, a community feast and auction held to provide financial and emotional support to the family of someone who has died. As Barbara explained:

Their mother temporarily was living on the reserve and has a child with a Native man. So that meant that the boys also lived on the reserve, spent a lot of time here and were friends with our boys. When the boys passed, the Mik'maw community came together. I put an announcement on Facebook—got to love Facebook—and said “What are the chances of doing a salite for the family to help with the funeral costs?” Somebody from the reserve saw it and felt it was a good idea. So we started planning twenty-four hours before the funeral. My friend spoke to the spiritual leader of the reserve and he said it was a fabulous idea. Then we spoke to the mother and she said that’s great. So we had a salite up at the reserve. We arranged for food and for the gifts to be auctioned off and we opened it up to the white community. The white community has never seen a salite before. (BW3)

The community raised a substantial sum of money for the mother of the two boys and everyone in the community was treated to “all they could eat.” More importantly, Barbara noted, “it sort of gives the white community a look into the Native community, saying like, ‘Look what they can do. We could do this too.’ . . . I think it showed a side of the community that the white community wouldn’t have otherwise seen” (BW3).

But Barbara and Wally are not only doing things with their Mi’kmaw community, they are also attempting to fit into local community cultural norms. Barbara commented that they’re part of the “it takes village to raise a child situation” (BW4). They trust that Mi’kmaw families will look out for their daughter and they do the same for Mi’kmaw children.

The first day kids showed up on our property, we told them, “You’re welcome to be here. Respect us and we’ll respect you. Don’t sneak around.” And we’ve never had a problem. One day we had a kid come on the property and say that this was the most funnest place on the whole reserve. That kid is going to be going into university or college next year and I have never told him that, you know, we weren’t on the reserve. I was speaking to his mother and I told her the story and she thought that was the funniest thing. (BW4)

Although the Mi’kmaw language is no longer spoken by the majority of people living on-reserve, especially younger generations, Barbara and Wally have learned to speak a few common words and phrases in Mi’kmaw. Barbara says that when she speaks Mi’kmaw, it “usually shocks them, [but] if I can shock somebody, I’m going for it!” (BW4). In the end, though, Barbara and Wally believe that their acceptance by the community is determined by their approach to interpersonal relationships:

We’re accepting, we don’t criticize, we don’t judge, we don’t say “Well, you should be doing it this way.” We accept the way it is and try and find out why it is that way because there’s usually reasons. But you have to participate . . . (Wally) Participate and go introduce yourself to the people on reserve. (Barbara) That’s all you can do. Don’t criticize, don’t judge, participate, be yourself. (Wally) Don’t be racist. (BW1)

However, Barbara and Wally implied that sustaining good relationships with everyone in the Mi’kmaw community has not always been easy. Both Barbara and Wally tend to be direct when dealing with their neighbours, but this approach has on occasion had unexpected consequences:

(Wally) We also caught two kids stealing popsicles in here one day, of all the stuff. We drove into the yard, and the kids were running away so we knew something’s going on.

So anyway, Barbara went up right to the Chief, she just— (Barbara) Stuffed the kids in the car and went up to the Chief and said, “We got a problem.” (Wally) Yeah. The Chief called Family Services and a week later one of the kids was gone. (Barbara) Her sister threatened me. But you know, the problem was the mother was gone. (Wally) It’s like one big happy, not happy family, up there. (BW4)

Living in such close proximity and participating alongside Mi’kmaw people and families in different activities has made Barbara and Wally more aware of the some of the tensions taking place inside Aboriginal communities as well as inaccuracies about Aboriginal Peoples promulgated in the media and through hearsay (BW5). Like Anne, Barbara and Wally have learned that poverty is a harsh reality. Wally recounted that “We actually know how much families get from the Band. It’s not that much, like \$160 every second week.” They also recognize that there are difficult stories that lie behind the stories that get reported in the news:

Yeah. We know everything, that’s kind of the sad part too. We actually know the person who fell through the cracks, the person who got charged. We actually know them; they had supper in our house and stuff. But they never stood a chance, some of them. (BW5)

Both Barbara and Wally reported that they are not afraid to speak up and speak out at their workplaces when misinformation is passed about or when they see that there are inequities (BW5). However, Barbara said knowing too much can put her under “a lot of pressure” in keeping good relations with different families, even with different members of the same family (BW5). One way that she deals with this is by biting her tongue and by changing the subject when sensitive issues that she has an opinion about come up.

One of the things that interested me about Barbara and Wally is that they appeared to have made a conscious choice to align themselves with the Mi’kmaq as their primary

community. In the critical events that they shared, two reasons stood out for me. Explaining their willingness to always lend a hand to their Mi'kmaw neighbours, Barbara simply said "They're our friends and you help your friends" (BW2). She contrasted this situation with their experience of life in small town Ontario, remarking that they had not formed close relationships with their neighbours in that community. At another point in the interview, Barbara also commented that she felt there were some similarities between the social exclusion of the Mi'kmaq and the barriers her family faced as "come-from-aways" to a tightly knit Nova Scotia town:

(Barbara) Our family is not a visible minority, we're not Mi'kmaq, we're not Aboriginal, but quite a bit of the way that we have been treated in the town is like racial prejudice. You know, there's walls that you're just cannot get over because we're not three generations from this town. Honestly, it doesn't really bother us because why would we care what they say when we have [a Mi'kmaw] community that accepts us for who we are? (BW1)

Like Doug and Anne, Barbara and Wally and their family have been warmly welcomed into Mi'kma'ki by its traditional keepers.

5.5 Lauren: My Parents Raised Us to Give Back

Lauren is a Professor of Education at a Nova Scotia university. Before she completed her doctoral degree, she worked for a number of years as a teacher in a Mi'kmaw First Nation school. Currently, she is one of a small number of teacher educators actively involved in supporting *Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey* (Mi'kmaw Education, [http:// kinu.ns.ca](http://kinu.ns.ca)), the body which represents and advocates for the educational interests of Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey supports educational programming in all thirteen Mi'kmaw Nations in the province including seven on-reserve schools. As a result of time teaching on-reserve and her

doctoral studies, Lauren has launched a unique approach to mathematics teaching and learning based on Mi'kmaw concepts and frameworks. This approach has not only has been taken up in Mi'kmaw schools across the region, it is also being adapted in First Nations schools in other provinces in Canada.

One trait sets Lauren apart from the other allies in this study: she speaks fluent Mi'kmaw. I wondered why and how Lauren had become proficient in a language that few white Nova Scotians have acquired any proficiency with. During the interview, Lauren shared six critical events from her life, explaining step by step how she came to be where she is today. In particular, Lauren emphasized the importance of role modeling by the people around her during her early growing years and how that fostered her desire to be of service of others. Lauren also reflected on the impacts of her growing awareness and knowledge of her own ethnic identity as an Acadian. She attributed much of her success as a teacher and teacher educator, though, to the support of Mi'kmaw friends and mentors who opened her eyes and her heart to other ways of framing and living in the world.

Lauren began by reflecting on the characteristics of her extended family; she felt “there was always this kind of spirit of community service in my whole family” (L1). Lauren grew up in a small city in the Maritimes, in the less affluent city North End also known as “Indian Town.” Her grandparents, Lauren remembered, were exemplars of generosity. Her grandfather had been involved in the credit union movement. Her grandmother was well known for helping those in need. Lauren’s family was somewhat better off than other families in the area, but Lauren recounted that she was aware from an early age that not everyone had the same advantages she did, enough to eat and nice clothes to wear. That kind of experience, she said, “predisposes you to realizing that there is a need to be of service to the community wherever you are” (L1).

When she was thirteen, Lauren's family moved to a small but more affluent, primarily white middle class town. For the first time, the family's material poverty was evident and Lauren suddenly became aware that "not all people were open and generous. I grew up in a place of community where people looked out for each other, and then I went to this place where people didn't, they looked out for themselves" (L1). She and her older brothers who remember their childhood in the North End have carried on their grandparents' and parents' example of giving back to the community. In contrast, Lauren described her younger brother who grew up in the middle class town as "kind and generous," but implied that he has less interest either in charitable events or social justice causes. The effect of these two contrasting experiences of community life and her own positioning in those communities has made Lauren "the kind of person who likes to go against the grain." Even as an adolescent she resisted pressure to conform and fit in, instead becoming someone who is "very outspoken towards people who I felt were just really wrong" (L1).

When she finished high school, Lauren chose to enroll at a small university which had a reputation for engaging with social justice issues. Her first week on campus, a friend invited her to participate in a service learning program where student volunteers engaged with youth from African Canadian and Mi'kmaw communities in the surrounding area. Activities included help with homework, recreational outings, mentoring support, and leadership development activities for youth. Lauren affirmed that while she "came with predisposition for service from my upbringing, the service learning project was the thing that helped me to define who I am" (L2). It was here that she found "a connection to the person I knew I wanted to be." First, Lauren reported, she "really learned a lot just going to communities and talking to people from

communities.” More importantly, she acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that have shaped her ability to be an ally:

One of the main things about the project was that you go into community to serve, you don’t go in being the person who’s there to save . . . they were very overt about kind of how they talked with us. I can remember we used to do a lot of training of volunteers and we’d have like, you know, very kind of blunt conversations about the fact that if you are here because you think you’re going to go help those poor people and you’re going to work with disadvantaged kids or whatever, then you’re not here for the right reasons.

(L2)

They also facilitated white privilege workshops in local schools, ostensibly for the benefit of student leaders, but as Lauren observed, “Things like that gave us the language to speak to misconceptions and misrepresentations. You know? It helped to give us the language of being allies” (L2).

Part of the reason, Lauren said, the knowledge took root in her consciousness was because she spent considerable time interacting with the service learning program coordinators, two strong women—one Black and one white—whose example made a lasting impression on her life. She also had a chance to hear community perspectives first hand:

I can remember one time having a conversation with a Mi’kmaw woman from a nearby community. And she said, “You know, we have our kids going to school and they’re not getting what they need.” She was talking about how she would like her community to have their own school. And she said, “You know, I’m not prepared to waste another generation waiting for society to change.” That really impacted me a lot. (L2)

At university, Lauren had become friends with a Mi'kmaw woman who was studying to become a teacher. She was also reading emerging work by Aboriginal educators and white allies that pointed to the need for more culturally-responsive, culturally-embedded approaches to teaching and learning. Lauren's engagement with the service learning project has continued for some 22 years; she now sits on the project Board and is training the new generation of volunteers. Like her mentors, Lauren asserts that she also speaks frankly to students about their role: "we don't use words like 'disadvantage' because you know what? I've learned so much from these community members. They have knowledge that you could never imagine knowing" (L2).

As a result of her service learning experiences and connections, Lauren's first teaching job was in a Mi'kmaw First Nation school. Although she had an apartment in a nearby white community, Lauren said that she immersed herself in the life of the Mi'kmaw First Nation where she worked. She participated in community activities like bingo, went to dances and funerals, and joined the church choir. Lauren implied that this was not initially a conscious decision, but one that came about in part because white "people in the village were never really that kind to me and I felt a lot of kind of fairly overt racism from the white people that lived around me because of my connection to the Mi'kmaw community" (L3). Because she made friends with people on reserve, though, Lauren found she had people to turn to who could help her through what proved to be challenging first years as a teacher.

When you're twenty-five and alone and living in a dark basement, and you're stressed out because you've got all these classes to teach and the kids aren't behaving the way you thought they would, it can be hard. (L3)

Lauren relayed that her B.Ed. program had concentrated on methodology, but hadn't prepared her for dealing with the kinds of real problems students brought with them to class:

I didn't come out with what to do if a kid comes in in tears . . . kids who're dealing with the loss of a parent or a grandparent or a sibling. Or if you've got a kid in your office saying, "I got kicked out of my house last night." Those were the things that I really never imagined or expected. It was just this whole notion of dealing with things that you feel are so beyond your control. (L3)

One friend in particular, who was also a teacher on staff, was an invaluable mentor giving her insights into the community that enabled her to determine how best to respond to her students' needs:

I would always go to Tim and he would always explain it to me in a way that honoured me but made me see that I was wrong. He has a phenomenal ability to understand from a white person's perspective that you might see it this way, but that's not how the community would see. He was very good at really helping the non-Mi'kmaw staff really understand where people were coming from . . . you'd get this whole history of generations of that family . . . Because I was willing to listen, I got to hear all kinds of interesting things and it really helped me to learn. And really looking to the community about what would be an appropriate response instead of kind of thinking about how you would respond if this was a white community. (L3)

One unexpected challenge Lauren was confronted by was the harsh reality of death. She expressed anger that Mi'kmaw people not only die younger, they also die needlessly from preventable diseases and from suicide. However, she observed, the way Mi'kmaw people respond to death is "very beautiful and respectful." Children are included, rather than shielded, "the whole community came together to embrace" the process, the person who passed away, and their family.

In the classroom, however, Lauren still found that she was floundering, even in mathematics, her area of specialization. It took some time before she at last concluded that “it wasn’t the kids, it was me. Like, I had to change my teaching style to meet their learning styles” (L4). In math classes she began to notice that:

the more that I talked in verbs, the more they understood. They used to call my nouns “crazy talk”: “You’re talking crazy talk, Miss.” What I came to realize is that “crazy talk” meant I was using too many nouns and not enough verbs; so I was using too many things and not enough processes and math is really about process. But the way we teach math is often as a series of kind of things, like it’s static. You take a process and nominalize it, turn it into nouns. (L4)

It wasn’t until she decided to learn Mi’kmaw that Lauren understood just why it was that she and the students seemed to have been talking at cross-purposes. The Mi’kmaw language, she discovered, prioritizes verbs, actions, interactions, and change; spatial relationships are highlighted and nouns may be either animate or inanimate. For Lauren:

learning to speak Mi’kmaw gave me an awareness that I didn’t have before, not only how beautiful the language is and how wonderfully descriptive, it’s also definitely opened up my eyes to my own kind of mathematics teaching and ways of understanding mathematics in a different way. (L4)

She also found that speaking Mi’kmaw “was part of what earned me the respect of the community” and helped her foster deeper relationships, although she commented that that was not her original purpose when she first took a course focused on reading and writing the Mi’kmaw language. Part of what fuelled her interest in the learning Mi’kmaw, Lauren explained, was her awareness of her own ethnic origins as an Acadian. Only after she was grown did she

realize that both of her grandmothers spoke French. When her grandmother was raising her children, Lauren said, the only thing worse than being Irish and Catholic was being Acadian. Because of this stigma neither of her parents learned French, and they never spoke about their family history. Lauren was clear about parallels between what happened to her family and the situation facing the Mi'kmaq:

In one generation we lost our language . . . It makes me sad sometimes to think about how the language, the French that I speak is not the French that my grandmother spoke . . . we never had the opportunity to know that piece of ourselves. So for me, that experience has made me internalize the whole loss of language in the Aboriginal communities as well. So it was important for me when I went to work in a Mi'kmaw community to learn to speak Mi'kmaw because I wanted the kids to see that I valued their language and they should be proud of it too. So I learned to speak Mi'kmaw. I learned Mi'kmaw hymns and I used to sing in the choir in the church and things like that. But it was because, I've since realized it was because we lost our Acadian language. (L5)

For some reason Lauren never fully understood, from the beginning of her time teaching in the Mi'kmaw community people referred to her as *Wenuj*, which means French. "So I was always the French woman . . . they identified with my Acadian heritage and saw me as Acadian" (L5). This was curiously apt because as Lauren pointed out the Mi'kmaq and the Acadians were once strong allies and intermarriage was not uncommon. Recently, Lauren has been doing some genealogical research and believes that "five hundred years ago, we did have some Mi'kmaw ancestry; maybe that's part of my destiny to have ended up with the Mi'kmaq" (L5).

Lauren's growing recognition that the world looks and behaves very differently when seen through the lens of the Mi'kmaw language was one factor which prompted her to go back

and pursue doctoral work in the area of mathematics, but a mathematics that is embedded in Mi'kmaw interpretations. In part, this was her way of giving back to the community that gave her so much. Although she admits she would have made more money working in the public school system, she recognizes that she would never have had the same experiences. Some people have raised questions about her position, authority, and permission to carry out work grounded in a culture that is not her own. Lauren, however, asserted that Mi'kmaw mentors and friends not only opened the door for her, they have insisted that she see this work to completion:

We've worked with you; we've taught you Mi'kmaw; we've taught you about our community; you know us and we've put a lot of time into you. You owe us. No, they didn't say it exactly like that, but there was this sense that I have an obligation to the community. (L6)

The Band where she first worked even provided her with tuition support when she returned to do her Master's degree. But even more than her desire to give back, Lauren saw herself as working for the good of the Mi'kmaw community because she has "a genuine sense of belonging" and "close ties to the community still." Her work with Mi'kmaw people is "really a piece of who I am now." She feels that she is "blessed" and that there is an "authentic appreciation" on the part of the Mi'kmaw teachers she works with. And, when she feels frustrated with issues like chronic underfunding of First Nations education, lack of resources and professional development support, she recognizes that if she has been "yelling about educational issues for almost twenty years, other people have been yelling about them for over forty" (L6).

5.6 Richard: You Can Observe, But There's a Point That I Have to Be Willing to Go Further.

Richard is a family violence prevention counselor who is now in his fifties. Since he moved to Nova Scotia from Ontario in the 1990s, he has also been an active volunteer in an Aboriginal rights solidarity group as well as an environmental association lobbying for the clean-up of Boat Harbour, Nova Scotia, and in other educational projects and programs aimed at promoting better relationships between the Mi'kmaq and non-Aboriginal people. Richard's partner is frequently a co-participant in these activities and has helped facilitate other initiatives which promote reconciliation, peace, and friendship between white Nova Scotians and the Mi'kmaq. Through mutual friends, I learned a little about Richard's solidarity work. Later, I met Richard and his partner at a number of meetings, gatherings, and other events that I attended in order to deepen my own understanding of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in the province. When we sat down for the interview, Richard shared six memorable moments from his life, focusing primarily on his experiences as human rights observer at Esgenoôpetitj First Nation in New Brunswick from 2000 to 2001. At that time, the community was commonly called Burnt Church by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In the aftermath of the 1999 *Marshall Decision* which guaranteed Aboriginal Peoples the right to a moderate livelihood through the pursuit of traditional occupations such as fishing, violence erupted in several communities in the Maritimes (Coates, 2003b). But the most prolonged, most publicized, most violent acts of aggression took place at Burnt Church. Richard and his partner were members of a group which had been invited by informal community leaders in Esgenoôpetitj to witness what was taking place and to communicate this information to the media and other organizations. Over time,

other non-Aboriginal solidarity groups also provided support, but not as witnesses or “observers” as the members of Richard’s group were called.

Richard recalled in rich detail not only what the experience of being an observer felt like, he also laid out the chain of events which allowed the group to be present. He also shared some of the insights he took away from living in the community for extended periods of time and how being witness to an event that marked a turning point in Canada’s history with Aboriginal Peoples has affected him:

Being there and being in this role of observer, you’re keenly aware of what’s going on. You’re taping, you’re recording, you’re taking pictures, you’re having conversations, you’re connected with an organization, you’re feeding information back to people who are doing press releases. You’re having community meetings. It’s an incredible privilege to be in that position. And just to see what was happening. Personally, I was shocked and embarrassed and ashamed of how the Canadian government, through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, through the RCMP, all the government channels, conducted themselves on this issue. The force that they brought to bear on that community was incredible . . . Many people will know some of the specific things that happened in the conflict, like the boat ramming and Native people having to jump out of their boats and being run over—just horrendous stuff. There were many, many times that it was so close to becoming an out and out battle, people being injured and or killed . . . It was so close, it was unbelievable, shocking. (R1)

Richard recounted one event which resulted in a sudden, perceptible shift in his relationships with Esgenoôpetitj community members. It was the day that he decided to accompany community fishers out onto the water:

You can stand around and you can observe, but there's a point for me that I have to be willing to go further. I wasn't being forced or anything, but I was offered the opportunity to go out in some of the boats. And there's a level of danger there. And we were all taught during our observer training that if you want to do that, you have to assess the risk and make your own decision. I decided to go out and I was in a boat that was hit . . . it was after that point that the relationship between myself and a lot of the other men in the community shifted. I had somehow become credible. I had been out there with them in solidarity. They were risking their lives and their safety and I was there and I was recording and they appreciated that. You know, they're incredibly brave. (R1)

Placing himself in a position where he was also at risk, Richard asserted was “the kind of stuff that builds friendship, great moments of adventure and friendship. To stand together in a situation like that in solidarity—relationships really, really get built when people go through a difficult time and adversity and challenges.” Richard described this time at Burnt Church as “one of the most challenging, difficult, and important and rich things that I think I'd ever done in my life” (R1). When he returned home for brief periods, however, he found that people in his local community often didn't understand what was happening and why. Nor was it easy to address distortions embedded in media reports. Richard also disclosed that the psychological and financial support he and his partner received from some like-minded friends were essential, and allowed them to continue in their role as observers. On the whole, Richard concluded that the Esenoôpetitj community appreciated the presence of observers and that observers “made a difference in terms of what happened,” even if their role and intentions were sometimes misunderstood. Richard and his partner still keep in touch with people from the community that they met at that time, but noted that there is still “an awful lot of work to do.” He said that he

feels compelled to carry on with Aboriginal solidarity work because “it’s not like the issues have all been resolved and the healing’s happened. It’s still going on.”

Richard was clear, however, this solidarity action didn’t develop overnight but was the outcome of activities which had been unfolding over a number of years. After their move to Nova Scotia, Richard and his partner started to attend meetings held by an Aboriginal rights support group (R2). Part of the group’s mandate was to educate non-Aboriginal people about the treaties. For Richard, one “really large learning” was around the content and intent of Maritime treaties with their emphasis on peace and friendship, a “peaceful co-existence,” and the importance of more just, equitable nation-to-nation interactions. Soon after the *Marshall Decision* came down, non-Aboriginal people in New Brunswick began to retaliate. Mi’kmaw traps were destroyed, a sacred Mi’kmaw site was burned to the ground, and there were face-to-face confrontations between individuals from the two nations. Already informed about the *Marshall Decision* and the implications of the ruling, some members of the Aboriginal rights support group proposed that human rights accompaniment, an approach that had been used successfully in supporting Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala, might be of help to the Esgenoôpetitj community (R5). Some members of the Aboriginal rights group had already established relationships with individuals from Esgenoôpetitj, and working through their contacts the group connected with some the community’s traditional leaders and arranged for a visit to the community. As Richard relayed, “You couldn’t . . . have just done it [snaps fingers] like that. There has to be trust building and a relationship that’s already there” (R2).

The first meeting between Esgenoôpetitj community leaders and non-Aboriginal support group members was far from smooth. Richard recalled that:

At our first meeting, one of the Elders, Frank, was just so angry with what was going on. He had been working as a community person for years. When he came to meet us, there were a lot of questions he had about “Who were we?”, “What were we going to do?”, “What did we think we could do?”, “Was it going to be useful?”, and “Were we going to get in their way?” And he was incredibly honest; it was one of those great moments of truth where he put out exactly what he felt. Just to experience his raw anger was really incredible. It was very, very informative for me. I didn’t at all feel threatened or anything, but I felt his anger towards the Canadian government and the system and the inherent racism . . . And Frank just felt like he was backed up against the wall. (R2)

In the end, Frank agreed that he was “willing to give you guys one more chance.” However, Richard discerned there wasn’t going to be much, if any, room for trial and error. It was important that the group not “screw this up. Go in there and do what you’ve been trained for. Keep your eyes open and your ears open and your mouth shut.”

As a result of the time he spent in and with the community, Richard found that “things really shift” (R3). Only a few months later, Richard reported that he was living in Frank’s house for weeks at time, getting to know Frank and his family on a person to person basis. Although Richard had been educating himself about Aboriginal rights issues and concerns for some years already, this was a new experience. Usually, Richard reflected, “the Native and non-Native communities are very, very separate and people carry on their whole lives and many non-Native people don’t even know a First Nations person. It’s quite staggering” (R2). He highlighted the impacts of spending long stretches of time outside, near the water, as well as varying opportunities to have longer, deeper, and more meaningful conversations with community members:

So there's the Elder and me standing there talking about things. You know, one of the things that we were taught in the training was be real, be personable, but also you don't have to express your opinion. For me, it was really challenging at times but once I got into it, it was very liberating. Just to be able to sit and listen, not that you don't ask questions or anything, I mean, you're not stone-faced. But at the same time, it's not about you, it's about them. It's about you offering something and deepening of that relationship in a different way. I think sometimes it's almost like helping to undo some of the negative stuff that's happened historically in terms of Native and non-Native people. So in terms of a deepening of relationship, it's one of the things that I need to do, is because it's my government, it's my culture, it's my history that's done a lot of damage in terms of the relationship. The thing I need to do is listen. It's a real privilege to be able to do that and I think a really important thing. You might think what's relationship about when one person talks and the other person just listens? But I think in this situation it was totally appropriate. (R3)

Richard credited the training he received about how to be an observer with enabling him to interact with the Mi'kmaw people he met in a new way, doing more listening than talking. Old habits, however, are hard to break. On one occasion, Richard recalled that he spoke out at a meeting but his intervention only made things worse for the community:

I went to a meeting that involved the Department of Fisheries and Oceans [DFO] along with observers from another group who took a more active role, such as entering into discussions with people. And a couple of little things I said ended up informing DFO about some community dynamics. And I shouldn't have done that; my comments allowed the DFO to divide the community by pitting one family against another. And so when I

realized what I'd done, it became a real learning for me that we can have really good intentions but sometimes we can make things worse . . . The Burnt Church community leadership told me, very clearly and very fairly, that what I'd done wasn't helpful. And, you know, I heard that and it deepened the relationship; it didn't sever the relationship, it deepened it. I'm not excusing what I did at all. You know? I learned from it and the work continued on. (R4)

Richard is aware of the need to be conscious of his words and actions when interacting with Aboriginal people, but he refuses to be self-conscious, noting that it's inevitable that "Sometimes you say 'Geez, I shouldn't have said that.' and 'Oops, got to watch that.' Of course, we should be careful, but we can't let that stop us just because we're fish out of water" (R3). In his experience, even if what he said or did "wasn't always perfect . . . People are understanding." Along with listening, Richard asserted that "a little humility" on the part of non-Aboriginal people is required if we truly want to "get on with it" and "create new ways of interacting and doing stuff together." At Burnt Church, Richard found his role as an observer provided both opportunity and reason for being with Mi'kmaw people. He felt that "It was a real honour to find a place in which we could interact with that community. I think the observer project was a vessel which allowed non-Aboriginal people to be of support in a contained way" (R4).

Throughout his life, Richard has been active in addressing issues around the environment, violence against women, and the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples (R5). He attributed his commitment to social justice to the example set by his parents: to his mother who was "very fair and very kind" and his father who was "more political . . . always talking about the little guy" (R5). Richard's "pretty sheltered" upbringing, though, was disturbed by a "life changing" event

that occurred when he was seventeen, working with kids at a playground in Regent Park in the North York region of Toronto.

So I went down and there was a priest, Mike, who was running the program and he welcomed me. I was working at this outdoor place, the kids all around in the playground, having a good time and everything and all of a sudden, the kids started to run and all move en masse to this one apartment building. And I grabbed one of little guys and said “What’s going on?” and he said “Fight, fight.” And I look up and here’s Mike who looks at me and he says “Come with me.” . . . Mike said “There’s a domestic assault. There’s a man who has a knife to his wife.” And I said, “Oh! What do you want me to do?” and he said “Just follow my lead.” So here I was, you know, sixteen, seventeen years old, from this peaceful environment. And the priest walks right in and between the man and the woman and you know, talks the guy down and takes the knife. Then the police come and the whole nine yards. And so I was never the same from that moment on because I had experienced this inequity, this unfairness, this situation that was real. This was not an intellectual thing, it was not something that I’d read about or heard about. (R5)

Richard indicated that “There are connections . . . it’s all the same issue, in terms of inequality and not being fair, the power dynamics, people abusing power” (R5). But he noted that “You can’t do everything about everything, but what you can do, you can do.” At one point in his life, Richard envisioned himself working overseas with community development organizations, but came to recognize that “we’ve got the same things going on here.” The contradiction between Canada’s espoused liberal, democratic values and oppression of particular groups is what motivates him to “keep on working for social change and social justice.” Richard, however, also

acknowledged that aspiring allies' interest in engagement with Aboriginal Peoples may be fuelled by several motivations, that "maybe non-Aboriginal people are acting out of our need to do something right or to feel better about this situation" (R4). Regardless, Richard asserted, it's important that allies do "not let that inform the work that we need to do." (R4).

Currently, Richard and his partner are involved in an environmental issue closer to their home, addressing the decades-old problem of pollutants that have been pouring into Boat Harbour which forms the shoreline of Pictou Landing First Nation. Richard began to form relationships with this community after his experiences at Burnt Church and the local action group, which includes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, has had "some successes, but there's still difficulties moving forward" (R6), mostly related to "relationships and doing the groundwork." Richard was firm, though, that "One positive thing is understanding how much we have in common. One of the connections is a relationship with the land." He believes that it is "the wisdom that's there around the Native relationship with the natural world" which will allow us to "get us through this period that we're in, this imbalance." His outlook is that "There's just so much potential for Native and non-Native folks to come together, to make this a healthier relationship with Native people." But whether or not this potential is fulfilled hinges on "facts, values, strategy, and persistence" (R6). As our conversation drew to a close, Richard reflected:

I heard Ralph Nader speak a long time ago. And Nader said "You know, doing work like social activism and social justice work, it's really simple." He said, "It's like a chocolate cake. There's four things you've got to have in it and if you don't put those things in, it just doesn't work out: facts, values, strategy, and persistence." So you have to get yourself educated about the facts, and what are my values as a person or do I want to

aspire to? Then, if you realize there's an injustice, you come up with a plan for something to do, working with other people around it. And then persist, continue to do it (R6).

Richard anticipated that he will continue to be involved in social justice groups and causes for the remainder of his life. One hope that he has for the nearer future is to “have more social interaction with First Nations folks and kind of deepen some of those relationships. I think those are really important” (R6).

5.7 Karen: Oh Yes, the World Can Change

For more than three decades Karen was a Professor of Biology at a Nova Scotia university, but she has recently retired. Karen has become well-known for her work on an integrative approach to science which not only incorporates Mi'kmaw Indigenous Knowledge, but also helps learners acquire values, attitudes, and skills needed to appreciate and engage effectively with Indigenous ways of knowing. This integrative approach emerged as the result of an intensive, long-standing collaboration with Mi'kmaw people in her area. The principles and approaches that the partners laid out have been used not only as the basis for a university program, but also have been applied to collaborative natural resource management, health research, and more recently community-based health promotion and social welfare in Mi'kmaw communities. Karen and her Mi'kmaw partners, Bertha and her husband Noble, have made hundreds of presentations not only at academic conferences but also to government organizations, community groups, and associations. They have also written about this new approach and about Indigenous Mi'kmaw wisdom, co-authoring journal articles and books. In six critical events, Karen's recalled her ally journey with the Mi'kmaq beginning in the 1980s. Newly graduated with a Ph.D., she moved to Nova Scotia to take up her first university position in a faculty of science. As she noted, her relationships and work with Mi'kmaw people evolved

over time. She began by telling me how she first got to know some people in the Mi'kmaw community and how these personal relationships eventually led to the creation of the program in integrative science, the central focus of her professional life for at least twenty years. What was somewhat surprising, though, was that all of this might not have happened if not for her love of hockey.

At university, Karen played on a varsity hockey team. Coming to a province and town where she was new and knew no one, she joined the oldtimer's hockey team on campus. The team shared ice time with a Mi'kmaw team, some of whom were university students. She remembered that, "Generally when we played it was the white guys against the Indians. But then we would all get together in the same dressing room, myself included, afterwards and swap stories and just have a grand time" (K1). She felt this was "a neat experience, just getting to know people through the game" and observed that:

It's a small community. Through a social relationship, you can easily get to know somebody . . . from the Mi'kmaw community, if you're open-minded and have those sorts of social circles. I found no difficulties whatsoever. People were very, very warm and offers of friendship opened up right from the get-go. (K1)

Being a small university campus, she also became somewhat acquainted with two Mi'kmaw women on staff at the university, Bertha who was teaching Mi'kmaw Language and Sister Joan who was the Native Education Coordinator. Her professional interests as a biologist also brought her into contact with Mi'kmaw organizations working in the area of natural resource management. But it was her reputation as "Dr. Road Kill" (K1), an interest in parasites, that got the relationship between Karen and Bertha and Noble started. "I remember Bertha phoned me up one day and said she could offer me a couple of bird carcasses. I was happy to have them

because I could . . . do some survey work on the parasites in the region.” As the result of this period where Karen found ways to interact with Mi’kmaw people on an informal, social basis, “when it came time to start working on an integrative science program [she] already had relationships in place.”

Another outcome of these new relationships was that Karen gradually became aware that even though there were Mi’kmaw learners on campus, no Mi’kmaw people were enrolled in the sciences. At the time, Karen said, she was teaching both first year and fourth year biology so she knew who was entering the program and who was finishing. When she turned to her on-campus friends to find out why:

Bertha and Sister Joan said, “Well, it’s probably got a lot to do with the way science is taught. And if you could do something about that, make it more appealing to the Mi’kmaw students, then you might actually start to see some of them show up in your courses.” And I asked, “Well, what is it that needs to be changed?” And I think it was Bertha who probably opened my eyes—that if the Mi’kmaw People have been [here] for thousands and thousands of years, which they have been, surely to goodness, don’t you think in all those years they’ve learned something about the water and the plants and the trees and the animals, and the weather and all those sorts of things? And isn’t that what you teach in some of your science courses? Why don’t you include what we, the Mi’kmaw people, know alongside what you, the come-from-aways, are teaching? (K2)

This resonated with Karen’s own sense of affinity with the natural world, long periods of time spent out of doors, and the absence of these very topics in academe when she was an undergraduate. Her question, “Well, what is it that needs to be changed?” set off a series of conversations—often in Bertha’s kitchen—followed by planning sessions and consultations with

Aboriginal scholars, in order to prepare a proposal which laid out a new program and curriculum details. Karen noted that she previously had been involved in trying to get two other integrative programs off the ground, one around eco-tourism, the other focusing on biodiversity, but had met with limited success. Drawing on lessons learned from these attempts, she made up her mind that:

There's no way on earth that we're going to fail this time. I actually developed a reputation of being a bit of a terrier that once I clamp on to something, I won't let go. Which kind of felt good, although it wasn't meant to be a compliment. But I think the most important lesson I took away from those previous attempts was determination. (K2)

The support of people like Bertha and Sister Joan on campus as well as others in the Mi'kmaw community "brought more of a social justice dimension" to the program, and their proposal for a new integrative science program was eventually accepted.

In deciding how to approach the teaching and learning component of the integrative science program, Karen noted that a number of people "just gave me permission . . . permission to try all sorts of things" (K3). One was Indigenous scholar Gregory Cajete, who has blazed a trail for Native Science:

The advice that Cajete gave us, though, basically boiled down to telling us to have enough nerve to get going, stay open to teaching yourself how to do it, and be creative. The biggest challenge that you're going to find, both in the problems that you face and in the students that you're trying to teach, he said, is the need for creative thinking skills when creative thinking skills have been beaten out of us by the mainstream educational system. (K3)

Cajete's emphasis on creativity made a strong impression on Karen who commented that creativity is seldom named as a factor for success in scientific endeavors. Only one time before, she said, when she was filling in an application for doctoral work, had she ever been asked about her capacity for creativity. Karen reflected that she had had little in the way of exposure to the arts while she was growing up or as part of her own education, so this wasn't area that she necessarily felt comfortable with. Scientific symposia and conferences, however, which affirmed the effectiveness of arts-infused learning—even as part of the hard sciences—were “a shot in the arm” (K3).

Another outcome of participation at these kinds of events was that Karen discovered other individuals who were thinking across disciplinary boundaries. In conversation with a young biochemist/choreographer, Karen said that:

By the time our students have finished the four-year integrative science program, I would like them to be able to dance the Periodic Table. And the young woman's eyes flew open and she said “I've always wanted to do that. That is the neatest idea.” (K3)

Affirmation by other scientists, by her peers, encouraged Karen not only to continue taking risks in how she taught integrative science courses, but also to begin to transfer those same creative approaches and practices in other courses.

Karen also benefited from the insights of her Mi'kmaw and non-Aboriginal colleagues on staff at the university:

there was another thing that Bertha said to me: “To the best of your ability, teach in a visual way because Aboriginal students are visual learners.” And me thinking to myself, “Whew, isn't that wonderful” because I am too. I think lots of people are visual learners. It's just that we don't tend to teach that way. (K3)

She reflected, though, that one reason she felt free to try things out was because no one was likely to see things that flopped posted to a website for the world to see. She was frank that “push-back” from learners was common in the earlier stages, until a rapport had been built and credibility established. Karen also credited the success of their first intake of students to the presence and influence of her co-teacher and facilitator, Fox, who is a respected Mi’kmaq Elder and educator. Although Fox didn’t always have the answers for problems that arose, his position in the community, background, and knowledge enabled him to lead discussions so that issues could be resolved. Karen asserted that co-teaching is an ideal strategy for cross-cultural learning, but that institutions like universities seem to regard this as unnecessary expense. Karen said that she also drew inspiration from another white professor on campus who was doing groundbreaking work in an area of computer science for which there were no textbooks, no hard and fast rules, just a willingness to experiment and learn by doing.

Karen also reflected on some of the ways that engagement with the integrative science program had affected her as an educator and as an individual. She commented that:

working with Mi’kmaq students loosened me up a lot. You know, when you’re a first time teacher and you’re teaching science, you’ve got a lot of ideas that you think are appropriate. The Mi’kmaq students certainly mellowed me faster than the typical professor gets mellowed. (K4)

For example, she found she needed another approach for dealing with deadlines and scheduling.

As she came to know her Mi’kmaq students better, she discovered some of the underlying reasons that the Mi’kmaq students, many of whom were already mature adults with families of their own, didn’t always find it easy to accommodate the expectations of an academic program.

For example, Karen said:

I'll never forget one student we had in a first-year course. She was a single mother of seven children and there she was in first-year science. I thought, "How do you do this?" with all the babysitting issues, childcare issues, transportation to the university issues . . . how do they manage still to find the time to go to university? I remember . . . [another student] telling me that when she went home, the only place that she could find to study where people would leave her completely alone would be on the toilet. So she would go in the bathroom with her textbook, slam the door shut and lock it, so that everybody, her kids included, would all stay away from her, leave her alone. (K4)

Consequently, Karen developed a "tremendous respect" for many of the Mi'kmaw learners who participated in the program while juggling multiple responsibilities at home and in the community. When she encounters these students today out in the community or when they get in touch by email, it's "just a wonderful feeling, it really is." Remembering when the first group of students graduated from the program in integrative science, she recalled that:

I had tears just pouring down my face because I was so pleased and proud of those kids, to see where they've gone and to see how they have made a difference. And there are people coming up behind them who are looking to them as their role models.

Karen commented that she felt that the relationship with the first cohort of integrative science was a particularly special one because:

You just become part of the extended family, right? I have never experienced that same feeling with non-Aboriginal students. I haven't. That's not to say you don't form good relationships, even close relationships with some non-Aboriginal students, but not like you do with the Mi'kmaw students. For some of the reasons that I already mentioned,

you end up listening to their woes as well as their wonderful moments and you are the sounding board for them (K4).

Because of the integrative science program. Karen concluded that, “Lots of lives out there have enriched mine, and I think we’ve enriched them.”

At several points during our conversation, Karen commented that considerable determination was needed in order to bring the integrative science program into being. One story she has told a number of times as a way of explaining why she became so interested in supporting an integrative science program also had its roots in hockey. Karen explained the prohibitions placed on her because of her gender have made her the kind of person who persists until she achieves her dreams:

When I was little, I so desperately wanted to play ice hockey. But I grew up in a family and in a community where girls don’t play hockey. My whole yearning when I was young was to play hockey. I would play with my brothers on the frozen ponds at home in the winter, or even sometimes when they played shinny at the outdoor rink at the little village where I grew up. So it wasn’t as if I didn’t play hockey. But my father wouldn’t let me participate in organized hockey even though he was part of the coaching staff . . . My father was adamant that girls weren’t going to play hockey, and yet I knew that girls played hockey elsewhere in Canada. As soon as I went to university, I joined the varsity team and played ice hockey ever after that, but I was always aware of that barrier that says, “You can’t do that because you’re this.” (K5)

Recognizing that there are similarities among different forms of oppression, Karen felt that she understood something of the pain her friend Bertha experienced when Mi’kmaw people’s knowledge was dismissed as unimportant or wrong:

So when my Mi'kmaw friend Bertha started telling me stories from her life as a young person, about sitting in a classroom and being told "You can't talk about those things that your grandfather taught you because that's not science," I mean, there was a real kind of connection. I thought, "I've been down this path before. I've experienced this. I know what she's talking about." Different details, but the context is the same: "You can't do that because you're this. You can't play hockey because you're a girl. You can't talk about what your grandfather taught you in the science classroom because what your grandfather's talking about isn't science." (K5)

Karen also observed that, in her experience, discrimination on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, and race persisted for quite a long time in some parts of Nova Scotia, particularly in smaller towns. She also noted, though, that there has been positive change, that "the new attitudes . . . are not like that at all, it's much more a mixture." Karen has seen that "Oh yes, the world can change" given time. For instance, Karen recounted that when her younger sister wanted to play hockey, her father not only gave her permission, he actually coached the team she played with.

As well as her personal experiences of exclusion, Karen also affirmed that she brought an important heart connection to her work with the integrative science program, an affinity for the natural world she developed as a child and a young woman through long and frequently uncomfortable canoe trips, as well as summer field courses at university. Indeed, Karen asserted:

There is an awful lot to be said for the kinship you develop with the natural world . . . I think a lot of my strengths were taught to me by the natural world. I really do think that . . . probably it was a lot of time out of doors that gave me this strength of character. So I think I already had some interest in the types of things that Bertha was indicating to me

would be appropriate curricular content for a science program that integrated Mi'kmaw perspectives. Who are the plants, who are the animals? (K6)

At one time, Karen says, it was assumed that students entering academic programs in the natural sciences were already familiar with and comfortable with nature. In her program at university, she recalled, the majority of students came from farms or rural areas; typically they were also interested in hunting and fishing. In recent years, however, Karen has noticed that undergraduate students, even biology students, not only don't seem to have much interest in being outdoors, they seem to be afraid of being alone in nature. She worried that "fewer and fewer people today have the opportunities to actually experience that." She observed that "The image of a scientist these days is not somebody who is outdoors; it's somebody who is standing with test tubes in their hand with a lab coat on. So times have changed dramatically."

5.8 Irene: It's About Rebuilding that Humanness, that Healing and the Whole of Social Justice

Irene has been working alongside Aboriginal Peoples for almost four decades. In her early twenties, she set out to pursue a career in theatre and film which "ended up crossing into First Nations" territory. Through this work, Irene formed relationships with emerging Aboriginal writers and directors. It was when she came across a biography of Anna Mae Pictou Aquash in the 1970s, however, that Irene's life took a sudden turn and she became engaged in Aboriginal activism in Ontario, and later on the west coast of Canada and the United States. In the late 1980s, Irene made what she thought would be a short trip to Nova Scotia, and as she noted, "that was twenty three years ago" (I1). Since then, Irene has been involved in alliance building work focused on bringing non-Aboriginal people and the Mi'kmaq together on common ground addressing issues of shared concern. Today, she is a community education program coordinator

with a non-profit organization that promotes social justice in the Maritimes. As Irene described, her “connections with First Nations weave in through [her] life a lot” (I5). As a young woman, she was adopted into an Anishinaabe family and community, a place that she calls home and where she maintains strong ties. Irene’s reputation for solidarity work with Aboriginal Peoples also brought her into contact with an imprisoned Aboriginal activist who later became her partner and the father of her child. Over the course of her life, Irene has also been honoured to become a bundle keeper and ceremonial singer. In this retelling of Irene’s life story, I draw on seven critical events; most were about Irene’s interactions with the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. I also refer to some additional events from earlier in Irene’s life which took place elsewhere in Canada and consider how these eventually brought her home to Mi’kma’ki.

In the late 1980s, Irene was living on the west coast when she experienced some health issues. At the same time, she and other family members were beginning to have concerns about her daughter’s future, wondering where it would be best for her daughter to grow up. Her brother had been living in Nova Scotia for some years and Irene found the money to take her daughter on a trip back to her family’s first home. “Someone asked me the other day, how I ended up knowing so many First Nations folks here. And it’s kind of a blur but I think it started when I flew to Nova Scotia for three months” (I1). While she was here, her brother invited her to lend a hand with a local issue, the cleanup of a place called Boat Harbour. Irene recalled spending her summers as a child at her aunt’s cottage, a place that at that time was “pristine” (I1). Irene remembered it as a beautiful inland estuary. She noted, “the environment had always been something that was really close to my heart.”

In the late 1960s, a pulp mill was opened further down the shore from Boat Harbour, near the town of Pictou. Untreated effluent from the mill was piped away from the town and into the

ocean at Boat Harbour adjacent to Pictou Landing First Nation. By the 1970s, even non-Aboriginal residents of the area were becoming concerned about what was happening immediately offshore and onshore. Working through his connections with the Maritime Fisherman's Union, her brother had helped to organize an advocacy group "which was sort of a combination of both people from the reserve and off the reserve." As he later admitted to Irene, "I knew if I got you involved in a cause, you wouldn't leave."

Coming back to live in Nova Scotia, however, was not an easy transition for Irene to make. She reported that it required considerable patience for her adjust to cultural differences, the differences she rubbed up against in interactions with the white community:

it felt very odd when I came home because I'd just been living with First Nations people, probably for about eight years, and knew very few white people at all. And then it was such culture shock to come home and be just with white people. And I found it very difficult for probably a good eight months to a year, I found it really hard. (I1)

As a result of her involvement at Boat Harbour, she soon became involved with other provincial and national groups with an interest the environment and found herself settling in as a permanent resident, commenting that "It just kind of happened I guess. The more time I spent here, it seemed like a wise decision." A few years later, in the 1990s Irene took on a leadership role with a coastal communities network that came into being as the result of the collapse of the offshore ground fishery. Participating communities were looking not only for livelihood alternatives, they wanted to find ways to restore marine ecosystems and manage existing fisheries so that they would remain sustainable in the future.

In 1999, the *Marshall Decision* opened the way for Aboriginal participation in and management of offshore fisheries. In southeastern Nova Scotia non-Aboriginal fisherman erected

a blockade at Yarmouth harbour and there were other examples of open confrontation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people over the future of the fisheries. Irene felt that “the work that we were doing behind the scenes led, I truly believe, to there not being violence in Nova Scotia like there was in New Brunswick” (I2). The coastal communities network launched a unique initiative focused on bringing members of diverse communities—who had been at loggerheads with one another—together to find points where they shared common ground. Persuading people to take part, however, was not easy because “there was so much fear.” The first face-to-face meeting of a core group seemed to get off on the wrong foot, but it didn’t take long before participants started to let their guard down:

we asked two Mi’kmaq, two African, two Acadian, and two fishermen from the area, to come together. It took us three months to get them all in the same room . . . And when the Acadians walked in late they said, “Well, we’re going to apologize for our English, it’s not so good.” And the African Nova Scotians said, “Well, at least you have your language. We don’t even know which language is ours.” And then the Mi’kmaq said, “We don’t have our language either.” And it just opened this door and we ended up holding a gathering at one of the Mi’kmaw Nations in the area. Each one of those people agreed to bring ten people besides themselves. So there was this awesome gathering that was done as a talking circle. And everyone realized the commonalities, their common concerns. (I2)

Over the course of the project, similar gatherings were held in other communities. Irene described the process and outcomes as “pretty amazing.” The solidarity fostered over food and friendship in community halls and churches did indeed have an impact on relationships down at

the shoreline where Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaq, and white fishers stood by one another rather than escalating the conflict.

Relationships established during this period continue to the present day. Not long before Irene and I sat together, she had been to the south shore to organize a gathering of communities who were opposition to the expansion of commercial fish farms in the area:

To me, it was powerful because you had these white fishermen from the area and the First Nations and Acadians from further down the shore who came to show their support. And there was white fishermen coming up and shaking hands with the First Nations, saying, "Thank you. You just don't know how much this means to us that you would come out like this for us." And like that solidarity was just awesome. (I2)

Irene contrasted the outcomes of this initiative with a "disheartening" experience she had in the 1990s attempting to build unity in an environmental alliance which included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. The alliance ended up splitting into two separate groups so Irene said she found it was "amazing that building bridges between Native and non-Native fishermen who the government was purposely trying to set up to be at odds with each other was easier than building bridges between First Nations and environmentalists who both cared about the earth."

Irene described her ongoing commitment to nation-to-nation relationship building as rooted in her spiritual beliefs, asserting that:

there are so many things that we could teach each other . . . It comes from believing that while we're here in this lifetime we need to heal and we need to work on becoming the people that we're intended to be. Right? I think almost every culture has experienced societal trauma and things that have caused us to separate from each other and from spirit and from the earth and all those sorts of things. And so it just seems critical to me to

bring hope back to people, so that they're not lost in the darkness and all those kinds of things. Yeah, it's about rebuilding that humanness, that healing and yeah, the whole of social justice. (I2)

Irene said that she finds the task of searching out appropriate ways to deal with different cultural needs, goals, and expectations, but at the same time making sure people feel respected is both fascinating and challenging. One thing Irene has learned from people she has met in Nova Scotia, though, is that the deep divides between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians have not always been there. At a gathering Irene facilitated in the mid-1990s, white and Mi'kmaq participants shared stories about their growing up years, reflecting that when they were young they had been friends, that their families had helped each other and even socialized together.

Irene believes that one way she can help build relationships between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians is by being a kind of interpreter, providing information and answering questions that white people of privilege are seemingly too shy to ask of someone who is Mi'kmaq:

I find it odd in Nova Scotia, that here more than anywhere else, non-Natives will ask me questions they're not comfortable to ask First Nations. And I'm totally fine with that because sometimes they bring out their bias or their stereotype or whatever, and then we can discuss it. You know? And it's out on the table. Like a lot of people have changed their attitudes because of that interaction. But if they just kept it buried in here and thought, "Oh I'm afraid I'll be considered a racist if I mention this," then it hasn't changed or moved anywhere. So I'm really happy to play that role. (I3)

Earlier in her life, someone provided Irene with the same kind of support. After her marriage to an Aboriginal activist, Irene spent a winter living with her husband's extended family in a Salish

longhouse. Initially, she said, she was nervous—even scared—of violating protocols and doing things the wrong way. Seeing how hesitant she was, a family member took her aside and patiently began to explain how things were done.

Irene is also comfortable and confident about speaking up when she recognizes racism at work. At a social justice workshop where invited speakers all came from the global south, Irene pointed to the glaring absence of any Indigenous representation:

And I said, “Why are there no Indigenous People here?” I said, “I know Indigenous People are taking this course. Why didn’t they feel comfortable enough to come here?” I said, “You know, I have friends who came to this university and they failed courses because it had to be partner work and none of you would be willing to work with them.” And I said, “And I’m not talking about ancient history, I’m talking about now.” And you could see all these heads go down. And I said, “Maybe you feel shy. Or maybe you think they’ll be lazy.” You know? And I said, “But my stepdaughter was at this university, couldn’t get anyone to work with her. She graduated with 90s.” You know? And I said “So if you’re feeling good about yourselves working in third world countries, you need to look a little harder and see if you really care about social justice, you need to take care of it here.” And you could see the speaker from South America who was listening to me in translation and trying not to laugh. (I3)

Years of experience and patient mentoring and role modeling by her Aboriginal family members have taught Irene that what is appropriate in one place, with one particular group of people at a specific time, may not be appropriate in another. She is especially sensitive of the need to “ask permission” (I4) rather than assuming she has the right to participate in ceremonies or to express her voice:

I think that's something that's very important for non-Natives to recognize. I've been to gatherings where people say, "Well, I saved up my money and I've travelled from New York City and so I'm going in this sweat." But I was taught by my adopted family to always ask and so I never presume . . . And so for me, as a non-Native person, it's critical wherever I go to always ask permission to be included. I would often ask my family or a Native person to ask the person running the ceremony so that they wouldn't even have to feel embarrassed about saying no to me. You know? (I4)

Irene feels that she has almost always been accepted by Aboriginal Peoples because her outlooks and belief systems are compatible with those of Aboriginal Peoples, not because she has tried to change them or herself in order to fit in.

There have still been some times, however, when Irene has had to navigate contradictions between her ascribed identity as a settler/oppressor and her acquired, secondary identity as an Aboriginal ally which has been years in the making (I5). At a gathering of survivors of Indian Residential Schools, Irene was asked to sit in ceremony with the group. One Elder even insisted that Irene bring out her bundle and pray. Irene was hesitant, however, because she knew this would cause pain and offence to another Elder who was present. On the last day of the gathering, Irene somewhat reluctantly agreed to sing and drum when there was no one else present who could do so. She implied that she felt relieved when the Elder with whom she has encountered some conflicts in the past came up and hugged her and wanted to know more about the songs Irene sang. Irene concluded that "Lots of people say 'Have respect' but then they don't really know what respect means, because what it means [differs] from one protocol to another protocol. Right? And sometimes that can be really tricky" (I4)

One of the things that struck me about Irene's story is that her interest in navigating across differences in cultures began early in life (I5). Even though Irene grew up in Ontario, her Nova Scotia family go back to the time of early white settlement. One of her earliest memories of being a child, however, was of walking through fields in northern Ontario with an Aboriginal Elder who lived in a nearby First Nation community. Irene mused that "I have no idea why he had the patience to walk through fields and chat with me, but he did" (I5). Her parents were positive towards and accepting of Aboriginal Peoples. As a result, Irene recounted that she was shocked when one summer day in Nova Scotia she ran down to the shore to play an Aboriginal girl who was about her age and "my aunt just grabbing me and saying, 'You don't play with them.'" A little later on, when she was 13, Irene recalled being absolutely "thunderstruck" by a speech that filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin made at a centennial year event:

And she started her speech saying, you know, "I want to say happy birthday for the 100th anniversary of your country. But this is also my country which is thousands of years old." You know? And I was thunderstruck by this woman. It was the first time I'd heard that perspective, and it had a deep, deep impact on me, deep impact. (I5)

But it was another Nova Scotia connection that diverted Irene from her interest in the arts and inspired her to take up the life of an activist. In the 1970s, Irene was acting in theatre productions and participating in an emerging film industry in Toronto:

I read a book about the life of Annie Mae Aquash. I was at a second-hand bookstore over on Queen Street in Toronto and I saw the picture of the hands in the jar. I picked it up, saw that it was a woman from here, from Pictou Landing, and this is the area where my father's from, so I bought the book and read it. I think partially it was that I could visualize in my mind exactly where she had lived. You know? Like because they describe

in the book where she lived on the Pictou Landing Reserve at that point, she grew up.

And I knew that road; I had driven down that road to go swimming, you know, when I was a kid. And then to think that the FBI had cut off her hands and taken them away in a box, was just so horrifying. And yeah, it just haunted me, the story just haunted me. So it wasn't like I could walk away from it. (I6)

Irene decided she would write a play about Anna Mae and made a trip out to Nova Scotia to visit her community and meet her family. Later, she went to South Dakota to attend a memorial at Wounded Knee, meeting some of the people who had been there at the time, meeting Elders and attending her first sweat lodge ceremony. Irene described this moment as a turning point in her life:

it did make a big change in my life because I ended up getting very involved in First Nations' rights and giving up my career as an actress and director and just working on Native rights for quite a number of years. (I6)

When she returned to Toronto, she was unexpectedly asked to step in and organize a march and gathering on behalf of Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement (AIM) activist who was charged with killing two FBI agents near Oglala, South Dakota. More than 300 people turned out for the March. Meanwhile, Irene had begun to establish links with people in the Aboriginal community including Art Solomon, an Ojibwe Elder who became her mentor and friend, helping her to discern ways in which she could be of support to the Aboriginal community in a good way.

A couple of years later, in the early 1980s, Irene was asked to help organize a tour for AIM leaders in Ontario (I7). At one "pretty big" gathering, Irene learned a lesson about being an ally that she would carry with her throughout her life:

The men were supposed to go hunt and provide the food. And then it was like Thursday afternoon and people were telling me, “We don’t have any food.” And I have no money to buy any. So I’m trying to get donations, donations of three hundred individually wrapped pizzas, you know, for a feast. And then when it [the feast] actually went ahead, there was a funny vibe, I don’t know how else to say it. And one fellow came to talk to me afterwards, and it was a powerful talk that stuck to me . . . talking about how as a Native man, there’s nothing of worth that you feel inside. “We lost the war, we let our family, our children down. And then we lived in poverty, we couldn’t get work, we couldn’t provide for our family. And then the Indian Act came along and we thought ‘Oh, we’re going to be able to take a good role for our people now and have these Band councils.’ And then after a while you realize that’s just really a show and you’re really not able to change anything. And so when you try and do something, inside we’re terrified it’ll be another failure. We do everything we can to sabotage it and stop it from going ahead, so it’s not another failure. And then when you manage to succeed, there’s a hollowness we feel inside because we know it wasn’t us, it was you.” (I7)

Later, following a ceremony, Irene’s mentor Elder Art Solomon also had some words to share with Irene:

I remember Art coming to talk to me and he said “Irene, I know your heart is good, you want to be doing this for all the right reasons. And you also need to know, you can’t run before we’re ready to walk.” And so I’ve always kept that in my mind. Yeah, that’s been sort of the guide for me. (I7)

In her haste to be of help, Irene recognized that she has been caught up in “doing for” rather “doing with,” teachings Irene has carried with her into other aspects of her ally journey.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter I presented a narrative interpretation of critical events in the lives of eight white settlers in Nova Scotia who have become allies with the Mi'kmaq. Each story highlighted how settlers came into contact with Mi'kmaw people, how these relationships unfolded and how settlers have been affected by them. As I asserted in Chapter 4, these types of narratives present a counter-story to more common narratives of settler indifference, aggression or domination. On the whole, these narratives were hopeful; they show the possibilities that exist for forming more equitable, mutually satisfying, and beneficial relationships. As I heard, analyzed, and re-wrote these settler narratives, I also found them to be informative. Settlers have suggested a range of factors that have played an important role in helping them to learn, grow, and change. In the next chapter, I begin to analyze these critical events, pulling some key themes and strands together.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS

TRANSFORMATION OF SETTLER ALLIES

For those of us who are involved with this work, and for those of us who are coming into it, if this work does not transform you, you are not paying attention . . .

It is not possible to be engaged in this work and not behave differently.

(gkisedtanamoogk, 2010, p. 53)

The purpose of this study has been to explore why and how some white settlers have taken up their responsibilities for reconciliation as individuals. In Chapter 3, I presented a model for reconciliation which highlights the need for change at three levels: political, social, and interpersonal. At the interpersonal level, reconciliation demands changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and values of people from dominant societal groups, people who are the most privileged. As I argued, shifts in settler Canadians are a prerequisite for the success of political and social reforms. The RCAP (1996b) emphasized that settler Canadians need to become willing and able to participate in relationships with Aboriginal Peoples, relationships characterized by “mutual recognition, mutual respect, mutual willingness to share the land and other benefits, and joint responsibility for making needed changes” (Vol.1, Pt. 3.16). Physical distance, racist public discourses, and insufficient, ineffective public education have resulted in settlers coming to believe they have little in common with Aboriginal Peoples, that Aboriginal rights can be ignored, and that Aboriginal worldviews can be dismissed. Intercultural, multi-cultural, and even anti-racism approaches all have drawbacks when it comes to promoting more informed, culturally sensitive, and equitable relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. I have consequently chosen to explore what we might learn about interpersonal reconciliation by examining the

experiences of settlers who have become allies with Aboriginal Peoples. The broad question that I asked in this study was:

What enabled white settler “ally” participants to make significant changes in their ways of thinking, acting, valuing, and feeling so that they are able to engage with Aboriginal Peoples in less dominating and more just ways?

As I argued in Chapters 1 and 4, the existing literature on reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples says relatively little about how ally awareness and identity development takes place in white settlers. In Chapter 5, participants described interactions with Aboriginal people as friends, neighbours, colleagues, and allies in social justice initiatives. Participants were also reflective about what they have been learning about Aboriginal Peoples and themselves, and about how this learning took place. In this chapter, I draw from the data in Chapter 5 and address each of my four research questions in turn, highlighting shared experiences, events, and interpretations.

6.1 Reflecting on the Data: Settlers Becoming Allies

All of our global universe will hinge in the next century
on how we respect each other.

(Battiste, 1997, p. 148)

In this section, I begin by examining how participants came to develop an interest in Mi’kmaw People, their cultures, concerns, and rights. Then, I describe the types of changes these settler allies have experienced and why they believe these changes occurred. Next, I explore what fuels allies’ commitment to relationships with the Mi’kmaq and what has helped to deepen these relationships over time. Last, I look at what narratives told by people of privilege may have to contribute to learning about interpersonal reconciliation. I compare and contrast data from

critical events shared by participants with references from narratives by two other white settler allies, Rupert Ross (1992) and Victoria Freeman (2000).

6.1.1 Establishing Connections with Aboriginal Peoples

The physical and psychological distance that settlers have placed between themselves and Aboriginal Peoples in this country presents a substantial barrier to interpersonal reconciliation. The first question I therefore was interested in exploring was, “How did settler allies become interested in Aboriginal Peoples, cultures, concerns, and rights issues?” In Australia, Somerville (2006) has noted that white settlers first have to enter a “contact zone” with Indigenous Peoples. Almost all of the participants in the present study described how a process of “site transfer” (Tilly, 2005, pp. 144–146) brought them into Mi’kmaq territory in Nova Scotia. Site transfer can include events such as a shift in place of residence, a change in employment, or entry into a new group or association. Participants talked about a range of personal, intrinsic, and extrinsic events (Measor, 1985; Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 74–75) which brought them into new physical, psychological, and ideological locations. Both Doug (D1) and Irene (I1), for instance, found themselves confronted by unexpected personal circumstances, including concerns about their health and family. Consequently, they had been on the look out for opportunities which would allow them to move forward with their lives. Other study participants named events intrinsic in the lives of adults as responsible for their shift in location. With the exception of Doug, all participants in this study had lived for a considerable number of years in other parts of Canada or the United States (BW1; K2; I1; L2; N1; R2). Karen made a move to Nova Scotia in order to take up her first job as a professor, while Lauren came to attend university. Extrinsic factors also played a role in fostering connections between these settlers and the Mi’kmaq. Anne’s organization had an explicit mandate to provide literacy services and programming to diverse

groups in the surrounding area, including the nearby Mi'kmaw Nation (A2). The *Marshall Decision* was an historic change in law which created new social conditions where some settlers began to step up in support of the Mi'kmaq (I2; R1).

Some scholars, though, have observed that people of privilege may be reluctant to initiate contact with “the other.” Studies of college students, for instance, showed that even though students reported being willing to take on an ally role, none actually made the first move until they were invited to do so (Broido, 2000; R. D. Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005). In general, settler Canadians appear to be similarly hesitant to voluntarily move outside their comfort zone (Day, 2010; Hickey, 2011; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Regan, 2010; Stackhouse, 2001) and several participants commented that they too had first been invited into locations where Mi'kmaw people were present. Barbara and Wally, for example, heard the drums coming from the nearby pow-wow grounds, but they didn't make a move until “we were invited to go up by somebody” (BW2). Connections were sometimes facilitated through non-Aboriginal as well as Aboriginal friends (A4; D1; K1; L3). Anne, for example, got to know a Mi'kmaw student through work, and was subsequently introduced to other members of the student's family (A4).

Connections also arose through participation in an existing group (A2; I1; K1; L2, L4; R2). Lauren traced the beginnings of her relationships with the Mi'kmaq to a service learning program she participated in throughout her time at university (L2). Richard pointed to the importance of having individuals or groups who can facilitate introductions and community entry:

The only reason that we could be there and have any credibility was that we were connected to informal leaders in the community. Because otherwise, we're just more white people, and why would they trust us? . . . But because of certain people in the

Aboriginal rights support group, the relationship with the Burnt Church community was there and it made it possible for the observer project to happen. You couldn't, I don't think, have just done it [snaps fingers] like that. There has to be trust building and a relationship that's already there. (R2)

Lauren felt that being invited helps shift the attitudes of people of privilege away from paternalism towards recognition of mutual interdependence (L2). Speaking about the service learning program she now leads, Lauren commented that:

communities still have to request us to come in. We don't go in and say "We're coming," they have to say "Yes, we want you to come." . . . And we work with the student volunteers to help them see that that is their responsibility is to serve, and to listen to community and to learn from the community. (L2)

Congruent with what L. Davis (2010) has described, many of the spaces in which settlers in this study were involved were ones in which Mi'kmaw people "provide the leadership" (p. 5) and settlers "take action in support of the direction Indigenous people have determined." As Richard indicated, he was acutely aware of the need to be a responsible "guest." Esgenoôpetitj Elders made it clear that the aspiring allies in Richard's group would be given only one chance to prove their integrity so it was imperative that they not "screw this up" (R2).

Another source of affiliation arises from shared life experiences. In social movements, such as the women's movement, people are believed to be bound together by a common identity or other shared experiences (Woodward, 1997, pp. 24–26). As Anne observed:

You cannot have a relationship based on just talk, but you can establish your friendship through activities considered mutually beneficial. I think there has to be a "doing with" that makes sense for everybody that's in the relationship. There has to be. (A4)

Even when individuals or groups see themselves as having significant social, cultural, or political differences, common ground may be found in other aspects which make up an individual's identity (Barvosa-Carter, 2001, p. 31). Part of what created the bond between Anne and her first Mi'kmaw friend, Anne said, was that "we both were struggling. And we were just trying to deal with how to survive and with our own issues" (A3).

In this study, participants highlighted everyday social interests such as a shared love of music (D1) as well as hockey (K1) as a way of gaining entry to any community. As Karen commented, it was through this lifelong passion for sport that she first got to know some Mi'kmaw men in her area, saying:

there were all sorts of things like that, just normal people interrelationships and interactions. It's a small community. Through a social relationship, you can easily get to know somebody who's an expert fiddler as easily as you can get to know somebody from the Mi'kmaw community, if you're open-minded and have those sorts of social circles. I found no difficulties whatsoever. People were very, very warm and offers of friendship opened up right from the get-go. (K1)

Doug similarly connected with One Sky through a shared love of music (D1). Regardless of the field of expertise, professional knowledge and skills provide an important basis for collaboration and exchange (Kealey & Protheroe, 1995).

Another source of connection between participants and Aboriginal people in this study was an attachment to the land. Irene noted that one of the reasons she became involved with a coalition who wanted to clean up pollution in Boat Harbour was because she had formed an attachment to that piece of the shoreline during her growing up years. Aboriginal Peoples and settlers are also coming together around social justice issues such as the environment. Barnhardt

and Kawagley (2005) emphasized that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples share territory on Turtle Island and consequently have a shared interest in sustaining the health of the land so that future generations will also enjoy a good quality of life. For Karen, an affinity for the natural world was something she had in common with her Mi'kmaw partners when they began to discuss what a program in integrative science might be like (K6). In Ontario, Richard had been involved in environmental causes and in Nova Scotia the land continues to provide a bond with his Mi'kmaw neighbours (R3, R6).

6.1.2 Identifying Changes in Settler Allies

In Chapter 1, I argued that one reason progress towards reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada has been so slow lies in a failure on the part of settlers to take up their responsibilities for “renewed relationships” (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 1, p. 643) with Aboriginal Peoples. Haig-Brown (2008) has concluded that non-Aboriginal Canadians must first begin to “re-imagine” themselves (p. 16). The second research question for this study was to identify the kinds of changes that occur in settlers so that reconciliation can take place. Social justice allies report that they have experienced psychological, ideological, spiritual, and behavioural changes as a result of their interactions with people from non-dominant groups (Curry-Stevens, 2007). Mezirow (2000) used the term “habits of mind” to describe these shifts. In the course of their interactions with the Mi'kmaq, participants talked about making changes in a number of ways: in how they interact with Aboriginal Peoples; the values they hold; what they know about Aboriginal Peoples and colonialism; how they are learning to see the world; and how they position themselves in relation to Aboriginal Peoples. Although participants did not all experience the same changes at the same time, an analysis of critical events reveals examples of all of these habits of mind.

6.1.2.1 Changes in behaviour.

In this study, settlers described how they are challenging socio-linguistic norms by entering into face-to-face relationships with Mi'kmaw people, building interpersonal connections, confidence and trust. These relationships stand in sharp contrast to the all too common personal and social distance that exists between Aboriginal Peoples and settler Canadians. Almost all participants spoke of having formed friendships with Mi'kmaw people (A3, A4; BW2, BW4; D1; I4; K1, K4; L3, L6; R1, R2, R3). Barbara and Wally asserted that much of their social life now takes place in the Mi'kmaw community near their home, with Mi'kmaw friends (BW2, BW3). The couple participates in and contributes to events like pow-wows and funerals, and their children have been involved in activities on the reserve. Similarly, when Lauren started her first teaching job, she spent most of her free time with the Mi'kmaw community where she was working rather than in the white community where her apartment was. Lauren's activities were also varied, ranging from joining the church choir to going to dances and helping with fund raising canteens for the school (L3). Doug has also been engaged with Mi'kmaw people socially, most recently with the members of the band One Sky (D1).

Several participants also described involvement in professional partnerships, programs and projects which promote Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge and perspectives. Lauren, for example, has created a new approach to mathematics teaching based on concepts embedded in the Mi'kmaw language (L4). Working with Mi'kmaw partners, Karen helped to initiate a new program in integrated Mi'kmaw/western science (K2). Anne and her Mi'kmaw facilitators/friends have launched a community-based Mi'kmaw literacy program. Other settler allies have been participating in solidarity actions aimed at securing Aboriginal rights. After volunteering to be an observer or witness to the events at Burnt Church (R1), Richard became

active with a group that has been lobbying for the clean-up of effluent at Boat Harbour (R6). Irene talked about another solidarity project her organization initiated in order to avert escalation of violence in the wake of the *Marshall Decision* (I2). The project brought Acadians, African Nova Scotians, white Nova Scotians, and the Mi'kmaq together to learn one another's stories, to eat and celebrate with one another, building bridges among these communities which have lasted over time.

Participants in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal alliances, however, emphasized that strong interpersonal relationships—friendships—are what is needed first if Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples are to work effectively with one another (Bianchi, Hanrahan, Henry, Neufeldt, & Wright, 2008; Da Silva, 2010; Graham, 2008; M. J. Hampton & Hampton, 2010; Hanson, 2009). As Karen concluded, getting to know a number of Mi'kmaw people on a social basis first meant that “later when it came time to start working on an integrative science program I already had relationships in place” (K1). For Lauren, involvement in service learning enabled her to get to know a number of Mi'kmaw people from the region. When she got her first teaching job in a Mi'kmaw community, she “already had some connections to the community . . . already knew people and it was almost like I was fated to end up there” (L2). Richard suggested community acceptance and trust hinged on settlers' willingness to engage with community members outside of their agreed upon role as volunteer observers (R2, R3). In his current solidarity work, Richard reflected that he “would like to have some social interaction with First Nations folks and kind of deepen some of those relationships. I think those are really important” (R6).

One way to foster more effective relationships, participants have found, is by adapting themselves to Mi'kmaw ways of doing things. Barbara and Wally (BW4) described how

speaking a few words of Mi'kmaw smoothed social interactions, even with Mi'kmaw people they did not know. Lauren also commented that by learning the Mi'kmaw language she was able to immerse herself more fully in community life and take part in activities that otherwise might have been closed to her, such as singing in the church choir (L5). In the classroom, when Lauren and Karen discovered that their students acted from a different set of cultural assumptions and expectations, they found ways to accommodate their students' preferences rather than insisting they conform to the mainstream ways of doing or learning (K4; L4). Lauren decided that she needed to understand what and how her students were thinking, and found herself "the only white girl" (L4) in a course on reading and writing Mi'kmaw. Learning Mi'kmaw has been "what earned [her] the respect of the community" (L4). Karen found alternative ways of dealing with classroom routines like assignment deadlines and reported that the Mi'kmaw students "loosened [her] up a lot" (K4), enabled her to become more flexible and innovative as an educator. Irene, who had the most years of experience as an ally with Aboriginal Peoples, asserted that for her one important guideline is to "always ask permission to be included" rather than assuming she will be welcome with Aboriginal Peoples, especially if the activities are spiritual, if there are ceremonies (I4). Irene commented, though, that protocols for interacting with Aboriginal Peoples and showing respect can vary from one territory to another, and even among individuals from the same Nation. Deciding the best way to proceed can sometimes "be really tricky" (I4).

Study participants are also learning what kinds of actions they can become involved in as allies. Participants highlighted reciprocity or giving back as a guiding moral principle in their relationships with the Mi'kmaq. When Freeman (2000) was carrying out the research for her book, she found that Aboriginal Peoples were initially reluctant to share what they knew in part

because she was unable to explain “why I wanted information, what I would do with it, and what I could give back” (p. xxii). When Richard’s group first met with informal community leaders to discuss what they could do to support the community of Esgenoôpetitj, one Elder asked a similar set of questions: “Who were we?”; “What were we going to do?”; “What did we think we could do?”; “Was it going to be useful?; and “Were we going to get in their way?” (R2). Consistent with the literature on allies and ally building (Bishop, 1994; L. Davis, 2010; Goodman, 2001; Regan, 2010), settler allies in this study have been giving back to Mi’kmaw people, communities, and causes in material ways, and through the use of their professional and positional power as people of privilege.

Barbara and Wally’s material contributions to their nearby Mi’kmaw community are often things such as firewood for the pow-wow and food for feasts (BW 2). They, as well as Lauren, also spoke of ways in which they were giving of their time, attention, and interest (BW1, BW2, BW3; L2, L3). Lauren (L4), for instance, found that demonstrating an interest in learning to speak even a little Mi’kmaw not only helped to break the ice with some Mi’kmaw community members, it also provided others with inspiration to continue with efforts around language restoration. Professional background and skills can also be of some benefit. In the literature, Freeman (2000) drew from information she uncovered in her research in order to provide testimony in a First Nations land claims case (pp. 436–438). Among study participants, Doug has been drawing from his experience in the music industry to raise the level of One Sky’s musicality, promote the group’s public profile, and ensure that members are adequately compensated for performances (D1). Lauren, Karen, and Anne have been using their skills as educators to help partners create programming which views the world through a Mi’kmaw lens. Anne also has been providing her Mi’kmaw partners with technical skills and assistance with

proposal writing (A1). Recognizing that participating in TRC hearings would be an emotionally charging and highly demanding process, Irene organized a healing gathering for IRS survivors (I3).

Understanding the benefits of their own positions of privilege, participants have also been taking on “agent-agent” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 22) roles in a number of ways: lobbying for changes in mainstream institutions and systems (L6); addressing absences and inequities in representation (I3; K2); pointing out the role that whites have played in creating injustice for Aboriginal Peoples (I3; L2); and by countering false assumptions about the Mi’kmaq and providing settlers around them with more accurate information (BW5; R1). At Burnt Church, Richard helped the community get accurate information out into the media. When he returned home for periods of time, he also tried to help his neighbours make sense of what they had been seeing on the news (R1). Barbara and Wally described how they made an attempt to break down some of the prejudices held by their white neighbours by inviting them to take part in a *salite*, an auction in support of a grieving mother whose son had died in a car accident (BW3). As Barbara noted, the *salite* “showed a [positive] side of the [Mi’kmaw] community that the white community wouldn’t otherwise have seen.”

Study participants held themselves personally accountable for being “part of the solution” (Bishop, 1994, p. 94), to overcoming racism and injustice experienced by Aboriginal Peoples. Richard observed that:

It’s a part of our history that we need to be accountable for. I mean, we’ve created an awful situation here and it’s not about blame, it’s about the reality. Sometimes people go “Well, that wasn’t me that did that.” Well no, but it happened in the development of this country, and it still continues today. It’s not like the issues have all been resolved and the

healing's happened. It's still going on. The truth and reconciliation process around the residential schools proves that it's still going on, look at the conditions of reserves. So there's an awful lot of work to do. (R1)

What was striking about participants like Irene, Richard, Karen and Lauren is that they have been involved as allies with Aboriginal Peoples for decades. Lauren said that she has been "yelling about" Mi'kmaw educational concerns for some twenty years now (L6). Even more recent allies like Anne do not see themselves as moving on to another group or cause when their program comes to an end. Anne's engagement with a Mi'kmaw literacy project has been relatively short, but she saw herself as committed to supporting Mi'kmaw partners for as long as they want her: she "won't break the relationship" (A1).

6.1.2.2 Changes in knowledge.

These relationships and moral imperatives were fostered by new epistemic habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000): in what participants knew; the kinds of knowledge they saw as important; and why they believed this new knowledge was correct. The myth of benign colonial rule and an imaginary Canadian identity (Mackey, 2002) has effectively drawn a curtain over a contentious past, obscuring the physical violence and the legalized domination used to suppress Aboriginal opposition in Canada. In order to understand why Aboriginal Peoples today are often still so wounded and so angry, aspiring allies need to understand the impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal Nations, as communities and families (Freeman, 2000; Ross, 1992, 2006). Like Ross (1992), participants have been learning about the historic workings of colonialism, such as revelations about Indian Residential Schools (A5; I4; R1). One Aboriginal man explained to Irene how this history had resulted in a loss of self worth and sense of agency, saying, "We lost the war, we let our family, our children down." (I7). Participants also have been confronted by

the ripple effects of colonialism, how it has led to the problems facing Mi'kmaw Nations, communities and families today—economic poverty (A5; BW5), family violence (BW5), poor health, and premature death (L3). Participants are clear that they saw that oppression exists. Barbara, for example, said she would like to “challenge any white family to live on \$160 every two weeks” (BW5). Other participants like Lauren also recognize that this oppression is structural and systemic. Lauren, for instance, recalled that a friend of hers:

went to the hospital one day and never got out. He died a month later. And that was really hard. He was in his forties. He wasn't an old man; he just got sick. And there were all kind of moments like that where people just passed away. That was probably the hardest thing, living in this community where there was always kind of death and sadness . . . Dying at sixty seemed normal but it's not normal in white communities. When you look at the sort of the average age of death in Mi'kma'ki, it's like 55 or 60, versus 75 in the Canadian public. Why that discrepancy? (L3)

Richard pointed out that settler society still resorts to violence, not negotiation, when they find themselves in conflict with Aboriginal Peoples (R1, R2):

It was my government that was then saying, “Yes, that is so. They have a right to fish. We're recognizing our treaty obligation is to respect their right.” That was a great clarification. But then, when it came down, the government reacted to the reality of it rather than anticipating it, rather than working with it, rather than finding the common ground and ways to move ahead. (R1)

Part of the problem is that misinformation and stereotypes about Aboriginal Peoples are still part and parcel of public discourses. Barbara and Wally commented that much of what settlers think

they know is little more than hearsay, stale stories passed on by word of mouth with little thought about or investigation of actual facts.

I think a lot of the racism comes from when Great-grandma lived near a Native community. And she told stories to Grandma, and then Grandma told Mom, and then Mom told her daughter. Whether they have connections or not, they've heard the stories. So who're you going to believe, your family or what's in the newspaper? (BW5)

Misconceptions are also perpetuated in broadcast media. In contrast to news reports, Richard emphasized that Mi'kmaw fishers at Esengoôpetitj were asking for only a small part of the catch, "a total of 6,000 traps in the water in a zone that had 250,000 traps in it" (R2). Several study participants are starting to recognize these distortions. Barbara and Wally, for instance, said that they have become more cautious about what they assume they know or understand, and make an effort to "try and find out why it is that way because there's usually reasons" (BW1). Other participants have learned how Mi'kmaw perspectives have been excluded from the academic canon (K2; K5; L2, L4; N4).

Another important piece of new knowledge for participants was the legal basis of settler relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. In Chapter 3, I situated contemporary treaty negotiations as one of three platforms for reconciliation. Richard reflected that this was "a really large learning, really knowing what the treaties are about and what they mean" (R2). The difference, he emphasized, was that these are peace and friendship treaties:

You think "Peace and friendship, what's that mean?" That really speaks to relationship, that we should be and can be living in peaceful coexistence here. These are not treaties about "We've got the land now," it's not that at all. In fact, it's like this peaceful

coexistence. That's the context. If you look at it that way then wow, of course, the next step is to develop relationships and to interact. (R2)

Learning about the treaties also had a significant impact on the goals for this study. When my doctoral studies began, my focus was on understanding how people from Eurocentric cultures learn to engage with Indigenous worldviews. I had “some general awareness of human rights covenants like UNDRIP, but I knew nothing about the agreements which are binding on me in Mi'kmaw territory where I live” (N2). In my experience living in Nova Scotia, the treaties have not been “talked about in coffee shops or even much in classrooms” (N2). Richard and I both learned about the treaties through participation in an Aboriginal rights support group which has been active for a couple of decades. Based at a church-sponsored social justice education centre in Nova Scotia, the group has organized workshops, gatherings and other events aimed at promoting understanding, peace, and friendship between settlers and Mi'kmaw people. While failure to appreciate Indigenous worldviews is indeed one aspect of the ongoing divide between the two nations, I began to conclude that an even more pressing issue was that settlers have resisted acknowledging the sovereign rights of Aboriginal Peoples. The concept of reconciliation, I realized, provided a framework for talking about the kinds of broad changes Aboriginal Peoples have been advocating, as well as a way of highlighting the need for a shift in nation-to-nation relationships at different levels and in a range of spaces.

Another important epistemic shift was in how participants are acquiring new information about the Mi'kmaq. Rather than talking and asking, participants asserted that the key was listening, watching, and reflecting. Ross (1992) reported his understanding of Aboriginal cultures was acquired through years of being present in court rooms, in communities, in people's homes and on the land. In the present study, Anne emphasized the importance of “lots and lots of

listening”: consistently being present in the company of Mi’kmaw people without saying much, being on the sidelines helping out so that people became comfortable “telling me things and I felt we were getting deeper and were sharing” (A1). For Karen, this meant making time to be with her Mi’kmaw students outside of the classroom (K4). As a teacher, Lauren found that if she was “willing to listen, I got to hear all kinds of interesting things and it really helped me to learn” (L3). Somewhat to his surprise, Richard discovered that really listening to what Aboriginal people have to say rather than constantly interjecting his opinions and thoughts not only felt personally “liberating” (R3), this seemed to be one way that he as a individual could help redress the persistent imbalance in settler/Aboriginal dialogue in this country:

I’ve kind of learned over time . . . that it’s really important to just listen and not talk.

Given all the historical oppression and all the history that exists, Native people have a need and a right to kind of get across their perspective and how they see things here. (R2)

In her work with teacher educators and service learning participants, Lauren said that she similarly stresses to her students that “their responsibility is to serve, and to listen to community and to learn from the community” (L2).

Like Ross (1992), some study participants also reported that they have been examining some fundamental principles on which their worldviews have been based. Changes in philosophical habits of mind included new understandings about the world as framed through traditional Aboriginal knowledge, accompanied by an appreciation of the value of Aboriginal perspectives for people and the planet. Several participants said that they are beginning to realize the profound differences between Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews (K2; L4; N1, N2; R3, R6). Lauren, for instance, highlighted that these include differences in perceptions of space,

which in turn define the ways in which humans and other-than-human beings interact with one another:

Learning to speak Mi'kmaw gave me an awareness that I didn't have before, not only how beautiful the language is and how wonderfully descriptive, it's also definitely opened up my eyes . . . The word for earth in Mi'kmaw . . . is *wskitqumu*, which means "sitting on a sphere." So not everybody believed the earth was flat and I bring that into my teaching now. I talk to my students about Mi'kmaw words and how things can be conceived of differently in Mi'kmaw and it's certainly transformed who I am as a mathematics teacher. I look at the whole verb-based nature of how the language is structured . . . I can think of things in different ways that I never would have thought of before. (L4)

In one critical event, I wrote about coming to recognize these outlooks as being much more than just anthropological observations, but new guidelines for reshaping western ways of life and livelihoods:

Like Rob, I see Indigenous knowledge as a pivotal point where we need to come together. Although Indigenous knowledge receives lip service in the push for a more sustainable future, rarely is Indigenous knowledge taken seriously. What would our society look like if we actually believed the earth is our Mother? That rocks are wise grandfathers and that plants and animals and all other-than-human beings are as important as people? (N2)

Changing how we think and behave is not easy; as Richard reflected, "We bring layers and layers of stuff that we're not even aware of how we've been socialized to interact with the natural world" (R6).

Both Karen and Lauren drew attention to the need for non-Aboriginal people to develop new skills which better enable them to enter into the meaning of Aboriginal worldviews. Karen (K3) talked about

becoming more intellectually and emotionally open as well as creative, drawing from more holistic and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge and knowing. Lauren took a more direct route, entering into the epistemological foundations for Mi'kmaw knowledge, learning the Mi'kmaw language so that she could appreciate Mi'kmaw concepts, principles, and values from inside (L4).

Three participants also reflected on very similar examples which suggested a re-framing in their aesthetic habits of mind, personal tastes, and perceptions of what is beautiful, graceful. Participants described how they were moved by Mi'kmaw practices, customs, and traditions around death which allow family ties to be renewed. Caring is extended not only to members of the immediate family, but also to friends and the community as a whole. Although Lauren found ever-present death one of the most difficult things about living and working in a Mi'kmaw community, the ways in which the Mi'kmaq cope with death were comforting and affirming (L3). In a workshop situation, listening to Mi'kmaw people's stories, I was also struck by:

how the Mi'kmaq deal with death; how a celebration of life is woven into acknowledgement of a life passing . . . What I eventually came to understand is that this isn't just for the sake of gossip, but is an ongoing recitation of the ways in which individuals, families, and groups have been joined with one another, the ties and pacts they have made with each other. In the celebration of death/life, space is created for introspection which reinforces our mutuality and responsibilities towards one another. It seems to me that western society has been scrambling—largely ineffectually—to revive teachings about caring and sharing that still happen as a matter of course in small towns and rural areas of Nova Scotia, in Mi'kmaw communities, and in Indigenous communities elsewhere in the world. (N3)

Echoing the feelings Lauren and I expressed, Barbara and Wally concluded that customs like the salite auction and feast are “neat. I really like the way they celebrate life. (Wally) And death. (Barbara) And death” (BW2).

As people of privilege learn to become allies they may also experience psychological changes in self-image or emotional reactions like grief, discomfort, or joy (Curry-Stevens, 2007, p. 42). These types of shifts are necessary if people of privilege are to see themselves as implicated in the broader problem of power and oppression. Freeman (2000), for example, concluded that settlers on Turtle Island “can’t move forward . . . until we understand ourselves more deeply” (p. 467). Some participants in this study, though, appeared to distance themselves from their identity as white people of privilege by asserting that they do not hold any racist attitudes or have any racist beliefs (BW1; D1). Other settlers identified themselves as being complicit in the problem of white privilege. Richard (R1, R2) and I (N4), for example, reported that we have come to feel ashamed of the actions that our government and other authorities in this country have enacted in our name. Like Richard (R2), I (N4) found myself confronted with contradictions between settler society’s purported good intentions and the ways in which white colonizers and governments have acted in fact, not only by failing to live up to our promises to Aboriginal Peoples but in the open use of force. Feelings of shame signal that there has been a violation of moral standards that we have set for ourselves (P. Barker, 2003; Tangney & Dearing, 2002, p. 25; Tangney & Fischer, 1995).

Spiritual leader, educator, Elder, and activist Stan McKay (2008) has also asserted that dialogue about reconciliation cannot take place “if all involved do not adopt an attitude of humility and respect” (p. 107). Some study participants indicated increasing awareness of the limits of their knowledge about Aboriginal Peoples and cultures and about themselves:

we're here; we live here on Native land. When you come to that realization that should mean a lot in terms of how you interact. Like we shouldn't be wrecking things, we're not in charge; we should be listening, these people have lived here for at least eleven thousand years or longer, probably a lot longer. Maybe we've got something to learn here. You know? A little humility. (R3)

When Lauren began to explore the possibility of pursuing a doctoral degree with a focus on the integration of Mi'kmaw knowledge (L6), she took the step of consulting with Mi'kmaw mentors and friends in order to discern if her intentions were appropriate. These kinds of remarks are in contrast to the observations of one anti-racism scholar who concluded that people of privilege are more generally conditioned "to act for the other, to represent the other, but never to recognize ourselves as dependent on her" (Hoagland, 2007, p. 103).

Another psychological barrier to reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples is lack of empathy (Cairns, 2000, pp. 209-210; Environics Institute, 2011, p. 43-45; Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2005, p. 17; Regan, 2010, pp. 45-51). Defined as the ability "to identify with the situation and feelings of another person . . . to imagine the way the world looks from another vantage point" (Goodman, 2001, p. 126), empathy is the "glue" required for human bonding (pp. 146-151). Empathy is believed to be both voluntary and subjective (Goodman, 2001, pp. 146-151). Comments by participants suggested a growing degree of closeness with and attachment to the Mi'kmaq. Rather than being dismissive, participants in this study are acknowledging Mi'kmaw humanity and the depth of harm done to individuals and to the Mi'kmaq as a People. Recalling Mi'kmaw people he knows who have been charged with crimes, Wally mused that "they never stood a chance, some of them" (BW5). Reflecting on his encounters with Donald Marshall Jr., Doug pointed the finger of blame at a racist white world,

which “just judged this man” (D3). Learning the truth about what the people of Esgenoôpetitj had been asking for, Richard empathized with his friend, an Elder and informal community leader, who saw no choice but to resist because he “just felt like he was backed up against the wall” (R2).

Participants also described growth in mutual trust with Mi’kmaw friends, colleagues, and communities (BW4; I4, I6; L3; R1). Richard, for example, placed his trust in the people of Esgenoôpetitj when he decided to go out on the boats even though he knew it was possible that he and others might be rammed and end up in the water (R1). Later, when he made an egregious error by intervening in a critical meeting between community representatives and government officials, community Elders accepted Richard’s apology and allowed him to stay on and continue as a witness. When Lauren encountered problems as a teacher, she trusted the information and guidance she received from Mi’kmaw friends (L3). In turn, the community later placed their trust in Lauren’s motivations for wanting to pursue a new way of teaching math which integrates Mi’kmaw knowledge. Irene has become sufficiently trusted by members of the Mi’kmaw community to become a bundle keeper, an Elder who may be invited to pray and even assist with ceremonies (I4; I6).

6.1.3 Uncovering Reasons for Change

An analysis of critical events in the lives of settlers who’ve become allies with Mi’kmaw people revealed examples of changes in socio-linguistic, moral, epistemic, philosophical, and psychological approaches to relationships with the Mi’kmaq. Participants did not necessarily report exactly the same changes at the same times, but there was a shared factor which explains why these settlers are learning to act, think, and feel in less dominating ways. E. W. Taylor

(2009) has described experience as the “primary medium of transformative learning” (p. 5).

Richard, for instance, said that the way he learned to interact with Aboriginal Peoples was:

just doing it. It wasn't always comfortable and it wasn't always right and it wasn't always perfect, but, so what? People are understanding. And sometimes you say “Geez, I shouldn't have said that,” and “Oops, got to watch that.” Of course, we should be careful, but we can't let that stop us just because we're fish out of water. (R3)

Karen, however, felt that “being given permission by somebody that I respected to try some of these things” (K3) was essential for encouraging this process of learning by doing. She also pointed to the importance of having a “safe space” where it was possible to experiment and fail: “Given the tendency of today's kids to have their cell phone in class and to take a video of you that can be posted on YouTube . . . That would tend to flatten me if I were teaching now” (K3).

For participants in this study, personal experience provided a source of “disorienting dilemmas” (Cranton, 2006, pp. 61-63; Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). These emotionally charged encounters pushed individuals outside their comfort zone and caused them to question what they believed and their habitual ways of viewing the world, other people, or themselves. In the literature, Freeman's (2000) research was sparked by the unexpected anger of an Aboriginal friend. In the heated argument that ensued, Freeman heard herself deny any accountability to Aboriginal Peoples: “I didn't ask to be born here!” (p. xvi). In the present study, one disorienting dilemma that pushed several participants towards more active engagement with the Mi'kmaq was witnessing acts of racism. New to the area, Barbara and Wally recalled how pejorative remarks by a white neighbour motivated their family into taking their first walk around the next door Mi'kmaq First Nation (BW1). Irene also remembered an incident from her childhood when an aunt refused to allow to her to play with Mi'kmaq girl her own age (I5), but the real spark for

her lifelong commitment to ally work with Aboriginal Peoples was the story of Anna Mae Pictou Aquash:

I was at a second-hand bookstore over on Queen Street in Toronto and I saw the picture of the hands in the jar. I picked it up, saw that it was a woman from here, from Pictou Landing, and this is the area where my father's from, so I bought the book and read it. I think partially it was that I could visualize in my mind exactly where she had lived. You know? Like because they describe in the book where she lived on the Pictou Landing Reserve at that point, she grew up. And I knew that road; I had driven down that road to go swimming, you know, when I was a kid. And then to think that the FBI had cut off her hands and taken them away in a box, was just so horrifying. And yeah, it just haunted me, the story just haunted me. So it wasn't like I could walk away from it. It totally, it just haunted me. (I6)

Participants also narrated incidents which caused them to become aware of their social and cultural positioning. New to Nova Scotia, Karen was disconcerted when someone questioned her identity and allegiances:

somebody at the university asked me was I Protestant or was I Catholic? And that question just absolutely floored me because that was not a question I had ever dealt with anywhere in Canada. And then as I indicated I went to Europe. And in none of those places had anybody ever asked me was I Protestant or was I Catholic. But here I was informed that that was a very important dimension to observe because it kind of dictated how your social relationships were going to evolve. And I thought "This is weird, I've never had to deal with this kind of thing before." (K5)

Karen subsequently indicated that she became increasingly aware of the divisions, exclusions, and absences both in the university where she taught and in the larger community. In the classroom, Lauren's students challenged some deeply held assumptions about the nature of the world, bluntly informing her "You're talking crazy talk, Miss" (L4). In a completely different setting, I was confounded when I realized that animist worldviews weren't just concepts in books, but part of the living consciousness and day to day practices of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (N1).

Experience has also provided a source of information which enabled participants to deepen their knowledge. Doug, for instance, found that racist public discourses about the Mi'kmaq were significantly at odds with his own perceptions of Donald Marshall Jr. as "one gentle soul," the "nicest guy you'd ever want to meet" (D3). Experiences could also be vicarious or re-lived, the lessons learned from events which happened in the past. Participants recounted moments when, out of ignorance or an assumption that they "knew better," their relationships with Mi'kmaw people had been ruptured (A5; BW4; I7; R4). Richard, for example, intervened in a critical meeting where government officials were present only to discover that his remarks breached community confidentiality and made a tense situation ever worse (R4). Irene (I7) also described a scenario where Aboriginal people actually felt disempowered, rather than supported, by her efforts at "rescuing" a feast by soliciting outside donations. As a result, however, both Irene and Richard felt that they learned not to overstep their role by taking over leadership from Aboriginal community partners.

Other experiences that participants learned from were embodied (Fenwick, 2003, p. 13). Haig-Brown and Dannenmann (2002) have asserted that settlers need to have experiences on the land in order to open a window into traditional Aboriginal knowledge and to help non-Aboriginal

people form their connections with and commitment to particular territories and places. As an observer at Burnt Church, Richard recalled how “the whole shift being on the water” (R3) affected him:

You know, where I live now, I’m on the water, but I don’t have this intimate relationship like I did there. I mean, you were literally on the water all the time. It felt strange when you got in your vehicle and drove into the neighbouring town. You would kind of want to be back at the water, everything happened at the water, the community and the water, and this road that goes along the shore, that was the whole conduit where everything happened. It was one of those special places. (R3)

Karen recognized that the time she’d spent outdoors as a girl and as a young woman was a significant emplacement, an important aspect of her identity which drew her towards Mi’kmaw people. She expressed concern, however, that students entering university today—even biology students—may have had little in the way of land based experience (K6). I also wondered about the need for embodied experiences to draw from when it comes to being interested in Mi’kmaw people’s stories, particularly stories about the past which “triggered my memories of ways of living that no longer exist in most of Canada. . . . If we have never hunted for sweet wild strawberries under a warm summer sky, why would we honour their sacred power?” (N3).

Experiences were also problem focused (Fenwick, 2003, p. 142-143), motivating individuals to seek out new facts, knowledge, and approaches. Difficulties with work related responsibilities spurred Ross (1992) into looking more deeply into Aboriginal cultures. Among study participants, Lauren noted that the unexpected challenges she encountered trying to teach Mi’kmaw students were one reason she took up the challenge of learning the Mi’kmaw language. Researching Anna Mae’s story Irene (I6), for example, travelled first into Mi’kmaw

territory, and then into the United States where she talked with Elders and went to her first sweat lodge ceremony. When she returned to Canada, she was drawn into organizing events and rallies in support of the American Indian Movement (I7).

Participants also pointed to the impact of collaborative experiences (Fenwick, 2003, p. 13; E. W. Taylor, 2008, pp. 5-7), from living and working with others (A1; BW2; D1; L2). Richard, for example, commented that having a defined role as an observer at Burnt Church gave him and others an actual “place in which we could interact with that community” (R4). Barbara and Wally spoke about learning from and with their neighbours; Doug from the Mi’kmaw and non-Aboriginal musicians in One Sky; Lauren from her students and from members of the community; Anne, from Mi’kmaw friends and educators. Karen credited the hours she spent in the company of her collaborators Bertha and Noble as well as Fox for helping her to reshape and re-frame her perspectives on the natural world.

Through personal experiences, participants were exposed to Aboriginal people’s stories and their interpretations, information that they otherwise would not have known about:

(Barbara) If we didn’t live here, we wouldn’t be privy to a lot of information. Like for us, like yeah, we’ve seen the poverty on the news, you know, but we’ve never been involved in it, we’ve never seen it first hand, we’ve haven’t known the people that lived in that poverty. (BW5)

Richard (R3) remembered that a book by Ojibway Elder Art Solomon (1994), *Eating Bitterness: A Vision Beyond the Prison Walls*, helped to open his eyes to injustices Aboriginal Peoples have experienced. Hearing what First Voice has to say, Doug has also been moved:

Usually, myself as a musician, I just listen to melodies and chord changes. But when [One Sky]’re playing together—here’s a difference—I listen to the words. And some days I’ll say “Whoa, this is heavy. This is a heavy constitution. (D2)

While at university, Lauren (L2) reported that it was a conversation with a Mi’kmaw student that made her realize the urgency of culturally appropriate Aboriginal education. Spending time with Mi’kmaw students outside classroom hours, Karen said she “quickly learned what difficult issues many of them faced in their personal lives and it just gave me tremendous respect for some of them” (K4).

Part of what makes it difficult for whites to distance themselves from this testimony is that it was provided in a compelling way, through the use of the human voice, often in person. Returning to the community where her grandfather had established an Indian Residential School, Freeman (2000) recalled that the testimony of survivors “reverberated through me for days . . . they exuded present pain. They wrenched me from any emotional detachment I might have pretended to” (p. 433). Following my participation in a series of dialogues about the Mi’kmaw humanities:

I reflected on why it was that the stories I heard during the dialogues were so powerful and resonant even if I did not and could not always understand what was being said. Wheeler (2005) also pointed to the difference between desiccated academic texts which talk about Indigenous knowledge and the impact of listening to Indigenous Peoples, particularly Elders, as they relay this knowledge through the human voice, even if this is only on tape or film. (N3)

Early mornings on the shore listening to a traditional leader was one of the critical events which Richard seemed to recall the best (R3).

Immersion in Mi'kmaw communities, projects, programs, and activities was an important factor which enabled participants to begin to integrate what they were experiencing and hearing, moving from information to action (A1; BW2; D2; K4; L3; R3). As Richard concluded, "When you live in a community, that's when things really shift" (R3). When they volunteered as observers to the conflict in Burnt Church, Richard and his partner were billeted with a local family:

And I just thought this is incredible. I didn't know this man a couple of months ago, but now suddenly, I'm living in his community, living in his home, I know his partner and his children, and we're part of their life suddenly. And there's so much potential with that. You know, in many places in Canada, the Native and non-Native communities are very, very separate and people carry on their whole lives and many non-Native people don't even know a First Nations person. It's quite staggering. (R2)

Ross (1992), for example, reported that he lived and worked in Anishnabeg territory in northwestern Ontario for decades. Freeman (2000) made a pilgrimage across Turtle Island to carry out research in the places where her ancestors came into contact with Aboriginal Peoples, and later lived for a period of time in a First Nation community where her family had ties.

While longer term community participation seemed to have the greatest impact, short term or periodic activities in spaces and contexts where Mi'kmaw people were present also seemed to have an effect:

What's been most important in shaping my understanding and developing some of the "backbone" required for sustaining my commitment to ally work has been a chance to simply be with Aboriginal people. I have been fortunate that I've been able to take part in

annual Peace and Friendship gatherings with Aboriginal people from the region, to sit in circle, sit in ceremony, share food together and simply listen (N2).

Doug (D2) also recalled that he learned a great deal one weekend when One Sky performed a concert in a Mi'kmaw community, and then travelled home together stopping at Mi'kmaw communities along the way.

6.1.3.1 Shortcomings in the process of settler transformation.

In this chapter, I've presented evidence that shows how settlers have experienced shifts in how they relate to Mi'kmaw people and in the values which govern those relationships, particularly recognition of the need for reciprocity. In addition, participants became better able to perceive their own position as people of privilege. Experiential learning with Mi'kmaw people provided a focal point for learning and reinforced aspiring allies' awareness of the need to do things differently. Immersion in Aboriginal contexts created opportunities where settlers had an opportunity to listen to the testimony of Aboriginal people first hand.

Even when settlers enter into relationships with Aboriginal Peoples with the best of intentions, however, old colonial mindsets can make manifest themselves (L. Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010). A number of participants also felt there had been times when Mi'kmaw people had either been angry with their offers of support or had misunderstood their actions (A5; BW4; I7; L3; R1). Anne described the work she and her Mi'kmaw friends have doing around literacy as being at least "harmless" (A1), but admitted that some people regard her organizational engagement as paternalistic, another attempt at removing control from Mi'kmaw hands (A5). Anne has begun to actively question her own position of privilege as a settler in relation to the Mi'kmaq. In summing up the experiences of partners in a range of social justice alliances, L. Davis & Shpuniarsky highlighted the fact that anger on the part of Aboriginal

people is often justifiable. When Barbara and Wally discovered some kids in their house without permission, they took the children and the problem of the break-in to the Chief. What neither Barbara nor Wally perhaps expected, however, was that this ended in one of the children being removed from their home. As I noted in Chapter 2, the seemingly ever increasing numbers of Mi'kmaw children being removed from their homes and communities is a painful problem for many Mi'kmaw families and Mi'kmaw nations in the province.

As Ross (2006) admitted in a follow up volume to his first book, acquiring new knowledge, strategies, and behaviours isn't easy and "maybe it's too much to expect that we could suddenly turn ourselves into different people just by sitting in a circle" (p. xviii). Study participants also admitted that trying to be an ally is hard work, slow, and sometimes frustrating. Irene (I2), for instance, was frank that trying to build bridges between Aboriginal and settler Nova Scotians sometimes just didn't work, that differences seemed to be irreconcilable. In the next section, I move on to consider what it is that sustains ally relationships between settlers and their Mi'kmaw neighbours. What is needed to keep these relationships intact in spite of difficulties? What learning has, in a number of cases, allowed these relationships to become deeper and more committed with the passage of time?

6.1.4 Fostering Commitment to Ally Relationships

Participants in this study have been interacting with Aboriginal Peoples for varying periods of time, from less than five years to more than 20 years (Table 5.1. Profile of participants). One reason I chose to interview these participants was that it was evident that their commitment to relationships with the Mi'kmaq were not "one-off" occurrences, but have been maintained over the passage of time. Lauren, for example, was a teacher in a Mi'kmaw community for almost a decade before she went on to pursue a doctoral degree. She is now a

professor, bringing along a new generation of educators and supporting teachers working in Mi'kmaw schools. Drawing from his experiences at Burnt Church, Richard has become involved in a group which supports Pictou Landing First Nation in an ongoing struggle for a clean up of Boat Harbour. After having been a coordinator of a Nova Scotia coastal communities network for more than a decade, Irene is now working for a non-profit educational institute, lending her experience and expertise to the design of projects and programs around peace and friendship between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians. Even settler allies who have come into relationships with Mi'kmaw people only recently have found new avenues for interaction. Doug continues to play with One Sky and has become more involved in activities at the Mi'kmaw community near his home, for example, working the sound equipment at pow-wows.

The third question in this study was “What it is that has sustained settlers’ commitment to Aboriginal Peoples: what has encouraged and nourished these relationships?” In Chapter 4, I outlined three orientations to ally relationships: self-interest, altruism, and social justice (Edwards, 2006). Allies for self-interest express a “selfish” desire to be of support to individuals they know and have come to care about (pp. 46-49). Barbara and Wally, for instance, asserted that it’s natural to want to “help your friends” (BW2). Anne similarly noted that one reason she became interested in learning how to become an ally was that she has been “befriended” (A5) by Mi'kmaw people. Participants highlighted a number of ways in which they benefited personally from relationships with Mi'kmaw people. Doug, for example, highlighted the psychological benefits (Goodman, 2001, pp. 105-109) of his association with One Sky:

it’s about being around positive instead of negative . . . it just gets rid of the negative right off the bat . . . in the Native community I find that they’re there to help other people, make you feel good about yourself. (D1)

In contrast to the “taken for granted” attitude of teachers in public schools, Lauren said that teachers in Mi’kmaw schools express an “authentic appreciation” (L6) for her input and assistance. Other participants spoke about the social benefits (Goodman, 2001, pp. 109-113) of coming together with Mi’kmaw neighbours. When Barbara and Wally (BW1), Karen (K2), Lauren (L2), and Richard (R2) were new to the area, they indicated an interest in finding a place for themselves in their new communities. Barbara and Wally found that in contrast to the non-Aboriginal town community, the Mi’kmaw Nation next to their home has welcomed them and made them feel as if they belong:

Our family is not a visible minority, we’re not Mi’kmaq, we’re not Aboriginal but quite a bit of the way that we have been treated in the town is like racial prejudice. You know, there’s walls that you’re just cannot get over because we’re not three generations from this town. Honestly, it doesn’t really bother us because why would we care what they say when we have [a Mi’kmaw] community that accepts us for who we are? (BW1)

Lauren reflected that her involvement in the Mi’kmaw community where she first taught has “given [her] connections, helped [her] to build credibility in other communities as well” (L6). Participants also pointed to intellectual benefits (Goodman, 2001, pp. 115-116) of having been involved with Mi’kmaw people, in particular gaining insights into traditional Mi’kmaw knowledge and perspectives on the natural world (K2; N1; R6). Karen, for instance, commented that “One of the things that I craved to find in science courses when I was an undergraduate student was things that would help me get to know the plants, the animals better” (K2).

If allies for self-interest are motivated by the personal benefits they receive from relationships, allies for altruism (Edwards, 2006, pp. 49-51) are primarily interested in “doing the right thing,” fulfilling their moral responsibilities towards others (Goodman, 2001, pp. 114-115).

When Lauren decided to pursue a doctoral degree, her decision to go ahead was motivated in part by “this sense that I have an obligation to the community” (L6). The focus for this altruism is on bringing about “justice for them” (Edwards, 2006, p. 47). A number of participants in this study, for instance, expressed an interest in transforming persistent colonial inequities and promoting an increase in social justice for Aboriginal Peoples (A5; BW5; I2; L6; N4; R5). For Anne, an interest in supporting the Mi’kmaq arose from a growing awareness of “the injustice of it all . . . the social unfairness” (A5). Allies like Anne who are motivated by altruism frequently describe themselves as working for the welfare and betterment of others (BW1, BW3, BW5; I3, I5; K5). As Anne mused, “I think that all of us can create more opportunities for others to shine, so that no one is ignored or not acknowledged or isolated or reduced in their humanity in any way” (A2). Anne spoke about the impact spirituality has had on her moral conscience, including reading about different religious traditions, philosophers like Martin Buber, and an interest in Quaker principles (A2).

The third ally orientation, allies for social justice (Edwards, 2006, pp. 51-52), are motivated by a sense of “combined selfishness” (p. 47). These allies are working to bring about changes in the world that will be of benefit to “us” (p. 47). Some study participants described themselves not just as friends with Mi’kmaq people, but as part of the Mi’kmaq family (I4; K4; L6). Lauren described her “genuine sense of belonging” and continued close ties to the community as arising from a sense of “authentic kinship relationships” (L6). Irene also has strong personal ties with Aboriginal communities, having been “adopted” into an Anishinaabe family and community in Ontario when she was a young woman. In addition, both Irene (I5) and Lauren (L5) commented that they believe that family members may have intermarried with the Mi’kmaq at some time in the past.

Allies for social justice look towards actions which promote a greater good, towards collective empowerment and well-being (Goodman, 2001, pp. 134-138). Like Lauren, Irene and Richard spoke of their growing sense of interdependence with Aboriginal Peoples, that “there are so many things we could teach other” (I2). Irene said that her commitment to ally work has been inspired by:

believing that while we’re here in this lifetime we need to heal and we need to work on becoming the people that we’re intended to be. Right? I think almost every culture has experienced societal trauma and things that have caused us to separate from each other and from spirit and from the earth and all those sorts of things. And so it just seems critical to me to bring hope back to people, so that they’re not lost in the darkness and all those kinds of things. Yeah, it’s about rebuilding that humanness, that healing and yeah, the whole of social justice. (I2)

Allies for social justice recognize links among different forms of oppression and trace the source of oppression to abuse of power-over, stereotyping, coercion, control, and exclusion (Bishop, 1994, pp. 66-71). Richard articulated his understanding of these connections, saying:

So to me, it’s all the same issue . . . I’ve always been interested in the environmental ecological movement and done work in that area for years. And the issue of violence against women and violence against the natural world, to me they’re very, very similar issues, all issues of respect. It’s the same issue with racism and the oppression of Native people or women or minorities. I mean, they’re all the same dynamic. (R5)

Richard went on to assert that the time has come for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to “build on what we’ve got and try and create new ways of interacting and doing stuff together. There’s so much potential, so much potential” (R3).

Before this potential can be realized, however, aspiring allies must be able to acknowledge their own positions of privilege and the problems white identities pose for relationships with others who are less privileged. Even when people from dominant groups have begun to question the status quo and the truth of harmful discourses, they may not recognize the systemic nature of oppression, or identify themselves as being a member of an oppressor group (Edwards, 2006; Goodman, 2001; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).

There's no like racial discrimination or anything like that. That's what I like about the band; they're just great gentle people to work with. I'm not saying, you know, "those people," I'm just saying they're friends of mine. That's what I'm saying. (D1)

Freeman (2000) noted that her thinking was shaped both by feminist theory and her reading of native authors (p. xv), but it was time she spent living in South Africa and talks with anti-apartheid activists which heightened her awareness of how Canada has excluded its Aboriginal Peoples (pp. xv-xvi). Lauren felt that service learning training, in particular a workshop on white privilege, gave her and the other volunteers "the language to speak to misconceptions and misrepresentations . . . the language of being allies" (L2). Richard described the training to be an observer as having a similar impact, that it "was a real lesson in terms of being able to just be there in a support role for the community," the "skills and ability and the mind set" (R4).

In addition, study participants indicated that they had already developed some degree of comfort with living and working in situations where "difference" was a factor well before they came to Mi'kma'ki. For instance, I'm a third generation settler Canadian, but grew up and have lived and worked in cross-cultural settings much of my life. Other participants also described their early encounters with people from other cultural groups as being positive (A3; D3; I4; K5; L5; N1; R5). Before coming to Nova Scotia, Karen recalled how much she had enjoyed time she

spent in Europe surrounded by people from many different cultures (K5). Lauren emphasized the impact on her ideas and values of her early years growing up in a low income neighbourhood where people still maintained strong ethnic traditions and spoke languages other than English (L5).

In some cases, connections with Aboriginal Peoples came through people's families of origin. In her autobiography, Freeman (2000) said that she became first became aware of Aboriginal Peoples through family stories, stories about ancestors who had been involved with Aboriginal Peoples (pp. xiv–xv). Lauren had two cousins of Mi'kmaw and Maliseet heritage (L5). In other instances, participants recalled encounters with Aboriginal people earlier in life that made a lasting impression on their consciousness. Irene vividly recalled a few instances from early childhood spent in the company of an Aboriginal Elder (I5), and as a teenager at Expo 67 she remembered being “totally moved” (I5) by a presentation by Alanis Obomsawin. When she was in her twenties, Irene began to cross paths with Aboriginal Peoples again as she became involved in theatre and film making. Anne also recounted that when she was in her twenties she made friends with a Mi'kmaw woman about the same age as she was (A3).

Participants' commitment to less dominating, more equitable relationships was also strengthened by a clear-eyed recognition of their own subordinate identities, and personal understandings of what it feels like to be disempowered. Participants like Richard (R5) recalled witnessing events which made them aware of inequities and violence. Karen (K5) and Anne traced the impact that their own personal experiences with marginalization have had on their decisions to become involved in social justice type causes. As a child, for example, Anne recalled that she:

hated it when there's cruelty and people are being put down, or when somebody was accused wrongly of something they didn't do . . . I think it was just wanting to somehow work against the cruelty and not let it get you. (A2)

Lauren emphasized that she grew up with a “sense of interconnectedness to other communities” (L5). Her work in helping to promote the Mi'kmaw language and worldviews, however, is driven by her personal understanding of what it feels like to lose her own Acadian mother tongue and cultural heritage (L5). As Freeman (2000) concluded, ties between settlers and Aboriginal Peoples are “not defined solely by blood or even by material culture, but also by self-identity, history, culture and values” (p. 460).

Other personal characteristics, traits, and outlooks are also important in determining who does or does not continue on an ally journey (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Tilly, 2005).

Richard, for example, observed that:

Usually, there's a real awkwardness, when non-Native folks start to interact more with Native folks, interact and find out what it's all about. I think what gets in the way is that so many non-Native Canadians have this mystique or something around Native people and it's like “Oh I have to act this way or I have to ask this question or do this or do that.” (R3)

Irene also commented that Nova Scotians often seem shy, reluctant to ask even for very basic information about Mi'kmaw People (I3).

Non-Aboriginal allies have also been described as being open to and curious about Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing (L. Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010; LeBaron, 2004, p. 18; Root & Dannemann, 2009, p. 6). Barbara, for example, says that they “accept the way it is,” but also “try and find out why it is that way because there's usually reasons” (BW1). Allies have

also been described as having a strong sense of their self-worth and a low need for external approval (Broido & Reason, 2005; Margaret, 2010; R. D. Reason et al., 2005; Root & Dannenmann, 2009, p. 6). Barbara advised that the best way to make friends with the Mi'kmaq was by to “be yourself” (BW1). Ally work, however, also demands a high degree of emotional intelligence and capacity for self-regulation (Goodman, 2001, pp. 38-39, 143-151; Mezirow, 2000, p. 11). Barbara commented that sometimes it's best to “bite [her] tongue and change the subject” (BW5). Particularly in the early stages of relationship building, when allies may encounter ambiguities and failure, a “thick skin” which enables them to accept critique may be helpful.

I actually developed a reputation of being a bit of a terrier that once I clamp on to something, I won't let go. Which kind of felt good, although it wasn't meant to be a compliment. (K2)

Rather than being bowled over by the “raw anger” of a Mi'kmaw Elder, Richard reported that it was “one of those great moments of truth . . . very, very informative” (R2). Anne (A5), Richard (R4), Barbara and Wally (BW4), and Irene (I7) also described conflict situations in which they had received feedback from Aboriginal people that was not easy to hear but this has not caused them to pull back from their involvement. As Richard acknowledged, “Of course we should be careful, but we can't let that stop us just because we're fish out of water” (R3). Doug was also comfortable and confident, asserting that even though “I'm just new at this, this whole thing, you know, and I'm just trying to figure it out. But I don't feel, how can I put it, I don't feel hampered or intimidated” (D2). Looking back on their own experiences, some participants felt at least somewhat optimistic that “Oh yes, the world can change” (K5), that relationships between

Aboriginal Peoples and settlers can eventually be improved even if it will take time and effort (I2; K5; N2; R6).

Experiential learning becomes even more potent when the process is supported by a mentor, guide or close personal friend (E. W. Taylor, 2009, p. 13). In some cases, this kind of input comes in print form rather than in person. Ross (1992) turned to work by Mohawk scholar Clare Brant for explanations, stories, and teachings in order to help him interpret incidents he did not understand (p. xviii). In this study, Karen found reassurance and inspiration in works by Cajete (1994) while Lauren looked to writing by Battiste and Barman (1995). Participants have also received in-person support. During her service learning involvement Lauren reflected that:

I was on the project executive at that time so I was more connected to the Board members and spent more time talking with them. I met an African Nova Scotian educator and the organizer, a white woman, who we called the godmother of service learning, two women who probably had more influence on my becoming a teacher than anyone else. Someone who was just coming out and volunteering every week, though, might not have gotten that same connection. (L2)

Anne has turned to Muriel, the Elder who teaches a Mi'kmaw language program. Karen's work around integrative science wouldn't have been possible if not for the willingness and openness of Bertha and her husband Noble, as well as in-classroom back-up by Fox, a Mi'kmaw educator (K2, K3).

Mentoring seems to be especially appreciated in the early stages of learning and relationship building. Doug noted that "Arthur and his son have pulled me in" (D1) while Irene cited the friendship and advice she received from Elder Art Solomon during the first few years of her involvement in Aboriginal rights issues (I7). Lauren stressed that without Tim, an education

counselor at her school, she might not have been able to get through the “hard times” and come to understand what she was seeing and experiencing in her classroom and in the local community (L3). Mentors can play a role as “coaches” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 122), helping learners develop new skills or as “interferers” (pp. 125-126), challenging assumptions and preconceived notions, guiding learners towards an awareness of the gaps, fallacies, and misinterpretations embedded in their thinking. Karen, for example, said that it was Bertha and the Aboriginal student advisor Sister Joan who pushed her to recognize that the reason Mi’kmaw learners weren’t participating in science programs was because the approaches and principles excluded Mi’kmaw knowledge and ways of knowing (K2).

Participant commitment to ally relationships was also supported and sustained through participation in groups where they found settlers with an interest in Aboriginal Peoples, in more equitable relationships, and in social justice. As a first year student at university, Lauren found that the service learning program dovetailed with her emerging interest in social justice. Living in Ontario, Richard had “connections with Native folks and Native organizations” (R2). In Nova Scotia, his initial learning about the Mi’kmaq took place in another community of practice, an Aboriginal rights support group. Karen’s community of practice is at least partly professional, with other scientists who are exploring more creative, cross-disciplinary approaches (K3). As she noted, change seems less risky and more appealing when we know that there are “other people who think in the same weird ways I do” (K3). Irene reflected that the common ground project her organization launched following the *Marshall Decision* wouldn’t have been possible without the support of a few white union leaders who saw the potential in new forms of relationships with Mi’kmaw First Nations and Mi’kmaw fishers (I2). As I noted in one critical event, communities

of practice provide a place where aspiring allies “can 'retreat' and think through what needs to be done in our own communities and in our own lives” (N2).

6.1.5 Settler Ally Narratives as a Tool for Change

The last research question I asked in this study was intended to explore the implications of settler narratives for the reconciliation process: How do participants see their narratives as useful for non-formal educational interventions aimed at helping other white settlers participate in more just and equitable community-based partnerships with Aboriginal Peoples? For me, reading Ross’s (1992) narrative had a significant impact on my thinking about Indigenous Peoples and my relationships with them:

I started reading *Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Ross, 1992). It was written by a Canadian lawyer called Rupert Ross. Now Ross was white like me and he went to work in Aboriginal communities in northwestern Ontario. The funny thing was that in his book, Ross also talked about how things that seem dead can talk and how we can learn to listen. He described the relationships he made with Aboriginal Peoples who helped him see the world this new way. I laughed and I cried and I could not put the story down because Ross asked the questions I’d asked, had been confused about a lot of the same things. Reading about his learning journey woke me up and I finally began to know, really know, just how different Indigenous perspectives are from my own and how different they are from what I was always taught was true. (N1)

When I asked study participants what other settlers might learn from listening to their stories, participants were either silent or they seemed uncertain.

When I asked again, probing for more information, a couple of participants began to share instead what they had learned from the example set by others. Freeman (2000) said that she

grew up in an “altruistic household” where the idea of service to community was held up as an ideal (p. xv). Lauren (L1) used similar words, noting that the “spirit of community service” in her family went back at least a couple of generations, and that her parents raised her to “give back.” Richard also reflected that he had grown up in a household “where there was always a sense of right and wrong,” where his parents modeled the idea of fairness and justice. Irene felt that her openness to Aboriginal Peoples was due in part to watching her father when she was young, noticing how he interacted with First Nations people, “laughing and joking...it was all a very positive kind of relationship” (I5).

More often than not, though, settlers shy away from any deep self-examination and refuse to accept stories that situate us as being “colonizer-perpetrators” (Regan, 2010, p. 28). As Schick (2009) has argued, one of the most challenging questions settlers need to be able to answer is, “Who do you think you are?” (p. 125). In this study I shared a story about how it was I came to feel ashamed about my position of privilege as a white settler (N4). In works by white “come-from-aways” to Nova Scotia—pioneers, explorers, government officials, missionaries, historians, educators, anthropologists, journalists and other authors of fiction—I was confronted with proof of settler collusion in what Episknew (2009) described as the numerous “policies of devastation” (pp. 20-68) used to subjugate Aboriginal Peoples.

I remember one day in Chiang Mai when Suree, my Thai colleague, asked me out of the blue, “Why do your Aboriginal students seem so troubled?” I stumbled through a clumsy academic explanation about colonialism, an explanation that even then I felt was largely devoid of any concrete examples or informed by much deep feeling. It’s only now I’m beginning to understand how I could have answered her question. It’s because Aboriginal Peoples have been—and often still are—invisible. It’s because Aboriginal Peoples have

been— and often still are—hated. It’s because Aboriginal Peoples have been forcibly removed from their homelands and children from their homes, and often still are. It’s because the white world carries on as if none of this has ever happened, as if Aboriginal Peoples do not exist, or if they do exist they do not matter. I feel exhausted and sad in equal measure. But even more than that, I feel so profoundly ashamed. (N4)

In Nova Scotia, Mi’kmaw historian Daniel Paul (2006) has observed that “the proof of the horrors committed by the British in what is today Atlantic Canada has been readily available for examination by scholars and others for centuries. But it was never brought out of the closet for scrutiny” (p. 370). Reading primary sources written by settler colonizers shook me up in a way that academic articles had not. These narratives forced me to “catch the traces of their thinking in my own; I can more easily recognize my own instances of arrogance or disrespect” (Freeman, 2000, p. 451). Now, having “acknowledged this history, settler history, my history, I am responsible for figuring out how it is that I can, that I will act differently.” (N4)

6.2 Stages in the Transformation of Settler Allies

In this study, participants were white settler Canadians, well-educated, several with professional occupations, who ranged in age from their early forties to mid-60s. Some participants like Irene and Lauren have been involved in work with Aboriginal Peoples for decades, but others like Anne, Doug, and I began to engage with the Mi’kmaq only recently. Shifts in people’s fundamental values and ways of framing the world are believed to decline from the mid-20s onwards (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 46-47). What accounts then for the kinds of changes and experiences settler allies in this study have reported? In the literature on anti-oppression, models such as Hardiman & Jackson’s *Stages of Social Identity Development* (1997, pp. 23-29) have been created in order to explain how people come to question ascribed identities

and undergo a change in perspective and behaviour. One drawback of many such models is that they fail to distinguish between people who are agents of oppression—people from dominant groups—and people who are more often the targets of oppression: people from groups that have been marginalized in some way. In contrast, Bishop (1994) and Curry-Stevens (2007) have proposed frameworks which focus exclusively on the shifts that take place in people of privilege as they learn to take an ally stand. Table 6.1 illustrates my understanding of the parallels between these two frameworks.

Table 6.1. Stages in ally awareness and identity development

Confidence Shaking	
Six Steps in Becoming an Ally (Bishop, 1994)	Transformation of Privileged Learners (Curry-Stevens, 2007)
1. Understanding oppression: where it comes from, why it persists, how it affects people, how the self is implicated	-Awareness of oppression -Awareness of oppression as structural, enduring and pervasive
2. Understanding different forms of oppression: how they are the same and how they are different, how different forms of oppression intersect and reinforce one another	-Locating oneself as oppressed -Locating oneself as privileged
3. Consciousness and healing	-Understanding the benefits that flow from privilege -Understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression of others, seeing oneself as an oppressor
Confidence Building	
Six Steps in Becoming an Ally (Bishop, 1994)	Transformation of Privileged Learners (Curry-Stevens, 2007)
4. “Becoming a worker in one’s own liberation,” addressing forms of oppression which have an impact on the self	- Building confidence to take action: knowing what to do, when and how to intervene -Planning for departure
5. Maintaining hope	-Finding supportive connections to sustain commitment
6. Becoming an ally	-Declaring intentions for future actions

Transformative learning which results in significant changes may be either epochal, resulting from some sudden or abrupt realization, or it may be incremental, occurring over a long

period of time (Cranton, 2006, pp. 71-75). As Bishop (1994) and Curry-Stevens (2007) suggest, learning to be an ally is a developmental process. Study participants spoke about particular disorienting dilemmas which caused them to sit up and take notice of Aboriginal Peoples and issues, but the changes participants reported were often gradual, the result of iterative attempts at relationship formation with Aboriginal Peoples and actions taken in different locations accompanied by a long, slow seep of new information into consciousness. In *Dancing with a Ghost*, Ross (1992) noted a similar progression, reflecting that was “difficult to locate either a beginning or an end” to the change process (p. xxvi). As Hardiman and Jackson (1997) admitted, identity development doesn’t “move neatly from one stage to the next. In reality, most people experience several stages simultaneously” (p. 23).

Curry-Stevens (2007) divided the ally learning process into two broad phases: confidence shaking followed by confidence building. Critical events shared by settlers in this study, however, suggest that confidence shaking was preceded by an additional, often lengthy, phase of confidence building. Participants spoke about satisfying, often memorable, encounters with Aboriginal Peoples and people from other cultural groups when they were young. Participants Anne, Lauren, and Irene formed friendships with Aboriginal people. Encounters with difference in informal, low risk settings, particularly if there are opportunities to ask questions without fear of judgment, predispose people of privilege to enter into more complex, ambiguous, and demanding relationships at a later time (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 24; Kealey & Protheroe, 1995, p. 114). For example, “students who had a roommate or close friend of a different race were more apt to discuss or reflect upon the role of their race in daily interactions” (R. D. Reason et al., 2005, p. 539).

In the literature, role models have been identified as important in shaping attitudes towards others who come from diverse groups (R. D. Reason et al., 2005, p. 537). Participants Richard, Barbara, Lauren, and Irene indicated that they learned to be confident rather than shy, interacting with people from different cultural groups by following the lead of family members or others in their immediate circle. In studies of college students who became involved as allies, Broido and Reason (2005) found that “confidence played a surprisingly significant role” (p. 22). Participants were outgoing, determined, and positive: personality traits which bolstered their success when it came to forming and sustaining new interpersonal relationships with the Mi’kmaq.

Another factor which promoted confidence building early in the learning and relationship development process was that participants had passions and interests in common with their Mi’kmaq friends, neighbours, or colleagues. Haudenosaunee American scholar, John Brown Childs (2003) calls these places where people connect with one another “emplacements of affiliation” (pp. 21–27). Emplacements are “sites of collective life [that] provide . . . a rooted and demarcated sense of shared perspective and affiliation” (p. 25). These may be based on race, class, or gender, but also compatible philosophical outlooks, cultural preferences, or even attachments to a particular geographic place. Shared attachment to a specific place or region is one emplacement on which a number of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal alliances have been organized (Da Silva, 2010; M. Smith & Sterritt, 2010; Wallace, Struthers, & Bauman, 2010). Richard, Irene, and Karen emphasized how a shared interest in protecting the land has fuelled their involvement with Mi’kmaq people, programs, organizations, and causes.

Participant narratives also revealed that confidence shaking (Curry-Stevens, 2007) was a part of their learning journey. Transformative learning is more likely to occur when learners are

outside their comfort zone, and if shifts in location are voluntary and self-directed (Cranton, 2006, p. 7). In this study, site transfer not only brought participants into Mi'kmaw territory, contexts, or settings; participants also appeared to be consciously open to new possibilities and opportunities. Along with a new location, participants were also confronted by: new information that clashed with personal observations or understandings; uncomfortable social norms such as racism; or by the implications of larger political events such as the *Marshall Decision*. These disorienting dilemmas pushed participants to question their beliefs, values, and assumptions about themselves and Aboriginal Peoples.

In the absence of a context which nurtures this self-reflexivity, however, introspection and change may stall. For participants in this study, immersion in Aboriginal settings and locations enabled them to develop a more accurate picture of Aboriginal Peoples and communities today. Research on places where diverse groups come together, like social movement alliances, has pointed to the importance of immersion, sustained interactions with others over time (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Foley, 1999; Hall & Clover, 2005). Study participants spoke repeatedly about the influence that Mi'kmaw and other Aboriginal people had on their thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. One essential catalyst for awakening the consciousness of people of privilege is the presence of “the other” (Bishop, 1994, pp. 112–113; Daloz, 2000; Episkew, 2009; Regan, 2010, Chapter 8). These findings are echoed in the intercultural literature where face-to-face interactions with people from the new culture are a necessary catalyst for behavioural change (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, pp. 19-21). Even more importantly, participants asserted, it was the friendships they formed with Mi'kmaw people which caused them to sit up and take notice. Looking at what sustains alliances where members come from different

backgrounds, races, classes, and cultures, Tilly (2005) concluded that “interpersonal transactions [are] the basic stuff of social processes . . . [which] compound into identities, create and transform boundaries, and accumulate into durable social ties” (pp. 6-7).

Immersion and personal or professional relationships with Aboriginal people were a rich source of new information for study participants. Episkenew (2009) has argued that Aboriginal Peoples’ narratives are the “medicine” that settler society needs to “cure the colonial contagion” (p. 2). As participants came to realize, Aboriginal Peoples’ stories and perspectives are often missing from the media and other public spaces. Newhouse (2005) has defined history as the “official set of stories we tell about ourselves” but noted that “not all stories are given equal time” (p. 49). When Aboriginal stories are present, these stories are “told wrongly” or are “missing significant parts” (p. 52). In contrast, participants have been listening to “First Voice” (Graveline, 1998, pp. 116–127), narratives in which Aboriginal Peoples speak their own truths, and speak them with “the authority of lived experience” (p. 118).

Regan (2010), however, has noted the problem of “passive” empathy, where the affective domain may be tapped, but individuals fail to take action. Another important outcome of confidence shaking is increased recognition of the workings of oppression and privilege within the self and at a systemic level (Bishop, 1994, Chapters 3-6; Curry-Stevens, 2007, pp. 45-51). In the literature, ally openness is believed to be enhanced by a theoretical understanding of power, privilege, and oppression (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 21-22, 24; R. D. Reason et al., 2005, p. 539). For example, students in women’s studies or sociology, or students who had participated in workshops and training programs with a focus on race were more likely to take up social justice causes and issues. In the present study only one participant, Lauren, indicated that anti-oppression training had had an impact on her thinking. Other participants stated that it was their

own experiences that provided them with insights to the nature and origins of domination. Bishop (1994) has asserted that all forms of oppression have common roots in power-over: attempts to control, restrict, stereotype, or exclude people (pp. 66-71). When people of privilege have personal experiences in which they are diminished by power-over, they become better able to empathize with others. Lauren, for example, suggested that her ongoing commitment to promoting the Mi'kmaw language and culture came largely from recognition of how much she and her family have lost because their Acadian identity was suppressed for generations.

Research on reconciliation has shown that in the aftermath of colonial violence, civil war, or acts of genocide, changing how aggressors position themselves and how they feel about themselves is as important as any changes in knowledge about “the other” (Allpress, Barlow, Brown, & Louis, 2010; Bloomfield, 2006; Daly & Sarkin, 2007, Chapter 3; Jacques, 2000; Porter, 2007). Schick (2009) has observed that even the most skillful anti-racist teaching may fail to disrupt the roles in which white settlers feel most comfortable, as “helpers, saviours and charitable guides” (p. 124). In her work with narrative as a tool for changing settler consciousness, Dion (2009) has observed that a healthy dose of shame may be what is required to cut through settler denial (pp. 58-62). Similarly, a study on reconciliation in Australia and Kenya found that before people from dominant groups “act in support of the establishment of intergroup equality it is likely they need to be experiencing some form of shame” (Allpress et al., 2010, p. 86). Shame pushes us to look at who we are, not just at what we have or have not done. One of the honorary witnesses for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada hearings, CBC broadcaster Shelagh Rogers (2012), said she “felt so ashamed of my country. But an Ojibway Elder told me that this feeling was the beginning of real learning, as rational understanding makes way for the heart to take it in. The real shame, he said, would be to feel no

shame” (p. 7). Witnessing the violence perpetrated by the Canadian government at Burnt Church, Richard acknowledged the ways in which settlers continue to be implicated in the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples. Immersed for months in settler narratives about the Mi’kmaq, I felt ashamed as I came to realize the unearned benefits of white skin and white privilege. These shifts are congruent with research on the teaching of history and social studies which shows that learners who engage with primary sources are more likely to re-frame their false, faulty, or distorted beliefs (Foster & Padgett, 1999; Nokes, 2013).

The final phase in the transformation of people of privilege into allies is to prepare them to take action with others (Bishop, 1994, pp. 114-115; Curry-Stevens, 2007, p. 52-53; Goodman, 2001, pp. 164-167; Regan, 2010, p. 21). Participants received considerable confidence building support which enabled them to sustain their relationships with Mi’kmaw people over time. The welcome and hospitality extended by Mi’kmaw people and communities was a defining factor. In addition, several participants spoke about how important it was for them to find Mi’kmaw mentors who provided guidance and support. In the literature, non-Aboriginal allies have similarly emphasized the importance of Aboriginal mentors or friends (Christian & Freeman, 2010; M. J. Hampton & Hampton, 2010; Lafrenière, Diallo & Dubie, 2005; Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009; Regan, 2010; Root & Dannenmann, 2009; Ross, 1992; M. Smith & Sterritt, 2010). Settlers also turned to like-minded communities of practice, to colleagues, friends, settler allies, and civil society organizations for information, inspiration, and support. Particularly in the early stages of ally learning and transformation, the discourse, dialogue, and role modeling which takes place in communities of practice helps to reinforce new ways of thinking and acting (Cranton, 2006, pp. 65-66; Goodman, 2001, pp. 68-69; E. W. Taylor, 2009, pp. 9-10). Learning that transforms is most often connected knowing (Cranton, pp. 41-43; Daloz, 2000), where

significant personal or professional relationships push learners to the very “edge of meaning” (E. W. Taylor, 2008, p.10).

Settler allies with Aboriginal Peoples have emphasized that being an ally is not as much an identity as it is “an on-going practice that is learned and developed through experience” (Margaret, 2010, p. 12). As Kumashiro (2000) hypothesized, first-hand experience and experimentation in the context of joint action with “the other” enables people of privilege to recognize their own position of power and take on a new identity as allies. Experiential learning involves praxis: recursive cycles of experience, reflection, and action (Bishop, 1994, pp.107-108; Goodman, 2001, pp. 145-146; Graveline, 1998, pp. 183-186). Learning by doing is a particularly potent tool for disrupting received knowledge (Bishop, 1994, pp. 107-108; Goodman, 2001, pp. 145-146; Graveline, 1998, pp. 183-186), often posing dilemmas which cannot be ignored. In this study, participants most often mentioned activities which were embodied and collaborative (Fenwick, 2003). Relationships were literally built on “perceptual ground” (Barta-Smith, 2001, p.58), through personal observation, experience, and reflection as partners learned to attend to one another. As a result, experiential learning draws participants closer to others involved and to the issues at play while academic approaches seem to have a distancing effect (Dion, 2009; Fenwick, 2003).

Having a clear purpose for engaging with Aboriginal Peoples, some specific task or goal, may be one reason participants in this study did not appear to succumb to white guilt, but continued on as allies. Reciprocity is one of the “4Rs” proposed by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991)—relevance, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility — which have subsequently become touchstones for more equitable relationships with Aboriginal Peoples (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Estey, Smylie, & Macaulay, 2009; Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996; Pidgeon, 2008).

Participants are giving back to the Mi'kmaq in material ways and by supporting programs which empower Mi'kmaw people, addressing racism and the silences in public discourses, and by changing themselves, their actions, intentions, and thoughts. Participants were motivated by the personal benefits of relationships with Mi'kmaw people, as well as a desire to “do the right thing” and a passion for justice for all.

Looking at how interpersonal reconciliation has occurred at a grassroots level in a number of countries, Daly and Sarkin (2007) concluded that the process “defies the conventional wisdom, which is that governments need to make extraordinary efforts to bring people into the reconciliation process” (p. 71). Rather than trained teachers or formal curricula, the process can take place “naturally.” This observation is consistent with studies of adult learning which conclude that the majority of learning in later life results from day to day interactions, tasks, activities, and challenges rather than through participation in formal education programs (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; A. Rogers, 2003, 2004; Selman, Selman, Cooke, & Dampier, 1998, p. 2). One important contribution of this study is to highlight the importance of informal learning as a factor in interpersonal reconciliation by settler Canadians. I found only two other authors who have similarly recognized the importance of informal learning in reconciliation. Grace Atkinson (2010) explored the life narratives of five social workers who adopted an ally stance in relation to their Aboriginal clients. Rick Wallace (2010) examined how participation in a blockade at Grassy Narrows, Ontario, affected the assumptions and behaviours of settler supporters.

6.3 Summary

In the first part of this chapter I addressed each of my four research questions, drawing data from critical events shared by study participants. Then, I moved on to examine the implications of the data in light of the literature on pedagogy for the privileged. In the next

chapter, I sum up the findings of this study and consider the implications of this study for the literature and for the practice of reconciliation. I close with some recommendations for research required to deepen our understanding of settler involvement in interpersonal reconciliation.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Maybe it is because of cultivation in a garden

Where beauty grows

Together we nod

You listen, while I sow.

(Joe, 1999, p. 31)

In an article published on the *Idle No More* website in March, 2013, co-founder Nina Wilson reflected:

I know it has been a long hard four months . . . but we need you . . . we need the messengers . . . the ones who love this land, water, and the air and want it safe, clean, and pure . . . the farmers, the unions, the educators, the poets, the writers, the singers, the artists, environmentalists, the settlers, and all allies . . . we need you. (Houle, 2013)

Acts of resistance by Aboriginal Peoples and their treaty partners continued throughout 2013. In Mi'kma'ki, Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick and their allies mounted months of peaceful opposition to seismic testing for natural gas (Simpson, 2013). In October, government authorities responded with violence using rubber bullets, pepper spray, tear gas, police dogs, and an armoured vehicle to force protestors to stand down. For a while it seemed that the resistance that fuelled Idle No More might be dissipating. As Aboriginal journalist and author Drew Haydon Taylor (2014) concluded, however, "Idle No More isn't dead, it's just resting" (p. F2).

The same month that Taylor's commentary appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, citizens from Sipene'katik district of Mi'kma'ki launched a new round of actions protesting a corporation's plan to build gas storage facilities in salt caverns and flush brine water directly into the

Shubenacadie River (Cooke, 2014; “First Nations Group Moves,” 2014; “Fishermen Join Mi’kmaq,” 2014). Mi’kmaq travelled from other parts of Nova Scotia and from New Brunswick to assert constitutionally guaranteed Mi’kmaw rights to fish. Non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians also turned out in support. Cheryl Maloney, President of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, observed that “One by one our treaty allies came . . . One lady even cooked a hot meal for us every day” (personal communication, November 22, 2014). As the image of the two row wampum belt suggested, rather than just travelling side by side, some non-Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia are beginning to move a bit closer to their Mi’kmaw neighbours. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study findings and then begin to examine some of their implications for theory and for practice, for reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples. As I conclude, there are ample opportunities for future research about reconciliation in Canada, especially at the interpersonal level.

7.1 Summary of Findings

One of the significant findings in this study was the importance of site transfer in unseating settlers from their familiar contexts and opening them to the possibility of forming relationships with the Mi’kmaq. Site transfer was catalyzed not only by actual shifts in settlers’ physical locations, but also by personal circumstances which motivated them to make change in themselves or in established social patterns. The process of making new connections was facilitated by invitations from Mi’kmaw people, or when new connections were bridged through friends or an existing group that already had contacts and relationships with the Mi’kmaq. As several study participants noted, these new relationships made sense because there were some shared emplacements right from the beginning, common interests or goals which gave

participants a reason to come together initially, and provided a focal point for gradually getting to know one another in a deeper way over time.

Study participants reported changes not only in knowledge but also in how they behaved in relation to the Mi'kmaq, and new insights into the nature of Aboriginal worldviews. These changes occurred as a result of informal learning from and through direct personal experiences. Immersed in settings and contexts where Aboriginal people were present, these experiences were embodied, problem focused and relational, from the process of being with and learning from Mi'kmaq people who settlers had formed close relationships with. As a result, participants were pushed to reflect not only on what they know but how they know, and to examine previous premises or assumptions about Aboriginal Peoples. This learning process was sustained because participants pointed to clear social and psychological benefits from their relationships with Aboriginal people, as well as the rewards of satisfaction from altruism and ethical commitments to working for social justice. Aboriginal mentors and participation with like-minded friends and others in their immediate communities of practice also promoted greater questioning, integration of new information, and feelings of empathy for Aboriginal Peoples.

Participants' own life histories and personal characteristics appear to have played a part in their desire to become allies. Participant narratives suggested that several had had positive experiences with people from different cultural and economic backgrounds relatively early in life, sometimes including positive encounters with Aboriginal people. Participants had also had some exposure to the realities of inequality and inequity, or had been denied opportunities to express their own identities. Settlers drew from experiences which had affected them deeply as individuals in order to relate to other people who were subject to marginalization. Personality traits such as openness, curiosity, patience, and tolerance for ambiguity were enabling factors

which helped these participants learn to listen and watch more closely. Participants' attitudes and behaviours were also shaped by the example of other family members and close friends who demonstrated more respectful relationship patterns. What is particularly significant about participants in this study, however, is that interpersonal engagement with Aboriginal people appears to have ripple effects, where some settler allies have gone on to become active in initiatives aimed at social and political reconciliation, activities addressing systemic racism and oppression.

7.2 Evaluation of the Study

This study of interpersonal reconciliation was carried out as an aide to my own personal learning as a white settler living on Mi'kmaw land. I also hoped to speak to other non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians who, like me, have been less than well informed about the history of this territory and the treaty responsibilities of settlers. Last, it has been my intention to contribute something to the literature on ally formation and change.

When my program of graduate studies began, my focus was on understanding how people from Eurocentric cultures could engage with Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. As this study shows, the purpose has shifted. As I slowly began to recognize myself as complicit in colonization, I have become more interested in learning what I need to do to become an ally who stands with Aboriginal Peoples and works to bring an end to colonial oppression. This study was invaluable in creating time, space, and opportunities which allowed me to learn something of the history of Mi'kmaw territory and about the Mi'kmaq, both past and present. I have also been privileged to have new opportunities to begin to enter into relationships with Mi'kmaw people and communities and to establish contacts with other settler allies in the region. As a result, it is no longer possible for me to avert my eyes to acts of injustice perpetrated by non-Aboriginal

Canadians. I have to look directly at what has happened, and acknowledge how I have benefitted from colonialism and the on-going repression of Aboriginal Peoples. I am committed to supporting the renewal of interpersonal, social, and political relationships with the Mi'kmaq. Change begins with me.

My other purpose for this study was to create a document which could be used to educate non-Aboriginal Canadians about reconciliation and inspire them to play a more active role as treaty partners. As I have argued, little seems to have been written for a popular public audience which explains reconciliation in terms that are relatively easy to understand. Nor has there been much research which alerts settler Nova Scotians to the blind spots and distortions in public stories which tell us who we are and how we are expected to relate to our Mi'kmaw hosts in this territory. This study has provided a snapshot of the history of the territory and situates contemporary settlers as having responsibility for what happened in the past and for what is happening now. It documents non-Aboriginal Canadians who are beginning to act in a manner consistent with the message of peace and friendship laid out in the treaties, challenging the presumed naturalness of separation. It shows settlers who are attempting to change themselves rather than placing the entire onus and burden for relationships on Aboriginal peoples. It illustrates what more reciprocal, equal, and respectful interpersonal relationships between settlers and the Mi'kmaq can look like. These renewed relationships range from friendships to community partnerships, where settlers lend their support as professional colleagues, as advocates, rabble rousers, and organizers challenging injustice and speaking out about racism. As allies like Richard observed, we need to be able to talk openly about the true history of this place and negotiate the ways we are going to share the land with one another.

Even if a percentage of settler Canadians do become somewhat more empathetic to Aboriginal concerns, this would not necessarily ensure the success of reconciliation. Not all settlers are open to the transformative potential of relationships with Aboriginal Peoples. Deep divides in identity, particularly where settlers see themselves and their interests as fundamentally at odds with those of Aboriginal Peoples, are not easily bridged. Where emplacements exist, though, settlers may be willing and able to become treaty partners.

While the study overall met a number of goals that I laid out in Chapter 1, there were some methodological shortcomings. First was the challenge of working with what was a relatively large sample for a narrative study. In part because of the size, it was not possible to include details about all critical events or about other and like events which occurred earlier in participants' lives or in territories other than Mi'kma'ki. Critical events were indicative, but in retrospect, an opportunity to ask for more details about the what, the why, and the how of the transformation process would have yielded a more nuanced picture. In addition, using a narrative approach proved to be more complex than I had imagined: in particular, attempting to discern what to include and what to exclude in each critical event. My own narrative voice is very much a part of each participant's story. In some cases, details about and discussions of problematic moments were limited because of concerns about confidentiality as well as concerns about potentially disrupting relationships.

7.3 Implications for Theory

The results of this study are congruent with the literature on transformative learning. There are moments in the lives of adults where identity may be more fluid and adults are more open to making changes in themselves and their lives. If confronted with new, disturbing events that run counter to their previous experiences, they may begin to question old assumptions, the

ways in which their knowledge was acquired, and why they believed these assumptions to be true. Study participants reported that disorienting dilemmas in their lives set off a chain of events which eventually led to the establishment of ally relationships with the Mi'kmaq. Routinely confronted with information or scenarios that could not be reconciled with past knowledge and interpretations, allies were pushed to reflect on their assumptions about Canadian colonial history, about Aboriginal knowledge systems, and about the values that underlie contemporary Aboriginal concerns. This learning has occurred over the course of participants' lives and continues to occur, even into the later stages of adult life.

As Mezirow (2000) postulated, participants appear to have experienced changes in a number of different habits of mind which govern behaviour. Participants described some important shifts in their epistemic habits of mind, usually about colonialism and its impacts. Even more significant were changes in socio-linguistic norms evidenced by settlers' interest in establishing interpersonal relationships with Mi'kmaq people. Most participants also identified psychological changes, becoming increasingly aware of their own privilege, and axiological changes, a desire to give something back, to return the hospitality received from the Mi'kmaq.

In this study participants were selected because they were somewhat publicly visible as standing in solidarity with the Mi'kmaq. Critical events from their lives showed, however, that many of the participants had an interest in social justice and equity before they came to Mi'kma'ki. Rather than a dramatic "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 2009), settlers in this study appeared to be "elaborating on existing meaning schemes" (p. 22), building on concepts, viewpoints, values, and predispositions already in place. Disorienting dilemmas caused them to begin to reflect on previous experiences and begin to consider the implications of their past knowledge in a new context, with a new People. As experienced by study participants,

transformative learning was developmental and incremental: an iterative, on-going process of action and reflection about significant personal experiences.

Many of the factors and experiences participants highlighted in this study were also consistent with theorizing about pedagogy for the privileged. One difference, however, was that settler allies reported a long period of awareness raising and confidence building in working with people from diverse backgrounds before they began to establish relationships with the Mi'kmaq. Becoming aware of how and why Aboriginal Peoples are discriminated against, marginalized, and excluded, participants made a conscious decision to contribute their time, knowledge, and skills to Mi'kmaw people, communities, projects, and concerns. Participants were also focused on bringing about changes in how they act and position themselves as Canadian citizens and as settlers living on Aboriginal land. Some participants have also been involved in challenging the distorted thinking of other settlers and unjust actions on the part of the Canadian state and its institutions.

What is striking about participants in this study is that they recognize their interdependence with Aboriginal Peoples. This interdependence is not only based on self-interest, but on their most deeply held values and on a belief in the importance of social justice. Rather than guilt and blame, settlers have been engaging in actions supportive of interpersonal reconciliation because they see these interactions with the Mi'kmaq as mutually beneficial for us all. Although many study participants indicated that they were familiar with anti-oppression concepts, it was their personal relationships with Mi'kmaw people and experiences in Mi'kmaw settings and contexts that had the most impact of their thinking and behaviour. For settlers in this study, a pedagogy for the privileged was primarily informal and experiential. This learning was informed by stories told by Mi'kmaw friends, neighbours, and colleagues, in particular by

mentors. Participants also drew insights from their own encounters with and experiences of oppression. When it comes to settler/Aboriginal relationships, pedagogy for the privileged is a holistic process that unfolds over time. Settlers need a chance to learn about topics and skills highlighted by intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism approaches to education but they also need to be able to develop new narratives that explain who they are and how they need to interact with Aboriginal Peoples on Turtle Island. Alongside counter-stories told by Aboriginal Peoples, settlers need to recover, remember, and examine the “internal” stories they have been told—and are still being told—about Aboriginal Peoples and about Aboriginal/settler relationships. Settler tales provide a mirror in which non-Aboriginal Canada may at last see our own faces and begin to question who we are.

7.4 Implications for the Practice of Reconciliation

Interpersonal reconciliation can occur wherever Aboriginal Peoples and settler Canadians are present. The process does not require specialized equipment, knowledge, or resources. It does require settlers who are willing to participate, to listen to Aboriginal people, and share freely of themselves as individuals. As participants in this study have asserted, forming relationships with Aboriginal people is neither a burden nor a sacrifice, but a pleasure; these relationships have brought them into new circles of acquaintance and have enriched their lives. In critical events presented in this study, settlers identified a number of key lessons for other aspiring allies:

- Listen as much as you speak: “observe and quietly affirm” (A1);
- Realize that what you see is not the whole picture: “try to see closer to their heart” (A2);
- Exercise patience: getting to know new Aboriginal people and allowing them time to get to know you “can take a long time” (A1);
- Take part: “participate and go introduce yourself to the people on reserve” (BW1)

- Reserve judgment: “Don’t criticize, don’t judge” (BW1);
- Don’t try to make yourself into someone you’re not: “be yourself” (BW1);
- Make an attempt to learn how to pronounce people’s names, the names of First Nations communities and at least some words in the local Aboriginal language: as Lauren commented, “It also was part of what earned me the respect of the community” (L4);
- Make an effort to get to know what the land is like in the territory where you are: “I think a lot of my strengths were taught to me by the natural world” (K6);
- Don’t assume that you’ll be welcome in all settings and contexts where Aboriginal Peoples are present: especially if ceremonies are involved, “always ask permission” (I4);

Study participants also highlighted some ways that settlers should approach the process of learning for reconciliation:

- Start learning about the issues Aboriginal Peoples are dealing with in your area before these issues reach a crisis point;
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions but don’t expect your Aboriginal friends or colleagues to give you answers to everything you have always wanted to know. It’s up to you to pay attention and to seek out other knowledgeable people and other sources of knowledge;
- Do what you’ve been asked to do or have committed to do; don’t assume that you know better than everyone else what needs to be done;
- Expect to make mistakes. Admit your mistakes, and learn from them. Make reparations if necessary and continue to engage in the relationship;
- Learn different ways you can give back to Aboriginal Peoples. Be as generous with your time, interest, support, and skills as your Aboriginal allies are with you;

- Learn who you are. What is your family story? What is the settler story where you live? How have lives that have touched yours been involved in colonialism? How has your own life replicated the actions of the past? What do you want to do differently?

The results of this study suggest that settlers who have become active in reconciliation at an interpersonal level may be more willing and able to support other types of initiatives. Participants emphasized the importance of making friends and being friends with Mi'kmaw people, the slow process of relationship building before engaging in other types of work. This lesson could have implications for non-Aboriginal representatives involved in the *Made in Nova Scotia* process. In Nova Scotia, although all non-Aboriginal residents are treaty partners with the Mi'kmaq, this message has yet to widely communicated. This study, therefore, also has some implications for the government of Nova Scotia and government agencies such as the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, which has a mandate for the education of non-Aboriginal people of the province.

Along with political negotiations, the government may wish to expand its efforts around public education, highlighting past and present efforts being carried out by Mi'kmaw organizations. Resources, courses, and other opportunities already exist, but often have little public visibility. At a minimum, settlers in the province would benefit from more—and more accurate—information about the Mi'kmaq, in particular information about the treaties and the impacts of colonialism. It would be helpful to have a database, website or other forum where groups with an interest in reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq would be able to post and share resources as well as information about opportunities where settlers can learn about or engage with Mi'kmaw people on a more direct, face-to-face basis. Examples might include community activities, theatre productions, artistic and other cultural events, cultural tourism programs, and

so on. All public libraries in the province should have a core collection of print and other resources by and about the Mi'kmaq. In addition, information about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, groups, and individuals engaged in reconciliation initiatives needs to be more widely disseminated. The government may also want to consider implementing province-wide programs through adult learning and upgrading organizations as well as through the Nova Scotia community college system.

7.5 Future Research

In contrast to reconciliation at a political level, interpersonal reconciliation, how and where it takes place and its importance to other forms of reconciliation, is still largely undocumented in the academic literature. Nor does it appear that much has yet been written about the impacts of friendships between Aboriginal Peoples and settlers, how these relationships have shaped settlers' openness and ability to participate in other forms of solidarity alongside Aboriginal Peoples. One of the biggest gaps in the literature is not so much about what needs to be done in order to move towards reconciliation, but what reconciliation looks like, sounds like, and feels like when it has met with a measure of success. The field is still open when it comes to case studies and profiles of reconciliation in places like public institutions. Checklists of cultural competency provide some guidelines, but do little to assert the kinds of positive outcomes that changes in behaviours could have on efficient, effective practice, client satisfaction, community and public relations. It could also be helpful to have case studies that document common challenges encountered in settler/Aboriginal relationships, particularly in situations where parties were able to overcome these challenges and continue with the relationship.

Similarly, not much attention been paid to mechanisms for public education that the RCAP saw as being so essential. In Chapter 3, I suggested some ways in which public education for reconciliation has been carried out, but there are numerous other approaches which privilege Aboriginal voices and perspectives that might also be explored, including: book clubs; public art installations; performance art and theatre; documentary films; and cultural tourism programs, particularly ones that may involve a more extended period of time in Aboriginal settings. The past five years has seen a rapid rise in the use of electronic media and social media as a way of communicating, organizing, and educating the settler public around Aboriginal Peoples' concerns and actions such as *Idle No More*. When it comes to reconciliation, new tools for public storytelling such as blogs, websites, and on-line video conferencing may prove to be transformative tools for public education about Aboriginal Peoples, colonialism, and reconciliation. The participants in this study were all adults. Do non-Aboriginal youth who may have learned more about Aboriginal Peoples through formal schooling years approach relationships with Aboriginal Peoples differently? What strategies are they using to facilitate communications and deepen their relationships?

Another problematic aspect of the settler transformation process which requires further investigation is the inability (or reluctance) of non-Aboriginals to acknowledge that they continue to hold colonial attitudes, beliefs, and values, albeit unconsciously. In this study, I found that working with primary historical documents provided me with a mirror of myself as a settler colonizer. History educators are already familiar with the power of this technique, which might also be applied to the problem of settler distancing from culpability for harms done to Aboriginal Peoples, either past or present. These types of narratives may be particularly helpful when it comes to instilling shame, rather than guilt.

7.6 Closing

For reconciliation to be an effective, just, and sustained process which results in renewed relationships, reconciliation needs to take hold in the hearts and minds of settler Canadians. The place where many settlers in Mi'kma'ki can begin is by getting to know Mi'kmaw people who live close by, people they work with, attend school with, worship with, or even play hockey with. And when the time comes when settlers have learned enough to want to help their Mi'kmaw friends bring about more systemic changes, Cheryl Maloney (personal communication, November 22, 2014) noted that all you really need to do is to be “brave enough to stand up and say something’s wrong here.” Everyone has something to contribute to the reconciliation process, she said: “There’s a job for everybody. All you have to do is offer.”

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION

Date:

Dear

I would like to invite to participate in a research study called *Learning for More Just Relationships: A narrative inquiry of transformation in white settlers*. The purpose of this study is to better understand why and how some white non-aboriginal people in Nova Scotia have become good neighbours, friends and colleagues with Mi'kmaw People. This study is being carried out by:

Nancy Peters
Educational Foundations, Educational Administration
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
RR #1, Antigonish, NS B2G 2K8
Tel: 902 863 1848 Email: nancy.peters@usask.ca

I would like to hear stories about experiences that you feel have enabled you to learn to stand in solidarity with Mi'kmaw People. My hope is that this study will encourage other white, non-aboriginal people in the Maritimes to think about their relationships with Mi'kmaw People and take responsibility for developing more just and culturally sensitive relationships with them. I believe that you are a role model for other non-aboriginal people and that stories about your experiences can help educators better understand conditions and factors involved in cross-cultural learning, attitudinal and behavioural change in relation to Mi'kmaw People.

Participation in this study is voluntary and involves a two hour interview at place where you feel comfortable. It's my hope that you will enjoy this opportunity to reflect on important moments that have shaped your relationships with Mi'kmaw People. You can, though, answer only those questions you are comfortable with. Information you provide will be combined with data from seven other white, non-aboriginal allies. Quotations from your interview, though, will appear in the final study as well as in academic articles in scholarly journal or in presentations to academic conferences.

Since only a small number of people will be interviewed, it's possible that people who know you well - including Mi'kmaw partners or community members - will be able to identify you in the final thesis or in scholarly articles or conference presentations. In order to protect your privacy, you will be given a pseudonym and other identifying information such as the names of other people, communities or organizations will be changed or removed. You will also have an opportunity to review the interview transcript and can revise or omit any information you feel is sensitive or inaccurate.

All of the information you share with me during the interview will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purposes. Audio recordings, interview transcripts and any other correspondence or documents will be securely stored at my home office until the study is

completed. Then, all data will be kept for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with University guidelines. Before the data has been compiled for analysis, you may withdraw for any reason, without penalty of any sort. The data you have contributed will then be removed and destroyed.

When the study is completed, I will send you a personal letter explaining what I have learned from your stories about how educators can promote a similar process of attitudinal and behaviour transformation in other white, non-aboriginal people in Canada. I will also be happy to send you information about how to obtain a copy of my thesis or articles or conference presentations based on this study.

If you have questions or would like to accept this invitation to participate, please contact me, **Nancy Peters**, either by email nancy.peters@usask.ca or by phone **902 863 1848**.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the **University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board** on (date). Any questions about your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee by contacting the **Ethics Office (306) 966-2084**. Out of town participants may call collect.

Many thanks for taking time to consider my request.

Sincerely, Nancy

Student researcher: Nancy Peters
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APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *Learning for More Just Relationships: A narrative inquiry of transformation in white settlers*. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask questions.

Researcher: Nancy Peters
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Tel: 902 863 1848 Email: nancy.peters@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of this study is to better understand why and how some white non-aboriginal people in Nova Scotia have become good neighbours, friends and colleagues with Mi'kmaw People. Participation in this study involves a two hour interview at your home, work place or other location where you feel comfortable. I would like to hear stories about experiences that you feel have enabled you to learn to stand in solidarity with Mi'kmaw People. You can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with and will have an opportunity to review the transcript from the interview, revising or omitting any information you feel may be sensitive or inaccurate. Information that you provide will combined with data from seven other white, non-aboriginal allies, although quotations from individuals will be included in the final study (thesis) and in academic articles published in scholarly journal or in presentations to academic conferences.

Potential Benefits: My hope is that this study will encourage other white, non-aboriginal people in the Maritimes to think about their relationships with Mi'kmaw People and take responsibility for developing more just and culturally sensitive relationships with them. I believe that you are a role model for other non-aboriginal people and that stories about your experiences can help educators better understand conditions and factors that support cross-cultural learning, attitudinal and behavioural change.

Potential Risks: You will be asked to share stories about your personal experiences with Mi'kmaw People. It's my hope that you will enjoy this opportunity to reflect on important moments that have shaped your relationships with Mi'kmaw People. Only a small number of people will be interviewed, however, so it's possible that people who know you well - including Mi'kmaw partners or community members - will be able to identify you in the final thesis or in scholarly articles or conference presentations that present data from the study.

Follow-Up or Debriefing: When the study is completed, I will send you a personal letter explaining what I have learned from your stories about how educators can promote a similar process of attitudinal and behaviour transformation in other white, non-aboriginal people in

Canada. I will also be happy to send you information about how to obtain a copy of my thesis or articles or conference presentations based on this study.

Storage of Data: All of the information you share with me during an interview will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purpose. Audio recordings of the interviews, transcripts, any correspondence and supporting documentation will be securely stored at my home office until the study is completed. Then, all data will be kept for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with University guidelines before the data is destroyed.

Confidentiality: In the study, you will be given a pseudonym and other identifying information such as the names of other people, communities or organizations will be changed or removed. Once your interview has been transcribed, you will have the right to review the transcript, and to revise or omit any data you feel may be sensitive.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information you share will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with my supervisors or Graduate Committee. Before the data has been compiled for analysis, you may withdraw for any reason, without penalty of any sort . The data you have contributed will then be removed and destroyed.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning this research project, please feel free to ask at any point. You are free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (date). Any questions about your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee by contacting the **Ethics Office (306) 966-2084**. Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project and understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Contact Information

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview format: Semi-structured interview with open-ended guiding questions. Narrative expansion will be encouraged by: acknowledging the significance of respondents' experiences; identifying common ground with the interviewee; sharing my own stories; making supportive comments, and using questions to link statements, clarify and negotiate meaning.

Interviewee (pseudonym):

Date:

Place:

Time of interview:

Description of setting:

Steps in the interview process:

1. Build rapport.
2. Review purpose and review interview process. Discuss confidentiality issues and measures to protect confidentiality. Explain that participant will have an opportunity to participants will have the right to review interview transcripts of the interview, as well as the right to withdraw their participation and data from the study. Have participant sign consent form.
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Overview
 - c. Confidentiality
 - d. Consent form.
3. Ask for permission to audio record. Upon request, recorder will be turned off.
4. Conduct the interview using the questions below. Each sub-question is intended to elicit a story about a critical incident.
 - 4.1 This research is about how white, non-aboriginal people in the Maritimes have come to make changes in how they think, act and feel so that they can engage with Mi'kmaw People in less dominating, more just, and culturally appropriate ways.
 - 4.1.1 Tell me about a time you have shared with Mi'kmaw Peoples that shows what relationships between white and Aboriginal Peoples should be like. How did you feel? Act? Why?
 - 4.2 I'm interested in learning more how you came to have an interest in Mi'kmaw People, Mi'kmaw culture and issues such as Mi'kmaw rights.
 - 4.2.1 Tell me about a turning point in your life when you began to see yourself as someone who is a good neighbour / colleague / friend / ally with Mi'kmaw People. Why do you think this incident took place? What made it possible for you to change? What made change difficult?

4.3 What kinds of the changes have occurred since you began to build relationships with Aboriginal Peoples?

4.3.1 Tell me about a time in your relationships with Mi'kmaw People that was difficult. How did this event affect you? What did you learn from it?

4.4 What do you think sustains your commitment to relationships with Mi'kmaw Peoples?

4.4.1 Tell me about an experience that has inspired you to keep on trying to be a good neighbour / friend / colleague / ally with Mi'kmaw People. In order to you're your relationships with Mi'kmaw People stronger, what do you see yourself doing over the next five years? Ten years?

4.5 How do think your stories might be useful in helping other white, non-aboriginal people to become better neighbours / friends / colleagues / allies with Mi'kmaw People?

4.5.1 Tell me about a time when you've been inspired by another person who was a good neighbour / friend / colleague / ally with Mi'kmaw People. Why was this example important to you? What kinds of changes did you make as a result?

5. Invite participant to add other information: "You've shared some rich experiences with me. Is there anything else you'd like to talk more about? Or, does any other experience come to mind that you'd like to share with me?"

6. Thank participant. Explain that they will receive a transcript of the interview along with a Transcript Release Form and that I will send them a letter outlining what I have learned from their stories once the study is completed.



APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT RELEASE

Title of study: *Learning for More Just Relationships: A narrative inquiry of transformation in white settlers*

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study. I have had an 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 Nancy Peters.

I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Nancy Peters 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.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

APPENDIX E:

CRITICAL EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF SETTLER ALLIES

**Doug: I Have More of a Smile Because
I Like the People**

Age: 40s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: Fewer than 5 years

Current Occupation: Musician & music educator

Place of Birth: Nova Scotia

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
D1. Becoming a member of a Mi'kmaq-led musical group: "It just gets rid of the negative"		
D2. Learning about the Mi'kmaq: "I'm just trying to figure it out"		Doug was married at a church in the Mi'kmaq community near his home. His interactions with a Mi'kmaq church deacon were so affirming that Doug felt he should learn more about the Mi'kmaq.
D3. Talking with Donald Marshall Jr.: "This world needs an eye-opener"	Fifteen or twenty years ago, Doug dated a woman who was Mi'kmaq.	

D1. Doug (Critical Event 1) – Becoming a member of a Mi'kmaq-led musical group: "It just gets rid of the negative"

When I first was in the music industry, I basically got a little sick of it and so I went back to teaching in about 2003. You know? But then once you get into the teaching, you want to go back to the music again. So then I started to basically hand pick what I wanted to do, who I wanted to play with. One Sky started a few years ago. So they were out doing their thing and I ran into this friend from Ontario who's part Native and she knew Arthur, the Mi'kmaq guy who started One Sky. Arthur'd heard of me 'cause I'd been around the industry. And my friend

Laurie kind of put her nose into the middle of it and said “Do you want to play in One Sky?” She goes, “Arthur wants you to play on their CD. Will you?” I said “Well, tell him I’ll do it. So what’s been happening, I’ve been just going out with the group. You know? So we went to Halifax and recorded this CD and then we got an East Coast Music Association awards nomination for the last album. Arthur was kind of flattered that I wanted to even do it. I mean, the band is not the best band I ever played with, that’s not issue. But Arthur said to me, basically, “Thank you, man. It’s like you brought the band up another level.” But I say that humbly, I just brought it up a little bit, you know. I’m not the only talent in that band. There’re some talented musicians in One Sky.

So I’m trying to get them to do better venues, trying to make a little more money. And that’s not a greed thing, just making sure that the band is not getting taken advantage of. But it’s not about the money when I play with One Sky, you know? When I put myself into that situation, it’s about being around positive instead of negative. And me, I just want the negative out of my life, and I’m trying to find a way to do that. In 2009, I went through a life change, health and financial difficulties. When I joined One Sky, it cleaned up my mind a lot. You know? It kind of puts a lot of things in your life into perspective. When I’m up there playing with the band, I got a smile on my face. I have a smile anyway, but I have more of a smile because I like the people. Just, like I said, it just gets rid of the negative right off the bat. You know?

Arthur and his son have pulled me in. They could’ve used Native musicians. You know? But they liked me and I liked them, so they pulled me in to basically do it as much as I could do it. It’s a nice little unit that I really enjoy; just trying to work with them is an honour. There’s no like racial discrimination or anything like that. That’s what I like about the band; they’re just great gentle people to work with. I’m not saying, you know, “those people,” I’m just saying they’re friends of mine. That’s what I’m saying.

D2. Doug (Critical Event 2) – Learning about the Mi’kmaq: “I’m just trying to figure it out”

And people in the group’ve been studying about the Mi’kmaq culture. We just talk about stories. I’m trying to get into the background of the Mi’kmaq. I know nothing, really not a lot about it so I’m just trying to understand. The band is not all Indian or Native or Mi’kmaq. The three Natives are Arthur and his son and the drummer, the rest are not. The singer looks Native but she’s not. For a woman that’s like twenty-one or something, she knows how to write lyrics and tunes. Usually, myself as a musician, I just listen to melodies and chord changes. But when we’re playing together—here’s a difference—I listen to the words. And some days I’ll say “Whoa, this is heavy. This is a heavy constitution. Our horn player in the band, he wanted to learn, what it was all about too. So when we were on the way back from a gig, we were in a van and we decided just to travel the back roads to see all the Mi’kmaq communities. We decided to stop and look at graveyards and churches in this one community because Arthur has relatives from there, of course. I found the trip just to be enjoyable. Everybody has to just lay back a little more. I find the world nowadays to be, how can I put it, aggressive, rude. But in the Native community I find that they’re there to help other people, make you feel good about yourself. I’m just not into the aggressive thing any more. And I really noticed that at couple of concerts in Mi’kmaq communities, the Mi’kmaq welcome whatever race in the world into their world. Like I mean, I’m a white guy. I’m just new at this, this whole thing, you know, and I’m just trying to figure it out. But I don’t feel, how can I put it, I don’t feel hampered or intimidated.

D3. Doug (Critical Event 3) – Talking with Donald Marshall Jr.: This world needs an eye-opener”

I found the world thirty years, forty years ago, to be judgmental against not just Natives. In the sixties, you know, the Black people were not allowed on Charlotte Street in Sydney. But you know, there's probably still prejudice out there but I want that kind of stuff to end. Like just kind of join together. In the eighties and nineties, we used to like to go out and see bands in this one club. And a friend of mine goes, "Oh, there's Donald Marshall Jr." You know? It's like who's Donald Marshall? I'd never met the guy then. And Donald Jr. got put in jail because you know, okay, he's Indian or Native or whatever, so walking through Wentworth Park he'll automatically be accused because there's that's prejudice. You know? It's a nerve that really pushes my buttons I guess because I'm not prejudiced against anyone. You know? And the world just judged this man. And you know something? I think he was misjudged. I used to basically see Donald Jr. once a month in Halifax. He would sit down and we'd have a beer. And he was probably one of the most gentle people I ever met in my life. And I'm saying, how did this boy go to jail for so long? And I felt he was judged because he was Native, that he automatically killed someone. But now, he's not around; he's one gentle soul that I do miss. It's like this world needs an eye-opener because Donald Jr. was never rude, always glad to see me. We had great conversations. Nicest guy you'd ever want to meet.

Nancy: The Rocks Tell Me What to Do

Age: 50s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: Fewer than 5 years

Current Occupation: Community-based educator

Place of Birth: Other province in Canada

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
1. Shifting perceptions of reality: "The rocks tell me what to do"		I attended a workshop on "two-eyed seeing," an approach to learning about and learning to appreciate Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge and perspectives.
2. Recognizing the importance of the treaties: "I just didn't know"		I attended a workshop about Peace and Friendship treaties in the Maritimes. Some time later, I facilitated a series of sessions focusing on UNDRIP and Peace and Friendship Treaties in the Maritimes.
3. Appreciating the Mi'kmaw humanities: "We come from a Nation of people who care for one another"		I was invited to and have attended an annual gathering of the Mi'kmaq, St. Anne's Mission, held at Potlotek on Unama'ki.
4. Acknowledging colonial violence: "I feel so profoundly ashamed"		Around this same time, I attended the TRC national hearings held in Halifax. In my local area, I also helped co-facilitate sessions about Indian Residential Schools and the TRC.

N1. Nancy (Critical Event 1) – Shifting perceptions of reality: “The rocks tell me what to do”

I’ve heard lots of stories in my life. I hear them every day, happy stories, sad stories, stories that make me angry. Sometimes these stories are about people close to me, sometimes they’re about people who are far away. Just because I hear these stories, however, doesn’t necessarily mean I do anything differently. I get up drink my coffee, check my email, go about my day. At night, I share a meal, watch TV or read a book and then go to bed. My life doesn’t change much just because I hear a story. But something did start to change when at last I began to hear Indigenous stories.

It all started when I got a job in Thailand. I was supposed to help Canadian students learn about Hilltribe Peoples, their cultures, and what Indigenous Peoples are doing that could make development more sustainable. I was nervous because I really didn’t know very much about Indigenous Peoples. The university, though, thought I was qualified because I could speak a little Thai. I liked to eat spicy food. I dressed neatly. I’d been a teacher in Aboriginal communities in Canada. I even knew a few Indigenous people.

So, I went to northern Thailand and I read a lot of books and I talked to Hilltribe Peoples. The students and I visited Indigenous organizations and Hilltribe communities. We learned the names of different tribal groups, where Hill Peoples came from, what they liked to eat and how their communities were laid out. We learned how Hilltribe Peoples care for the land, about sustainable forestry, herbal medicines, and low impact agriculture. We also learned how people care for one another, and how Hilltribe Peoples are resisting modernization and globalization, fighting to retain their languages, livelihood practices, traditional institutions and governance structures, struggling for rights and recognition. We learned a lot and I thought, as an instructor, I wasn’t doing too badly.

Then, one day a Hilltribe shaman explained how he decided where floodways should go in order to prevent his village from being washed away. He said, “The rocks tell me what to do.” Suddenly animism wasn’t just something you read about in books. I realized that Hilltribe Peoples knew things and were able to do things that people from my culture assumed were impossible. Hilltribe people could even form relationships and interact with other-than-human beings I perceived as being “dead.” These were pretty uncomfortable thoughts, though, so I pushed them aside and might even have forgotten them entirely but a few months later I came across a book.

I started reading *Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Ross, 1992). It was written by a Canadian lawyer called Rupert Ross. Now Ross was white like me and he went to work in Aboriginal communities in northwestern Ontario. The funny thing was that in his book, Ross also talked about how things that seem dead can talk and how we can learn to listen. He described the relationships he made with Aboriginal Peoples who helped him see the world this new way. I laughed and I cried and I could not put the story down because Ross asked the questions I’d asked, had been confused about a lot of the same things. Reading about his learning journey woke me up and I finally began to know, really know, just how different Indigenous perspectives are from my own and how different they are from what I was always taught was true.

In South America, some Indigenous Peoples tell a story about the eagle and condor, about how for 500 years the people of the mind and the machine have separated themselves from the people of spirit whose homes are in an animate world. The prophecy says that after 500 years, the eagle is going to learn to fly with the condor again. Before this happens in Canada, though,

non-Aboriginal people need to learn to tell some different stories. Some of these stories are about Aboriginal Peoples and how they have been caring for this land. Some of these stories are about who settlers are, who our ancestors were, and what happened when white Europeans arrived.

So, that's why I started to pay attention to what Indigenous Peoples have to say. All it took for my journey to begin was a story. I learned from Thomas King (2003), who said, "You can have this story if you like it, it's yours. Do with what you will. Tell it to your friends or forget it. But don't say that in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you'd heard it. You've heard it now." There are no people without knowledge, but there can be no future without Indigenous Peoples.

N2. Nancy (Critical Event 2) – Recognizing the importance of the treaties: "I just didn't know."

Hi, Rob, Janet and Jim,

I've been encouraged and inspired by your commitment to reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and settler society. As Rob commented, conversations about decolonizing settler consciousness require us to sit face-to-face together for years, not just a few hours. Like you, I've observed that there seems to be an increase in cross-cultural awareness training with a focus on Aboriginal Peoples. As Rob also pointed out though, this approach seems to have had only limited impact. One weakness I see is that these approaches appear to simplify the issues which divide Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, often implicitly "blaming the victim." There also seems to be little or no emphasis on the profound significance of Indigenous worldviews and cultures for our growth as human beings and our survival as a species. Like Rob, I see Indigenous knowledge as a pivotal point where we need to come together. Although Indigenous knowledge receives lip service in the push for a more sustainable future, rarely is Indigenous knowledge taken seriously. What would our society look like if we actually believed the earth is our Mother? That rocks are wise grandfathers and that plants and animals and all other-than-human beings are as important as people?

Nor does cross-cultural training seem to place much onus on settlers to examine our position of privilege in relation to Aboriginal Peoples. Jim's emphasis on the importance of treaties really rings true for me. I came into this work with some general awareness of human rights covenants like UNDRIP, but I knew nothing about the agreements which are binding on me in Mi'kmaw territory where I live. I recognize now that the treaties provide a foundation for Aboriginal and settler people to move forward together. In Nova Scotia, a framework agreement for addressing Mi'kmaw rights was signed in 2007 and, by all accounts, this is a groundbreaking process. The silence around these negotiations, however, is deafening. There have been a handful of media stories that provide little in the way of context or background so it's not something that gets talked about in coffee shops or even much in classrooms as far as I've been able to determine. Treaty education could open up these silenced aspects of our history in Canada and jar folks like me out of our complacency.

Janet asked if I knew about *We Were Not the Savages* (Paul, 2008). Although I've lived in NS since 1996, I only recently read this book. Like other people of privilege I've found myself saying, "I just didn't know." This is changing, slowly. Over the past couple of years, I've had a chance to participate in several educational programs aimed at fostering peace and friendship between the Mi'kmaq and settler Nova Scotians. A few years ago, I started attending meetings of an Aboriginal rights support coalition that has been working here in the Maritimes since the

1990s. I've also been able to attend some Tatamagouche Centre social justice workshops focusing on Peace and Friendship treaties and skills for cross-cultural solidarity. What's been most important in shaping my understanding and developing some of the "backbone" required for sustaining my commitment to ally work has been a chance to simply be with Aboriginal people. I have been fortunate that I've been able to take part in annual Peace and Friendship gatherings with Aboriginal people from the region, to sit in circle, sit in ceremony, share food together and simply listen.

Rob's question about how we reform a damaged culture is, of course, the crucial one. What I think I see happening in Canada and in other places around the world is a desire to shift what philosopher Charles Taylor describes as our "social imaginaries," the seemingly impervious edifice of unexamined beliefs that shore up who we are and what we do as settler Canadians. Like the little kid who shouted out that the emperor was walking naked through the streets, I have a part to play in naming reality rather than sustaining our collective delusions. On the plus side, it seems that Mi'kmaw people and Mi'kmaw culture are more "visible" now than when I first moved here. There are also a few hopeful projects which draw from Mi'kmaw Indigenous knowledge as a basis for re-shaping taken-for-granted attitudes and practices around the environment. There's a long way to go, however, before these programs become mainstream.

In Janet's message, I found some insights about what it is that enables settlers to get outside a dominant "white cultural bubble" and engage with the spirit of the treaties rather than just the "letter of the law." Janet talked about her long relationship with First Nations Peoples, the understandings that arise from living in and working with First Nations communities. Her commitment to social justice, though, she said, has a spiritual foundation. In Nova Scotia, the settlers I know who are most active in solidarity work are also members of faith-based organizations. In doing educational work with settlers, I have the sense that we need to tap the affective and spiritual dimension much more as a way of awakening empathy with, rather than sympathy for, Aboriginal Peoples. There is an affective component to decolonization that must be addressed so that new information sinks in and skill building takes hold. By the way, Janet, I also greatly admire your approach to political change, influencing our government representatives one on one, one person at a time, so that the ripples spread! And maybe it's conversations like these where people new to the notion of being allies can "retreat" and think through what needs to be done in our own communities and in our own lives.

With appreciation, Nancy

N3. Nancy (Critical Event 3) – Appreciating the Mi'kmaw humanities: "We come from a Nation of people who care for one another"

I've had the rare privilege of being witness to two dialogue circles focused on the framing the humanities from a Mi'kmaw perspective. Invited participants included Mi'kmaw Elders, educators, scholars, artists, writers, and leaders. Held at opposite ends of Mi'kma'ki, these discussions were truly historic moments where Mi'kmaw people claimed ontological space, identifying what has been important and good in their lives and how this knowledge contributes to a greater collective good.

In trying to name elements of these dialogues that resonated with me, I came across a chapter by Winona Wheeler (2005) on “Reflections on the social relations of Indigenous oral histories” in which she reminds us that Indigenous oral histories can only be understood when we understand the contexts which informed the dialogues in the first place as well as the relationships among the people who participated and the kinds of knowledge that they shared. Although white settlers frequently accord lip service to the holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge, what I took away was how difficult it is for non-Indigenous people to appreciate (let alone enter into) ontologies arising from very different principles. Wheeler emphasizes that Aboriginal “experience and knowledge are not compartmentalized” (p. 202) and highlights an appreciation of cosmology and rituals as central to understanding, but then she shifts to the importance of understanding the day-to-day, the ways that life is lived. This made me think of a video I saw some time ago where an Indigenous Elder from South America asserted that he wants the world to know (1) how his people care for the land; (2) how they care for each other; and (3) who his People are today.

During the dialogues, I heard all three kinds of stories. I was struck as one Mi’kmaw Elder reiterated that the Mi’kmaq “come from a Nation of people who care for one another,” and in particular how the Mi’kmaq deal with death; how a celebration of life is woven into acknowledgement of a life passing. When I was growing up, conversations about births, marriages, sicknesses, and deaths were commonplace, but became almost non-existent when I moved away and began living in cities. When I came to Maritimes in the early 1990s, I was surprised to hear this kind of talk again in every coffee room. To be a part of the community, I was told I should listen to the funeral announcements on the radio every day and read the obituaries in the newspaper every week. What I eventually came to understand is that this isn’t just for the sake of gossip, but is an ongoing recitation of the ways in which individuals, families, and groups have been joined with one another, the ties and pacts they have made with each other. In the celebration of death/life, space is created for introspection which reinforces our mutuality and responsibilities towards one another. It seems to me that western society has been scrambling—largely ineffectually—to revive teachings about caring and sharing that still happen as a matter of course in small towns and rural areas of Nova Scotia, in Mi’kmaw communities, and in Indigenous communities elsewhere in the world.

I reflected on why it was that the stories I heard during the dialogues were so powerful and resonant even if I did not and could not always understand what was being said. Wheeler (2005) also pointed to the difference between desiccated academic texts which talk about Indigenous knowledge and the impact of listening to Indigenous Peoples, particularly Elders, as they relay this knowledge through the human voice, even if this is only on tape or film. As I read my notes, I recalled where people sat, I remembered their facial expressions, their tone of voice and the feelings that I had sitting in witness. As Wheeler describes, memories are:

more than mere mental exercises. Memories are also experienced at the somatic level and in the soul. To remember those times spent listening . . . is to relive them. Memory, in the context of Indigenous oral traditions, is a resonance of the senses . . . The smells, nuances, facial expressions, body language, and range of audience responses are as much a part of the memory of the story as the story itself. (p. 191)

She goes on to describe her own experience of learning through being with Aboriginal Elders in the context of community activities: chopping wood, sitting in coffee shops, or on a ten hour tour of second hand shops (p. 199). Problems, however, arise when outsiders “have no relationship with the storyteller, or lack the lived experience, or have no personal investment in the histories

they study, or do not understand the nature, quality, and role of Indigenous oral histories” (p. 196).

What reasons do white settlers, in particular urban dwellers, have for listening to the kinds of stories Mi’kmaw participants shared in these dialogue circles? Where are the shared experiences of life? Many of these stories triggered my memories of ways of living that no longer exist in most of Canada. Information can become knowledge only when it is embodied, where there has been an experience which can call up what an event looks like and feels like, how things smells, sound, and even taste. If we have never hunted for sweet wild strawberries under a warm summer sky, why would we honour their sacred power? Divorced from the people who have created this knowledge and the contexts in which this knowledge was produced, what is it that we can say we know? Can the Mi’kmaw humanities be summed up in texts or transmitted in educational systems where learning is confined within four walls in 40 minute blocks of our attention? Just as culture isn’t a musty artifact but a living outcome of relationships, the process of how we learn is just as important as what we learn.

During the dialogues there were animated discussions about different Mi’kmaw words that mean something like “the humanities” and I saw some parallels with how this idea might be expressed in the Thai language where there is a word that distinguishes humans from other biological beings. When the negative is added, however (i.e. “not human”), it means not another form of being, but a human being who is lacking: lacking in empathy; unable to sufficiently, appropriately, and humanely enter into the perspectives and feelings of the other. To be “human” then is to be capable of participation in a collective, capable of entering other mindsets, and willing to transcend narrow self-interest. One of the Mi’kmaw Elders at the dialogues talked about the pedagogical power of love. Love is by definition relational. In order to understand the Mi’kmaw humanities, I have to be willing to first develop my own personal relationships with Mi’k’maw people, with Mi’kmaw communities, with the land of Mi’kma’ki. It seems that there are no short-cuts.

N4. Nancy (Critical Event 4) – Acknowledging colonial violence: “I feel so profoundly ashamed”

I am awash in old papers. I have been wading through centuries past, thumbing page by page through yellowing textbooks, wrinkled reports and dusty journals written by early Nova Scotian settlers, by explorers who became government officials, by missionaries and historians, teachers and school administrators, anthropologists, journalists, and authors of fiction. I’m finding this research project more difficult than I had ever imagined. First, there is the practical problem of finding old books and resources that have been used in schools or used by teachers. Once I find them, I find it hard to even attempt to read them. I don’t which has been worse, the complete silences about the Mi’kmaq—erased as if they had never even existed—or the fearful, fear-mongering invective that has been printed on the pages of school texts. I can’t imagine what it must be like for someone who is Mi’kmaq, coming across these images which are purported to be of your ancestors, your family or your community. Why is it that I know so little about what’s happened in this province? Was it because no one told me, or is it that I didn’t want to pay attention?

I remember one day in Chiang Mai when Suree, my Thai colleague, asked me out of the blue, “Why do your Aboriginal students seem so troubled?” I stumbled through a clumsy

academic explanation about colonialism, an explanation that even then I felt was largely devoid of any concrete examples or informed by much deep feeling. It's only now I'm beginning to understand how I could have answered her question. It's because Aboriginal Peoples have been—and often still are—invisible. It's because Aboriginal Peoples have been—and often still are—hated. It's because Aboriginal Peoples have been forcibly removed from their homelands and children from their homes, and often still are. It's because the white world carries on as if none of this has ever happened, as if Aboriginal Peoples do not exist, or if they do exist they do not matter. I feel exhausted and sad in equal measure. But even more than that, I feel so profoundly ashamed. Having acknowledged this history, settler history, my history, I am responsible for figuring out how it is that I can, that I will act differently.

Anne: The Best Way to Move is Through Friendship

Age: 60s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: 5 to 10 years

Current Occupation: Literacy program coordinator

Place of Birth: Other province in Canada

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
A1. Experiences with a Mi'kmaq family literacy program: "The chill is no longer in the air"	Her agency has supported other literacy projects with a focus on Mi'kmaq people and language including a calendar; a series of books for children	
A2. Early family and other influences: "You try to see closer to their heart"		
A3. Making a friend with a woman who is Mi'kmaq: "An interest in people on the edges of things"	Anne reported that friendships have always been an important way for her to connect even in work settings. For example, she formed friendships with other employees working in a prison and with some of the women she taught	
A4. Laying the foundation for ally relationships: "You cannot have a relationship based on just talk"	Earlier in her life, Anne formed a friendship with a Mi'kmaq woman that she maintains to the present day.	
A5. Realizing the complexity of ally work : "It's a funny kind of balance"		TRC hearings were held in Nova Scotia in 2011, sharing information about the impacts of Indian Residential Schools. This testimony has alerted Anne to the depth of social injustice experienced by the Mi'kmaq.

A1. Anne (Critical Event 1) – Experiences with a Mi'kmaw family literacy program: “The chill is no longer in the air”

In terms of work, Mi'kmaw People became my interest because we're with an adult literacy association and that's my job. Our mandate is to serve the lifelong learning needs of people in the town and surrounding county. And a Mi'kmaw First Nation is in our area. We've been running programs in partnership with the Band Council and with members from that community. A lot of what we're trying to do is just support Muriel, who is an Elder, to find a way of bringing the Mi'kmaw language back into the family in a more real way. The whole concept is still there; I saw it in the family learning groups which is why they were so marvelous. Everyone takes responsibility for every child; so there's a lot there that Mi'kmaw people would love to be able to resurrect. Grandmothers and young moms came to the program; it was a really nice mix. Some fathers were there too, and children of all ages. Everyone just mingles and they all learn together and there's this coming and going and this lovely sense of play. People talking, you know, people talking over top of each other, but still really listening. There were all kinds of activities. We would do everything from painting to making books. Jane came and gave a workshop on making books. And Muriel would give Mi'kmaw lessons using her techniques. And it was just so real and we all had these really comfy chairs.

I guess my biggest Eureka moment came when I went for one of the family learning sessions and I was just going to help with the children. It didn't seem like anything was happening at all ... and then when I was just thinking that nothing was going to happen, all these families came. It was probably one of the most exciting and real family exchanges of learning that I've ever experienced. It's a magical moment when you're there and, all of a sudden, you've proven yourself and you're okay and you've been accepted. And you can see the difference, the chill is no longer in the air and you're just person to person. It was when I was cleaning up one day. I had been attending the group consistently and being sort of helpful. People were telling me things and I felt we were getting deeper and were sharing. But you still know in your intuition, that your otherness is still putting you apart. Right? And this time, I was no longer other, I was just in there helping clean up underneath the table where a little girl had been sick. And it was another bonding moment. I think what works for me is to not put myself in the centre of a room or the stage, but instead to just listen and observe and quietly affirm until people get used to me being there. You know? That my intentions are none other than just to be present with what they're doing and support. Which can take a long time, and, in some cases, may never take. I feel like once you show that your intention is none other than what would be allowable and what would be wanted, and you do it in a respectful manner, then you do gain friends.

So for me, it's been important to support the people who are really solidly trying and caring. What the people in this Mi'kmaw community are doing is very important work. They're trying to make sense of it all; they're trying to figure out what can they hold on to, and what can they let go of. So again, it goes back to lots and lots of listening. Now I think what I'm going to do with Muriel and her niece is help them get a rudimentary book together that they can take to a publisher. I will always remain as their behind the scenes person that can help them with those sort of technical things like putting it in Microsoft publisher and making it look good, helping them write funding proposals. So I mean, if they wanted to continue, because it really is harmless and fun and a nice chance for people to come together and celebrate, so if they wanted to continue, then I'd continue. But if they tell me, this is enough and just use me as a channel for

getting the books published, I'm fine with that too. It could all be left to Muriel, that's kind of better. So in a sense, I've kind of working to get out of the way. But if there comes a time where somebody said "Well, look, we've lost our momentum," then my organization would try to help again. But I won't break the relationship.

A2. Anne (Critical Event 2) – Early family and other influences: "You try to see closer to their heart"

Even as a kid. I hated it when there's cruelty and people are being put down, or when somebody was accused wrongly of something they didn't do. I guess the biggest thing was I saw so many people who were so profoundly unhappy, especially in my own family. I think it was just wanting to somehow work against the cruelty and not let it get you. It was probably a fairly dysfunctional home that I came from. But at the same time, there was a lot of idealism. It was a funny mix of idealism and dysfunction, intelligence and ineptitude. You know? I guess, as a kid, I was more of what you call a survivor, I would learn how to disarm the opposition rather than be attacked or noticed. So you learn those kinds of survival skills.

But I think it was also my reading. I remember always liking to read philosophy, you know, the great philosophers. And I always liked to read about the religious traditions and different religions. I liked people like Martin Buber, who talked about "I and Thou." I think Buber was an early influence, you know, different ways of being in the world. It's also my faith, I suppose as well. I tend toward the Quakers. It just feels wrong to be walking on the earth with big feet and stomping over other people. I think that all of us can create more opportunities for others to shine, so that no one is ignored or not acknowledged or isolated or reduced in their humanity in any way.

In my younger days, it was a bit like being a kamikaze pilot. Everything was really intense because it could be like your last moment. So it was this whole idea that you have to be fully present to somebody and that you treat everybody with accord and respect regardless of anything on the surface. You try to see closer to their heart as opposed to what clothes they're wearing or anything else. Now, I have good days and bad days. My good days are when I'm present to others so that whatever happens in that transaction, it's at least real and they feel like I've given them my time and attention. As opposed to other days when I thinking too much about what I have to do.

A3. Anne (Critical Event 3) – Making a friend with a woman who is Mi'kmaw: "An interest in people on the edges of things"

When I was in my twenties, a friend of mine happened to be Mi'kmaw. So that became my interest because I always kind of felt that she was living in two worlds at one time. We met each other, believe it or not, in a coffee shop. We were probably just trying to find a nice warm place to be, where people wouldn't kick us out. I said, "May I sit here?" because it was so busy, and then we just sort of started talking and after that we became friends. In my twenties, I was struggling, and my friend was struggling, we both were struggling. And we were just trying to deal with how to survive and with our own issues. She was a young mom and had a child who was really, really, really demanding. And so I would often just help her with the babysitting. Because we had a friendship, we'd end up talking about everything, her experience of growing

up and what she was dealing with, and questions around living on and off the reserve. When you're Aboriginal, you're negotiating so much so much in terms of your own identity, just because of government bureaucracy.

Since then, we've maintained the friendship over the years. What I had with my friend wasn't an academic understanding, it was more of a life understanding. I've always had more of an interest in people on the edges of things than in the middle, because I've never myself been comfortable in the middle. So I didn't really form the friendship based on where she came from or where I came from, often times you all kind of collect together around the edges. I think that usually in my work, I would always gravitate to people who didn't fit in one way or another, to what would be considered mainstream. My own lifestyle, my own way of living was not mainstream. I think that that earlier friendship probably made me really aware. When later on I would meet people who were Mi'kmaq, without feeling like this was a brand new situation or something alien to me.

A4. Anne (Critical Event 4) – Establishing a foundation for ally relationships: “You cannot have a relationship based on just talk”

Ultimately, the best way to move in any direction any time is through friendship. When I worked as a writing tutor, a Mi'kmaw woman was on my list of people and we did a lot of really interesting papers. She was really exploring her whole roots and her history and so that became a really neat thing to talk about. She was trying so hard to do well academically, but she'd been kind of an outcast because she did do really well at school. So when it came time for my organization to work on a Mi'kmaw family literacy program, I thought of her because she has lots of children and she wants them to have a sense of their own culture. Through this woman, I met her aunt, Muriel. And then Muriel and I have developed a friendship because we probably have more commonalities. Muriel is trying to do this two-world thing. She knows what she believes in and she holds on tight and at the same time she's just very accepting. But there has to be a real exchange. You cannot have a relationship based on just talk, but you can establish your friendship through activities considered mutually beneficial. I think there has to be a “doing with” that makes sense for everybody that's in the relationship. There has to be.

But what's really bonding is if you find situations where you're both out of your comfort zone. That's the biggest bond of all. Last fall, we got an award for the family literacy program, and I used it to have Muriel showcase what she was doing with family literacy. Both of us were like fish out of water though. They set Muriel up in this nice motel room, you know, which was kind of fun. And her daughter was there and they were spent a long, time getting ready but there was lots of laughter before and afterwards. At the award ceremony, Muriel got up and spoke in Mi'kmaw right in front of all these dignitaries and it was quite wonderful! It was probably the first time that anybody had actually done that. Muriel said, “You know, I wanted to speak in Mi'kmaw, that's the importance of what I'm doing; I wanted to greet you all.” But she did it in such a spontaneous and gracious way, it was nice. People's mouths were open and Muriel just couldn't get over it. She just loved the fact that they were going to do sign language translation, but they couldn't do sign language for Mi'kmaw! It was a really neat moment. And I'm just standing up there with her, grinning foolishly. It was fun. Sometimes I think it's absurdity that brings us together.

A5. Anne (Critical Event 5) – Realizing the complexity of ally work: “It’s a funny kind of balance”

I think wanting to be an ally arose as my surface knowledge gets deeper, as I start to explore more and come to understand more, and even research more. One reason for wanting to be ally was that I was befriended. But also, why it’s become particularly hard core for me now, is because I’m really getting a real understanding of the injustice of it all. In any way I can, I’d like to help. Maybe it’s learning a bit about Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, maybe it’s learning a little bit about what people are dealing with in terms of housing, basic survival, a lot of learners are coming from these situations, it’s the social unfairness of it all too. Like how can people survive on the amount of money that they’re given. Muriel was explaining to me that the rate hasn’t gone up; in about sixteen years it’s gone up just a few dollars. There’s this incredible knowledge and people are trying on the one hand to celebrate and value their culture, but on the other, there’s a need to survive, and some pretty hard core issues happening in the community.

But the more that I engage in partnerships with Mi’kmaw people in a kind of supportive, background role, the more I realize that it’s a very, very complex situation. It’s very, very complicated. I really feel because I don’t want to appear like I’m doing something that should ultimately be done better, could be done better, by Mi’kmaw people. Sometimes I butt heads with people because they feel they should be doing the activities. And then I feel I shouldn’t be there and I just kind of want to remove myself professionally, but not personally. Does that make sense? I feel like I’m in a bit of a quagmire. I don’t want to be stepping on toes, that’s not the purpose

**Barbara and Wally: Don't Criticize, Don't Judge,
Participate and Be Yourself**

Age: 40s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: 5 to 10 years

Current Occupation: Barbara – Administrative assistant; Wally – Public service employee

Place of Birth: Barbara – another province in Canada; Wally – European country

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
BW1. Reacting in opposition to the expectations of the white community: "I wasn't raised with racism"		
BW2. Becoming active members of the Mi'kmaw community next to their home: "You help your friends"		Even though they lived in a small town in Ontario, they often didn't interact much with their immediate neighbours.
BW3. Demonstrating community strength and solidarity: "Look what they can do. We could do this too"		
BW4. Fitting into Mi'kmaw community norms: "It's not just a community"		
BW5. Dealing with knowledge and relational accountability: "You know what's going on"		

BW1. Barbara and Wally (Critical Event 1) – Reacting in opposition to the expectations of the white community: "I wasn't raised with racism"

(Wally) When we moved here, we didn't even know exactly where the reserve was. We didn't realize that our property line was their property line. (Barbara) We didn't know anything

about the next-door Mi'kmaw community, we didn't know anything about the people. All we knew is that there was a neighbour who warned me one March break not to let my children play with "those Indians." And I told Wally about that and the first thing we did was walk up to the reserve. And like yeah, sure, we've heard of racism, but we've never been subject to it, we've never seen it in action. When we heard this woman make this comment, it pretty much threw us for a loop. So that's why we went looking for the reserve. We decided to go for a walk and to see what our community was like and basically said "Here we are. Deal with it." And the rest as they say was history. See, I wasn't raised with racism, so when I get confronted with racism, of course I'm going to go totally opposite. I think that was part of it. So we started participating in whatever we could on the reserve and if anybody needed help, we were there. The next thing we knew we were hearing that we are part of the community and we were being introduced as part of the Mi'kmaw community.

(Barbara) Our family is not a visible minority, we're not Mi'kmaq, we're not Aboriginal, but quite a bit of the way that we have been treated in the town is like racial prejudice. You know, there's walls that you're just cannot get over because we're not three generations from this town. Honestly, it doesn't really bother us because why would we care what they say when we have community that accepts us for who we are? And I think our acceptance by Mi'kmaw people in our nearby community is because we're accepting, we don't criticize, we don't judge, we don't say "Well, you should be doing it this way." We accept the way it is and try and find out why it is that way because there's usually reasons. But you have to participate... (Wally) Participate and go introduce yourself to the people on reserve. (Barbara) That's all you can do. Don't criticize, don't judge, participate, be yourself. (Wally) Don't be racist.

BW2. Barbara and Wally (Critical Event 2) – Becoming active members of the Mi'kmaw community next to their home: "You help your friends"

(Barbara) But I think things started the very first time we heard the drums for the pow-wow. And not knowing that we were allowed to go up, we thought it was a community thing and, you know, everybody else stay away. But we were invited to go up by somebody and so we started to take part. And the next thing was what can we do to help? People started to ask us, "Do you have any wood for the ceremonial fire?" "Sure, not a problem." "Can you bring your horses up for pony rides?" "Not a problem." And now it's "You're in charge of the food for the pow-wow." "Not a problem!!!" I think that it started step by step. Then one day I found out that I was going back to work full time, and we went up to the daycare and said "What's the chances of our child being included in your daycare?" And the daycare worker was so surprised by the question that she said "Well, we'll have to ask the Band office because we've never had that question asked before." So the community members said, "Well they're part of our community. Why wouldn't their daughter be able to come up to the daycare?" And now our daughter's on the bus with the First Nations and she does the fancy shawl dance at the pow-wow. So it was a continual thing. We started with one little thing and then we got more involved with the community by asking questions and it progressed from there. (Wally) I've had people say that our kids will be members of the youth group. It's great. And this year, I was honoured; I carried a Canadian flag in the Grand Entry to the pow-wow. They asked me to do it. (Barbara) It's a big honour. And when you get to be part of the community, you're verbally invited to more and more items. But sometimes we just can't help because we have to work. Like there's a *salite* tomorrow. So they know we won't be there for that, we won't be able to contribute. Basically that's all we can do is

say, “We’re available at this time and what can we do to help?” They’re our friends and you help your friends.

BW3. Barbara and Wally (Critical Event 3) – Demonstrating community strength and solidarity: “Look what they can do. We could do this too.”]

(Barbara) Last year, two non-Native boys were killed in a car crash. Their mother temporarily was living on the reserve and has a child with a Native man. So that meant that the boys also lived on the reserve, spent a lot of time here and were friends with our boys. When the boys passed, the Mik’maw community came together. I put an announcement on Facebook—got to love Facebook—and said “What are the chances of doing a *salite* for the family to help with the funeral costs?” Somebody from the reserve saw it and felt it was a good idea. So we started planning twenty-four hours before the funeral. My friend spoke to the spiritual leader of the reserve and he said it was a fabulous idea. Then we spoke to the mother and she said that’s great. So we had a *salite* up at the reserve. We arranged for food and for the gifts to be auctioned off and we opened it up to the white community. The white community has never seen a *salite* before. (Wally) Some of them. (Barbara) Most of them. And they realized how a small community bands together at a time when they need support the most. And here was this grieving mother with no money, she’s going to school, she’s not working, she has a young daughter at home. She had firewood donated for the winter, had money collected by the youth group, approximately \$ 400 and, thanks to the *salite*, raised close to \$ 6,000 in the auction. Plus absolutely every single person, had all they could eat. And that was all done within twenty-four hours. So it sort of gives the white community a look into the Native community, saying like, “Look what they can do. We could do this too.” Will we ever see a *salite* outside of the gym on the reserve? Probably not. But I think it showed a side of the community that the white community wouldn’t have otherwise seen. (Wally) It’s neat. I really like the way they celebrate life. (Wally) And death. (Barbara) And death. (Wally) But if non-Natives want to learn about the Mi’kmaq, they can still come to the pow-wow and have fun, enjoy it. (Barbara) Yeah, come for the opening. Stay for the feast.

Note: A *salite* is an auction held after someone has died in order to provide financial and emotional support to the family of the deceased member.

BW4. Barbara and Wally (Critical Event 4) – Fitting in with community norms: “It’s not just a community”

(Barbara) But yeah, it’s just we’re part of the community. We were at a karaoke, and one of the councilors had a friend from another reserve there. And he looked at Wally and me, and he looked at his friend and he says “I’d like to introduce you to our token White people.” You know when people tease you like that you know you’re part of the community. But it’s not just a community, you know, it’s greater than that. One day our daughter went down to the bridge on her bicycle where she’s not allowed to be. And we got a phone call “Are you aware that she’s at the bridge?” And I said “I trust in your vocal skills. Scream at her to get home.” You know? It’s the it takes village to raise a child situation. It’s true. Like if you don’t know where your child is, somebody does. Our daughter disappeared on Good Friday a couple of years ago and for four

hours we didn't know where she was. We discovered that she was with her friend because her friend's grandmother died and she didn't think her friend should be alone. The Elders explained what was going on and we didn't have to punish her for taking off which was great.

(Barbara) The first day kids showed up on our property, we told them, "You're welcome to be here. Respect us and we'll respect you. Don't sneak around." And we've never had a problem. One day we had a kid come on the property and say that this was the most funnest place on the whole reserve. That kid is going to be going into university or college next year and I have never told him that, you know, we weren't on the reserve. I was speaking to his mother and I told her the story and she thought that was the funniest thing. (Wally) But we also caught two kids stealing popsicles in here one day, of all the stuff. We drove into the yard, and the kids were running away so we knew something's going on. So anyway, Barbara went up right to the Chief, she just — (Barbara) Stuffed the kids in the car and went up to the Chief and said "We got a problem." (Wally) Yeah. The Chief called Family Services and a week later one of the kids was gone. (Barbara) Her sister threatened me. But you know, the problem was the mother was gone. (Wally) It's like one big happy, not happy family, up there. (Barbara) It is; it's a huge family. And we classify ourselves as grandparents to a little boy up there. People in the family actually call us Grandma and Grandpa. The boy's going to be a year old and we're just part of part of the community.

(Barbara) We probably speak between twenty and thirty words of Mi'kmaw. It's not going to start a conversation. But you know, we're learning bit by bit. We probably speak more than most people do. It's learn what you can. (Wally) Just from being around. (Barbara) The joke is that the way we learn the names is we name the animals using Mi'kmaw. I was told once that animal names are usually the sound the animal makes. (Wally) Like *Googoo*. (Barbara) *Googoo* is owl. So yeah, that's how we sort of started to learn Mi'kmaw. It's not easy. I guess it's repetition maybe, if you hear it enough you start to use it. Like *Gwis*, and *Dus*. You know? I call a couple of kids *Gwis*, and I've had a couple of people call my daughter *Dus* but I don't use Mi'kmaw words in everyday conversation. But when I notice Mi'kmaw women who come into where work, they'll be wearing a jacket or something that has a name that I recognize, I will say *Kwe'. Me'takl-wlien?* (Hello. How are you?) and it usually shocks them. You do what you can do. If I can shock somebody, I'm going for it!

BW5. Barbara and Wally (Critical Event 5) – Dealing with knowledge and relational accountability: "You know what's going on"

(Wally) When I was working at Wal-Mart, one of the bosses from Montreal came in and they asked us how are working conditions? And there was a Mi'kmaw girl working there and the other employees made life hard for her. So I said to the Montreal guy "Well, it's good conditions unless you're Native." And then of course, he said "Why you say that?" And I said "Well, they don't treat Natives very well." So I left it like that and a couple of months later I got fired. But now I speak out more about that stuff at work now.

(Barbara) I do the same thing in the staff room where I work. To a certain extent what white people are saying is true. But they're basically saying because it's happening some place, it's happening everywhere. And it's not. Like recently it was disclosed that some Mi'kmaw Chiefs are making this ridiculous amount of money. And so people decided that every Chief and Council member is making this ridiculous amount of money. Well, we know for a fact that the Chief and Council here are not making that much. Some of the jobs were only making not even

full-time or part-time wages. They were like \$13,000 or \$15,000. So what the Band ended up doing was getting rid of some positions and dividing up those positions so that other councilors would get that portion of the money. So now they're making \$30,000. That's not unreasonable because they're getting extra duties to do. But that's not out in the news. (Wally) And we actually know how much families get from the Band. It's not that much, like \$160 every second week.

(Barbara) Like I challenge any white family to live on \$160 every two weeks, you know, even if they don't have to pay for their home. I think a lot of the racism comes from when Great-grandma lived near a Native community. And she told stories to Grandma, and then Grandma told Mom, and then Mom told her daughter. Whether they have connections or not, they've heard the stories. So who're you going to believe, your family or what's in the newspaper? If we didn't live here, we wouldn't be privy to a lot of information. Like for us, like yeah, we've seen the poverty on the news, you know, but we've never been involved in it, we've never seen it first hand, we've haven't known the people that lived in that poverty. Now we do. (Wally) Yeah. We know everything, that's kind of the sad part too. We actually know the person who fell through the cracks, the person who got charged. We actually know them; they had supper in our house and stuff. But they never stood a chance, some of them.

(Barbara) I do find that there's more pressure on me in some areas because I know what's going on. And you've got to keep it to yourself in a lot of cases because this community is so interrelated that if you know that so-and-so is beating up on his wife, you can't say anything because you're good friends with her but you're also good friends with his family. So you know what's going on, but you can't say anything. That puts a lot of pressure on you. And you don't want to lose the friendships of either side because it's not their fault and it's not her fault. But if you say anything against him, then it becomes your fault. You know? So I find that difficult. And then you start to say something, and you bite your tongue and try to change the subject.

Lauren: My Parents Raised Us to Give Back

Age: 40s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: More than 15 years

Current Occupation: Professor of Education

Place of Birth: Other province in the Maritimes

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
L1. Following in family footsteps: "There was always this kind of spirit of community service"	Later in life, Lauren continues to be actively involved in activities which are of service to community	
L2. Learning how to be an ally: "The service learning project helped me to define who I am"	The service learning project allows Lauren a concrete way to demonstrate her desire to "give back"	While studying to be a teacher, Lauren was also influenced by the work of Robert Leavitt and Aboriginal educators Battiste & Barman's (1995) <i>The Circle Unfolds</i> . She also made friends with a Mi'kmaw woman who was studying to be a teacher.
L3. Learning through immersion and mentors: "I feel really lucky that I had good friends from the community"	Lauren reported that she benefited from the mentorship of service learning program coordinators.	MK, the Mi'kmaw school authority, was established a couple of years after Lauren began teaching.
L4. Understanding the world through the Mi'kmaw language: "I had to change my teaching style to meet their learning styles"	Earlier in her life, she had made an active attempt to learn French in order to reclaim and reconnect with that aspect of her identity	Lauren was working in a community where the Mi'kmaw language was spoken in everyday contexts
L5. Learning about her Acadian roots: "We never had the opportunity to know that piece of ourselves"		Lauren has also recently uncovered some evidence which suggests she likely has some Mi'kmaw ancestors as well.
L6. Sustaining commitment to the Mi'kmaq: "I've been blessed to do this"	Just as when she first became a teacher, Lauren continues to be involved in diverse activities which bring her into contact with Mi'kmaw people, and in learning and promoting the Mi'kmaw language	Lauren recalled at least one instance in which Mi'kmaw teachers were openly subjected to discrimination at a workshop.

L1. Lauren (Critical Event 1) – Following in family footsteps: “There was always this kind of spirit of community service”

So there was always this kind of spirit of community service in my whole family. I grew up in a city in New Brunswick in what people now call the Old North End. But when I lived there it was called Indian Town and I have no idea why. But it was kind of like the old original part of the North End and people were poor. I always thought we were wealthy because my parents both had jobs. My Dad worked for the railway in the evenings. My Mom worked part-time at Sears. So there was always one parent home. And my grandmother lived with us and helped to pay the rent. My grandfather passed away just before or just after my parents were married but the man who owned our building was a friend of my grandfather's so our rent wasn't that expensive. So we thought we had a lot, but we really didn't. I was much older before I realized we didn't have as much money as some of our friends who lived in other parts of the city. But in our neighbourhood, there was a lot of poverty and so we grew up knowing that we were lucky to eat lunch every day. My grandfather had been involved with the credit unions starting up in the sixties, when they were part of the church. I found out much later on in my life when I was a university student that my grandfather had actually been a friend of Moses Coady and had come to the like the Topshee conferences and participated in the Antigonish movement. My Dad's mother was known for coming home and saying “So-and-so is going to stay with us for a little while”, and they'd be there for years. So there was always this kind of culture of growing up in service to community.

I think that coming from a place of poverty and coming from a place of feeling that I was blessed in an otherwise very bleak world. Feeling that, relative to some of the other kids in the neighbourhood, we were doing okay. Because we ate every day and we had nice clothes and my parents both worked, and not everyone in the neighbourhood had that same experience. So I think that kind of predisposes you to realizing that there is a need to be of service to the community wherever you are, really. And then when I was thirteen, we moved to a small town in New Brunswick that was about as white bread as you can get. I actually wrote about this in my Master's thesis and I think it upset my mother. But what I really write about is the experience of being thrown into what was then an upper middle class white community, where all of a sudden I realized we were poor. Because I didn't have designer jeans and I didn't have the clothes that other people have, and we didn't have a paved driveway. It was my first awareness that not all people were open and generous. I grew up in a place of community where people looked out for each other, and then I went to this place where people didn't, they looked out for themselves. I tell my parents time and time again, it was six years of hell for me living in that town. Because I was like, you know, I could either conform or resist. And I've always been the kind of person who likes to go against the grain, so I resisted and I was very outspoken towards people who I felt were just really wrong.

But I think that my parents raised us to give back. And in our own ways, all of us do things. My oldest brother is a television host, and he does a lot of like just volunteering with different organizations, fundraisers, and Christmas Daddies and all that kind of stuff; he has that in him. And my second oldest brother is a teacher and also does a lot of coaching and volunteering. My youngest brother not so much. He grew up in the small town and we grew up in the city. He's a very kind and generous person, he would do anything for anyone, but he has a different perspective on the world than the rest of us. He was about nine or ten when we moved,

so even though he's only three years younger than me, he didn't have that same experience of the North End that we did. Like he looks at it and he goes "We lived there?" He doesn't remember much about it. So it's interesting, we've all grown up kind of with this spirit of service. And my parents to this day, like my Mom retired last year, but she's always taking on all these volunteer roles. And my Dad runs the food bank and he's singing with these choirs and going to these seniors' homes and he's seventy-five. Right? And I'm like "Are they younger than you??" He's a very immature seventy-five, though, which is good. It's like that spirit is still there, that predisposition to service and being open.

L2. Lauren (Critical Event 2) – Learning how to be an ally: "The service learning project helped me to define who I am"

So after I graduated from high school, I went to a university where there's a great sense of social justice. My first week there, I met a girl who said "You should join the service learning project with me." And I said "Okay, what's that?" And she said "Well, you go out into communities and you help kids with their homework and you know, you do recreation things and stuff like that." The project was started with the spirit of helping kids with their homework, and providing them with opportunities to see educational potential outside of their communities. One of the main things about the project was that you go into community to serve, you don't go in being the person who's there to save. Right? And the project organizer would always tell us stories about how back in the sixties, when they first started going to an African Nova Scotian community there was some suspicion because there were all these different agencies working there. Everyone was there to help, but most of them weren't helping at all. So what the project organizer started doing was just going out and doing pottery in the community. And at the same time a man who had graduated from the university was teaching at the school there and started inviting some of his former colleagues, who were still students, to come down and help the kids with homework. And that's really how the service learning project got started. So I joined up and twenty-two years later, I'm still on the Board. And you know, communities still have to request us to come in. We don't go in and say "We're coming," they have to say "Yes, we want you to come." The project has board members from all the communities who represent the community voice. And we work with the student volunteers to help them see that that is their responsibility is to serve, and to listen to community and to learn from the community. I always said that I learned more in the service learning project than I did anywhere else. I guess I kind of came with a predisposition for service from my upbringing, but the service learning project was the thing that helped me to define who I am.

I really learned a lot just going to communities and talking to people from communities. I can remember us doing a white privilege workshop in a small town where there had been some racial tension in the school and the kids asked us if we could do something. So we got another teacher to come down from Halifax and we did a white privilege workshop with all the kids. Looking at it now, we did the workshop with the kids but we really needed to do it with the teachers! But it was good for us as volunteers to be part of that because that's how we learned to be allies. Things like that gave us the language to speak to misconceptions and misrepresentations. You know? It helped to give us the language of being allies. The trainers were very overt about how they talked with us. Later, when we'd do training of volunteers, we'd have like very blunt conversations about the fact that if you are here because you think you're going to go help those poor people and you're going to work with disadvantaged kids, then

you're not here for the right reasons. Now, I'm overt with our new education students, that we don't use words like "disadvantage" because, you know what? I've learned so much from these community members. They have knowledge that you could never imagine knowing. So just because it might not be what you think is, or what you value, this is valuable knowledge in the world. So it's about sharing.

But not everyone who was in service learning got that same experience. I was on the project executive at that time so I was more connected to the Board members and spent more time talking with them. I met an African Nova Scotian educator and the organizer, a white woman, who we called the godmother of service learning, two women who probably had more influence on my becoming a teacher than anyone else. Someone who was just coming out and volunteering every week, though, might not have gotten that same connection. Over the next five years at university, I spent a lot of time with both the Mi'kmaw and the Black communities. And I can remember one time having a conversation with a Mi'kmaw woman from a nearby community. And she said, "You know, we have our kids going to school and they're not getting what they need." She was talking about how she would like her community to have their own school. And she said, "You know, I'm not prepared to waste another generation waiting for society to change." That really impacted me a lot. There were so many moments over those five years where I just learned so much from these Mi'kmaw women, from service learning project Board members, from the project organizer and from the community representatives.

Perhaps my predisposition was to really immerse myself because I was in a space where I found kind of a connection to the person I knew I wanted to be. If I was not that person, maybe I wouldn't have listened with the same degree of kind of attention. It was because of the relationships that I built with community members, and the opportunities that I had to have conversations, really meaningful conversation, not like reading something in a newspaper, that made me really question assumptions and begin to think it would be nice to transform education for Aboriginal people rather than thinking about it from a White perspective. So service learning was a very rich experience for me, and it really helped me when I went to a Mi'kmaw community and first started teaching there. I already had some connections to the community, I already knew people and it was almost like I was fated to end up there.

L3. Lauren (Critical Event 3) – Learning through immersion and mentors: "I feel really lucky that I had good friends from the community"

And, you know, the Mi'kmaw community where I first went to teach is very much my home. I never felt at home in the village that I lived in nearby. I went to church and I went to work in a Mi'kmaw community and that's my home. People in the village were never really that kind to me and I felt a lot of kind of fairly overt racism from the white people that lived around me because of my connection to the Mi'kmaw community. I probably only experienced a fraction of what the people in the community experienced, but it certainly wasn't a welcoming place for me. So I did my socializing on the reserve, that's where I made my friends, and that's where I lived my life, you know, community events and dances. I used to go with the kids to bingo and we'd do the bingo canteens as fundraisers for the school. So I was always immersed in the community and never really felt like the white community embraced me in any way, shape or form.

But when you're twenty-five and alone and living in a dark basement, and you're stressed out because you've got all these classes to teach and the kids aren't behaving the way you

thought they would, it can be hard and it can be challenging. There were always moments where you felt like you had to kind of take a step back and take a step out of yourself, to look at it from somebody else's perspective, especially if there was a conflict with a child. I can remember so many kids that would go through bad days, some kind of crisis that you never would have imagined in a million years that you would have to deal with. But all of a sudden, there you are, and you've got this kid who's gone through something terrible, and you have to kind of wrap your head around it and figure out how do you deal with that. When you're in a B.Ed. program, they teach you how to teach. I came out with methods, but I didn't come out with what to do if a kid comes in in tears because of something that happened; or kids who're dealing with the loss of a parent or a grandparent or a sibling. Or if you've got a kid in your office saying "I got kicked out of my house last night." Those were the things that I really never imagined or expected. It was just this whole notion of dealing with things that you feel are so beyond your control.

I feel really lucky that I had good friends who were from the community that I could talk to about those things. I think of Tim in particular, my friend Tim, who was a teacher with us, and he's still a teacher there, he teaches Mi'kmaw. He was a really good friend. His wife is like my best friend in the world and their daughter is my god-daughter. I would always go to him, and he would always explain it to me in a way that honoured me but made me see that I was wrong. He has a phenomenal ability to understand from a white person's perspective that you might see it this way, but that's not how the community would see. He was very good at really helping the non-Mi'kmaw staff really understand where people were coming from. And you would get the story, you'd get this whole history of generations of that family. And so you came to know these stories - like I have stories of that community that I didn't live, but they live in me. Because I was willing to listen, I got to hear all kinds of interesting things and it really helped me to learn, really looking to the community about what would be an appropriate response instead of kind of thinking about how you would respond if this was a white community.

I think the hardest thing was dealing with death so much. Despite the fact that I had a sense of Aboriginal communities coming up, I never realized the magnitude of death ... Prior to moving to that community, I had gone to maybe five funerals in my life. I probably went to that many in my first year of teaching. And people dying young, unexpectedly, that was probably one of the hardest things I had to deal with. I remember there was a man I met my first day in the community, Eldon, his son was in my class, in my home room. Eldon was funny and used to tease me. He always called me Miss Laoch. And I'd be like "You know, my name is Lauren, you can call me Lauren." Nope, it was Miss Laoch, he always called me Miss Laoch. And Eldon was always really nice to me. He'd see me at community events and come over and chat with me and joke around. And he was always concerned about how his son was doing in school. Eldon was on Council and responsible for education. He would always come into the school and check on us and he really bonded with all the staff. Everybody loved Eldon, and he was very good to go to for support. When I was going back to do my Master's, he got Chief and Council to give me some money to support me. You know, the Band paid for part of my tuition, which was amazing.

And when his son was in Grade 12, Eldon went to the hospital one day and never got out. He died a month later. And that was really hard. He was in his forties. He wasn't an old man; he just got sick. And there were all kind of moments like that where people just passed away. That was probably the hardest thing, living in this community where there was always kind of death and sadness. Dying at sixty seemed normal but it's not normal in white communities. When you look at the sort of the average age of death in Mi'kma'ki, it's like 55 or 60, versus 75 in the Canadian public. Why that discrepancy? Things like that were really hard things to go through.

And then losing some of the kids, to suicide, more in recent years, things like that are hard. I learned a lot about death. Like I always tell my mother, we sanitize death in white communities, we keep the children from it. I always felt very comfortable going to a Mi'kmaw wake and seeing children around in the community, knowing that the whole community came together to embrace it. It taught me a lot about how to deal with death in a very beautiful and respectful way. But the dealing with it was hard.

L4. Lauren (Critical Event 4) – Understanding the world through the Mi'kmaw language: “I had to change my teaching style to meet their learning styles”

There were lots of tears and lots of times where I thought “That’s it, I’m packing it in, and I’m going home.” The strategies that they taught you in your B.Ed. program were just not working. But there was something that held me there. The kids were really good. There were moments that were really stressful but by and large they were really good kids and they really wanted to learn. And you know, it took me some time to realize that it wasn’t the kids, it was me. Like, I had to change my teaching style to meet their learning styles. I noticed that the more that I talked in verbs, the more they understood. They used to call my nouns “crazy talk”: “You’re talking crazy talk, Miss.” What I came to realize is that “crazy talk” meant I was using too many nouns and not enough verbs; so I was using too many things and not enough processes and math is really about process. But the way we teach math is often as a series of kind of things, like it’s static. You take a process and nominalize it, turn it into nouns.

Learning to speak Mi'kmaw gave me an awareness that I didn't have before, not only how beautiful the language is and how wonderfully descriptive, it's also definitely opened up my eyes to my own kind of mathematics teaching and ways of understanding mathematics in a different way. It's also given me ways of arguing points that I didn't have before, for example, that people used to believe that the world was flat. The word for earth in Mi'kmaw, though, is *wskitqumu*, which means “sitting on a sphere.” So not everybody believed the earth was flat and I bring that into my teaching now. I talk to my students about Mi'kmaw words and how things can be conceived of differently in Mi'kmaw and it's certainly transformed who I am as a mathematics teacher. I look at the whole verb-based nature of how the language is structured and how that can really help kids, if we can think of mathematics as dynamic rather than static. And it does really help all kids learn mathematics, not just Mi'kmaw kids. So learning Mi'kmaw has been the most profound impact on my teaching. It's made me a much better mathematics teacher because I can think of things in different ways that I never would have thought of before.

But I'm also aware that there are so many things I just don't know yet, like I often tell the story about trying to learn how to count. I went to the Elders and I said “Well, in the Mi'kmaw language, I want to learn how to count.” And they're like, “Right, what are you counting?” “What do you mean, what am I counting? I just want to count.” And they're like, “But what are you counting?” Counting words are conjugated if they're animate or inanimate, you know, so counting years is different than counting people. So I still don't know how to count in Mi'kmaw. I can do the basic rote kind of numbers. But you know, it's so complex and we teach as if it's the simplest thing in the world and that you just need to learn how to count and then everything else will fall into place. Spatial reasoning is very important in the Mi'kmaw language and you also see these really sophisticated concepts that I consider to be topological.

It's also really neat that you can occasionally talk to people in Mi'kmaw and they kind of get blown away. It also was part of what earned me the respect of the community. So in the

community where I taught, they were inclined to show me off to other communities. This one time, we were having this video conference with Elders and they were talking about language learning and what can we do to promote language learning. And I was in the room getting the conversation going. One of the Elders, grabbed me and started telling people in Mi'kmaw "If we can teach this one to speak Mi'kmaw, why can't we teach our children to speak Mi'kmaw?" And it was like "Hmmm!" And another time, we had this series of Elder story telling by video conference and there was an Elder in one community who was drumming and someone in another community singing. And everyone was teasing them about it. And I said "Next time, I'm going to sing." And so at the next video conference, my friend decided that I was going to hide behind her, and sing Amazing Grace in Mi'kmaw, which I can do and she can't. So it was pretty funny even though everyone knew it was me. Because I was willing to learn the Mi'kmaw language and made an effort to learn about the culture, that's part of what helped me to build relationships. Like I took a course in Mi'kmaw reading and writing for speakers, and I was the only white girl in the room. But it's a way that I connected. It was something that I authentically wanted to do. It certainly helped me to build relationships, but I didn't do it for that purpose.

L5. Lauren (Critical Event 5) – Learning about her Acadian roots: "We never had the opportunity to know that piece of ourselves"

I guess I never grew up with that sort of "they/us" mentality because I always had a sense of interconnectedness to other communities. The city North End where I grew up was quite culturally diverse. There were a lot of people of different races and ethnicities living in our neighbourhood. And in my family I have two cousins who are Aboriginal that I went to kindergarten with, one who was Mi'kmaq and one who was Maliseet, through their fathers' lines. So I kind of grew up with a sense of kind of connection into the Indigenous community. And my grandmothers are both Acadian. So we have a strong heritage in terms of looking to the Mi'kmaw and Maliseet cultures in New Brunswick, and particularly the Mi'kmaw culture in New Brunswick, as kind of an ally, a place we have connections And, like I told you earlier, my grandmothers are both Acadian, but I grew up believing I was Irish Catholic because of my last name. I did not know that my grandmothers were Francophone because they both married Anglophone men and lived in the city of St. John. Being Irish in the city of St. John was pretty bad, you were pretty much marginalized. Being Irish Catholic, you were very marginalized. I remember growing up hearing that so-and-so would never be promoted because they were Catholic and they were Irish. But being Acadian was worse. Right? My grandmother used to tell my aunt when she was little and she'd go outside, "There's two things you don't tell your friends. You don't tell them I'm French, and you don't tell them I smoke." Like those two things were equally bad.

So I didn't really have a sense of our Acadian heritage until I started to go to school. I can remember watching Sesame Street when I was a kid and learning how to count in French, and going and saying, "Mamie, look, I can count in French" and she asked, "Have you been watching Sesame Street?" I was probably seven or eight before I realized that my grandmothers were French. Like they were both French Acadian and had spoken French their whole lives until they got married. But in one generation we lost our language because they never spoke to their children in French. It makes me sad sometimes to think about how the language, the French that I speak is not the French that my grandmother spoke. It's a very different, it's school French; it's very different and we never had the opportunity to know that piece of ourselves. So for me, that

experience has made me internalize the whole loss of language in the Aboriginal communities as well. So it was important for me when I went to work in a Mi'kmaw community to learn to speak Mi'kmaw because I wanted the kids to see that I valued their language and they should be proud of it too. So I learned to speak Mi'kmaw. I learned Mi'kmaw hymns and I used to sing in the choir in the church and things like that. And I spent a lot of time immersing myself in the community. But it was because, I've since realized it was because we lost our Acadian language.

And it's interesting because I've been doing our family tree lately. One of my colleagues bought a membership to an on-line genealogy database and we've all been doing our family trees. And I didn't realize how Acadian I am. Like, I've traced both grandmothers back to Port Royal. There're a lot of rings in our family tree, but there's five hundred years of Acadian, and then all of a sudden it was gone in one generation. That has been very profound for me. My grandmothers, as we got older, would start to talk more about it because it became more widely accepted to be Francophone in the country. But as children, my Mom and my Dad never knew anything about their mothers' Acadian heritage. And it's funny because in the Mi'kmaw community where I got my first teaching job I was always called *Wenuj* which means French. So I was always the French woman, and I'm like "I'm not French at all," even though I have Acadian features and an Acadian heritage. I mean, I can speak French but not that well. But I was never called *Akalisie'w*, Anglophone. Even though I was an Anglophone, they identified with my Acadian heritage and saw me as Acadian. I think it was a piece of connecting with the sort of the cultural ally that the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq had been. There was a kind of an allegiance there that predates a certain amount of time. Recently, I've also traced our ancestors back to Membertou which is interesting. So five hundred years ago, we did have some Mi'kmaw ancestry; maybe that's part of my destiny to have ended up with the Mi'kmaq.

L6. Lauren (Critical Event 6) – Identifying reasons for remaining committed: "I've been blessed to do this"

I guess that's part of what sustains me, is knowing that despite the fact that I personally have been yelling about educational issues for almost twenty years, other people have been yelling about them for over forty years; it's pretty frustrating, really. When you see the injustice . . . I mean, I worked for years for seventy percent of provincial salary. I could have gone to the public schools and made more money, but I don't think I ever would have had the same experiences. You see there is a common misconception within the wider Canadian society that "Oh, there's all kinds of money going into the First Nations education, and people are just wasting it," but we couldn't even buy textbooks. It's widely known that Band schools are funded at about seventy-five percent of what provincial schools are, and we're talking about being seventy-five percent in one of the most poorly funded provinces in the country. And then you're also not getting any extra resources, but Band schools are still expected to meet the same standards. And they aren't getting the same professional development opportunities either. So it's on the backs of the staff and people working in Band schools to take time out of their lives to build their own curriculum or go and borrow things from friends who teach in public schools and make photocopies. Because that's all you could do. And it's still happening. It's not as bad as it was when I first started, but Band schools are still underfunded and there still are inadequate resources. With the First Nations Student Success Program, we've been able to take funds and build sets of resources at schools. But you know, you're being told you must meet

certain standards by the federal government and you're getting twenty-five percent less funding. And here we are trying to meet literacy goals and numeracy goals and improve Mi'kmaw language use in schools. But by and large, we don't have mentors, we don't have coaches or anything like, you know, it's a handful of university faculty and a few people that work with Mi'kmaw school authority who are going out and doing all this work without any kind of like site-based support.

So it's still frustrating but I think my commitment to this work comes from a genuine sense of belonging. I mean, I have close ties to the community still. I have wonderful friends in the community and even though I'm living now an hour away, I still try to go there at least twice a month. And my friends Tim and Carol, are really my closest friends in the world. I probably spend more time with their kids than I spend with my own nieces and nephew. You know, they're family. It's that sense of authentic kinship relationships that sustain you. No matter where I go, Mi'kmaw people will always come up to me and be so kind to me and give me big hugs and stuff, so they really are like family. And I still stay connected to the kids. I can probably tell you where almost all of my former students are right now, at this very moment, because I'm pretty much connected to them daily on Facebook, or they send me messages. So I still have a really close bond with the kids. And some of them have come through the B.Ed. program which is really neat to work with them as adults. And now they're working and they're teachers and that's kind of neat. So, even when it's hard, it's not like you can walk away. It's not like you can go do something different. Like this is the thing that I do; this is really a piece of who I am now.

And there's a sense of obligation, too, I guess. When I was doing my doctoral work, I told this story at a Mi'kmaw language conference. You know, a lot of people will say "Well, who are you to do this? All kinds of people think that no white people should do research in Aboriginal communities and they ask all these critical theories type questions. And you know they're right. But coming with this real authentic sense of relationship, I know not only that I can do this work, but I've been blessed to do this. But it has made me question myself. I went back to the community one day and I sat with my friends Ron and Tim and I said, "Why should I be doing this work?" And they were like, "Because we've worked with you; we've taught you Mi'kmaw; we've taught you about our community; you know us and we've put a lot of time into you. You owe us." No, they didn't say it exactly like that, but there was this sense that I have an obligation to the community. Now I'm working in a Faculty of Education so I have opportunities to continue supporting the school. It was one of the reasons why I went to do a Ph.D., to be in a position where I could help get grant money and support Mi'kmaw education, my school and my community. My work with the Mi'kmaw community where I first taught has given me connections, helped me to build credibility in other communities as well. You know, we are genuinely engaged in conversation about improving education in Mi'kmaw communities.

But another thing that sustains me is knowing there is authentic appreciation. Like I've worked with provincial school teachers a lot and I've worked with Mi'kmaw teachers at Band schools. And I will tell you that the Mi'kmaw teachers authentically, for the most part, appreciate the work that you do. It's not to say the public school teachers don't appreciate it, but they get a lot more professional development and they kind of take it for granted that they're going to get support. In Band schools, we had very little support when we were first starting out so we were making our own way. And then we started talking across the schools, so that we could at least have someone else to talk to. And when the Mi'kmaw school authority came into being, we had already begun that sharing process across communities. But we really appreciated having people come and help us with anything that's related to anything academic, you know, "How do I get

that resource?” A lot of young Mi’kmaw teachers have gone through the B.Ed. program and are teaching and they’re really excited to be doing a good job. But they still really, authentically appreciate having someone to come and talk to and having a support person that they ask “Okay, my Grade 3’s did this. I don’t really know where they made this mistake, but a whole bunch of them did. What’s going on?” Stuff like that. There is still that sort of authentic appreciation and kind of a genuine desire to improve education for the kids that sustains me too.

**Richard: You Can Observe, But There's a Point
That I Have to Be Willing to Go Further.**

Age: 50s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: 15 to 20 years

Current Occupation: Family violence prevention counselor

Place of Birth: Other province in Canada

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
<p>R1. Demonstrating trustworthiness: "Burnt Church during the fisheries crisis"</p>	<p>Richard attended TRC hearings held in Halifax in 2011, but noted that this was a lost opportunity where more settlers should have participated and been witnesses to the stories of IRS survivors.</p>	<p>The situation at Burnt Church was precipitated by the 1999 <i>Marshall Decision</i>. There were numerous similar incidents of violence across the Maritimes.</p> <p>Today, Richard is working in solidarity with Mi'kmaw and non-Aboriginal people to address another issue related to the environment and Mi'kmaw rights.</p>
<p>R2. Negotiating community entry: "There has to be trust building"</p>	<p>Richard was also involved in a similar Aboriginal rights solidarity group when he lived in Ontario.</p> <p>He also came into contact with Aboriginal Peoples in different First Nations in Ontario when he was working at an arboretum and collecting seeds of indigenous plant species.</p>	<p>As a result of his interaction with an Aboriginal rights support group in the Maritimes, Richard not only learned more about the Peace and Friendship treaties, he also had an opportunity to participate in training which prepared him to be a witness to events at Burnt Church.</p>
<p>R3. Learning more effective ways to interact: "The thing I need to do is listen"</p>	<p>In Ontario, Richard reported being deeply affected by a book by Ojibwe Elder Art Solomon, who was an advocate for Aboriginal people in prisons, and by reading Solomon's (1994) book, <i>Eating Bitterness: A Vision Beyond Prison Walls</i></p>	

	Richard also cited the work of filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin as another important influence on his understanding and thinking.	
R4. Speaking out of turn: “We can have really good intentions but sometimes we can make things worse”		
R5. Witnessing an act of violence: “There’s these life changing things that happen”		Richard credits this event with his lifelong involvement in a number of social justice causes, addressing issues around violence.
R6. Taking action closer to home: “Facts, values, strategy, and persistence”	Richard is drawing on lessons he learned as an observer at Burnt Church as he and others stand with Mi’kmaw people in a community closer to his home.	Richard has gained additional insights about Aboriginal relationships to the land by reading books that draw attention to different perspectives on the natural world. A Cree friend shared these resources with him.

R1. Richard (Critical Event 1) – Demonstrating trustworthiness: “Burnt Church during the fisheries crisis”

I recall the time I spent at Burnt Church during the fisheries crisis. Being there and being in this role of observer, you’re keenly aware of what’s going on. You’re taping, you’re recording, you’re taking pictures, you’re having conversations, you’re connected with an organization, you’re feeding information back to people who are doing press releases. You’re having community meetings. It’s an incredible privilege to be in that position. And just to see what was happening. Personally, I was shocked and embarrassed and ashamed of how the Canadian government, through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, through the RCMP, all the government channels, conducted themselves on this issue. The force that they brought to bear on that community was incredible. The community was locked down; we were trying to communicate with cell phones and none of the cell phones would work. This was the state moving in. Many people will know some of the specific things that happened in the conflict, like the boat ramming and Native people having to jump out of their boats and being run over—just horrendous stuff. There were many, many times that it was so close to becoming an out and out

battle, people being injured and or killed. I just can't believe it came so close so many times without people being hurt and killed. It was so close, it was unbelievable, shocking.

You can stand around and you can observe, but there's a point for me that I have to be willing to go further. I wasn't being forced or anything, but I was offered the opportunity to go out in some of the boats. And there's a level of danger there. And we were all taught during our observer training that if you want to do that, you have to assess the risk and make your own decision. I decided to go out and I was in a boat that was hit. It was a real experience but it was after that point that the relationship between myself and a lot of the other men in the community shifted. I had somehow become credible. I had been out there with them in solidarity. They were risking their lives and their safety and I was there and I was recording and they appreciated that. You know, they're incredibly brave. Afterwards there was this kind of release of laughter because, you know, they appreciated me being there but at the same time they sensed that I was pretty scared. But that's the kind of stuff that builds friendship, great moments of adventure and friendship. To stand together in a situation like that in solidarity—relationships really, really get built when people go through a difficult time and adversity and challenges and stuff. There's such a deepening of relationships.

So I would go in for periods, into Burnt Church, and be an observer, and then I would come out for periods and try to go back to my other life. I found that it was a real challenge to tell people what I was doing. It was one of the most challenging, difficult, and important and rich things that I think I'd ever done in my life. But I could see that people back here, in my community, a lot of them were really struggling with understanding what it was that was going on. They'd see images on TV and they were interested but sometimes they couldn't get it. It was just astounding to me, particularly around the way it was getting portrayed on the media.

We also couldn't really deal with the emotional impact of what was going on in our observer role. When we came out, there was a lot of need to debrief about the situation and we were able to get some of that through our connections back here. Luckily, both my partner and I had a group of people where we live that are quite politically aware and who were incredibly supportive. So we had a network of very good friends in our neighbourhood, plus other friends, who were supporting us financially and supporting us emotionally so we could do that work.

We still have friends in Burnt Church that we see and keep in touch with. And I don't think that will ever end and that's a great thing. I know we were appreciated in the community, and also, misunderstood, and sometimes not trusted, but we've been told by community members that our presence made a difference in terms of what happened. I still really feel compelled to be involved and to try to do something about Aboriginal issues. It's a part of our history that we need to be accountable for. I mean, we've created an awful situation here and it's not about blame, it's about the reality. Sometimes people go "Well, that wasn't me that did that." Well no, but it happened in the development of this country, and it still continues today. It's not like the issues have all been resolved and the healing's happened. It's still going on. The truth and reconciliation process around the residential schools proves that it's still going on, look at the conditions of reserves. So there's an awful lot of work to do.

R2. Richard (Critical Event 2) – Negotiating community entry: "There has to be trust building"

So when my partner and I came out east in 1992, we connected with a non-profit educational centre sponsored by a Christian church. The centre was connected to a number of different organizations and issues and we got involved with an Aboriginal rights support group

that has been active for years and years on the east coast here and started to attend the meetings. I guess the real piece that we got was around the treaties. For me, that was a really large learning, really knowing what the treaties are about and what they mean. And they're peace and friendship. You think "Peace and friendship, what's that mean?" That really speaks to relationship, that we should be and can be living in peaceful coexistence here. These are not treaties about "We've got the land now," it's not that at all. In fact, it's like this peaceful coexistence. That's the context. If you look at it that way then wow, of course, the next step is to develop relationships and to interact. And so when the Marshall thing came along, it was just so clear that that was a real example of the test of the treaties. This was not new to Native people. They knew that they had a right to fish, they knew that. But it was my government that was then saying, "Yes, that is so. They have a right to fish. We're recognizing our treaty obligation is to respect their right." That was a great clarification. But then, when it came down, the government reacted to the reality of it rather than anticipating it, rather than working with it, rather than finding the common ground and ways to move ahead. When violence started to break out at Burnt Church, we were at an Aboriginal rights group meeting and we were thinking what the near future might look like. It became pretty clear that there might be an opportunity to do something.

So, we had these conversations with people in Burnt Church and we ended up being invited to come up in January. This gave us an opportunity to meet folks there, outside of the people that we'd already connected with. The only reason that we could be there and have any credibility was that we were connected to informal leaders in the community. Because otherwise, we're just more white people, and why would they trust us? I particularly remember meeting a couple of folks that my partner and I later ended up staying with. It was incredible to start to develop these relationships with the community, sitting and talking and listening and just being there. At our first meeting, one of the Elders, Frank, was just so angry with what was going on. He had been working as a community person for years. When he came to meet us, there were a lot of questions he had about, "Who were we?", "What were we going to do?", "What did we think we could do?", "Was it going to be useful? And "Were we going to get in their way?". And he was incredibly honest; it was one of those great moments of truth where he put out exactly what he felt. Just to experience his raw anger was really incredible. It was very, very informative for me. I didn't at all feel threatened or anything, but I felt his anger towards the Canadian government and the system and the inherent racism, the fact that here was his community wanting to put a total of 6,000 traps in the water in a zone that had 250,000 traps in it. And Frank just felt like he was backed up against the wall.

I've had connections with Native folks and Native organizations for years and one of the things that I've kind of learned over time, is that it's really important to just listen and not talk. Given all the historical oppression and all the history that exists, Native people have a need and a right to kind of get across their perspective and how they see things here. So I mean, I was completely open to that. It's about us coming to terms with our history that we've perpetrated then things will really start to move. Because Native people are there already; they're just kind of waiting for us to catch up. And they're incredibly gracious and tolerant. Like my friend Frank, the man I mentioned who was really angry, he actually said "Okay, I'm willing to give this one more chance. I'm willing to give you guys one more chance." And I thought "Holy mackerel, there's a challenge. Don't screw this up. Go in there and do what you've been trained for. Keep your eyes open and your ears open and your mouth shut. Do your job and try and do something."

And, you know, a few months later, I was living at Frank's house for weeks on end. And I just thought this is incredible. I didn't know this man a couple of months ago, but now suddenly, I'm living in his community, living in his home, I know his partner and his children, and we're part of their life suddenly. And there's so much potential with that. You know, in many places in Canada, the Native and non-Native communities are very, very separate and people carry on their whole lives and many non-Native people don't even know a First Nations person. It's quite staggering. That doesn't prevent non-Native people from having opinions. But in terms of an actual person to person relationship, that often is just not there. But because of certain people in the Aboriginal rights support group, the relationship with the Burnt Church community was there and it made it possible for the observer project to happen. You couldn't, I don't think, have just done it [snaps fingers] like that. There has to be trust building and a relationship that's already there.

R3. Richard (Critical Event 3) – Learning more effective ways to interact: “The thing I need to do is listen”

When you live in a community, that's when things really shift. You know, one of my favorite times to observe was in the early morning. I think my shift was from 2:00 am until 8:00 am, or something like that. I'm not necessarily a night person, but I kind of fell into it because others didn't necessarily want to do that shift. I kind of started it and liked it. One of the great things was I'd be there and I'd get to see the sunrise every morning on Miramichi. I mean, it's absolutely beautiful. And that's another thing, being outside that much and the whole shift being on the water. You know, where I live now, I'm on the water, but I don't have this intimate relationship like I did there. I mean, you were literally on the water all the time. It felt strange when you got in your vehicle and drove into the neighbouring town. You would kind of want to be back at the water, everything happened at the water, the community and the water, and this road that goes along the shore, that was the whole conduit where everything happened. It was one of those special places. So I would be down there at the shore at 4:30 am, 5:00 o'clock, and the sky would be lightening up. There was this traditional leader who was up every morning very early, and he'd often go into Tim Horton's and get a coffee, and he would bring me down a coffee and we'd stand on the shore and talk.

So there's the Elder and me standing there talking about things. You know, one of the things that we were taught in the training was be real, be personable, but also you don't have to express your opinion. For me, it was really challenging at times but once I got into it, it was very liberating. Just to be able to sit and listen, not that you don't ask questions or anything, I mean, you're not stone-faced. But at the same time, it's not about you, it's about them. It's about you offering something and deepening of that relationship in a different way. I think sometimes it's almost like helping to undo some of the negative stuff that's happened historically in terms of Native and non-Native people. So in terms of a deepening of relationship, it's one of the things that I need to do, is because it's my government, it's my culture, it's my history that's done a lot of damage in terms of the relationship. The thing I need to do is listen. It's a real privilege to be able to do that and I think a really important thing. You might think what's relationship about when one person talks and the other person just listens? But I think in this situation it was totally appropriate.

I've observed people, non-Native folks interacting with Native folks. And seeing when somebody gets it and they get it and show the respect and understanding that is so important.

Usually, there's a real awkwardness, when non-Native folks start to interact more with Native folks, interact and find out what it's all about. I think what gets in the way is that so many non-Native Canadians have this mystique or something around Native people and it's like "Oh I have to act this way or I have to ask this question or do this or do that." And I don't know, I guess for me, I've just been lucky enough to have been working and sharing and stuff with Native folks for a while. I'm pretty comfortable with that. And the way that I got comfortable was just doing it. It wasn't always comfortable and it wasn't always right and it wasn't always perfect, but, so what? People are understanding. And sometimes you say "Geez, I shouldn't have said that," and "Oops, got to watch that." Of course we should be careful, but we can't let that stop us just because we're fish out of water. We just have to move ahead. I mean, we're here; we live here on Native land. When you come to that realization that should mean a lot in terms of how you interact. Like we shouldn't be wrecking things, we're not in charge; we should be listening, these people have lived here for at least eleven thousand years or longer, probably a lot longer. Maybe we've got something to learn here. You know? A little humility. It doesn't sound very deep, but let's just do it, let's get on with it. I'm not planning to move back to Europe, to Ireland or wherever my ancestors are from. And nobody's asking me to either. Let's build on what we've got and try and create new ways of interacting and doing stuff together. There's so much potential, so much potential.

R4. Richard (Critical Event 4) – Speaking out of turn: "We can have really good intentions but sometimes we can make things worse"

People involved in the Aboriginal rights group put together training for the observers at Burnt Church based on some of the work that had been done in Guatemala around accompaniment. The training was very intensive, seven- or ten-days, around the skills and ability and the mind set to be able to be an observer in the community. One of the things that the training was very specific about was that you're there to do the specific job of observer. You may have opinions but leave them at the door. Don't get drawn into debating or talking. And so it was a real lesson in terms of being able to just be there in a support role for a community. They wanted us to be there in solidarity, as a non-Native person to observe and record what was going on. The likelihood that there was going to be violence would be lessened because of our presence and the things that were happening wouldn't be believed. But if we saw it and recorded it, and did it in a professional way, we would be believed. It was a real honour to find a place in which we could interact with that community. I think the observer project was a vessel which allowed non-Aboriginal people to be of support in a contained way. Yeah, maybe non-Aboriginal people are acting out of our need to do something right or to feel better about this situation, yeah, all those things exist, but let's not let that inform the work that we need to do.

But there was one time when I went to a meeting that involved the Department of Fisheries and Oceans [DFO] along with observers from another group who took a more active role, such as entering into discussions with people. And a couple of little things I said ended up informing DFO about some community dynamics. And I shouldn't have done that; my comments allowed the DFO to divide the community by pitting one family against another. And so when I realized what I'd done, it became a real learning for me that we can have really good intentions but sometimes we can make things worse. That for me, was a really big learning, to be very clear about what it was that I was doing, and not trying to get into a role of "Oh, well I can see this and I can see that and maybe there's some potential here." So it's been a really good

lesson to me, to really listen if you're there in a support role, really listen is what you're supposed to be doing, and don't try and do something else. The Burnt Church community leadership told me, very clearly and very fairly, that what I'd done wasn't helpful. And, you know, I heard that and it deepened the relationship; it didn't sever the relationship, it deepened it. I'm not excusing what I did at all. You know? I learned from it and the work continued on. So I really appreciated the project, in terms of having a role defined, having people trained and all that stuff.

R5. Richard (Critical Event 5) – Witnessing an act of violence: “There’s these life changing things that happen”

I guess I was lucky to grow up in a family where there was always a sense of right or wrong. And you know, my mother was a very fair and very kind person and wouldn't tolerate any meanness or anything towards people. And my father was a little more political. He understood how things worked, and how power dynamics worked and how oppression worked. My father was always talking about the little guy. And so I grew up with that which was a very good thing. I was raised in a pretty sheltered place, in the suburbs of east Toronto. You know, there's always stuff going on in every place, but on the surface it was a quiet, pretty safe environment and everything, so I had a pretty easy childhood. But I wasn't unaware that there were things going on in the world that, you know, not everybody had it as well as I did. There's just things that happen in your life that suddenly, you can be educated. You can go to school and you can do all these things, but there's things that happen in your life where you just learn a life lesson and you get something.

And I remember being about sixteen or seventeen, and a woman I knew in high school, she was a sister of a friend of mine. She was going to go to Regent Park and work for the summer as a counselor. Regent Park was a low rental housing development, low rise apartments in east Toronto. Regent Park is kind of one of Canada's first slum developments that ended up developing quite a history and it's been studied a lot since. So this girl invited me to come down. I already had a part-time job, but I said yeah, I could come three days a week. So I went down and there was a priest, Mike, who was running the program and he welcomed me. I was working at this outdoor place, the kids all around in the playground, having a good time and everything and all of a sudden, the kids started to run and all move en masse to this one apartment building. And I grabbed one of little guys and said “What's going on?” and he said “Fight, fight.” And I look up and here's Mike who looks at me and he says “Come with me.” So I said “Okay.” I go with him up to the second or third floor of this apartment building and Mike said “There's a domestic assault. There's a man who has a knife to his wife.” And I said. “Oh! What do you want me to do?” and he said “Just follow my lead.” So here I was, you know, sixteen, seventeen years old, from this peaceful environment. And the priest walks right in and between the man and the woman and you know, talks the guy down and takes the knife. Then the police come and the whole nine yards. And so I was never the same from that moment on because I had experienced this inequity, this unfairness, this situation that was real. This was not an intellectual thing, it was not something that I'd read about or heard about. I think that there's these life changing things that happen for people. And that was one of them.

I guess in some ways it's not surprising that I end up being a family violence intervention worker, running a program aimed at preventing relationship abuse. There are connections. So to me, it's all the same issue, in terms of inequality and not being fair, the power dynamics, people

abusing power. I've always been interested in the environmental ecological movement and done work in that area for years. And the issue of violence against women and violence against the natural world, to me they're very, very similar issues, all issues of respect. It's the same issue with racism and the oppression of Native people or women or minorities. I mean, they're all the same dynamic. Once you're kind of open to that, that there's something wrong or an inequity or unfairness, the next step is, well is there something that can be done about it? You can't do everything about everything, but what you can do, you can do.

When I was growing up, I always thought I would end up going overseas and working in Africa. And for years I was in touch with CUSO and OXFAM and worked with those organizations here locally around awareness and I really thought I'd end up in Africa somewhere. The way life went, I never did, but of course I was dealing with similar things there. I did grow to understand that we've got the same things going on here. And sometimes people say "Oh yeah, but it's not as bad." Yeah, in some ways maybe it isn't, but in some ways maybe it is. Maybe it's actually worse here because it doesn't have to happen anywhere, but it especially doesn't have to happen in a country that's so wealthy and so supposedly so democratic and supposedly stable. That flies in the face of it, so I'm motivated to keep on working for social change and social justice. There were periods in my life where, because of life circumstances, I've had to put social justice work on the shelf, but I've longed to get back into it. That's how I relate to things, if there's an injustice, let's do something about it. You asked me when it started. It was a long, long time ago, but I can't imagine not doing what I've been doing

R6. Richard (Critical Event 6) – Taking action closer to home: "Facts, values, strategy, and persistence"

So at the time of the dispute at Burnt Church, I knew a few Mi'kmaw people but I didn't know a lot. Ironically, my major connection was with the Burnt Church First Nation, but understandably, because work had gone into creating a relationship with that community. Living where I live, Pictou Landing Mi'kmaw Nation is the closest reserve. But you could live in the nearby town and never have a connection with the community never even know a Native person even though the reserve is fifteen minutes down the road. I've been working a little bit on some of the issues around Boat Harbour here, Pictou Landing First Nation, Native and non-Native communities. Basically it's a very bad relationship between the government and the mill. And you know, what continues to go on there is quite appalling. It doesn't seem that the government wants to deal with that issue any time soon. It's been going on since '67. They've got a mill on a piece of land and you would think that you would treat your waste at the site. But, oh no, they stick it in a pipeline and ship it miles and miles, under water over to Boat Harbour. And the only reason was that the First Nation was there. And they expropriated non-Native land too. What's happening here in Boat Harbour, should never have happened, but there doesn't seem to be any change coming very quickly.

We've had a group going for a few years. We've had some successes but there's still difficulties in moving things forward. And again, it speaks to that thing about relationships and doing the groundwork. It's really important to do the groundwork because there are opportunities. One of the things I've come to understand is the experiences and history are different, but when you get right down to it, Native and non-Native people are dealing with a lot of the same issues. Non-Native people have been privileged for so long that we don't understand that what's happened to Native people can also happen to the rest of us. I'm not saying it's the

same but I'm saying that the vulnerabilities and the power dynamics are still there for all folks. But if we get together on these things, I'm hopeful that we can maybe move things forward. I think one positive thing is understanding how much we have in common. One of the connections is a relationship with the land. That's always been a strong influence in my life and I've learned a lot from the relationship to the land through Native culture and Native people. They've really got the connection with the land that I'm sure, at one point, my ancestors had but we've largely lost that. I feel I have it personally through some things, but there's also huge disconnects between how I live and how I could or should be living. We bring layers and layers of stuff that we're not even aware of how we've been socialized to interact with the natural world. One of the learnings that's really benefited me personally is to realize that the Native perspectives on relationships with the land are things I really need to focus on and understand more. That's what's going to get us through this period that we're in, this imbalance with the natural world where we're basically destroying things. And the wisdom that's there around the Native relationship with the natural world is just astounding.

I heard Ralph Nader speak a long time ago. And Nader said "You know, doing work like social activism and social justice work, it's really simple." He said, "It's like a chocolate cake. There's four things you've got to have in it and if you don't put those things in, it just doesn't work out: facts, values, strategy, and persistence." So you have to get yourself educated about the facts, and what are my values as a person or do I want to aspire to? Then, if you realize there's an injustice, you come up with a plan for something to do, working with other people around it. And then persist, continue to do it. And I find myself writing those little words on a lot of different campaigns, whether it's Boat Harbour, whether it's a work issue, or whether it's something at a community education centre. And where we live, it's about developing good relationships. There's just so much potential for Native and non-Native folks to come together, to make this a healthier relationship with Native people. It's a priority for me to keep up connections with Native people. It's great working on political issues but I really would like to have more social interaction with First Nations folks and kind of deepen some of those relationships. I think those are really important.

Karen: Oh Yes, the World Can Change

Age: 60s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: More than 20 years

Current Occupation: Professor of Biology (retired)

Place of Birth: Other province in Canada

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
K1. Making connections with the Mi'kmaq community: "Through a social relationship, you can easily get to know somebody"	Karen reported that she had previously spent time in other cultures and was comfortable in situations where cultural norms were not her own.	This social connection also enabled her make professional connections with Mi'kmaq people involved in natural resources management and to be seen as approachable by other Mi'kmaq people working on staff at her university.
K2. Noticing the absence of Mi'kmaq learners in science courses: "What is it that needs to be changed?"	Karen had previously attempted to pilot an eco-tourism program and a biodiversity program which took a similar integrative, cross-disciplinary. These programs were never implemented.	
K3. Receiving permission to become creative: "If you can dance the Periodic Table, then you genuinely know the pattern"	Karen also benefitted from the example of other colleagues who were attempting to break new intellectual ground and who approaching academic instruction in non-traditional ways.	Karen reported that she began to transfer principles that they used to shape integrative science into other courses she was teaching.
K4. Reflecting on personal learning: "Lots of lives out there that have enriched mine"		
K5. Reacting against ascribed identities: "Girls don't play hockey"		Hockey later was a vehicle which enabled her to become connected with members of the Mi'kmaq community when she moved to NS
K6. Developing affinity for nature: "My strengths were taught to me by the natural world"		Karen went on to study zoology at university. She notes that most of the students at that time came from farms or rural areas.

K1. Karen (Critical Event 1) – Making connections with the Mi'kmaw community: “Through a social relationship, you can easily get to know somebody”

Through hockey, I got to know a lot of the young Mi'kmaw guys in the community. Before we started the integrative science program, before we were even talking about it, I spent a lot of time playing ice hockey with the men's team here on campus,—what do they call it—old folks or gentlemen's hockey. And I was the only girl and the ice slot that we had was midnight; that was the only time when the group could get together and afford the ice time. We ended up sharing our ice time with some young guys from a nearby Mi'kmaw community, many of whom were in natural resources program that the university was offering at that time. And friendships just emerged from that. Generally when we played it was the white guys against the Indians. But then we would all get together in the same dressing room, myself included, afterwards and swap stories and just have a grand time, as gentlemen's hockey is wont to do across the country. I think it's the social aspect of hockey that draws a lot of people, in addition to the recreational aspect.

Most of the Mi'kmaw guys, I think, would have been at least in their mid-twenties up to late thirties. Some of the guys I got to know at that time then became the partners of some of the students that I taught later on. You soon realize what an entangled world it is, eh? For me, with my love of hockey, that was kind of a neat experience, just getting to know people through the game. So there were all sorts of things like that, just normal people interrelationships and interactions. It's a small community. Through a social relationship, you can easily get to know somebody who's an expert fiddler as easily as you can get to know somebody from the Mi'kmaw community, if you're open-minded and have those sorts of social circles. I found no difficulties whatsoever. People were very, very warm and offers of friendship opened up right from the get-go.

My scientific area of interest, however, is in parasites that you find in wild animals. Back in the early '90s, a Mi'kmaw fish and wildlife organization in this area was also interested in knowing about the parasites in fish, so I got to know some of the Mi'kmaw people working in that organization which is in a nearby Mi'kmaw community. Through those sorts of friendship and professional outreach relationships, I also got to know two Mi'kmaw women very well. Bertha and Sister Joan were both on staff here at the university. Being a small university, you run into people all the time from outside your own area of specialization. I remember Bertha phoned me up one day and said she could offer me a couple of bird carcasses. I had a university-wide reputation as being “Dr. Road Kill”. I was happy to have the carcasses because I could pick the parasites out of them and do some survey work on the parasites in the region. So it was kind of funny when Bertha phoned me up. So later when it came time to start working on an integrative science program I already had relationships in place.

K2. Karen(Critical Event 2) – Noticing an absence of Mi'kmaw learners: “What is it that needs to be changed?”

The turning point for me was when I began asking Mi'kmaw people, like Bertha and Sister Joan who were on staff here at the university, why given that I saw lots of Mi'kmaw students around the university, why didn't I see any Mi'kmaw students in Biology, Chemistry and other sciences? I had really been struck with the fact that, at that time the university was claiming that there upwards of three hundred Mi'kmaw students on campus. But if there were

that many, why weren't there any in the sciences? For me, at that time, that was a brand new question to be asking because it was my first teaching job. It was just something I hadn't considered before. You know, you get in that little narrow pathway called doing your Master's, and your Ph.D., and your post-doc, so the fact that there were very few Aboriginal students in any university science programs, clear across the country, the continent, around the world, wasn't something I was aware of at all when I started asking those questions. It was a very localized observation. I was teaching a first-year introductory biology so I knew exactly who was coming into the program. I also knew exactly who was leaving because I was teaching the only fourth year courses, and I certainly knew there were no Mi'kmaw students there. If I had been at the University of Toronto students number almost up in the thousands and you'd never know who was in your class. Right? But here I could see lots of Mi'kmaw students around the university, hanging around together in the cafeteria having lunch together.

To make a very long story short, Bertha and Sister Joan said, "Well, it's probably got a lot to do with the way science is taught. And if you could do something about that, make it more appealing to the Mi'kmaw students, then you might actually start to see some of them show up in your courses." And I asked, "Well, what is it that needs to be changed?" And I think it was Bertha who probably opened my eyes—that if the Mi'kmaw People have been for thousands and thousands of years, which they have been, surely to goodness, don't you think in all those years they've learned something about the water and the plants and the trees and the animals, and the weather and all those sorts of things? And isn't that what you teach in some of your science courses? Why don't you include what we, the Mi'kmaw people, know alongside what you, the come-from-aways are teaching? You know? And I felt that was a valid point. Because I've spent a lot of time out of doors, I could feel the resonance with what Bertha was saying immediately. One of the things that I craved to find in science courses when I was an undergraduate student was things that would help me get to know the plants, the animals better. So I agreed with Bertha, "You've got a valid point. We should be teaching those sorts of understanding."

So we worked very, very closely together, often on the table in Bertha's kitchen to outline what these new integrative science courses would look like, what the curriculum would be and what kind of a degree program was required. And following some of those early, informal discussions, then we put together a more formal discussion process. We had several Aboriginal scholars come from outside who gave us some suggestions and we got advice and suggestions from them as to what modifications might be needed. It was in '97 that we actually had a formal proposal that we submitted. So there were several years of interesting discussions which evolved more and more towards a formal proposal. It wasn't that we sat down and said "Okay, we're going to do it;" we tossed the idea around for quite a while.

I had been involved in a couple of other efforts around integrative programming at the university that got somewhere but not very far. With those two experiences under my belt, integrative science was the third new program that I was involved in trying to get going. I took some of the lessons learned from those earlier efforts and said "There's no way on earth that we're going to fail this time." I actually developed a reputation of being a bit of a terrier that once I clamp on to something, I won't let go. Which kind of felt good, although it wasn't meant to be a compliment. But I think the most important lesson I took away from those previous attempts was determination. Plus there was more of a support community behind us. People like Bertha and Sister Joan and other people from the Mi'kmaw community, brought more of a social justice dimension to the integrative science program. I was just not going to be defeated again!

K3. Karen (Critical Event 3) – Receiving permission to become creative: “If you can dance the Periodic Table, then you genuinely know the pattern”

Cajete was a tremendous role model. He’s a friend of Bertha and her husband, the two Mi’kmaw Elders I work most closely with. Cajete came up and spent some time here. And I thought, “Wow.” Cajete has not only given the Native Sciences, as he calls them, an awful lot of thought over many, many years, he did his Ph.D. thesis on it, and has written many books. He’s become the major advocate for Native Sciences in North America. So here’s somebody who’s given this area a lot of thought. The advice that Cajete gave us, though, basically boiled down to telling us to have enough nerve to get going, stay open to teaching yourself how to do it, and be creative. The biggest challenge that you’re going to find, both in the problems that you face and in the students that you’re trying to teach, he said, is the need for creative thinking skills when creative thinking skills have been beaten out of us by the mainstream educational system. You know, sometimes things people say echo with something else you’ve heard in your life.

When I was first considering going to graduate school, I wrote to about five or six universities and got the application forms. And only one of those universities asked that the person you got to write your reference letter to speak towards your creative thinking abilities. I remember thinking, “Wow, that’s really weird.” Because first of all, there’s only one out of five or six universities is interested in that. But more importantly, what really struck me was why would they be asking about creative thinking skills? I’d never even heard that phrase the whole time I’d been an undergraduate science student. Nobody ever mentioned the need for creative thinking skills. Why would they be asking about creative thinking skills now that I want to go to graduate school? So when Cajete emphasized creative thinking, I was like “Aha, I’ve kind of gone down this road somewhat already.”

Cajete’s (1994) book, *Look to the Mountain*, which was his Ph.D. thesis, is such an excellent example of what he means when he says creative thinking - it just gave me permission, I think that’s probably what I needed, was permission to try all sorts of things. I didn’t come from a family that was arts inclined at all. My mother had been a school teacher for a few years before she married my father and then promptly quit to raise kids when she got married. As a result of her having been a school teacher, there were some poetry books in the house when I was growing up. I remember always sitting on the couch and reading, you know, just by myself. And that, other than what I was exposed to in public school, there was very, very limited exposure to the arts in my educational process.

Later I attended the National Research Council Millennial Creativity Symposia and two other major conferences, one in Edmonton and one in Ottawa, where the complete focus was on the need for more creativity in the Sciences. Those were a shot in the arm for me. I had also gone out to Banff for a conference called “Bridges” which was taking an interdisciplinary look at a number of different topics. Fox and I had been invited to come out and talk about integrative science. And I remember, speaking to a young Ph.D. graduate in biochemistry and I said, “By the time our students have finished the four-year integrative science program, I would like them to be able to dance the Periodic Table.” And the young woman’s eyes flew open and she said “I’ve always wanted to do that. That is the neatest idea.” In her spare time, she was a choreographer. It was like “Oh yes, two weird people have come together.” For me, that was kind of like a neat moment, that somebody else had also independently, said “Yes!” If you can dance the Periodic Table, then you genuinely know the pattern, the way it’s set up. And if your students can’t, you need to move out of the linear way we normally teach Chemistry.

Anyway, I just thought “Oh man, there are other people who think in the same weird ways I do.” You know, you meet many scientists who are very talented in other spheres of their lives. So there was certainly some learning that I did within the integrative science program that I moved over into other courses. Intentionally employing more creative ways of teaching in the integrative science program helped me transfer some of those approaches into my teaching in my regular biology courses.

And there was another thing that Bertha said to me: “To the best of your ability, teach in a visual way because Aboriginal students are visual learners.” And me thinking to myself, “Whew, isn’t that wonderful” because I am too. I think lots of people are visual learners. It’s just that we don’t tend to teach that way. So again, being given permission by somebody that I respected to try some of these things. And if some of these crazy things that I tried didn’t work, I just didn’t recycle them, right? You know something? Given the tendency of today’s kids to have their cell phone in class and to take a video of you that can be posted on YouTube within seconds, I’m not sure I would engage in as many creative teaching efforts as I did back then. Because until you’ve been together for a while and established relationships with your students and made them see the utility behind some of these crazy things, there is a push-back. And I see that lots of things get posted on YouTube within seconds almost. That would tend to flatten me if I were teaching now.

In the first year I taught the integrative science program I was fortunate that Fox, a Mi’kmaw educator, was in the classroom with me as a resource person. A lot of things that were a challenge for me, though, also presented a challenge to Fox because he’d been teaching other courses like linguistics courses. But he would have discussions with the Mi’kmaw students in the class about issues that came up. And I was learning the joys of having somebody else who was equally responsible in the classroom, so I wasn’t left totally on my own. Anyone who is interested in teaching using an integrated approach, where you’ve got mainstream and Mi’kmaw content, or other Aboriginal content, side by side, will really benefit immensely from having people from both cultures in the classroom. In the proposal, the concept we had put forward was to team teach every single course. Fox helped me in year one, and then in year three and year four. In year two we had someone else who was not on the same level that Fox was. So I think that success is expensive, but it’s worth it.

K4. Karen (Critical Event 4) – Reflecting on personal learning: “Lots of lives out there have enriched mine”

I think that working with Mi’kmaw students loosened me up a lot. You know, when you’re a first time teacher and you’re teaching science, you’ve got a lot of ideas that you think are appropriate. The Mi’kmaw students certainly mellowed me faster than the typical professor gets mellowed; no question about it. One of the hardest things that I had to deal with the first few years when I was teaching was that a deadline meant next to nothing to the Mi’kmaw students in terms of handing in assignments - and for very good reasons. But when you’ve got twenty different people in a classroom, choosing to hand in their assignments at twenty different times, and you’ve got an assignment just about every week, oh man! So what I ended up doing was getting a cafeteria tray cart, you know, one of those with metal shelves that are stacking, you just shove your cafeteria trays in them. I just pushed the cart down into my lab where I was teaching and each student had a labeled tray. So I told them, “When hand in your stuff, you just put it there, and when it’s there, I know it’s ready to mark.” Because there was no such thing as a

deadline! Those first few years, we also dealt with loose understandings about what the start times for a class should be, too. I was teaching two of the integrative sciences courses back to back followed by their lab. So that meant that I taught them from 9:00 o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, right through until 4:00, and again on Thursday, 9:00 until 4:00. And so in the students minds, if they're going to be there that long, over the course of two days a week, you know, 9:00, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, I'll get there when I get there, kind of thing. For me, that was kind of a huge challenge to overcome, too.

I also got to know many of the Mi'kmaw students in a very intimate way because they would come and spend time in my office and just tell me their life stories. I quickly learned what difficult issues many of them faced in their personal lives and it just gave me tremendous respect for some of them. I'll never forget one student we had in a first-year course. She was a single mother of seven children and there she was in first-year science. I thought, "How do you do this?" with all the babysitting issues, childcare issues, transportation to the university issues. How do these young people, and sometimes not so young people, how do they manage still to find the time to go to university? Another student who now is graduated and is a nurse, I remember her telling me that when she went home, the only place that she could find to study where people would leave her completely alone would be on the toilet. So she would go in the bathroom with her textbook, slam the door shut and lock it, so that everybody, her kids included, would all stay away from her, leave her alone. I've got tremendous respect for the students, many of whom finished their degrees and are now out working, and some whom, after making an effort at the first year level, just decided that they couldn't do it. I've got tremendous respect for those young people.

But you know, the neatest thing, has been when students from integrative science come back, some of them that I taught, in the first few years, and seeing where they are now. When I run into them, say in Sobey's, and have a little chit-chat, and meet their little kids, and see that we made a huge difference in the lives of those young people. We really, really did. I don't have any kids of my own, but I have lots of kids called students. You know? They feel like your own children in a certain sense. I remember when our first graduates walked across the stage at convocation. I had tears just pouring down my face because I was so pleased and proud of those kids, to see where they've gone and to see how they have made a difference. And there are people coming up behind them who are looking to them as their role models. When they come back, when they send an email about an award that I received, or when you run into them in the mall or the grocery store or whatever, it's just a wonderful feeling, it really is.

And that's not restricted to the Mi'kmaw students by any stretch of the imagination, but because we put so much tender loving care into those first cohorts of integrative science students, it feels special. I know that some of them almost break down in tears, too, when they see me, too, because the first group of students that started in the fall of '99 put on what they called a "stag party" for me at a nearby Mi'kmaw community. I got married at Christmas time, it would have been December of '99. My goodness, the things that they did. So you know I had a special relationship with that group of kids. There were about 25 of them. You just become part of the extended family, right? I have never experienced that same feeling with non-Aboriginal students. I haven't. That's not to say you don't form good relationships, even close relationships with some non-Aboriginal students, but not like you do with the Mi'kmaw students. For some of the reasons that I already mentioned, you end up listening to their woes as well as their wonderful moments and you are the sounding board for them. Lots of lives out there have enriched mine, and I think we've enriched them.

K5. Karen (Critical Event 5) – Reacting against ascribed identities: “Girls don’t play hockey”

I think how things turned out had a lot to do with the way I was brought up. I grew up in southern Alberta. When I was little, I so desperately wanted to play ice hockey. But I grew up in a family and in a community where girls don’t play hockey. My whole yearning when I was young was to play hockey. I would play with my brothers on the frozen ponds at home in the winter, or even sometimes when they played shinny at the outdoor rink at the little village where I grew up. So it wasn’t as if I didn’t play hockey. But my father wouldn’t let me participate in organized hockey even though he was part of the coaching staff, part of the small group in any community that makes sure that minor hockey keeps going. My father was adamant that girls weren’t going to play hockey, and yet I knew that girls played hockey elsewhere in Canada. As soon as I went to university, I joined the varsity team and played ice hockey ever after that, but I was always aware of that barrier that says, “You can’t do that because you’re this.”

So when my Mi’kmaw friend Bertha started telling me stories from her life as a young person, about sitting in a classroom and being told “You can’t talk about those things that your grandfather taught you because that’s not science,” I mean, there was a real kind of connection. I thought, “I’ve been down this path before. I’ve experienced this. I know what she’s talking about.” Different details, but the context is the same: “You can’t do that because you’re this. You can’t play hockey because you’re a girl. You can’t talk about what your grandfather taught you in the science classroom because what your grandfather’s talking about isn’t science.”

Now the interesting thing about my father was that my younger sister also wanted to play hockey. So there was only that six year difference between us. Right? By that time, my Dad had changed his mind. I have no idea what would have brought that on, but he actually coached the team that she played on. So the world does change and some of the people who are your greatest opponents can actually become some of your greatest allies. So there was that realization that “Oh yes, the world can change because women do play hockey now, in fact, at the Olympic level. Yes, the world can change because Indigenous knowledge is very important.” I’ve told that story before and what surprises me is how few people actually see the connection that I’m trying to make there. So maybe it’s not a very successful way of getting at it, but I think really my determination is rooted in that early experience Yeah. I really do think that the hockey story gave me strength when it came to developing an integrative science program; I see a lot of similarities there. You can’t do this because of your identity. Right?

But I think if you grow up in some of these small towns in Nova Scotia, you probably grow up with some pretty racist conditioning, if not in your own family, possibly in the neighbourhood or goodness knows where people pick it up. The racism is probably dampened down now compared to what it was a few of decades ago. You just have to consider the Donald Marshall Jr. case that worked its way through the courts and what came out of that. Right? I spent some time in Europe before I came here so I was exposed to different cultures, I mean, not cultures that are radically different, but I was inquisitive about the differences. When I first came here in 1989, though, somebody at the university asked me was I Protestant or was I Catholic? And that question just absolutely floored me because that was not a question I had ever dealt with anywhere in Canada. And then as I indicated I went to Europe. And in none of those places had anybody ever asked me was I Protestant or was I Catholic. But here I was informed that that was a very important dimension to observe because it kind of dictated how your social relationships were going to evolve. And I thought “This is weird, I’ve never had to deal with this

kind of thing before.” And you know, after I was asked that question, I don’t think that I ever heard it again, in that sort of like “in your face” manner. I would say this person was probably representative of the old attitudes. The new attitudes in this part of Nova Scotia are not like that at all, it’s much more a mixture. But that categorization of people, whether by religion or ethnicity, I think used to be very, very strong. So I think that racism was probably very much embedded here. And not just racism in terms of the white versus non-white, but also in terms of one community’s ethnicity versus another community’s ethnicity. And they tended to have enclaves of certain ethnicities in those communities. One of the nice things about this area is that you can experience that, the generational heritage, I’ve been here for many generations and my neighbourhood reflects who I am. But at the same time, there’s the dark side to that.

K6. Karen (Critical Event 6) – Developing an affinity for nature: “It was a lot of time out of doors that gave me this strength of character”

I’ve spent so much time out of doors as a little person, as a teenager, and certainly in my adult years. There is an awful lot to be said for the kinship you develop with the natural world. Fewer and fewer people today have the opportunities to actually experience that. I think a lot of my strengths were taught to me by the natural world. I really do think that. Just knowing that if you’re on a long canoe trip, for example, and it’s pouring rain for four days, you know, eventually the sun is going to come out. And if you end up with your canoe upside down in a river, you are going to be able to find some things that you’re just going to say goodbye to. Yeah, I think that probably it was a lot of time out of doors that gave me this strength of character. So I think I already had some interest in the types of things that Bertha was indicating to me would be appropriate curricular content for a science program that integrated Mi’kmaq perspectives. Who are the plants, who are the animals? Don’t you think the Mi’kmaq know something about the waters, the sky, and the land that you could teach in a science program?

And as I said before, those are the sorts of things that I wanted to hear about when I went through my zoology program at university. Some of my courses were still in that older natural history mode, although some of them were switching over more the physiology. Macular biology hadn’t come along yet, but cellular biology certainly had. So you know, I was probably at that transition time. So when Bertha started pointing out some of these things, I was like “Yeah, that’s the kind of program I would like to have had.” I always thought, that I was very fortunate that when I took zoology we actually did weekend camping trips and a lot of field trips. I don’t think there’s very many universities that teach that way as part of their regular courses any more. If you want those types of courses, then you take a summer school course where you go out in the back fields and woods, but as part of your normal biology or zoology courses, no way.

I noticed a shift when Biology students started saying to me that they were afraid to be out of doors in the woods by themselves. I knew that something had really, really changed because I want to be out of doors in the woods by myself, not an issue at all. But when students actually in a Biology program started saying that they were afraid to be out of doors, it’s like “Wow, what’s happening?” I remembered the fellow who was my Master’s and Ph.D. supervisor in zoology saying when he started teaching in the early sixties, most of the students in Zoology, and it didn’t matter whether they were females or males, were young people who liked to fish and hunt, maybe they came from a farm or something like that, but they all had extensive experience out of doors. And if you compare that with students today, I mean, I bet you could

ask our whole Biology cohort here and I bet you no one hunts. Maybe a few go fishing. Now when a photographer comes along and says that they would like to take a picture of you, they say “Okay, better put on a white lab coat and stand in front of a microscope” or some other instrument. The image of a scientist these days is not somebody who is outdoors; it’s somebody who is standing with test tubes in their hand with a lab coat on. So times have changed dramatically.

**Irene: It's About Rebuilding that Humanness, that Healing
and the Whole of Social Justice**

Age: 50s

Number of years in relationship with the Mi'kmaq: More than 20 years

Current Occupation: Community education program coordinator

Place of Birth: Other province in Canada

Critical Events	Like Events	Other Events
I1. Becoming involved in Mi'kmaq issues: "If I got you involved in a cause, you wouldn't leave"	Irene was involved in similar activism and organizing when she was in her 20s and 30s, and living in Ontario.	Irene described how engagement with a group lobbying for the cleanup of Boat Harbour led to a series of other activities in Mi'kmaq territory.
I2. Fostering dialogue across divides: "While we're here in this lifetime, we need to work on becoming the people that we're intended to be"	Irene had been involved in an earlier attempt at alliance building between Aboriginal people and settlers with an interest in the environment. In the end, Irene reported, settlers seemed unwilling to accommodate and less than committed to addressing Aboriginal Peoples' concerns. The groups split and eventually two separate environmental networks were formed, one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal.	At a gathering hosted by a coastal communities association that Irene headed in the 1990s, white and Mi'kmaq participants reflected that "We grew up as friends," that people from the two nations had not always been separated. At one time, families from the different communities socialized with one another and helped one another.
I3. Naming the elephant in the room: "I'm afraid I'll be considered a racist if I mention this"	In her attempt at establishing an environmental alliance that included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, Irene found herself playing the role of "navigator," bridging different cultural perspectives, understandings, and goals.	
I4. Navigating place, position, and protocols: "Always ask permission"	After her marriage to an Aboriginal activist, Irene spent a winter living with members of her husband's extended family in a Salish longhouse. Initially, she felt scared of doing things the wrong way, but a family member reassured	

	her and became her cultural “interpreter” and guide.	
I5. Remembering early connections with Aboriginal Peoples: “I was thunderstruck”		Even though Irene’s parents moved to Ontario, other members of her family maintained their contact and connections with Nova Scotia.
I6. Propelled into action by the story of Annie Mae : “It just haunted me”	In the 1970s, Irene had been involved with Aboriginal filmmakers and theatre people in Toronto, including a film called <i>October Stranger</i> . The film is about an Ojibway youth who leaves his reserve in Northern Ontario to pursue a writing career.	
(I7) Learning when to step back: “You can’t run before we’re ready to walk”	Later, after she returned to Nova Scotia, Irene organized community tours for Milton Born-With-A-Tooth	Irene had earlier experienced considerable success in organizing a march for Leonard Peltier and had received considerable positive feedback for her efforts.

II. Irene (Critical Event 1) – Putting down roots in Mi’kma’ki: “If I got you involved in a cause, you wouldn’t leave”

Someone asked me the other day, how I ended up knowing so many First Nations folks here. And it’s kind of a blur but I think it started when I flew to Nova Scotia for three months. Then while I was here, one of my brothers got me involved in the Boat Harbour issue. It related to an area of my childhood that had been pristine when I was a child. You know? It had been a beautiful inland estuary. And the environment had always been something that was really close to my heart. My brother was a fisherman, a lobster fisherman, and herring and he was involved with the Maritime Fishermen’s Union [MFU] at the time. And there were also First Nations fishermen—this is before Donald Marshall Jr.—First Nations fishermen who belonged to the MFU. But the local MFU president insisted on everyone treating the First Nations with respect. And my brother just didn’t have the attitudes that other folks might have had. So for him it seemed logical that if we could align the fishermen and the First Nations and other people, that it was a very powerful statement. So he did outreach to the community, sort of through the MFU, and then got people involved. And so then we ended up forming Citizens Against Pollution which was sort of a combination of both people from the reserve and off the reserve, to try and do something about cleaning up Boat Harbour.

But it felt very odd when I came home because I’d just been living with First Nations people, probably for about eight years, and knew very few white people at all. And then it was such culture shock to come home and be just with white people. And I found it very difficult for probably a good eight months to a year, I found it really hard. So I’d have to just kind of be

patient. And years later, my brother told me, “I knew if I got you involved in a cause, you wouldn’t leave.” And so that’s what ended up happening, and that was twenty three years ago. It just kind of happened I guess. The more time I spent here, it seemed like a wise decision. Then I got involved in the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and the Canadian Environmental Network. And some First Nations people from out west wanted to start a First Nations Environmental Network. And so I met with Milton Born With A Tooth, and then I organized a tour for Milton to the various communities here. So I met a lot of people through that. And then I was asked to help raise money to sponsor two people from Mi’kmaw territory to go to the national First Nations Environmental Network. And sometime soon I’m hoping to be able to organize a gathering in Boat Harbour, so things are kind of coming full circle again

I2. Irene (Critical Event 2) – Fostering dialogue across divides: “While we’re here in this lifetime . . . we need to work on becoming the people that we’re intended to be”

When the *Marshall Decision* happened, the work that we were doing behind the scenes led, I truly believe, to there not being violence in Nova Scotia like there was in New Brunswick. There were pockets of people like this one fisherman, Andrew, who was part of the union who was really working with the Acadians and other communities. Andrew spoke at a fisherman’s meeting on the south shore and it almost came to people attacking him physically, but he maintained the position that everyone needed to support the First Nations and he turned the whole meeting around. There were about three hundred fishermen there and they were ready to just roar because they were being egged on by the big fish companies. And there were actually people from this one political party who came down here to stir things up. Even people like my own brother, I remember him telling me, “Irene, I’m going to take a stand with First Nations at the fishermen’s meeting tonight. You may be visiting me in the hospital tomorrow because there may be so much anger. But I’m going to stand up for it.” It was bad, it was really, really bad.

So one project we did was helping communities find common ground. The project had sort of three prongs to it. One part we did on the south shore, and we asked two Mi’kmaq, two African, two Acadian, and two fishermen from the area, to come together. It took us three months to get them all in the same room, because there was so much fear, right? And when the Acadians walked in late they said, “Well, we’re going to apologize for our English, it’s not so good.” And the African Nova Scotians said, “Well, at least you have your language. We don’t even know which language is ours.” And then the Mi’kmaq said, “We don’t have our language either.” And it just opened this door and we ended up holding a gathering at one of the Mi’kmaw Nations in the area. Each one of those people agreed to bring ten people besides themselves. So there was this awesome gathering that was done as a talking circle. And everyone realized the commonalities, their common concerns. And then the Acadians just jumped in and offered to hold another dinner and that they would show everybody their internationally famous dance troupe; none of the other community even knew that there was an internationally famous dance troupe. Like you’re living in a small rural area, how can we not know things like this about each other? And then the Black community asked everyone to come to the Baptist Church and they’d sing. And then there was a fish chowder supper.

Yeah, it was all pretty amazing. And the interesting thing was no media would cover the positive things that were happening. The media would play a four day old clip of a conflict rather than report on something positive. We couldn’t get it in the media but there were Acadians

who were interviewed who said things like “History will know we did the right thing. My children will know we did the right thing. We’re standing by the First Nations.” And this is still going today because in that same area they’re facing this huge commercial fish farm development. I was asked to go down and help. So I went down and met with them the day before and contacted the First Nations communities. To me, it was powerful because you had these white fishermen from the area and the First Nations and Acadians from further down the shore who came to show their support. And there was white fishermen coming up and shaking hands with the First Nations, saying, “Thank you. You just don’t know how much this means to us that you would come out like this for us.” And like that solidarity was just awesome. I found it amazing that building bridges between Native and non-Native fishermen who the government was purposely trying to set up to be at odds with each other was easier than building bridges between First Nations who cared about the earth and environmentalists who cared about the earth.

There are so many things that we could teach each other. And reclaiming that sort of heritage, that strength, you know. I love trying to figure out how to be respectful as different cultures. I find it so exciting and awesome. But when you’re bringing Acadians and First Nations together, Acadians need to drink their wine and the traditional Natives need to not be around alcohol. How do we find a way to work together? You know? Like those kind of different dynamics and finding ways to be respectful, truly respectful, with each other. I just find it fascinating. It really interests me. Because it’s not like you can say, “Here it is,” right? I think this commitment comes from real belief, my spiritual beliefs. You know? It comes from believing that while we’re here in this lifetime we need to heal and we need to work on becoming the people that we’re intended to be. Right? I think almost every culture has experienced societal trauma and things that have caused us to separate from each other and from spirit and from the earth and all those sorts of things. And so it just seems critical to me to bring hope back to people, so that they’re not lost in the darkness and all those kinds of things. Yeah, it’s about rebuilding that humanness, that healing and yeah, the whole of social justice.

I3. Irene (Critical Event 3) – Naming the elephant in the room: “I’m afraid I’ll be considered a racist if I mention this”

Another facilitator and I were called to do a workshop at a university in Nova Scotia. And it was all around social justice and they had speakers from third world countries. And I sat there and I thought, “How far do I go with this?” You know? And so I started speaking about Indigenous issues in this country. And I said, “Why are there no Indigenous People here?” I said, “I know Indigenous People are taking this course. Why didn’t they feel comfortable enough to come here?” I said, “You know, I have friends who came to this university and they failed courses because it had to be partner work and none of you would be willing to work with them.” And I said, “And I’m not talking about ancient history, I’m talking about now.” And you could see all these heads go down. And I said, “Maybe you feel shy. Or maybe you think they’ll be lazy.” You know? And I said, “But my stepdaughter was at this university, couldn’t get anyone to work with her. She graduated with 90s.” You know? And I said, “So if you’re feeling good about yourselves working in third world countries, you need to look a little harder and see if you really care about social justice, you need to take care of it here.” And you could see the speaker from South America who was listening to me in translation and trying not to laugh.

And afterwards I went up to the other facilitator and said, “I hope I wasn’t being too hard on these poor little kids.” Some time ago, we had this workshop on training and it was fascinating to me because a lot of people felt like if they asked a person about their culture, they were being rude. I find it odd in Nova Scotia, that here more than anywhere else, non-Natives will ask me questions they’re not comfortable to ask First Nations. And I’m totally fine with that because sometimes they bring out their bias or their stereotype or whatever, and then we can discuss it. You know? And it’s out on the table. Like a lot of people have changed their attitudes because of that interaction. But if they just kept it buried in here and thought “Oh I’m afraid I’ll be considered a racist if I mention this,” then it hasn’t changed or moved anywhere. So I’m really happy to play that role.

I4. Irene (Critical Event 4) – Navigating position, place, and protocols: “Always ask permission”

So after the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in Halifax, we held a healing gathering for survivors. I started fundraising and I called some friends of mine to hold the container. And then I got a hold of the Native branch of Health Canada to see if they would help pay for other support people to come. And it was an amazing gathering, it was so — I was humbled by what happened, totally humbled. I made it very clear at the beginning that I did not need to be in the room, you know, that I’m just here as a helper, so whatever you need me to do is fine with me. And it did end up that people wanted me in the room, so that was cool, but I would have been totally fine with not being in the room, too. Right? Because it’s ceremonies and, to me, ceremonies are always a privilege, they’re not a right.

I think that’s something that’s very important for non-Natives to recognize. I’ve been to gatherings where people say, “Well, I saved up my money and I’ve travelled from New York City and so I’m going in this sweat.” You know? But I was taught by my adopted family to always ask and so I never presume. My sister, who is Ojibwe, the way that she was raised was if she’s in anyone else’s territory, she asks permission. And so for me, as a non-Native person, it’s critical wherever I go to always ask permission to be included. I would often ask my family or a Native person to ask the person running the ceremony so that they wouldn’t even have to feel embarrassed about saying no to me. You know? So wherever I went, I was generally accepted. And I asked my Ojibwe sister about that because other white people would always ask, “Why is Irene accepted and we’re not?” And my sister explained that it’s because I’m not trying to be Native, I am who I am. And that I had my beliefs, which really fit with Native beliefs before getting involved with Native ways. Like my way of looking at the world was the same way.

But there have been a few times in Mi’kma’ki, I remember this one Elder being upset with me. And she was also at the healing gathering that we did after the TRC. And before the gathering started, another Elder came up to me and said, “You need to get your bundle out.” And I said, “No, I’m not getting it out.” But she insisted, “You need to pray. You need to have your bundle, to help things.” And I said, “No, if I bring my bundle out, this particular Elder will get angry. She’s here for healing. If she gets angry, she can’t go to the place she needs to be.” Right? But I think it just kind of — Yeah. It’s just having that respect. Lots of people say, “Have respect” but then they don’t really know what respect means, because what it means [differs] from one protocol to another protocol. Right? And sometimes that can be really tricky.

But the last day of the gathering was very interesting. A friend of mine was leading the ceremony, and the singer had to leave, so there was no one to sing songs for the final day. And so my friend kept saying, “Who are we going to get to sing?” So finally, I said, “Okay. If you

need me to, I will.” But kind of awkward feeling because the other singer had been so powerful. So I did the songs and afterwards this Elder came up and just hugged me and said, “Thank you.” And she said, “Your songs, they’re travelling songs. Where did you learn them?” and she wanted to hear all about it. And she just kept thanking me for the songs. You know?

I5. Irene (Critical Event 5) – Remembering early connections with Aboriginal Peoples: “I was thunderstruck”

And my connections with First Nations weave in through my life a lot. My folks are actually from Nova Scotia. Both my parents have connections back to Scotland. So my mother’s people were sent here, I think, by the British, from what I can tell, and settled in the Minas Basin and Bass River which was all Acadians around that time. So there are these family stories that have been passed down since the 1600s. And my father’s people came at about 1778 from Scotland, and settled here. And then my parents both did the “going down the road” thing, so I was pretty well raised in Ontario.

But when I was still very little, my father wanted us to have the freedom being on the land and the water. So he went to northern Ontario and found this place and cleared the land and got some friends and built summer places there for us. And to get there, we used to go through Gibson Lake First Nations. I was only about four, and I have clear, clear memories of an Elder from there who would go for walks with me and talk to me. And I remember talking to him about how beautiful it was and him telling about how he wanted to move home. And I said, “Isn’t this your home?” and he said, “No, I’m from Kanesatake”; so that was like my first exposure at a very young age. I have no idea why he had the patience to walk through fields and chat with me, but he did.

We never picked up from our parents any racist attitudes towards the First Nations. I could watch my dad laughing and joking with the men and, you know, it was all a very positive kind of relationship so I never picked up any sort of awkwardness or anything like that. But I don’t really remember any stories like that from Nova Scotia, except for one time with my aunt which was just so bizarre. Like I know when I was a child, my aunt and uncle had a cottage on the cove, right? Most of the Native and white communities lived in complete isolation of each other. And I remember being on the beach as a little kid, and there was a Native kid, looked about my age you know, so I went running down to play with her and my aunt just grabbing me and saying, “You don’t play with them.” And I remember being so shocked because my parents certainly never had that attitude. And so to me, it was just shocking.

And I so remember another moment that had a very deep influence on me: it was Alanis Obomsawin, the filmmaker. I saw her speak in 1967, and she had a profound effect on me; I would have been thirteen, somewhere around that. And she was asked to speak at some Centennial thing. It must have been my parents that took me there, I don’t remember. But I do remember her standing there in full traditional dress which, at that point, I had never seen. And she started her speech saying, you know, “I want to say happy birthday for the 100th anniversary of your country. But this is also my country which is thousands of years old.” You know? And I was thunderstruck by this woman. It was the first time I’d heard that perspective, and it had a deep, deep impact on me, deep impact. I ended up meeting her maybe about a year later. And I don’t remember the conversation but I remember just being in awe of her, she just totally moved me.

16. Irene (Critical Event 6) – Propelled into action by the story of Annie Mae: “It just haunted me”

I was working in theatre in Toronto. So I was doing a number of things, and even there it ended up crossing into First Nations stuff. I read a book about the life of Annie Mae Aquash. I was at a second-hand bookstore over on Queen Street in Toronto and I saw the picture of the hands in the jar. I picked it up, saw that it was a woman from here, from Pictou Landing, and this is the area where my father’s from, so I bought the book and read it. I think partially it was that I could visualize in my mind exactly where she had lived. You know? Like because they describe in the book where she lived on the Pictou Landing Reserve at that point, she grew up. And I knew that road; I had driven down that road to go swimming, you know, when I was a kid. And then to think that the FBI had cut off her hands and taken them away in a box, was just so horrifying. And yeah, it just haunted me, the story just haunted me. So it wasn’t like I could walk away from it. It totally, it just haunted me, so I decided I would write a play about her and what happened, I went back again to Annie Mae’s community and I met some amazing people. And I ended up meeting some of her family.

And then I just really got into a lot of research on her life, tracking down somebody from the Canadian government about finger prints and why would they have had to cut her hands off. And then I raised the dollars to go down to South Dakota, to the Annie Mae Memorial. When I went to South Dakota, I talked to a nurse who had been in the hospital, a Native nurse, and I’d ordered a bunch of tapes from the public radio station in the States about Wounded Knee. And so it was always this one reporter and I ended up tracking him down. He was a public broadcaster, who had been inside Wounded Knee the whole time of the occupation and stuff, met me there and took me down and introduced me to a lot of people in the American Indian Movement. And I met different Elders, it was really an incredible event. You know? I went to my first sweat lodge ceremony and stuff like that — that would be back in about ’78, or maybe a little earlier. And then when I came back, people called me and asked if I would hold a gathering for Leonard Peltier. Normally I have a picture of Annie Mae that he took up there, at her wedding, inside the occupation of Wounded Knee. But yeah, it did make a big change in my life because I ended up getting very involved in First Nations’ rights and giving up my career as an actress and director and just working on Native rights for quite a number of years.

17. Irene (Critical Event 7) – Learning when to step back: “You can’t run before we’re ready to walk”

There was a second gathering that we held that was pretty big. We brought up people involved in the American Indian Movement from the States, some really good name people. I think it would have been early eighties and it was interesting because the men, you know, the warriors, were kind of doing things to sabotage it going ahead. The men were supposed to go hunt and provide the food. And then it was like Thursday afternoon and people were telling me we don’t have any food. And I have no money to buy any. So I’m trying to get donations, donations of three hundred individually wrapped pizzas, you know, for a feast. And then when it went ahead, there was a funny vibe, I don’t know how else to say it. And one fellow came to talk to me afterwards, and it was a powerful talk that stuck to me. And he basically was apologizing without saying that, talking about how as a Native man, there’s nothing of worth that you feel inside. “We lost the war, we let our family, our children down. And then we lived in poverty, we

couldn't get work, we couldn't provide for our family. And then the Indian Act came along and we thought 'Oh, we're going to be able to take a good role for our people now and have these Band councils.' And then after a while you realize that's just really a show and you're really not able to change anything. And so there's this hollowness that you feel inside. So we have had hundreds of years of failure as Native men. And so when you try and do something, inside we're terrified it'll be another failure. We do everything we can to sabotage it and stop it from going ahead, so it's not another failure. And then when you manage to succeed, there's a hollowness we feel inside because we know it wasn't us, it was you." We had a ceremony with Art Solomon after that. And I remember Art coming to talk to me and he said "Irene, I know your heart is good, you want to be doing this for all the right reasons. And you also need to know, you can't run before we're ready to walk." And so I've always kept that in my mind. Yeah, that's been sort of the guide for me.