ABORIGINAL WOMEN BREAKING THE SILENCE: BEATING THE BIG DRUM

by

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the narratives of eight First Nations female educators in terms of their experiences as students and/or as members of a faculty, to ascertain how Euro-Western educational practices contributed to, or interfered with, their learning process and their cultural beliefs. I add my own voiceprint to the 'First Voiceprints' of these First Nations women whose munificence in their narratives connects me to them. Each of their environmental and cultural experiences shapes and becomes part of the collective consciousness. By narrating these experiences, the First Nations women act as change agents toward the dismantling of the Euro-Western colonialist hierarchy.

As my thesis journeys around the Sacred Circle – East, South, West and North – I conclude that the First Nations women's educational experiences are negatively impacted as a result of the biases and hierarchical positioning in the Euro-Western academy. It is also evident that the cultural misrepresentation and harmful stereotypical beliefs about First Nations People that permeate Euro-Western society are major contributing factors in these women being marginalized and oppressed. This thesis acknowledges how vital it is for First Nations women to continue to narrate their experiences. It is crucial that the storytelling, written and oral, be used as a vehicle towards correcting historical untruths, towards demolishing the systemic belief that the First Nations population is a vanishing race and towards restoring self-determination to all Aboriginal Peoples.

Dedication

To my parents,

James Allan and Etta Mae Hunt

Who protected me, in good faith, from a world

I never knew existed. Now I know why, and I thank you.

All My Love…

Donna

Acknowledgements

I must first acknowledge and thank
the Creator who has guided me from above, and Mother
Earth who has provided a solid base on which to stand and move
forward. I would also like to acknowledge the power contained within the
Sacred Circle for guiding me on my journey which is beginning in the East, and will
move to the South, then to the West and finally to the North. I am grateful for the
beauty of nature and the many metaphorical symbols embedded within
the Aboriginal traditional beliefs that assisted me in the formation
of my thesis. I want to thank the following people
for their encouragement, support,
knowledge, and kindness.

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have been completed without the wisdom that each imparted in her efforts to guide me on my journey.

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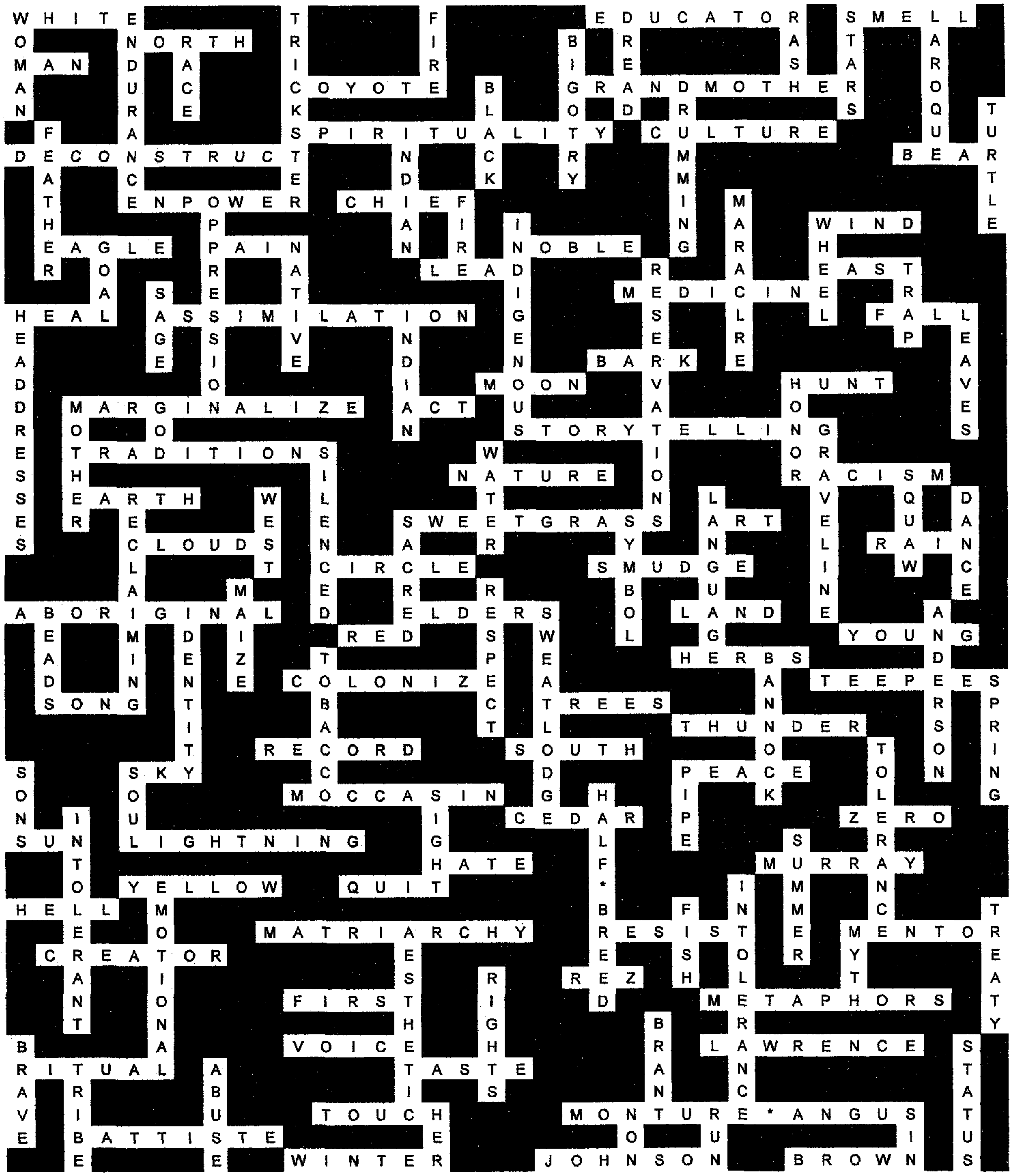
WHITE
EDUCATOR
SMELL
NORTH
MAN
COYOTE
GRANDMOTHER
SPIRITUALITY
CULTURE
DECONSTRUCT
BEAR
ENPOWER
CHIEF
WIND
EAGLE
PAIN
NOBLE
LEAD
EAST
MEDICINE
HEAL
ASSIMILATION
FALL
BARK
MOON
HUNT
MARGINALIZE
ACT
STORYTELLING
TRADITIONS
NATURE
RACISM
EARTH
SWEETGRASS
ART
CLOUDS
RAIN
CIRCLE
SMUDGE
ABORIGINAL
ELDERS
LAND
RED
YOUNG
HERBS
COLONIZE
TEEPEES
SONG
TREES
THUNDER
RECORD
SOUTH
SKY
PEACE
MOCCASIN
CEDAR
ZERO
SUN
LIGHTNING
HATE
MURRAY
YELLOW
QUIT
HELL
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RITUAL
TASTE
TOUCH
MONTURE*ANGUS
BATTISTE
WINTER
JOHNSON
BROWN

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CHAPTER I: A CACOPHONY OF VOICES – LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

The drum
represents the universal
heartbeat of Noo Halidzoks
(Mother Earth) – the universal mother
to us all. The heartbeat is manifested through
playing a special rhythm on the drum. This rhythm
facilitates healing and realignment of the four realms of
human existence (Mental, Spiritual, Emotional, Physical) because
the Creator revolves around the rhythm.

The drum when combined with the
voice, creates a hum that rests between the voice and the drum and is thought to be the spirits of the Ancestors [...] The Big Drum was a gift from the women to the men a very long time ago, so that men could experience a resonant connection to the Earth Mother that naturally occurs with women as the life-givers...It was not the intent when the drum was given that female personal power would go with it! [...]

The gift came with some simple rules:
Men were to respect women, and women's leadership role in the community.
They were never to raise their voices or hands against women or children.
They were to protect the "giver of life" at all costs...
The prophecy which states, "when the maple trees start dying from the top, women will take back the drum" is starting to happen, the trees are dying. Men have not fulfilled their responsibilities and promises; women must now re-assert themselves in order to save themselves, their children, their communities and the Earth Mother (Thunderbird, 2008:3-5).

INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to introduce my thesis with a writing that is Indigenous. My Nativeness has become more and more a part of my identity. This thesis is a result of having travelled along many paths in the shadow of the Eurocentric[1] worldview.

THE TRICKSTER[2]
The Trickster works magic,
and I become the pawn swirling amid the hidden
messages that I know not how to decipher. Brambles draw blood
as I wander amongst the chaos, wanting to survive for yet another day.
Who is the trickster?
The trickster shows what is right by doing wrong.
I hear the silent screams of yesterday's unfulfilled promises.
The Native thunder in my soul lurks in the souls
of the dead and I am left to wonder why. I know not what has
become of my White past, or the future promises that the Indigenous
Sacred Circle holds within its grasp. The clouds begin to part; the winds of change
arrive. The Sacred Circle gives back life to those who are lost...East, South, West, North...a
never-ending glimpse of what was, what is and what can be. Change is in the wind and I will
stoke the burning
embers and ask them
to guide my destiny.
(d. a. Hunt, 2007)

This thesis began as an examination of Aboriginal women's experiences in higher education to ascertain if the education they received met their needs and, if not, how it could be improved. As my thesis unfolded, my focus shifted to the enormous struggles that Aboriginal women have, not only in higher education but living as an Aboriginal woman in an Euro-Western world. What does it mean to be an Aboriginal person, an Indigenous person, a First

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[1] *The terminology used to describe the politicized, hegemonic colonialist worldview in western society will be* defined by use of the words Eurocentric, Euro-Western or neo-colonialist. At the same time, I recognize that systems of knowledge are contested and not monolithic.

[2] Trickster's BushCree Name is Wisakecahk (Graveline, 2004). "The Trickster in most native traditions is essential to creation, to birth...[who demonstrates an] openness to life's multiplicity and paradoxes...The trickster is an enduring archetype that crosses many cultures" (Wikipedia, 2008:1, 3). The Trickster is an ubiquitous being who disobeys rules and norms of behaviour. The Trickster can be a female, a male, or an anthropomorphic animal, such as a Coyote or a Raven.

Nations person or a Native person[3]? Perhaps that is the true focus of my thesis, a way of addressing the silence and tensions that I have experienced in my family and subsequently, in educational settings. I have wrestled with the uncertainty of my own Indigenous identity. I struggle with being too White (colonialist upbringing, appearance) to being a First Nations person but want to reclaim my Aboriginal ancestry and, with it, a fuller sense of identity. Hence, I welcomed the opportunity of discovering my heritage through the lived experiences of other Aboriginal women academics in higher education. In fact, I came to study the narratives of the Aboriginal women through the lens of my own narrative.

The core of my thesis is an analysis of published narratives of eight such women as well as my own. In the process we became as one in terms of being women united by the same controlling Euro-Western ideology that had provided the framework for all women, be they brown, black, yellow, or white. The only difference was the colour of our skin; every other aspect of our experiences contained the same oppressive, sexist and racist overtones generated by a male dominated society. All these negative discriminatory techniques of domination lent themselves to negating the women's sense of empowerment and self-worth.

Initially, I had expected to be the only mixed race woman who would be intermingling my story with those of the other Aboriginal women. I had not anticipated that some of the women in the narratives would also be of mixed heritage, had never lived on a reserve and had primarily lived in contemporary urban settings. The diversity of experiences in their narratives speaks to the ongoing cultural genocide as a result of colonialism that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for Aboriginal women to form their dual identity without sacrificing their Nativeness. Indigenous women share a common legacy of marginalization and oppression as a

[3] The terminology used to define the identity of the women in the narratives will appear in varying formats.

result of the incumbent Euro-Western self-serving stereotypical caricatures of First Nations People. This characterization produces a dangerous mismatch between the Euro-Western and Aboriginal ideology in most areas of society. I have serious doubts that a sustainable relationship is possible in the current colonialist society that embodies the belief that the acquisition of objects is the highest value of life, not the interpersonal relationships between humans. The women's narratives speak to this dichotomous relationship. The process for the White man to walk in another's moccasins has not been without difficulty.

Acknowledging my First Nations ancestry has meant challenging the beliefs that are associated with each of these diametrically opposed worldviews. Euro-Western education is systematically molded by the colonized rationale that tends to extinguish the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the marginalized. The dichotomous distinctions that one makes between oneself and the other speak more about one's own fragmentation within one's culture. One's beliefs are the basis from which knowledge is extrapolated, from which one gains a sense of identity, of community.

I approached the women's narratives with a critical pedagogical tool, First Voice[4], fully aware that this didactic tool would guide how I interpreted their narratives based on my interests and social location. I acknowledged myself as a non-Indigenous narrator and accepted that I can only view their experiences of colonization as an outsider. I endeavoured to deconstruct and decolonize the privileged Western systems of knowledge, thereby making the women the subject of inquiry, not the Indigenous systems of knowledge. I also recognized that there would be fewer published works by Aboriginal writers about Aboriginal subjects resulting in unavoidable

[4] First Voice was coined by Fyre Jean Graveline in 1998. "First Voice as a critical pedagogical tool arises out of anti-racist, feminist, experiential and Aboriginal discourse. First Voice is the reliance on the "voice of experience," our own interpretation of experience to guide our knowledge base" (Graveline, 1998:118).

gaps and omissions in the Aboriginal people's knowledge base. I circumvented making claims of certainty when I was not able to back up what was stated within the narratives as the truth. Therefore I, as a qualitative researcher, understood and accepted that my ideological positioning influenced my research. I, as a female gendered, multicultural researcher, entered the investigation as one who had been inextricably linked to the Euro-Western colonized, political, social, and historical White world (Andrews, 2007).

May the wind
always be at your back and
the sun always shine in your path.
(Source Unknown)

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter I looks at the multifaceted areas that have led to the stereotyping and devaluing of the Indigenous peoples. It includes cameo appearances by Emily Pauline Johnson and Beth Brant, two women who have not experienced higher education, but who have made visible the struggles of Indigenous peoples with their writings. Chapter II discusses feminist pedagogy. It distinguishes between the Euro-Western White feminist movement and the Aboriginal women's rights movement. It also looks at the Aboriginal peoples' traditional educational topologies that speak to Indigenous cultural beliefs. Chapter III reviews the background and describes the methodology used to study the educated Aboriginal women who have experienced higher education, both as students and as faculty members. I used a cross-cultural qualitative narrative inquiry, incorporating both traditional and non-traditional methods. Chapter IV establishes the importance of narrative as a vehicle that portrays people's experiences and truths. The overriding substance of this chapter is my own narrative. Chapter V presents the eight Indigenous women's stories. Chapter VI examines the key themes that emerged from the Aboriginal women's narratives. Chapter VII concludes this thesis with a

summary of the overall experiences of the Aboriginal women in higher education. It includes an open letter from the Trickster, an Aboriginal archetype, who speaks to the injustices experienced by the First Nations People as a result of colonialism.

A WORD TO THE WISE

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1 describes the world in which educated Aboriginal women lived and, as such, provides a foundation on which to build my thesis. It was important to identity the main concerns that appeared throughout the women's narratives as well as mine. Specifically, the chapter addresses the Aboriginal heritage of these women with some of its beliefs, values, symbols and ceremonies. It acknowledges the importance of 'First Voice' narratives that speak the truth about the stereotyping and devaluing of First Nations women by Euro-Western Whites. It compares and contrasts the differences they encountered with living in an Euro-Western colonialist society and being a part of an Aboriginal community.

In addition, it was important to lay the historical groundwork when I referred to the colonialist establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 and subsequent amendments that discriminated against Aboriginal women and very much impacted First Nations People as a whole. Through the legislation, the Euro-Western world was actually attempting to assimilate the Aboriginal world into itself. It was important to revisit the past in order to explain what subsequently happened to First Nations People.

It was vital to acknowledge the ongoing discriminatory interlocking forms of oppression, i.e., racism, sexism, and classism that these women experienced in the academy and society. The politicized Euro-Western educational arena tended to exacerbate this by retaining control of the systems of knowledge, hence the need to examine the prospects of self-government and the

Aboriginal people's right to exercise control over the cultural, political, economic and social issues that concern them. To shift the control back to the Indigenous communities, where education is concerned, requires shifting the tenets of Indian education from accepting acculturation and cognitive assimilation to revitalizing and renewing language, cultural identity and dignity.

It was important to differentiate between the feminist ideology of the White world that I experienced, with its claims of individual equality and the belief systems of the Aboriginal women's rights movement where collectivity amongst women is the prevalent theme. As a way of accomplishing this, Aboriginal women want to take back the Big Drum – that is, their power. As my own narrative became prevalent in the process of my thesis, I too savoured the prospect of telling my story as a mixed-race woman – beating my own drum as it were.

These concepts provide a roadmap, as did the words contained in the prologue, Map the Journey. I was not entirely sure where the connecting words would lead, but had faith that they would enable me to make sense of the experiences of the women in the narratives and my life as I walked through their life stories. If I were to place these concepts on the Medicine Wheel, they would begin in the East with the Aboriginal women's narratives that planted the seeds of change, for without them there would not have been a new beginning. The South would shine a light on the inadequacies and blatant discriminatory tactics implied by the colonialists' government in their efforts to civilize an already civilized Indigenous populace. The West would acknowledge the teamwork that enables Aboriginal communities to accomplish such a task, and the North would speak to the spirituality and wisdom that is found when women work collectively to bring about change.

Historical Perspectives – Linear Legacy

The following is a much quoted speech made to a House of Commons committee in 1920 by a senior bureaucrat named Deputy Superintendent-General Duncan Campbell Scott who had a free hand in Indian Policy that was put forth in the Indian Act[5] of 1876. The Act resembles a "system of apartheid...[that] systematically isolated a minority people and undeniably set out to destroy their economy, culture, religion and institutions" (Richardson, 1993:96). Scott apparently took a dim, contemptuous view of Native life, which is evident in the following statement.

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem...I do not want to pass into the citizens' class people who are paupers...when they are able to take their position as British citizens or Canadian citizens, to support themselves, and stand alone. That has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times...Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department. (Scott quoted in Richardson, 1993:97)

"Knowledge...is power," stated Frances Bacon, the English philosopher and statesman, in the sixteenth century. Knowledge, when translated into our contemporary social setting, can, in many instances, promote the acceleration of human social development. Academia, the playground on which one develops knowledge more than other organizations, contains a cacophony of opinions and a plurality of voices, which affect all areas of education in promoting efforts to preserve the status quo or radically reconfigure the curriculum. Within the current Euro-Western curriculum exist a number of habitual systems of knowledge which some believe

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[5] The Indian Act is federal legislation, which dates from 1876. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) carries out the day-to-day administration of the Act and is, by law, responsible for maintaining the list of registered Indians (Indian Registry). Two basic areas in the Act affect all Indian people in Canada. (1) The Act sets out rules for governing Indian Reserves, it states how Reserves and Bands can operate, including the powers allocated to Band Councils, and (2) it defines who is and who is not recognized as an Indian (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1997). The last major change made to the original Act was in 1985.

should be offered as knowledge for everyone. The concerns that surround these systems of knowledge are that they tend to be predominantly Euro-Western in nature, thereby giving voice to some and silencing others. For the purposes of this thesis, the silencing of the other will refer to the experiences of First Nations women in higher education.

First Nations women have historically been objectified, and as a result, metaphorical cultural constructs have evolved to describe them in society. I have explored the social sphere of First Nations women's educational and cultural experiences. I am aware that, throughout this thesis, I am endeavouring to better understand these women through their narratives, and, as stated by Razack (1993), my primary difficulty will be the "difference in position between the teller and the listener, between telling the tale and hearing it [because] story-telling is all about subjectivity..." (56). She also points out that not only the teller, but also the listener of a tale/narrative must deal with the internal dilemmas that have to do with identity and voice. Having said that, within the confines of this thesis, my interpretations of their narratives are based, in part, on the historical framework that I, consciously or unconsciously, weave into the fabric of their stories as I synthesize their experiences. The manner in which these women/I have created their/my narrative, according to Cohler (1987), "renders adversity coherent in terms of experienced life history" (365).

The role of experience, according to Monture-Angus (1995), is different in the First Nations culture than in the Euro-Western culture. As Aboriginal people experience exclusion in Euro-Western education, I too face a form of exclusion for I cannot speak to the experience of living on a reserve as an Aboriginal person or to experiencing bigotry and racist remarks because I appear to resemble the stereotypical images of a First Nations woman with brown skin and black hair: I do not. The only form of exclusion that I have experienced and can identify with is

being a mixed race woman in a patriarchal world. The second point Monture-Angus makes has to do with oral versus written communication. Based on her cultural heritage she considers the latter to be a foreign way of communicating. In order to be heard, she has to be accommodating in the manner in which she participates in academia. However, her transitioning the experiences of the First Nations People from the oral to the written is one of the ways in which she is bridging the pedagogical gap between the First Nations and Euro-Western understanding of what constitutes one's knowledge base of life experiences in society.

Storytelling is essential if racist and patriarchal constructs are to be diminished, if not abolished. The deep gaping chasm of despair that divides cultures, due to ignorance, needs to be crossed; build stronger bridges with knowledge of the other. Storytelling must not be seen as individualistic in nature, but rather as a product of the whole of society: a society that is universal in context and subject to the many interpretations that are dependent upon the art form of listening. Who is listening and what is being heard? Subjectivity is contradictory and multiple, thereby making it difficult to unpack the complexities within the narratives of First Nations women who are resisting domination (Razack, 1993). In life, as at the centre of a woman's scholarship and a woman's politics, it is important to recognize that more than one truth is represented at any given time (Aptheker, 1989). I am not proposing a dichotomizing of the pedagogical material, nor am I suggesting the Euro-Western White be subjugated by the oppressed, but rather am recognizing the paradoxical and ambiguous nature that exists within the multi-layered narratives. One's recognition of differences does not automatically constitute one's acceptance of Aptheker's (1989) call for tolerance of ambiguity, but it does offer a basis for discussion of what constitutes meaning beyond the currently constructed patriarchal discourse.

Not all storytelling deconstructs that which needs to be changed within the patriarchal discourse. Razack (1993) states that in the midst of untangling how we are constructed we have periodically failed to define what it is that we want to change and why. The lack of empowerment in some storytelling occurs because of the complexity involved in constructing meaning. The multiplicity of differences between students in any classroom does not lend itself to an all-inclusive pedagogical approach. The best one can hope for is based on Ellsworth's (1989) suggestion that the diversity of voices and stories be respected and recognized as "valid—but not without response" (305). At any given time an individual can only lay claim to partial knowledge about the other based on one's own position in society and on circumstances that can label one as the oppressor or the oppressed. Ellsworth recommends certain tools and ground rules to lessen the impact of the diversity of voices and ambiguity that one encounters in the art of storytelling: build trust amongst storytellers; do not wait for others to tell their story – ask; label and devise ground rules to deal with inequalities in the classroom; and encourage affinity. All of these ethical guidelines are simple and effective ways to lessen some, certainly not all, of the adversity that has the propensity to arise when dealing with difference across sociocultural boundaries.

> The native's challenge to the Colonial World is not a rational confirmation of points of view. It is not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute. The colonial world is a Manichean World. (Bannerji, 1991:5)

What are some of the beliefs in the literature, past and present, regarding First Nations women and their educational experiences? Let me begin by noting three key realities that, for me, are the starting points to understanding the experiences of some women, including some non-marginalized White women. These three key realities are sex, gender and race. I suggest

that when these three key points interact, they influence how women and 'others' in society view women and those views can impact how they experience their educational tenure at all levels. In higher education, it can make a difference having a Brown body in a White classroom. The following quote demonstrates, metaphorically, a possible valid reason behind the organization of relationship problems that exist between White and Indigenous peoples in Canadian institutions of higher learning. It suggests how one might shift the blame for a situation unto the other, instead of taking responsibility for and endeavouring to change the situation.

> ...a young native woman came down the tracks and, sitting beside us on the ground, cried and screamed at us in a language we did not understand. We had no idea of what she was saying to us or why she was screaming at us - after all we were not driving the train; we were not in control...We can only see what this might have been about if we shift from the immediate level of the relationship to the underlying historically determined structure of relations.
>
> (Smith quoted in Bannerji, 1991:9)

Therefore, it could be surmised that discriminating social attitudes that become part of the social fabric determine how women are treated and can become a social construct of Euro-Western pedagogy.

Politicizing Educational Opportunities

Canada can only be viewed as a microcosm of European ideology. Canadian Euro-Western academics have dominated and controlled the educational environment by manipulating and discrediting other systems of knowledge in much the same way as the earlier colonizers. To bring about change in the educational process, I believe it is important to examine the social and cultural historical aspects that led to the politicizing of First Nations education. This process would hopefully provide a basis to better understand what has been excluded and what changes, if any, need to be implemented to further the theoretical base and consequently the educational opportunities available to the Indigenous peoples. Eurocentric thought, according to Battiste

(2002), suggests that only "Europeans can progress and Indigenous peoples are frozen in time, guided by knowledge systems that reinforce the past and do not look towards the future" (4).

Battiste and Barman (1995) state that in 1969 there was a crucial turning point for Indian education through Indian control. The federal government wanted to reassign responsibility for First Nations education on reserves to the provinces. This was known as the White Paper Policy. In essence, it was reversing previous treaty agreements that had delegated, under the Indian Act of 1876 and 1880, that "Indian self-government was abolished, and finance and all social services, including education were placed under federal control...[Under this same act]...lands reserved for Indians were managed...[for them]...until such time as individual First Nations People enfranchised themselves or became sufficiently civilized to be allowed a measure of self-government" (Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill, 1986:4-5). Unfortunately, the Indian Act was tantamount to the politicized, total control of all aspects of the educational process on all reserves across Canada via the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The government's view of educating First Nations People was to transform their minds via cognitive imperialism and colonization, state Battiste and Barman (1995), rather than educating them in their traditional languages, values and Aboriginal worldviews. DIAND hoped that inevitably all Aboriginal students would become absorbed into Euro-Western White society, which is similar in nature to the ideology put forth by the missionary predecessors who were "racists, patriarchs, and oppressors who hid behind fine-sounding words or ideology" (Battiste and Barman, 1995:viii).

The White Paper Policy was rejected by the Aboriginal people who, in turn, issued the Red Paper Policy that led to the development of the National Indian Brotherhood's *Indian Control of Indian Education*. "Aboriginal peoples vociferously opposed the government's

intent...they argued that Aboriginal communities themselves had the right, based on their Aboriginal status and treaties...[and]...Aboriginal peoples pointed out that the provinces could do no better in educating Aboriginal youth than the federal government had done" (Battiste and Barman (1995:viii). It took until 1973, state Battiste and Barman, for the federal government to accept, in principle, the *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy as national policy. If one jumps ahead to 1991 and examines the MacPherson Report, *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future. A Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education*, a national review of First Nations education by DIAND, one can clearly see that the federal government had, in truth, only foreseen the First Nations control as administrative, versus the actual restructuring of First Nations education. In theory this meant that the "government of Canada had failed to implement the 1973 policy as it was intended" (Battiste and Barman, 1995:xi). The fundamental tenet put forth by MacPherson, of the Osgood Hall of Law School, was that it was important for First Nations People to achieve authority over education within the context of self-government[6]. The battle for self-determination[7], including self-government, continues and it became evident that the Euro-Western educational platform that contains assimilationist structures and systems will not enable Aboriginal communities to transform themselves. One example is the government's capping of educational funding, which then forces bands to adopt funding priorities according to federal guidelines, a control issue that plagues First Nations education in the twenty-first century.

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[6] "Self-government...is the authority to create and maintain the organizational structures necessary to manage day-to-day community affairs. Self-government is the means employed within particular communities or regions to put self-determination into practice" (Ekstedt, 1994: 49).

[7] Self-determination is used to refer to the right of a people "to exercise control over those political, cultural, economic, and social issues of concern to them" (Ekstedt, 1994:49).

DARK MOMENTS

Stereotyping and devaluing of the Indigenous peoples has been an ongoing obstacle across North America. In 1954 the Department of Education in the United States commissioned a report to establish a definition of an Indian (Hampton, 1995). Up to this point in time there were over 100 different definitions of 'Indian.' It was found that the more one tried to define an Indian, the more unreliable the definitions became. The Bureau of Indian Affairs testified to the following before a Senate committee in 1954.

> I just don't think there is any definition that you can give to an Indian. He is an Indian for some purposes and for other purposes he isn't an Indian. I am sorry, I cannot make a definition. We in the Indian Bureau are concerned with it also. We don't know how to define an Indian. (Hampton, 1995:23)

One piece of knowledge that I found disturbing was put forth by King (2003) in a story/narrative about Coyote (the Trickster) and the Ducks entitled "What is it About Us That You Don't Like"? The Ducks (Indians) giving up their big feathers to Coyote (Whites) is really about the treaties that were a good deal for the Whites and a bad deal for the Indians. But later, states King, the reverse is happening because, like Coyote, "Whites haven't been happy with only most of the feathers...However...as long as there are Indians, there will be a plethora of 'Indian things.' Feathers, if you will. Indian land. Indian rights. Indian resources. Indian claims" (129-130). Oppressive legislation with respect to Native people and Native rights centres on two goals: (1) legalize them out of existence and (2) relieve them of their land (feathers). The Whites have been trying to pluck the feathers of the Indians for a very long time. The 1876 Indian Act and its 1880 amendment allowed for automatic enfranchisement if any Indian got a degree, served in the military, became a clergyman or a lawyer. Indians, states King, "Now you see them. Now you don't" (133). This statement is tantamount to a total assimilationist approach.

For the most part, First Nations women in urban centres experience a "dual oppression—from their own Aboriginal band governments and from the non-Aboriginal governing institutions" (Ouellette, 2002:54). The literature warns against assuming that Aboriginal women were universally honoured and respected by all Aboriginal traditions. Matriarchal Native societies did not prevent men from oppressing women (LaRocque, 1996). Aboriginal women are concerned with what it might mean for them to return to traditional customs. Would the return involve historical subservience of Aboriginal women to Native men, or equal power that existed between First Nations women and men prior to being "distorted by the imposition of European patriarchal law and practices" (Jackson, 1994:193)? It was suggested that there might be too much harm done to the customary ways of being for Aboriginal people to return to "spiritual balance without the imposition of structure and process" (Jackson, 1994:194). Many Aboriginal people have become urbanized and, as such, not in touch with their Native roots.

First Nations women have had to fight for their right to be heard, seen and validated, be it by significant others (family members) in their lives, or by the community (educational institutions). Unfortunately, within the traditional academic framework, Aboriginal women's writings and research about First Nations women's own lives are "neither fully appreciated nor fully understood as valid scholarly contributions" (Miller and Chuchryk, 1996:9). In some Native communities there are notions about Aboriginal women that are patronizing. It is felt that "Aboriginal women should not assume elected leadership, which is taken to mean 'acting like men'...unobtrusive, soft-spoken and quiet...act and dress like an ornamental Pocahontas/'Indian Princess'" (LaRocque, 1996:14). The stereotyping of Aboriginal women as drunken, lazy, over-sexualized "squaws" leads to their vulnerability in society as it can promote a direct relationship between racist and sexist labelling and violence. These dehumanizing portrayals have had a

"profound impact on the self-images of Aboriginal men and women and on their relationships" (LaRocque, 1996:12). That is to say, women of First Nations descent are spoken of as being lesser than their male counterparts as government policy attests to when in 1876 the Canadian Parliament passed its first consolidated Indian Act (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1997:81). Section 12(1) (b) of the Indian Act blatantly discriminated against Aboriginal women for over 100 years until it was amended in 1985. Aboriginal women were denied their status if they married a non-Aboriginal man, while the reverse was not true for Aboriginal men who could marry a non-Aboriginal woman and retain their status. The Aboriginal women were also denied their rights, such as "employment and accommodation...ostracism and exclusion from involvement in tribal life" (Jackson, 1994:181). As a result of changes to the Indian Act (Bill C-31), in some Indigenous communities the decisions of kinship, descent, and succession were now determined by the patriarchy and not the matriarchy. The traumatic impact of such a shift was considered to be an assault on customary law, that is recognizing Aboriginal women as family leaders and grandmothers. "Bill C-31 exacerbates tensions of identity that arise from intermarriage as children of mixed parentage are cast into denigrating categories as "C-31ers or 'half Status' or worse" (Status of Women Canada, 2006:10).

Aboriginal women are aware of the negativity that persists in society towards them and they have worked at making changes, not only for themselves but have, by example, enabled other women to be more aware of society's ills and their impact on them. As more women recognize the value in taking the time to listen to the voiceprints of other women, a template begins to emerge for them to incorporate into their own lives. However, that being said, I would assert that the majority of women would continue to be less privileged than their male counterparts in a society that favours the latter. As such, women will be required to take risks

and defy historical norms, if changes are to be made that are more conducive to the well being of women.

According to Wotherspoon (1998), there is a tendency for educational inequality to spread from one generation to the next amongst those who are considered to be less well situated in society. Challenging the status quo and refusing to accept what has always been the benchmark for the privileged class can avert the continual act of silencing. The move towards a better society for Aboriginal women gains momentum because of their narratives that share their inner wisdom with other women. This interconnectedness is crucial to further promote the emancipation of Aboriginal women and, in the process hopefully lessen racism, bigotry and the inclination to silence the voices of the marginalized.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PAST – SAY IT ISN'T SO

The rich and vast body of Canadian literature of the First Nations People has long been ignored and neglected. Whether it is the wide range of written genre, or the oral literature that transcends the European concepts of genre very few literary scholars are familiar with it. The reasons for this neglect include:

> European cultural arrogance, and attitudes of cultural imperialism and paternalism that initiated and fostered patronizing stereotypes of the Indian; European antipathy and prejudice towards the oral literatures of so-called primitive peoples; the European belief that the Indian was a vanishing race; the purist attitude of Western literary critics towards literature that does not conform totally to their aesthetic criteria; and, finally, the difficult problems of translating native literature…Metaphor is largely in use among these Peoples; unless you accustom yourself to it, you will understand nothing in their councils where they speak almost entirely in metaphors. (Petrone, 1990:1/6)

As evidenced in the following two narratives, one from the mid-nineteenth century about Emily Pauline Johnson, and the other from the twentieth century about Beth Brant, the Indigenous peoples did not become extinct as expected. These two less-educated women, by

Euro-Western standards, have contributed immensely to the genre of literature that speaks literally and figuratively to the troubled times of the First Nations People. Their written life experiences demonstrate the value contained in all Native women's stories. The only reason for their exclusion in the narratives is based on the criteria that had been initially set out as the boundaries in which this thesis would be studied. Hindsight has far greater depth than what I could have possibly envisioned at the beginning of this journey. I feel, as a result of my short-sightedness, I could have lost a piece of history had I not included them in a separate section. My excluding them would have paralleled Eurocentric thinking that can dismiss knowledge that appears to be outside its own pedagogy.

Emily Pauline Johnson – 1861 – 1913

> If you don't want to hear about the history of my people, what did you come to see me for?...I am only a Mohawk with an ambition to show that even an Indian can do something in the world...I am a Red Indian, as you know, and feel very proud of the 'copper-tinted face and smouldering fire of wilder life.'
>
> (McMaster University Archives, 2007:1)

I would be remiss if I did not include Emily Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) as part of my thesis. She was from the Six Nations of the Grand River, which is where the matrilineal side of my family of origin was born and lived prior to their moving to Brantford, Ontario to live as 'White' people, renouncing their Indigenous heritage. She does not have a post secondary education in the formal sense but, in her way, made some significant contributions that I want to include. Johnson affirmed that her Indigenous name, Tekahionwake, came from her great-grandfather. She said she chose the name to call attention to her Native ancestry. It means 'double wampum[8]', or 'double life' in the Mohawk language. Literally, the word signifies that it

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[8] Wampum belts were very durable and consisted of shell beads strung together that were used as a means of communicating within the Indigenous cultures by those who knew the wampum language. They had many uses: to seal betrothal, engagement and marriage agreements; used at condolence ceremonies; used as a token representing a

is so hard to kill a Tekahionwake person, that one must kill him/her twice. Johnson pointed out that the Johnson name was her baptismal name as was her great-grandfather's after he was baptized an Anglican Christian.

Johnson indicated that she was of mixed race. Her father, George Henry Martin Johnson, was a Mohawk who lived at Six Nations of the Grand and her mother, Emily Susanna Howells, an English woman. Johnson states that she moved between the two worlds, Native and non-Native. Her family connections, including her grandfather, John Smoke Johnson, who was a hero in the War of 1812, established her as both "Native aristocracy and Loyalist descendant" (Moses and Goldie, 1992:377). She stated that she was not an educated woman in the sense of having attended 'college' but that she was tutored by an Indian nurse, who taught her Native folklore and legends and, in addition, by an English governess for whom she indicated annoyance for teaching her verbs, which she hated. She stated that her childhood was spent writing, dreaming and reading and that her verses would continue to play in her head until she wrote them down. Her colonizing experiences in her early life did not include living on a reserve in the same manner as did her father, George Johnson, who was Chief of the Six Nations of the Grand. She said she lived in a house that her father had built called Chiefswood, a mansion, which isolated her from the other children on the reserve. She would later write about reserve life as an expert, but in fact, she was able to escape many of the oppressive practices that other Aboriginal people experienced by virtue of her station in life, having received home schooling versus being sent to a residential school, and by looking more White than an Aboriginal person. In total she said she

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memory aid in storytelling; used as a badge of office, and as a way of keeping records and used to seal treaties and agreements when exchanged between Europeans and First Nations Peoples. Wampum played an important part in passing down stories from one generation to the next (Wikipedia, 2007). "Wampum quickly evolved into a formal currency after European/Native contact" (NativeTech, 1994:2), which the European politicians and traders used to exploit and gain Native peoples' territory or favour.

had only seven years of schooling, which included two years of high school at the Brantford Collegiate (1875-1877) after her father's death. The family had to move to Brantford and rent out their mansion, as they could not afford to stay at Chiefswood. Years later a new high school would be built in Brantford and named in her honor. She received high praise for her poetry, short stories and journalism, among them an award for fiction by Dominion Magazine in 1892 for "A Red Girl's Reasoning." One publisher of her work felt that Johnson "grasped the didactic potential of her venue and produced material which [was]...both pro-Native and feminist" (Moses and Goldie, 1992:377). The best example of the matriarchal influences in the Mohawk society would be a story entitled 'My Mother.' It is evident that Johnson was clear as to her racial and symbolic position when she stated:

> There are those who think they pay me a compliment in saying that I am just like a white woman...Oh, why have our people forced on me the name of Pauline Johnson?...Was not my Indian name good enough? Do you think you help us by bidding us to forget our blood? By teaching us to cast off all memory of our high ideas and our glorious past? I am an Indian. My pen and my life I devote to the memory of my own people. Forget that I was Pauline Johnson, but remember always that I was Tekahionwake, the Mohawk that humbly aspired to be the saga singer of her people, the bard of the noblest folk the world has ever seen, the sad historian of her own heroic race. (Moses and Goldie, 1992:378)

At the age of 31 Johnson began touring the country at a time when society, at the turn of the century, expected her to marry and have children. In 1894 she said she traveled to England and had her first poetry collection, 'The White Wampum', published despite being discouraged by a critic, Andrew Land, who said that she would never succeed. She told a reporter who interviewed her in England that the English "owe so much to the Indian--where would your British America have been had he helped the French as he helped you long years ago?--you have a very poor idea of the grandeur of the Indian nature. I daresay, you, like the rest, think and write of him as a poor degraded savage, walking round with a scalping knife in one hand and a

tomahawk in the other, seeking whom he may devour" (McMaster University Archives, 2007:1). On her way home from England, Johnson stated that she encountered racism but was equal to the task when a woman from New York City complained about English customs. The woman, stated Johnson, said that when she asked for ice water in England they looked at her as if she was an Indian savage, to which Johnson replied that they looked at her in the same manner. Because of Johnson's double life (Native/non-Native) many, she said, were puzzled by her 'civilized' manner. During her recitals she would dress as an Indian Princess in buckskin and rabbit's fur, including feathers and two scalps, and recite dramatic Native poems. During the second half of her performance she would dress in an evening gown and recite patriotic poems and short plays. She thought of herself as purely a Native person even though she did fit into the 'White' world, which was confusing for some non-Native people. She even called White people "palefaces." Perhaps this confusing attire for some led the before mentioned American woman to ask Johnson if her father was a real wild Red Indian to which Johnson replied in the affirmative. The woman told her that she did not look like one. Johnson told the woman that she was equally surprised to hear that the woman's father was a real White man.

She was, in fact, the first Native poet in Canada and the earliest Native poet to write about her cultural identity in English. She was considered to be a successful and well-known popular entertainer reciting her poetry, plays and comedy routines from Vancouver to Halifax. Considering that this was the nineteenth-century, it was an unusual feat for any woman, let alone a Native woman, to tour in an effort to promote Aboriginal people and their way of life. White people, at this point in time, were writing that the Native cultures were a "vanishing breed" that was "dying out." Johnson indicated that she was proud of her Native heritage and that to sing the glories of her own people was her aim, her joy and her pride. Brant (1994) referred to her as a

"revolutionary" (6) and Johnson continues to be respected by many Native authors that include Lee Maracle and Thomas King. Her most famous poem, "The Song My Paddle Sings" continues to be read by thousands of White Canadian school children. Some of Johnson's writings were about fighting the stereotypical ways in which non-Indigenous writers portrayed all Aboriginal peoples as belonging to one culture; as savages who were violent and untamed and criticizing those who would depict Aboriginal women as betraying their culture for the love of a 'White' man. In her efforts to demystify the untruths about the Indigenous peoples she was, in one sense, trying to change the status quo of a society that promoted the use of racist slurs to describe Native people. Her efforts were not located in higher educational institutions but within the higher echelons of society for she stated that she counted among her friends famous people such as the Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Nellie McClung, a feminist, a journalist and novelist, journalist Kathleen "Kit" Coleman and naturalist Ernest Thompson-Seaton, to name a few. However, it was apparent in Johnson's other writings that she was ambiguous with respect to her own representation of the Indigenous culture. Some of her writings about First Nations People as "noble savages" and "red men" did as much to perpetuate prejudice as those of non-Indigenous writers of the time. This contradiction in terms brings forth a question to which I do not have an answer. Did Johnson struggle with her mixed race identity? She had the benefit, I believe, as have I, of being accepted as White and the advantages attached to White privilege while clearly stating that she was of Aboriginal descent.

If Johnson were alive today, in terms of documenting possible options that the Aboriginal peoples might suggest in terms of dealing with the current Euro-Western higher educational pedagogies, she might give a recital that would express her pride in her Native heritage. A line

from her poem, "And He Said Fight On" comes to mind, "I fling defiance at them as I cry. Capitulate? Not I" (McMaster University Archives, 2007:1).

Beth E. Brant – 1941 –

> About 40 Indian children took the train at this depot for the Philadelphia Indian School last Friday. They were accompanied by the government agent, and seemed a bright looking lot. From *The Northern Observer* Massena, N.Y. July 20, 1892.
>
> (Brant, 1988:100)

Beth Brant (Degonwadonti) is a Bay of Quinte Mohawk from the Tyendinaga Mohawk First Nation's community. Her family lives on the Six Nations of the Grand River. Brant (1988) describes herself as an economically poor, light-skinned, uneducated half-breed who is a lesbian and a feminist. She stated that she was ashamed to be an Indian at the time she was in the fifth or sixth grade because she was a "pale, blonde child, [who] wore glasses, and had lots of baby fat" (Brant, 1994:113). She was jealous of her cousins who all 'looked' Mohawk. As she began to understand racism at school, she managed to avoid it by hiding her Mohawk identity from her classmates. Her girlfriends who lived on the same street did not see her as different; however, Brant did fear the 'other' kids at school. Her family was unaware of her 'White' identity at school. It was around this time that she obtained a library card and an obsession to read and a respect for books began. Books and movies shaped the images of the White society she lived in at the school, of which her family, she knew, did not want any part, unlike her as a child and teenager. Brant questioned if the confusion between being Native and wanting to be accepted in the White world had anything to do with the meaning of 'half-breed.' Neither she nor her family were aware that there were any books by Native writers, and had her family known, such books would surely have been in her home. Unfortunately, at the age of 17 she married and dropped out of high school and, as a result does not have a traditional Euro-Western education. She indicated

that her first real brush with racism was experienced from her mother's family that initially disapproved of her marriage to an Indian. It is a major theme that appears often in her writings.

Her traditional Native teachings included being taught Mohawk by her Grandpa but she lost the language after her Grandpa died. It was always a surprise, she stated, when the occasional Mohawk word appeared in her writings, a gift, she believed, from the spirits. He also taught her that Native men were to be respectful of women, hard workers, loving and playful with children. Her husband did not have these qualities and was very abusive. The only bright spot in the marriage was her three daughters. Her Grandma taught her that women are to be "strong, fierce protectors of family and land, independent of men while respecting them" (111). Brant said that her Grandma, mother and herself do not need a man to tell them how to fix or clean anything, and that it was her grandparents who formed her values and the beliefs that she holds dear. She admitted that she also inherited "secrets" that she learned to be silent about, and wanted to idealize the solid family unit she did have.

When she began to write at the age of forty in 1981, her stories were positive about her family, but soon they took on a different tone as she recognized there was another side of the family history that was not being told. Her family members were survivors of colonial oppression and, as a Mohawk woman, she grew up in a culture that resists and persists in spite of the many colonialists' untruths that pervaded. Brant admitted she had internalized these untruths. Her work, she stated, had taken on an autobiographical format that enabled her to unburden herself of racism, woman-hating and homophobia. Publishers in the early eighties were taking chances on women who were uneducated, women of color, and women who did not have any prior writing experience, as was her case. She referred to her writings as "gifts." The privilege of writing, "holds a responsibility to be witness to my people" (70). Brant (1994)

pointed out that literacy is a new concept to Indigenous peoples with fifty percent either functionally literate or illiterate. She challenged non-Native writers to accept their history of cultural dominance before writing about the history of Aboriginal people. It is important, she stated, that she tell the truth in her writings and that when she ceased to believe that she was a writer, she ceased to think Mohawk. Her story of how she received the gift of writing from a Bald Eagle bears telling.

> ...a great shadow blocked out the sunlight and the tip of a wing touched the front windshield. A Bald Eagle made his presence known to us. Denise stopped the car, I opened the door and stood, transfixed, as Eagle made a circle around us then flew to a nearby White Pine and settled himself on a branch. The branch dipped low from his weight, his dark wings folded around him, his white head touched by a flash of sunlight through the needles of the tree. I remember how his great talons gripped the branch as I moved closer and stood in front of him, my heart drumming inside my human body. We were locked together in vision. I could feel his heartbeat take over mine. I felt my hands curving and holding onto the branch. I heard the thoughts; the deep, scratching thoughts of blood, bone and prey, the thoughts of wind carrying me along, the thoughts of heartbeat. He blinked his eyes, unfolded his wings, and flew away. I watched him as I slowly came back to myself, to the smell around me, the breeze picking up and scattering dust in my face, my legs growing so weak I could hardly walk back to the car. When I got home, I began to write. (Brant, 1994:108)

Brant indicated that she never had the opportunity to go to university. Her father had attended college at night, so formal education was not an unknown entity in her household. Her two siblings did obtain university degrees. In terms of the future for her and 'others' that read her stories, she stated that it is important to break the existing scenarios that the cacophony of voices of the dominant White society produce. She said she is distressed at the women's movement's attempts to rename symbols associated with Native history and culture in colonial terms. For example, the term goddess has no place in Native religions. Brant stated, "One can only come from one's own culture and class" (30). She stated it is important to silence these misguided appropriating voices so that the Indigenous voices of the ancestors can be heard. Oral tradition,

she stated, is important for it "makes a complete circle of Indigenous truth" (Brant, 1994:19). It requires a listening and a telling of First Nations history, culture, teachings and spirit that is intentional and intense with a 'community consciousness' that allows Native people to remain connected to their own. In this way, the struggles of the Indigenous people in the colonial society will be kept visible, and as a result, Indigenous communities will continue to exist.

Summary

This chapter shows the very complex world in which the educated and less-educated Aboriginal women have lived. Their world is two-fold – being an Aboriginal person with the rich heritage that is a part of that, and being surrounded by and penetrated by colonial imperialism. It demonstrates how essential 'First Voice' storytelling is if racist and patriarchal constructs are to be diminished, if not abolished. Historically, racism is part of the analytical/theoretical scheme in the social organization of Euro-Western pedagogical designs. The next chapter examines the differences between Euro-Western White feminisms and the First Nations women's rights movements. Aboriginal people's traditional educational typologies that speak directly to Indigenous cultural beliefs are examined with respect to their potential implementation into Euro-Western White institutions of knowledge.

CHAPTER II: EUROCENTRIC/ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Feminism is ideally both a belief in universal equality and an action that we take together to turn this belief into a reality. All of us are a part of finding a humanizing way forward.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

Feminist pedagogy is a method of teaching that aims to draw very diverse people together. It promotes the idea that one can learn from others who may come from very different cultures or races. It can engender community as educators consciously weave students and faculty together to bring an end to patriarchal ways of thinking. It strives to provide the ability to learn without the oppressive practices that are imposed by some neo-colonialist educators in contemporary university settings. It encourages students to alter a social reality that negatively impacts their lives and to come up with the reasons behind their concerns and to talk about solutions to such problems. Education, with a feminist pedagogical philosophy, could be helpful in identifying oppression and hopefully would work towards its elimination.

Feminist pedagogy, according to Tisdale, has three primary strands—the "psychological...structural...and post structural models" (Hayes et al., 2000:162). The first refers to the impact on women living in a male-dominated society; the second refers to the systems of privilege and oppression in society that determine how some classes and races of women are viewed; and the third offers choice as to how knowledge is constructed and by whom, which is enabling for women. This challenging of Euro-Western authority in the classroom could lend itself to more Aboriginal women's voices being heard which, in turn, could alter their level of consciousness about the oppressive nature of their educational experiences. Monture-Angus in her book Thunder in my Soul – A Mohawk Woman Speaks (1995) states:

> ...if the goal of women, or Aboriginal Peoples, is to change the structure

> of society we must also develop new ways of challenging the philosophies and beliefs of the mainstream. To not encourage structural change is to continue to accept the marginalization of any perspective that is not White or male and so on. Structural change is the only way which meaningful and substantive long-term change can be secured. (221)

Cohee, Däumer, Kemp, Kregs, Lafky and Runzo (1998) propose that feminist pedagogy includes several tenets. They indicate that feminist pedagogy endeavours to improve the lives of women in and out of the classroom as it addresses the crucial categories of class, race and gender. Feminist pedagogy addresses the undeniable force of heterosexism and sexism in society; further it allows room to discuss and explore issues of sexuality honestly. Feminist pedagogy promotes the development of an epistemological framework with respect to the communal and subjective reality of knowing; and finally it asserts that feminist social practices are at its basis through consciousness-raising, social activism and social transformation.

In principle, feminist pedagogy sounds like the ideal. However, as Ellsworth (1989) points out, it is based on several assumptions that she had accepted at face value but no longer does, it being such a difficult concept to put into practice. The assumptions are that "all members in a classroom have equal opportunity to speak, all members respect other members' rights to speak and feel safe to speak and all ideas are tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment against fundamental judgements and moral principles" (314). In reality, all members in a classroom do not have equal opportunity for their voices to be heard because all ideas are not tolerated for all kinds of reasons that reflect the complex societal power dynamics. All voices do not become unified in their goals; some are more interested in perpetuating oppression, not the reverse. This does not mean that a teacher stop trying, but rather the necessity for putting forth the effort to unify the classroom as much as possible. Graveline (1998) can attest to the difficulty of such an environment based on her experiences with students in the classroom setting. Some

were shocked, fearful, disrespected and disrespectful as a result of what other students had divulged.

Davis in the 1980s speaks to the dynamics of differences between the 'old' more radical feminists versus the 'new' feminists who are beginning to experience the feminist approach for the first time (Lenskyj, 2005). These diametrically opposed ways of understanding feminism lead to differences of opinions that can prove to be a delicate balancing act for the instructor, regardless of the teaching philosophy. When coupled with "lesbian and heterosexual, Black and White, or even feminist and anti-feminist" (149) differences in what constitute reality, there is the potential for discord in the group. Everything that is experienced in any classroom is subject to being transformed by each individual, teacher included, based on their life experiences.

When one acknowledges how women, privileged or not, have been silenced in the traditional Euro-Western higher educational institutions, it is easy to grasp why feminist pedagogy claims that the traditional educational system has focused primarily on a privileged race and class of men. There are many versions of feminist pedagogy, and although each is guided by different theoretical underpinnings, they are all concerned about "increasing women's choices, status in society, and all note the importance of connection, relationship, and the role of affectivity in learning" (Hayes and Flannery, 2000:156). The primary concern of feminist pedagogy is in the development of curricula that shifts the climate and dynamics of the classroom to one that is more conducive to women, thereby increasing the voices of women, their self-esteem and their status in society.

DICHOTOMOUS VIEWS ON FEMINISM

I believe that the phrase 'commonality of experience' is a broad-based assumption that does not accurately denote the positioning of all women under one feminist umbrella. For

example, marginalized women and many Euro-Western White women are restricted as a result of not having the financial means to gain entrance into institutions of higher education. The process of alienating certain women based on class position has been a major criticism of feminism, since feminist theory itself is a set of political and social theories that are meant to challenge how women are oppressed in the course of patriarchal domination, including economic oppression, through the analysis of women's experiences. It may be speculated that non-marginalized feminists, predominantly White, middle-class women, have had the opportunity to challenge the economic disparities that exist, unlike other feminists such as those in the Aboriginal women's rights movement. Some Indigenous women think that Aboriginal women's rights, like sovereignty, are inherent rights and must be recognized as a powerful adjunct towards self-determination. Other Indigenous women, like other marginalized women of color and creeds, avoid the feminist designation, which may be due to their belief that their real-life concerns are not relevant to the Euro-Western White feminist movement. However, by incorporating diversity under the one feminist umbrella, feminism could become incredibly powerful and not just a superficial political position. In doing so, perhaps the racist and sexist attitudes that result from neo-colonialist oppression and that work at undermining women and perpetuating the divide amongst women could be diminished.

The goals of the Aboriginal women's movement for special rights differed from the women's movement for equal rights (Weaver, 1993). For instance, what qualified as real-life oppressive concerns for Western feminists did not relate in the same manner to the Indigenous women's movement. Western feminism means different things to many women some of which is incompatible with the Indigenous view of human nature. Some Western feminists adopt extreme views that label motherhood as instrumental in the oppression of women; that state

feminism does not support gender specific roles; others perceive feminism as a platform that bashes men, and others that women are being discriminated against because of their sex (Ouellette, 2002). In reality it is the socially constructed male dominance that is the basis of women's oppression in Western ideology. In Aboriginal thought, a "woman's role as childbearing, nurturer and custodian [of Mother Earth] is perceived as central to survival" (90). Aboriginal women equate the subordination of their roles with Euro-Western influences and the implementation of the colonial policy, namely, the Indian Act. Therefore, the equality they seek does not concern Euro-Western White women per se. Feminism, for Indigenous women, includes the recognition of tribal sovereignty and maintaining and promoting of Aboriginal traditions in order to survive as a people.

Is it possible for the women's political movement, labelled feminism, and Aboriginal women's activism to comfortably amalgamate? I have concerns with respect to the paradoxical nature of feminism. For example, Cott (1986) states that feminism aims for "individual freedoms by mobilizing sex solidarity...acknowledges diversity among women while positing that women recognize their unity...requires gender consciousness for its basis, yet calls for the elimination of prescribed gender roles" (Ouellette, 2002:25). One of the keys, perhaps, for there to be a coming together as a whole might be to have a better understanding of other women's beliefs and values. Promoting ignorance amongst individuals and cultures only fuels the "other" syndrome in society, i.e., when one group feels different from the other and therefore less than, or better than, the other. Brooks (2000) suggests that there is enough evidence to support the belief that the "importance of relationships, the integration of mind, body, and emotion, and the experience of institutionalized forms of discrimination are [all] themes that extend across the differences among women" (153). There would appear then to be a basis for consensus, an affirmative

linkage among the feminists' models. Regardless of a woman's gender, social class, or race, all women are victims of silence.

INDIGENOUS TOPOLOGY

To address the silence that some women experience, it is important to acknowledge Indigenous topology. The Sacred Ways of Life of First Nations can be described in many ways. The terms "ways of knowing" and "traditional knowledge" are used interchangeably. Traditional knowledge is "created, preserved, and dispersed" (Crowshoe, 2005:7) having been determined by a First Nation's land, language, culture, environment and region. A First Nation's culture is based on its beliefs about the Earth, the animals and the plants. Storytelling, usually by Elders and healers, is one of the ways in which traditional knowledge is shared in the community. First Nations communities and nations recognize the importance of passing down traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. It is an integral part of how First Nations make sense of, and share information. Crowshoe (2005) states that traditional knowledge may be rooted in storytelling, dances, ceremonies, ideologies, arts and crafts, traditions, or a combination of all of these. It is this way of life that sustains who the First Nations People are and what they pass on to future generations.

By comparison, Western ways of knowing are "rooted in academics, science, and literature" (Crowshoe, 11) which lacks the lived experience approach that is central to the First Nations knowledge base. The Western knowledge base is more rooted in facts, more linear than the cyclical First Nations model that adheres to the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical aspects and its connection to Mother Earth. As a consequence, the academic discipline of Native Studies has been established to seek a more integrated and holistic approach to the study of Native people. This discipline is not a subset of the long established Euro-Western knowledge

base but rather, a distinct entity of genre that speaks the truth to First Nations People, not about them in a mythical, stereotypical, discriminatory racist way. Douglas (1987) developed guidelines that support students in an Indigenous classroom.

> Students will demonstrate an understanding of Native heritage and contemporary lifestyles through an analysis of significant content from history, the social sciences and contemporary events...the ability to examine critically the contemporary issues (social, political, economic, legal, cultural) affecting the continued development of Native identity and lifestyle ...demonstrate an awareness, empathy and respect for the traditional Native value system that emphasizes the significance of the relationships among self-respect, respect for others and respect for the environment... demonstrate positive attitudes towards Native people in an attempt to prevent prejudicial and stereotypical perspectives from developing. (207)

Hampton (1995) delineates 'Indian education' into five different meanings. Prior to the influx of Europeans, traditional Indian education consisted of ceremonies, apprenticeships, teaching stories, oral histories, formal instruction, tag-along teaching and tutoring. The second phase consisted of Schooling for Self-Determination whereby schools were established to promote self-determination through the use of Native languages, the uniting of school with the community, and developing a positive attitude towards Native cultures. Unfortunately, Schooling for Assimilation was also introduced which produced the exact opposite of the self-determination schooling. The passage of the Indian Education Act of 1972, which was to shift the control of Indian education *of* Indians to Indian education *by* Indians, has done little to change the content, structure, methods and numbers of non-Native faculty using Native curricula and educational methods, such as the Medicine Wheel. I have discovered that the construction of the Medicine Wheel varies in different Aboriginal communities, although the premise remains the same. It is the physical manifestation of Spiritual energy; seeing life is a Circle[9], having East, South, West, and North directions, with Mother Earth being down and Father Sky being above. Some include

[9] "The circle symbolizes the continuity and connectedness of events with the added dynamism of movement" (Battiste and Barman, 1995:51).

Spirit, which is seen as either human or all that is. This leads to Hampton's final phase, Indian education Sui Generis, which means "a thing of its own kind" (10). This self-determining structure uses patterns or organizing principles, such as the six directions, consisting of East, South, West, North, Spirit and Earth, that are structured by Indian cultures to help organize and clarify one's thoughts as part of what is considered to be the dynamic traditional Indian educational experience. Hampton lists twelve standards for Indian education, which he contends that any theory of Indian education should address:

Spirituality – it denotes the spiritual relationships that exist between all things
Service – to serve all the people
Diversity – active implementation of diverse cultures
Culture – Indian cultures have their own ways of thought, teaching, learning and communicating
Tradition – maintains a continuity to define and preserve
Respect – demands relationships of personal respect
History – sense of history that does not avoid hard facts
Relentlessness – teachers as warriors in battle for Indian children's education
Vitality – recognizes and nourishes the powerful pattern of life that lies hidden due to oppression
Conflict – recognizes tensions and struggle between White and Indian education
Place – recognizes importance of an Indian sense of land, place, and territory
Transformation – recognizes need for changes in relationship between Indian and White and individual and society

Graveline (1998) states that traditional understandings are embodied in the Medicine Wheel that was used during ceremonies to make contact with Ancestral spirits. Modern day traditionalists use it to "illustrate/invoke/reinspire understandings of Ancestral beliefs in this contemporary world of separation and abstraction…the essential immanence and interconnectedness of all things…all life is a Circle" (75). This is quite the opposite of the linear thinking in the dominant Western industrial world. The teachings, according to Kathy Absolon, a Cree educator, warn of the dangers of becoming rhetorical when one's words are not followed up with actions that reflect what was verbally stated. Graveline's Model-In-Use, a term she uses

to refer to the evolving teaching model, is a proponent of this belief which brings the Medicine Wheel to life and, in doing so, students learn to hold close the valued offerings of the Aboriginal cultural beliefs.

> The interdependence of holiness and wholeness are integral to healing and teaching in Aboriginal Tradition: "[t]he holiness, or sacredness, of healing is manifested as a striving towards wholeness of spirit and an attempt to incorporate this wholeness of spirit into ourselves, our families, our communities, and the environment. (Graveline 1998:76)

Within the four areas of the Medicine Wheel (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual) there is an interaction that is required to maintain a healthy lifestyle. When applied to transformational pedagogy, Graveline states that all four areas play a role in enabling one to grow and maintain an alternative consciousness. If this is not the case and a state of imbalance appears in one area, this can lead to the entire organism being in a state of imbalance. Therefore, by using the holistic perspective of the Medicine Wheel, one can see the "entire educational process as a complex, integrated whole; psychological, spiritual, emotional and physical are all part of the human consciousness and are inseparable" (Graveline 1998:76). One needs to experience the whole of one's being, one's physical senses—such as taste, sight, touch, hearing and smelling to fully understand, and more importantly, remember – whether the teacher, or the learner.

Mi'kmaq Elders use their five physical senses in addition to six non-physical senses, which they consider to be gifts from the Creator. These include: memory, dreaming, spirit-travelling, thinking, imagination and visioning. They use these as others would use their sight. They believe that visions, dreams and spirit-travelling are all part of seeing what needs to be done to heal. Right brain energies, according to the Mi'kmaq Elders, include: myth, ritual, storytelling, meditation, art and metaphor, the latter of which is required to invent, create and to

challenge conformity. They believe that these right brain energies are essential for more holistic learning. This new Model-In-Use[10] of a personal educational experience can only be accomplished when one quiets the rational mind, relaxes and moves towards another state of consciousness. bell hooks (2003) echoes these sentiments:

> My belief in the power of prophetic imagination...what we cannot imagine we cannot bring into being...The important point is that prophetic imagination, like poetic imagination, is not confined to some private daydream, but is a fully public imagination, belonging to the public domain, inspiring the full range of communities belonging to it to commitment to fuller visions of well-being...Prophetic image, or prophetic dreaming, keeping visions alive is what stimulates diverse groups into becoming a culture of life, a biophilic, a life-loving culture...(195-196)

Traditional educators in Euro-Western pedagogical paradigms tend to divide these domains, causing an imbalance which, according to Aboriginal traditionalists, give rise to the narrowness of Euro-Western thought as it focuses primarily on cognition and not as an embodied experience. At the very basis of this educational conflict is the legacy of cultural interaction between the Aboriginal Peoples of North America and their European colonizers that has evolved over the past four centuries. This interaction has been riddled with contradictions and misconceptions due to the mistaken belief, on the part of the Europeans, that they were the superior culture and therefore it was understandable that the Aboriginal populace should assimilate into their culture, not vice versa. This assimilation did not include the traditional Aboriginal way that involved a written symbolic sophisticated system that shared a common ideal of how the world worked. It also did not acknowledge how the Aboriginal people acquired their strength from a close reciprocal relationship with the physical environment, hence the importance of the four directions contained in the Medicine Wheel and their vital connection to Mother Earth. Canadian Aboriginal people shared certain cultural attributes irrespective of their specific lifestyle or ecological base. They believed in the "unity of all aspects of life and

[10] "Model-In-Use, Model and In-Use refer to the evolving teaching model" (Graveline, 1998:6).

consequent lack of distinction between the '*secular*' and the '*sacred*'" (Barman, Hébert and McCaskill 1986:3). Family life and, in particular, the obligation to educate their children in a holistic fashion, were very highly valued.

The Smoke Rises

There are a number of Aboriginal traditional educational topologies that speak directly to Indigenous cultural beliefs that need to be examined. There appears to be controversy over the implementation of Aboriginal education, in terms of what is meaningful, appropriate, and necessary with respect to how the Indigenous culture will be represented in schools. In addition, contradictory issues have been raised with respect to goals and outcomes. Denzin (2005) argues that Indigenous pedagogies should contest the neo-colonial forces contained within modern universities. These forces encourage the colonizer to take responsibility for the traumas induced by colonization. Four characteristics of Indigenous pedagogy speak to this suffering: " (a) a quest for sovereignty, and the dismantling of global capitalism; (b) epistemologically, it privileges indigenous knowledge; (c) the earth is its "spiritual centre"; (d) socioculturally, it is grounded in "tribal and traditional ways of ways of life" (944). He states that the restorative Indigenous ecologies contained within Indigenous pedagogies attempt to rebuild nations and their peoples. This is not unlike the goals of feminist pedagogy in my estimation. The Native ecologies celebrate "survival, remembering, sharing, gendering, new forms of naming, networking, protecting and democratizing daily life" (944).

What processes should accompany linguistic and cultural development and inclusion? Should the educational content only include traditional Aboriginal ways or is there room for the Euro-Western model of education, thereby offering more diversity in the overall context? There are as many differing answers as there are questions. In particular, one Aboriginal Elder,

according to Battiste and Barman (1995), felt that the past should not be dwelt upon, but to focus only on bringing harmony and balance in the present. Others felt it was important to include historical references to promote healing of past tragedies in the Aboriginal communities and in the process there would be a better understanding of Aboriginal education. It was evident that this paradigmatic shift, which is necessary in any successful transformation and revitalization of a culture, caused confusion and contradictions within the Aboriginal community. A variety of theories put forth by educators such as Eber Hampton, Marie Battiste, Jean Barman and Fyre Jean Graveline, to name a few, relate to Native curricula and educational methods such as the Medicine Wheel. These theories could lead towards the education of Indigenous peoples in a more holistic fashion and, as such, bear further investigation.

Chasing the Four Winds: East-South-West-North

From my readings I have learned that as a method of investigation, most Tribal peoples honour the Sacred Circle[11], Sacred Hoop or Medicine Wheel so that they can learn from their experiences, their mistakes and successes. As such, the four directions are a way of expressing and bringing to the fore the need for change and the directions around the circle (East, South, West, North) that are used to promote learning and healing. Change can occur when one is conscious of what needs to be changed. Upon examination of the Sacred Circle concepts of Battiste and Barman (1995) and Graveline (1998), I recognize that their words may differ when describing the Circle experiences, but they follow the same concepts towards the betterment of the Indigenous peoples through consciousness-raising. If one applies the traditional Indian education pedagogy to the aforementioned problems, the analogy associated with the *Eastern*

[11] The Sacred Circle is a symbolic circle, which incorporates the spiritual beliefs of many First Nations People. It is named the Medicine Wheel on the Plains. Most Tribal peoples of the earth honour it. It is symbolic of wholeness and completion. Four seasons, elemental powers, races of humanity, laws of living in community and four directions are all part of the Sacred Circle. Four is the sacred number. The Circle is a container for energy that is shared together (Graveline, 1998).

Door, which represents spring, is appropriate. Battiste and Barman state that the *Eastern Door* is where the Sacred Circle opens and offers new beginnings in reconceptualizing the unique framework that is distinctive and diverse to First Nations education in over 300 Aboriginal communities, which encompass fifty-two Aboriginal languages. In Graveline's Model-in-Use (her teaching model), which is circular, personal and holistic, the *Eastern Door* is about challenging Eurocentric consciousness. Through Aboriginal people's consciousness-raising a deeper understanding of the collective reality occurs, which can be the beginning of political change.

Battiste and Barman infer that the *Southern Door* represents summer, whereby one connects to and tries to maintain the unique Aboriginal ways of knowing and relating with the contradictions that exist in modern society. Graveline refers to the *Southern Door* as a place to introduce Aboriginal spirituality into the classroom text. As such, it challenges the Aboriginal students to see the bountiful gifts that their culture has to offer.

The *Western Door,* according to Battiste and Barman, brings autumn and with it the harsh realities that are a result of continuous disappointments and frustrations that accompany the historical complexities and lack of changes and traditional educational opportunities for Aboriginal people. For Graveline, the *Western Door* is about building community inside and outside the classroom. She challenges Aboriginal students to pay attention to the struggle, to regain their emotional balance as a result of the pain inflicted by their educational experiences. True resistance is about confronting one's pain, or the pain of others and then wanting to make changes.

For Battiste and Barman, the *Northern Door* speaks of winter and to the legacy of the Aboriginal people's ability to endure and survive the painful contradictions in modern society.

Graveline also pictures winter through the *Northern Door* and with it the gift of silence. It is about enacting changes as a result of all the knowledge that one has gained by way of the other three doors. Balance is achieved by following this form of Aboriginal praxis. The continuum of the Medicine Wheel, Sacred Circle or Sacred Hoop is evolutionary and cyclical in its teaching and healing process. It is important for one's identity to identify and understand the balance, the interconnectedness and the wholeness that the Wheel, Circle or Hoop expresses. Through the experiential process provided by the animal and plant world or one's Elders, one has a sense of what the basic pattern of balance looks like. Traditional teaching and healing involve one's respecting and recognizing one's experiences and form a connection to Mother Earth (Graveline, 1998). As a result, one can begin to identify with the pattern of the Wheel, which is a positive pattern of balance, not only for oneself, but also for others.

All of these doors contained within the Sacred Circle, with its Aboriginal worldview and spiritual philosophy, can inevitably lead to the creation of pedagogy that is nurturing by nature to the minds, bodies and souls of the Aboriginal people. Changes as a result of the Sacred Circle praxis that would enhance the cultural experiences of Aboriginal women in higher education include the four fundamental laws of living in community, according to the traditionalists. These are caring, honesty, respect and sharing, all of which speak to one's sense of identity (Graveline, 1998:57). Madeleine Dion Stout, a Cree educator, revealed key components that construct Aboriginal identity.

1. discovering the centrality of *self*, especially individual will and ability or "medicine";
2. transmitting individual power to *family* through values, attitudes, behaviour and institutions;
3. extending the family to the broader end of *community* and developing *agency* to connect diverse groups of people;
4. challenging the existing imbalances between the cultural/structural divide of all peoples of the *world*; and;

5. recreating *self* in solidarity with those who are, those who have been and those who are yet to be. (Graveline, 1998:57)

As stated by Allen (1986), "the connection between people in a Circle creates the threads that will weave the human species back into the Sacred Hoop of life" (Graveline, 1998:131). The power contained in the circle can enrich the lives of all peoples by promoting understanding and bridging differences that exist between cultures. This is in direct opposition to the individualistic colonist philosophies that divide and conquer nations.

As I have demonstrated, there are obvious differences between Euro-Western White feminist pedagogy and the concept of Aboriginal rights for Aboriginal women. Most notably, there is a divide between the concept of individuality and the Aboriginal community-based ideology. There are also differences noted in the concepts that define the systems of knowledge, i.e., the Indigenous ideology that is based on the Sacred Circle model of East, South, West, and North as a way of enacting change in contrast to the more linear Euro-Western modes of teaching. The next chapter will outline the background and methodology I used to provide a solid platform from which to examine the narratives of eight Aboriginal women who have experienced higher education, both as students and as faculty members.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

RATIONALE

In this chapter I describe how I constructed my exploration by using qualitative methodology, in particular, contemporary narrative inquiry, which Chase (2005) defines as a "subtype—of qualitative inquiry" (651). Narrative inquiry, state Clandinin and Murphy (2007), deals with individual lives and is the technique used to understand human existence, which I sought to do in my study. This particular open-ended style of research provided for shifting paradigms, using both the more traditional Euro-Western thought processes and the Aboriginal holistic models, such as the Sacred Circle topology. This approach helped me to better understand the educational discord that existed between the two. This cross-cultural approach was not without its challenges in terms of interpreting and analyzing the narratives that also resembled my personal experiences.

Background – Women in Academia

To provide the platform upon which the Aboriginal women's narratives can be raised, I have included information that speaks to the struggles that I have encountered in Euro-Western society with defining myself as an authentic Native woman. In the body of the genre that I examined by authors such as Anderson,Young, Battiste, Lawrence, LaRocque, Brant, Graveline, Maracle, Johnson and Monture-Angus, it was apparent that 'chilly climate' practices were prevalent. The term "chilly climate," states Prentice (2000), was first coined by theorists Bernice Sandler and Roberta Hall in 1982 to denote inequality and discrimination in higher education that marginalizes women. The marginalization occurs as a result of the cumulative effects of women being devalued, excluded, and stereotyped, which in turn continues to revictimize the individual over time. These chilly climate practices were indicative in the narratives of the lives

of Indigenous women as the norm, in and out of the academy. Feminists and equity-seekers define the concept "climate" as a "pervasive and systemic institutional order...which blocks women's full participation in the university" (Prentice, 2000:196). The limited access to higher education as a result of these discriminatory practices towards women has led them to being underrepresented on the teaching staff of universities in North America—revictimization.

I believe it is important to quantify the current positioning of the Aboriginal peoples, women in particular, by way of reports currently available through Statistics Canada. These reports clearly indicate the need, and indeed the urgency, to research the barriers to Aboriginal women's educational endeavours, according to Stout and Kipling (1998), in their report on Aboriginal Women in Canada for the Status of Women Canada. More importantly, they suggest that policies and programs should be put into place, thereby making the Aboriginal women's educational experience relevant to their life goals and contexts. It is important that current government structures, based on structural determination of colonialism and patriarchy, design policies that challenge and rectify the tendency to negate or downplay Aboriginal women's agency and the exclusion of Aboriginal women from civil society. Stout and Kipling (1998) affirm, "Aboriginal women remain a highly marginalized segment of the Canadian population" (5). It is evidenced in all the reports that the legacy of marginalization continues with respect to the adversities that many Aboriginal women face, such as poverty, abuse (physical and sexual), ill-health and above all, the continued efforts to silence their voices and roles as key change agents beyond their own communities—higher education.

The 1998 Statistics Canada's Status of Women Canada reported that non-Indigenous Canadian women have made tremendous strides with respect to attaining a university degree. The percentage of students attending Canadian universities who were women jumped from 37%

in 1972-73 to 55% in 1997-98. In 1996, the number of non-Indigenous women who completed their university education was four times higher than in 1971. The proportion of Aboriginal students who completed university between 1986-96 more than doubled. However, Aboriginal adults (aged 20 – 29) were still 20% below the levels of non-Aboriginal Canadians in 1996 who attained a university degree (Tait, 1999). Data from census metropolitan areas that examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Aboriginal population show that between 1981 and 2001, the number of Aboriginal young adults (25-34) who completed postsecondary education rose dramatically, more so for females than for males (Siggner and Costs, 2005).

A further Statistics Canada (2006) study reported a summary of Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 (APS) that was conducted after the 1991 Census. This was a large-scale survey of the Provincial and Territorial off reserve Aboriginal population which reported Aboriginal ancestry, Aboriginal identity, Registered Indian status and/or Band membership. It highlighted their educational achievements across Canada, including the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Ontario has the largest number of Aboriginal peoples in Canada living there (1 in 5), and the largest majority of Aboriginal people who live off reserve (78%). The survey indicated an improvement in off reserve Aboriginal people's educational profiles. In 1996, 37% (25 and over) had post-secondary qualifications. This increased to 42% in 2001 (O'Donnell and Ballardin, 2006). All the reports indicated that Native women attain lower average levels of education than their non-Native counterparts, which is significant when the statistics indicate that employment rates are generally higher for women with more education—a vicious circle that sustains economic poverty. "Aboriginal women remain a higher marginalized segment of the Canadian population" (Stout and Kipling, 1998:5).

However, McMullen (2005) in her study on Aboriginal peoples in urban areas notes that with the trend towards more Aboriginal women in higher education there is room for optimism, however cautious it might be. Having said that, there are still the "chilly climate" challenges within the post-secondary institutions that all women face, especially marginalized women. Stout and Kipling (1998) assert that there has been improvement since the mid-to-late 1970s due to Euro-Western White feminism and the women's movement that aroused interest in the specificity of the lives of Aboriginal women. As part of the ongoing need for improvement, three points need to be considered before initiating changes in the educational forum. "Aboriginal women carry out their daily activities in the face of ongoing challenges, such as racism and sexism...Second, Aboriginal women are resilient to a degree that has allowed them to move forward and succeed...despite the countervailing force of multi-faceted discrimination... Finally, Aboriginal women embody differences which must neither be erased nor forgotten, if one hopes to formulate policy that is truly responsive to their needs and concerns" (Stout and Kipling, 1998:8).

Personal Rationale

My interest in this research project served to heighten my awareness of how all women have been perceived in a variety of venues via the chilly climate syndrome in academia. With respect to differences, in particular differences associated with privilege, power relations are hidden under the guise that the classroom is a neutral place when, in reality, disparities exist that reflect the social structures outside the classroom, which are always gendered, raced and classed. Because of gender and age prejudices, economic opportunities are withheld from women, especially marginalized women, because of society's racist and sexist interpretations about their abilities. It is apparent that there is a strong link between how society views women and the way

in which women interpret their reality. This tenet has proven to be interwoven into the very fabric of Aboriginal women's higher educational experiences. In my thesis, I made the decision to use narratives to heighten the awareness of how the chilly climate practices of power and domination over women in academia and society centre on issues of gender, race and class.

On a more personal level my interest in this study is in part due to my own experience of being female within a particular historical sociocultural timeframe and the impact that this has had on how I viewed my own lived experiences. The way in which I view my heritage today is quite different from how I viewed it growing up, for now I understand that I was raised in a home that contained hidden Indigenous beliefs, in addition to the 'White' Euro-Western realities of the day. The long held secrets of my family's heritage led to many years of uncertainty and chaos, culminating in my recent endeavours to dig deeper into the pool of silence and unearth the truth about my family of origin. I did not feel that I had any control over my circumstances, as the only child raised in isolation and silence by older conservative parents in a working class family in the 1950s. However, I have come to realize that I am a product of the social and cultural influences within the family environment, which have given rise to my own academic aspirations in an attempt to overcome past prejudices where women and education are concerned. Higher education was not discussed in a home where the belief was upheld that women stopped working after marriage, making education a low priority. Because of my exposure to this type of thinking, I saw myself in my family as having less value than had I been born a male.

How do I, as the author of this thesis, delineate myself as an Aboriginal person within the Aboriginal women's Nativeness? This brings into question my own authenticity. Am I to classify myself as an authentic White person, an authentic Aboriginal person, or both? The latter

incorporates many different connotations as to what qualifies one as an authentic Aboriginal person. The 1985 Indian Act (generally known as Bill C-31) amended the original Indian Act which dates from 1876. It embodied three fundamental principles: (1) the removal of gender-based discrimination; (2) changing the meaning of "status" which allowed for the restoration of status and membership rights to eligible individuals; and (3) allowing bands to define their own membership rules. (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2008)

I regained my own status as a result of the second principle, but I am not able to pass my Native lineage down to my children, as is the case with many other women who were reinstated in this manner. Because of Bill C-31, the future of the Native status population will be reduced drastically, and the reality of the Indigenous populace vanishing is becoming more and more a truism. Women, who are now allowed to return to the reserves as a result of Bill C-31, have "found themselves stigmatized and often rejected" (Status of Women Canada, 2006:6). As a matter of record, mine was the only Indigenous narrative to claim status via this route, and I admit to feelings of inferiority as a result of how I regained my status. My mother's father enfranchised my mother when she was underage, which resulted in my eligibility claim. However, in terms of how I have viewed my personal entitlement, I am a proud member of the Tuscarora[12] Nation located within the Six Nations of the Grand River beside the New Credit Reserve. My totem is the Turtle. Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 28), I, as a White woman, am assured equality rights, the same as any male, whereby I am protected under the law. Section 35[13] of the Constitution pertains to Indigenous peoples under the heading

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[12] The Tuscaroras joined the Iroquois Confederacy, which then became known as the Six Nations, in 1722. The Oneida, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga and the Seneca were the original five nations. The Tuscaroras were a "southern Iroquois group from the Carolinas" (Smith, 1987:24/25).

[13] Any reconciliation process must consider the Supreme Court's direction in Delgamuukw v. B.C., [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010: Chief Justice Lamer stated, "Since the purpose of s. 35(1) is to reconcile the prior presence of aboriginal

"Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada." It goes on to say that Aboriginal and treaty rights are "guaranteed equally to male and female persons" (Monture-Angus, 1999:61). As an authentic mixed race person, who has regained her status, I am a person of privilege who receives the benefits from both cultures. The worst-case scenario, for any individual Indigenous or non-Indigenous person, would involve being segregated as a non-descript person who has no rights at all.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This study of Indigenous women's narratives involved the following questions to examine how the Euro-Western educational practices have affected or benefited the women's cultural beliefs or contributed to or interfered with the learning process. (1) What do the narratives of Indigenous women tell us about their experiences of higher education? (2) Are there identifiable points of tension or contradiction between pedagogies and knowledge systems (Euro-Western vs. First Nations) which are implicit or explicit in their accounts? (3) What changes in higher education practices and pedagogies are implied by the narratives? These questions explore the "hidden curriculum" of oppression towards marginalized women in Euro-Western education.

I examined the narratives of Indigenous women in higher education to ascertain if their experiences of Euro-Western and/or Aboriginal educational practices negated or enhanced their educational experiences as a student. I also investigated if, as faculty members, they had experienced discriminatory and racist practices and how these had impacted their overall

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peoples in North America with the assertion of Crown sovereignty, it is clear from this statement that s. 35(1) must recognize and affirm both aspects of that prior presence – first, the occupation of land, and second, the prior social organization and distinctive cultures of aboriginal peoples on that land (Morellato, 2003:2).

understanding of academia. In the process, differences and similarities were examined in an effort to decipher what constitutes knowledge for Indigenous women in higher education and to ascertain if it is possible for Indigenous women to maintain and balance a positive self-Native identity within the Euro-Western skill set that is required to live/work in a Euro-Western society. The data set consisted of a compilation of Indigenous women's narratives from published books, journals and the Internet. The thesis examines the possible benefits when the Euro-Western educational practices are incorporated with a more holistic approach; namely, Aboriginal topology, which promotes Aboriginal women's sense of empowerment and self-worth. As a result, I had the opportunity to experience Aboriginal topology—a more holistic approach to education—which was in direct contrast to how I was primarily educated to date.

The terminology used to define Native identity appears in varying formats. Each is capitalized to signify its importance. For instance, First Nations is interchangeably used with an Aboriginal person, a Native person and an Indigenous person. The term First Nations has no legal standing in Canada. However, it was introduced in the early 1980's to replace "band or Indian, which some people found offensive" (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007:12). The term 'Indian' is part of the Indian Act and, as such, considered to be legal terminology that is used to govern the First Nations People of Canada. Terms used to express the sacred concepts in Aboriginal cultures, in addition to cultural and racial qualifiers, including White, are also capitalized.

I, as a female gendered, multiculturally situated researcher, entered the investigation as one who has been inextricably linked to the Euro-Western colonized political, social, and historical contextualized White world (Andrews, 2007). As such, based on the biases that I have inherited from my Eurocentric upbringing, it was important that I use methodology that allowed

me the multifaceted analytical lenses that I required to locate myself within the Indigenous world via the narratives of Aboriginal women. As a result of trying to understand the "other," I learned about myself, thereby completing a circle of understanding. In the process of (re)locating myself, by employing a cross-cultural approach, there were epochal changes in my own sense of identity. I found that I wanted to distance myself from the White world, to deny that the oppressive behaviour I witnessed included me and that I was one of the many parts of the interlocking system of oppression. I felt shame at how Whiteness described the power and privilege of the sociocultural beliefs of the world. I became uncomfortable in my White skin and it was increasingly difficult to construct myself as a White or Aboriginal woman in and out of the academy. My heightened awareness opened more doors towards enabling me to better understand marginalized women and what is important to them.

The Embers Glow – First Voice

I discovered from my readings that Aboriginal people believe that Indian education is the most vital aspect of a culture in maintaining its integrity and in the strengthening of its First Nations languages. One's culture, based upon the strong foundations of ancestral heritage, is where deep values and a view of the world are formed. The context of their knowledge base is therefore ultimately guided by how they interpret their experiences which, in turn, brings forth the concept of what it means to be an Aboriginal person. Ideally, one must act in ways that are congruent with one's beliefs, values and morals. Consequently, I understand the need for Aboriginal people to receive holistic curricula.

Aboriginal people and other non-White women have been marginalized and oppressed throughout time due to patriarchal domination, as have White women. However, my focus centred on Aboriginal women. I believe that one of the keys to lessening the divide between

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is mutual respect and that it can be derived, in part, when the Aboriginal and Western educational systems intersect. This is difficult with the great divide that still exists in society between the White and non-White ideology and that is reflected in the Euro-Western educational forum. If this change were to be made, it would entail a lessening of the Euro-Western linear approach to make room for the Aboriginal holistic ideology in the classroom. The historical litany of non-Indigenous (colonized) published literature misappropriates the epistemological and ontological beliefs of the Indigenous communities. As a result, the possible classroom inclusion of the Aboriginal people's traditional rich sacred (non-colonized) knowledge, with its 'authentic' Indigenous perspectives, seems to be more wishful thinking than based on reality. It was evident that the existing dominant Euro-Western patriarchal educational system and the Aboriginal teachings were not consistent, but distinct, in their historical perspectives. The prospect of such a venture could only be accomplished if the lies and myths that have perpetuated in Eurocentric pedagogy about First Nations People were acknowledged as such, and the Native community accorded the respect that is long overdue. Not likely, even though it would lead towards a better understanding of the "others" identity, which is an important process of human growth and development in society. One's identity provides a framework for one's life, one's worldview and ultimately one's place in it. Benham (2007) states that "multiplicitous realities" (519) have value and this needs to be recognized. With the introduction of new paradigms of knowledge there will be increased awareness, connectedness and wholeness that are open to cross-cultural possibilities.

In The Crosshairs

Colonialization, under the guise of cross-cultural communication, superimposes a system of knowledge over other systems of knowledge. In the process there is a reduction and

appropriation of the "Otherness." In terms of the Native population, the colonialists have perpetuated myths and lies that downgrade the Native point of view. Hence, it became silenced. Indigenous peoples believe that the First Nations scholars, cultural experts and storytellers should be the first tellers of their narratives/stories. As a result, tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers can arise as a result of some Indigenous scholars taking exception to their life's narrative being told by non-Indigenous people. For instance, Graveline (1998) refers to cross-cultural practices that arise and have the propensity to divide participants when debating issues. The use of certain words can have multiple interpretations when taken out of context, based on what is relevant to one's belief system, and if it is one's first language. In all spheres of civilized life the apartheid type of difference continues to operate. Minh-ha (1989) states that storytelling as a vehicle to challenge the White beliefs about the Native culture is important. She adds that non-Native people who have studied Indigenous storytelling stated: "What especially impressed me was their eagerness to make me understand. To me this eagerness became proof of the high value they set on their stories and what they represented" (Minh-ha, 1989:123). Native people embody their history—the past courses through their veins as it does in all cultures. Freeman (2007) states, "The self is the instrument which allows us not only to live the truth but to contemplate it, and thereby to be comforted by meaning—which is simply the awareness of relationship" (140).

As we have seen, Euro-Western academic knowledge is different from the Indigenous ways of knowing. Benham (2007) attributes this difference to the manner in which power to bring about change is defined. The Euro-Western concept of narrative is connected more to the development of an autonomous self whereas other cultural genres of remembering hold that the narrative will lead to the advancement of social interrelatedness (Andrews, 2007). The

Indigenous power, Benham (2007) states, is considered sacred power that is passed on by way of ceremony and story and is considered communal, not solely personal. Native stories are meant to be "cogent theories of the complexities of the sociopolitical organization of native communities" (521) which increase the Indigenous people's understanding of their contemporary life with its rich historical significance. I believe it is difficult, if not impossible, to write with any accuracy through my cultural lens about the sociocultural complexities of a society that I have not experienced. In the process I become the "other." I would argue however, amidst my feelings of embarrassment as I acknowledge the simple truth that the Indigenous frameworks do not fit effortlessly into Euro-Western educational pedagogy, that it is possible to contribute if I can imagine the Indigenous world beyond the one I have known, Eurocentric. The text of Native writers is not about persuading others of the value contained in their traditional knowledge base, but rather about the more important issues of policy, pedagogy and practice in higher education. There is a paradox, states Benham (2007), between how Western academics see knowledge and how Native people view it. He explains that Indigenous people view knowledge as sacred, deeply personal and not as property which is how some of the colonialists see it. Indigenous narratives have the propensity to transform and illuminate educational practices and policies. Through the global integration of narratives, subtle cultural variations in meanings can be integrated into the development and instruction of curricula (Benham, 2007). Narratives have the capacity to tell the truth about the cultural and sociopolitical nuances through the eyes and voices of Indigenous community members for they have the ability to engage the community through collective memory and to raise social consciousness.

At the heart of cross-cultural research is "the seeing the difference" (Andrews, 2007:489). I believe it is prudent to acknowledge that such a venture would be difficult to achieve, if not

impossible, for non-Indigenous writers on a large scale. I have come to believe that the unique tenets embedded within the First Nations culture preclude the true authorial voice from being anything but their own. Cultural specificity becomes an issue when a non-Indigenous person misrepresents another culture through ignorance. One must be cognizant of the features that define identity, the importance of delineating what is the self and other for, in the process of crossing boundaries, the self becomes at risk. Cross-cultural research is a risky venture. The naïve suggestion that I might consider my newfound Indigenous heritage as going home is in reality far more complicated than that. The "cultural hybridization" (Andrews, 2007:508) and homogeneity of experiences from living as a White person in a White community preclude my ability to fully assimilate into the Indigenous culture. Nevertheless, the risk is worth the effort, for there is much to be learned beyond one's cultural boundaries and "cultural uncertainty affords creativity" (498).

Sacred Feathers

I approached the women's narratives as a distinct form of social action genre that would illuminate their experiences. When someone tells a story, states Chase (2005), "She shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience, and reality..." (659). It was important that I was aware of their particular First Voice, a critical pedagogical tool that guides their knowledge base. I did not question the factual nature of their narratives; I only wanted to highlight their versions of reality, their experiences, and their sense of self that are produced through the storytelling. That is not to say that they are not accountable. I believe the storyteller accomplishes credibility. The women's stories were based on the social locations from which they spoke. I, as narrator, was cognizant of my subjectivity, that is, my interests and social location, and how it played a role in how I construed their voice based on my perceived interpretative authority as researcher.

In the process, all the narrators, the Aboriginal women and myself, became the protagonists of our own experiences, either as a part of the experience or by observing the actions of others. I must also acknowledge that I viewed myself as a non-Indigenous narrator, and as such, an outsider to the experiences of the colonized Indigenous peoples. As a consequence, I needed to be mindful of the Euro-Western legacy of colonizing the other, to resist turning the Indigenous women into the essentialized other, and to endeavour to deconstruct and decolonize the privileged Euro-Western systems of knowledge, thereby making them the object of inquiry, not the Indigenous systems of knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The examination of the Aboriginal women's narratives involved various steps. The narratives were chosen as a result of two unique common threads—all the women wrote about their experiences as Aboriginal women, and all had attended institutions of higher education. I selected the first eight narrators that crossed my path. I did not need to reject any. I also included an additional two narratives that did not fit my criteria, because they were both from Six Nations of the Grand River, and my high school bore the name of one of these women. The latter two for me completed a circle, taking me back to my origins. I was introduced to a number of these Aboriginal women through a course I had studied on Aboriginal literature at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The rest crossed my path through bibliographies. I used several sources for most of the women.

To assimilate the information derived from the narratives, I formulated a matrix of categories for each woman's narrative: (1) an overview of each woman's personal experiences in higher education (devaluation, stereotyping, exclusion and revictimization); (2) identifiable explicit and implicit tensions or contradictions between pedagogies and knowledge; (3) implied changes in higher education and pedagogies in the narratives. As a result, dominant themes

emerged – identity, oppression/racism, education and vision – which are discussed in Chapter VI. My narrative was also included. It was important to notice the differences and similarities amongst the women's narratives, and to also examine how each viewed and responded in a similar or dissimilar manner to parallel events in their lives. It was important that I capture the unique histories, the "temporal development" of these women's lives (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007:633).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research involves the studied collection and use of empirical materials such as one's life story, personal experiences, visual and interactional text, to name a few. These methods describe moments that are problematic and have meaning in individuals' lives. That said, I caution the reader to not accept my revelations as the authority outside the text of this thesis. My text—my reality—pertains to my experiences as an individual. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out that it is important for researchers to identify their ideology and biases because there is no bias-or value-free design. They contend, "no single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience" (12). It is not possible, states Brady (2005), to unpackage commonly held experiences, for there are individual versions of every experience because of semiotic particulars that separate the whole from the part. I needed to respect and accept the truthfulness that each woman embedded within her narrative, and take ownership of how my interpretations, which reflect my perspective, altered that reality. It is important that I avoided making claims of certainty when I was not able to back up what was stated within the narratives as the truth. Therefore I, as a qualitative researcher, understand and accept that my research was based on my ideological positioning which provided me with a conceptual framework. This framework included the sociological ethos (the way men and

women were viewed in society) that produced the patriarchal ideology of my upbringing and which also appeared in the narratives.

The chilly climate practices that I experienced in academia have prompted me to explore my narrative using First Voice in an attempt to delineate these experiences in higher education. In the following chapter, I have woven my story amidst the Indigenous topology of the eight women.

CHAPTER IV: NARRATIVE PROFILES

NARRATIVES THAT SPEAK THE TRUTH

The fundamental importance of narrative can be gathered from some of the phrases that humans use to restructure their world. Narratives organize data in a way that represents and explains their experiences. When one studies the perceptual activity that organizes the oral accounts of one's personal experience one can examine the tellers' representations and explanations of experience. These overt manifestations of the mind in action, according to Chafe (1990), are windows to both the content of the mind and its ongoing operations. (Cortazzi, 1993) This chapter will give the reader a sense of my struggles in a family that silenced a part of my ancestry as a result of colonialist influences. Hence, my need to put forth my story.

Narratives have power! How one utilizes that power is open to interpretation. Narratives explore and illuminate knowledge that connects one with one's roots, one's relationships with others, one's community and one's environment. Narratives for Aboriginal people, written by Aboriginal people, are reminiscent detailed accounts of loss and sovereignty, home and identity, which recognize the importance of the narratives as a pathway to the sacred Indigenous knowledge. Narratives are cumulative moments that affect the meaning and nature of events, when interpreting and organizing unique perspectives as a result of their temporal element. The power of colonialism has disrupted the Indigenous perspective that contains the qualities of both the physical (metaphysical) and the abstract (spiritual), states Benham (2007). She indicates that most published works about the Indigenous community, other than autobiographical narratives, are written by non-Indigenous people, and as a result are not from an Aboriginal perspective. In addition, they tend to aim at promoting the interests and attitudes of the colonizers towards the Native community.

Narratives written by Aboriginal women develop and sustain the voice of Aboriginal women. They open the window to reality and offer a cultural and relational site for learning. By looking into the narratives of another, one can get insight into one's own experiences and when narrating one's own experiences, one can reflect and learn from others, which can lead to change. The Aboriginal women's stories that emerged put a wider, more distant voice on my narrative, which enabled me to reflect and relive my own experience through the eyes of the women of Aboriginal descent. I realize that I cannot provide a truly Indigenous people's perspective within my study, for I do not have it to give—born and bred White. I can, however, try to be more sensitive and inclusive in the manner in which I interpret the reality of the Indigenous women by "making visible and loud what has been silent and invisible …promote a generative learning process" (Benham, 2007:517) that may evoke change, however small, in the colonized status quo. For example, Razack (1993) states that the central strategies for social change are contained within storytelling, in particular, in the areas of education and law. Monture-Angus (1995) also speaks to the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in the criminal justice system and education. Her work on storytelling connects the political context of Aboriginal people's lives with her academic work—defined as a path breaker for all Aboriginal people, especially women. She reflects and shares her educational experiences in the educational institutions that have continuously wronged Aboriginal people.

The Indigenous communal and personal existence is reliant on the development of one's identity in one's narrative and in the telling and retelling of stories and historical memories as a means of preserving the Native ontology. The stories become the sacred tool, the language that is used to mirror back one's reality, and its importance lies in how one formulates that reality, for one cannot extricate oneself from the language that defines the understanding of the world in

which one lives. This, in turn, states Kerby (1991), personifies how one understands the world and oneself. Stories about and by other people from different cultures expand one's knowledge. Self-narrating one's life through story is determined by one's language and the genres of storytelling inherited from one's traditions and how conscious one is of the broad socio-political arena.

The narrative, therefore, is a primary vehicle that cannot escape being evaluated and it is with this in mind that I hermeneutically studied the narratives of the Aboriginal women from the viewpoint of my experiences within my own storytelling. My identity, not unlike that of the Aboriginal women, can be somewhat fragmented, thereby lending itself to a different story at another place in time. The cathartic value derived from these narratives can only be experienced based on the implicit truths that presented themselves and were constrained within this study by virtue of the stories told at a specific moment in time. This is not to say that the accounts are historically correct because the past is something that is continuously updated by virtue of our temporal human existence. Benham (2007) has found that the temporal element within Indigenous narratives is part of cumulative moments that interpret and organize unique perspectives. These perspectives are embedded and affect the meaning and nature of events in interrelated arenas that are culturally, politically, historically and ecologically based. As we evolve the truths as we know them can reconfigure themselves which then can lead to an entirely different narrative, one that we truly believe to be our new autobiographical account. It becomes exactly that, and nothing more, at that moment in time, which may or may not be based on the expansive semiotic sphere that prevails in society; e.g., the media, the arts, the descriptive language, and so on. There can be no final truth for even as I attempted to interpret the narratives before me, I too became a spectator and a subject of the same inquiry.

Forked Tongue – Veracity

> We can build a world of truth
> within ourselves and—simply because we
> are human beings—find the material world of our
> perception unsatisfactory. In this way, we build a world truth
> within us. And when we truly examine that world, we see something
> there that transcends all physicality…The existence of the world of truth thus
> suffices to convince us that we are sharers of a spiritual world, for we live in it with our truth.
> (Steiner, 1999:173)

There is a fundamental difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies as to where truth is seen to be located. Monture-Angus (1995) states that the truth, according to the Aboriginal way, is internal to the self, whereas, in the non-Aboriginal way, truth is located outside of the self. Truth and introspection are very important and lead to increased consciousness of the self. The text's relationship to reality can be identified as verisimilitude. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), in its most naïve form, verisimilitude asks if the text is telling the truth. I expect there to be a great many truths in the First Voice stories. Will I capture all the intricacies that are contained within the narratives? Highly unlikely! As it is with all narratives, mine included, there will be pieces of details that will slip away into the dark recesses of the mind, creating perhaps a counter narrative that differs from the original version of events. This, I believe, cannot be avoided. I will however, respect what the narratives contain, and their right to their reality, although I may not always agree. Respect seems to be very closely tied to trust, that is, trusting that someone is listening in a respectful way, trying to understand, to learn. I contend that the quality of what constitutes respect is different in all cultures. For instance, in the dominant Euro-Western patriarchal society, quite often respect for an individual seems to centre upon the number of letters after a person's name, not the individual as a whole being. In

the Aboriginal community, respect is based on life experiences and wisdom. The true inner worth of an individual is not based on outer circumstances, nor silenced by other cultural truths.

The Aboriginal women's narratives are documents about life, an aesthetic work of art about their living, breathing reality. Contained within the text there may be omissions and/or errors in context, maybe even lies; however, the artistic value is very real, which for all intents and purposes affirms the truth of which they are currently aware. The memory, real or imagined, contained within the storytelling is reality to each Native woman. As a narrative researcher for this thesis, I want to present each woman's narrative in a format that displays the content of her words thereby making her world visible. "The truth is not a hidden treasure...confession of the past realizes itself as a work in the present: it effects a true creation of the self by the self" (Freeman, 2007:136). Truth is a necessary key vehicle for moving beyond dualistic thinking and understanding the human realm. One's autobiography is inventive, for one tends to lie to oneself to keep one's story/narrative together (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007). They further say, "Life is a fiction, but it's our fiction and it feels good and we are in charge of it" (136). The self allows us to live and contemplate the truth, which heightens awareness when one is confronted by meaning.

Cocooning to Re-Emerge

> As I have come to understand it from listening to the Elders and traditional teachers, the only person I can speak about is myself. That is how the Creator made all of us...All I have to share with you is myself, my experience, and how I have come to understand that experience. (Monture-Angus, 1995:44-45)

The need to challenge myself as to why I undertook such a journey is perhaps hidden deep within the pages of my own story, waiting for yet another person to interpret and challenge my findings. What has led me to scrutinize the dramas that have unfolded during my life span?

The answers lie somewhere in the past, for within the past lies my future, and together they give me a sense of identity. Kerby (1991) describes the past in two primary ways. Both the objective and the linear view contain an accumulation of successive experiences, which are irretrievably behind the present and as such, inseparable. He further states that the weight of the past exerts influence in the present, which is why the more theoretical linear view impacts the future. This has been my experience, one which led me to examine the emotional upheaval from the past that has continued to reside within me. To this end I needed to examine the stories of other women in search of the truths that were hidden within my own narrative. In doing so my narrative began to change and with it a part of my personal identity. Needless to say when I became the subject of the inquiry, either by choice or by chance, it came with an emotional outlay that has shifted many aspects of my life. As a result, I chose to interweave within my narrative brief one-line metaphors as a way of linking my words with my inner feelings.

When the Aboriginal women's experiences in higher education became a part of my exploration, it was somewhat controlled based on the narrow framework chosen for the study. Their autobiographies cannot be seen as a complete transcript of their existence, but only a small piece of what their memories consciously chose to reveal of the historical threads that connect one part of their narrative to another. Their narratives varied but the overriding Euro-Western negative experiences were in close proximity one to the other. As the richness of their lives unfolded in the narratives, I am not so imprudent as to think that I have created the past in its original format nor do I assume that my perceptions were not blurred with the passage of time. That would be tantamount to viewing the past through the eyes of an empiricist.

> To remember is not to bring into the focus of consciousness a self-subsistent picture of the past; it is to thrust deeply into the horizon of the past and take apart step by step the interlocked perspectives until the experiences which it epitomizes are *as if* relived in their temporal setting. (Kerby 1991: 22)

Kerby (1991) contends that remembering is a second form of memory because it no longer can be viewed as a functioning part of the living present, whereas the first form is retention and as such, an element of our present consciousness. He further asserts that the apex of our remembering can be found in our déjà vu experiences, moments in time when the present is in some way connected to the past. In viewing the narratives I found many déjà vu moments as I recalled flashes from my own past as they mingled with the experiences of the women...quite an exhilarating phenomenon! Locked within their experiences is the exceptional structure of imagination that may well augment their memories, especially when "memories from early childhood...easily settle into the gaps left vacant by recollection, ... one can no longer be certain of the difference between them" (Kerby, 1991: 25). These discernible differences rest within the confines of each woman's narrative and my own narrative. Throughout the analysis of the narratives I fully believed that my own sense of self impacted my self-understanding, and I/they are only responsible for the identity of which we have conscious knowledge. It is only through the telling and retelling of one's stories that one may eventually be able to objectively look at past events with decreased emotionality. One's emotional life is bound up with how one narrates both past and present experiences, which becomes an interpretive activity, not a simple description of facts (Kerby, 1991). It was not until I narrated my own story that I began to recall events that had long been forgotten and, in some instances, began to see my story in a new light as it took on new meaning. From this new perspective I noticed that the emotions that had surrounded my recollections of the past also began to shift. Perhaps the most notable shift was away from the anger and rage that had been trapped within yesterday's memories. I credit this shift to the frankness and intimate details that each of these

women gifted me. It was a fortuitous event that shifted my paradigm for living and rendered me the latitude to think beyond the walls that had confined me for so many years. I concur with Kerby (1991) that emotions do change as we develop a different understanding of our life histories. He implies that human emotion is self-interpretive, and I would suggest that how the self interprets one's existence becomes an important part of one's life story.

I make no attempt to politicize, feminize, nor colonize the basic contents of my being...this will undoubtedly materialize as I continue to peel away the layers of unknowing, uncertainty and unwillingness, in some instances, to progress beyond my own imposed "silencing of the self." So why do I feel like a fraud? Perhaps the "real" question that I am trying to answers is: "How did I end up here in academia based on where I came from?" Shortly before my return to school to complete an undergraduate degree my mother passed away and I was finally told about my Native identity. My mother, the oldest, was the matriarch of her thirteen siblings and, as a result, she made it clear that I was not to be told. My life and how I viewed the world changed forever. Years of depression would follow as a result of what I perceived to be an insurmountable betrayal on the part of my parents and family members. It was a devastating period in my life, and today, the White part of me still struggles with the Native component. I relate my feelings of betrayal at the doorstep of an all-consuming power that hides beneath the cloak of cultural imperialism, stealing my identity and self-esteem.

According to Sismondo (2007) the persistent fraudulent feelings may not only stem from individualistic insecurities and low self-esteem, but from within academia and its scholastic expectations. Many reasons, academic expectations and otherwise intermingle, heightening the challenges that I faced in institutions of higher learning. The remnants of inadequacy from an earlier educational experience have projected the feelings of incompetence into today. Perhaps it

is because I returned to school, after many years of absence, which in itself was challenging or is it because I am not perceived as your traditional student who dutifully acquiesces to the professor's every utterance as an absolute truism. I have lived and experienced first hand a small majority of what was being taught in one form or another and have had enough therapy to feel confident about putting forth what I have experienced as having validity. Still, to enter a classroom, as the eldest, was somewhat daunting. The initial image of a "grey haired woman" not a male, can carry with it the social stigma of ageism. Younger students, perhaps even some educators, viewed me as being "too old to learn" or questioned the wisdom of working towards a degree at this stage of life. I entered university with what I perceived to be two major impediments – I am female and I struggle with identity confusion based on my mixed ancestry. The former has proven to be a detriment throughout my life, limiting and colouring my world with negativity. I have always believed that the true value of a person lies within, and to be viewed as not having potential because of my gender or race; classified as not being 'young enough' to learn, or for that matter anything else that seems to be associated with 'being young', angers me.

I acknowledge that as the depth of my emotions increased, so did the need to remember and to endeavour to understand the past in a different light. With this thought in mind, I offer an account of my narrative as a catalyst into the world of recollections. It is important that I/you the reader understand what has brought me to this place in time. Themes will emerge in my story that were triggered by those of the Aboriginal women who graciously gave pieces of their lives through their narratives and will be duly acknowledged as pieces of the puzzle that are grounded in colonialism. It is prudent for me at this point to let the past speak through the present. My Christian name is Donna Ann Hunt. Poems that I have written in the past, under my maiden

name, d. a. Hunt, are included in my narrative as a vehicle to convey my mixed race identity struggles, for they give voice to my silent pain. There are seven sections that represent the seven days of the week each labeled by the name of a tree – Weeping Willow, White Birch, Red Oak, Eastern Fir, Southern Arrowwood, Western Soapberry and North White Cedar. The names of the trees symbolize the sadness, the White, the non-White components of a mixed race woman and also the East, South, West, and North segments of the Indigenous Sacred Circle.

CULTURAL AWARENESS – SILENT NO MORE

Crossing the Line

I enter the unknown world of the Indigenous culture and am unable to project the outcome that such a journey between the colonized world and the Indigenous world might take. This narrative is only the beginning of many narratives to come, but for the moment this is the story, the truth that I remember.

I enter the realm of mystery with eyes wide open; a sense of hopefulness fills my soul as I search for meaning amongst the many roads that lay before me. I challenge myself to have wings and take flight observing what is and what was—a painful adventure. I chose to reflect on my experiences until my storytelling feels complete. I want all that has been as part of my journey towards a better understanding of my heritage. This process will in no way be completed, but does offer me the opportunity to raise my level of consciousness in an effort to find peace in my mind, body and soul. The privilege of reading the stories of women of strength has loosened the foothold that silence has had on my memory and me. In particular, I found myself identifying and resonating with many statements that Graveline (2004) put forth in her

narrative 'Healing Wounded Hearts[14].' As a result, her words which do not follow the 'normal' academic vernacular, will remain as such and be interspersed throughout my narrative as I endeavour to integrate my story into the Indigenous world as a way of bringing the two cultures closer together. The duality of this experience offers me a pathway into a world I have never known beyond my White colonized upbringing. It is important that I allow my words to spill forth so that I do not silence myself in the process. My newfound voice will undoubtedly provoke questions of others and myself that will add to the confusion in the colonized world in which I live. I know this narrative is a journey that I must take if I am to move forward and enjoy the broader aspects of knowledge that each culture has to offer.

Bridging the Gap

The implications of discovering that I am "rootless" are endless. The black void of nothingness fills every corner of my being—I rattle inside, as do the pebbles when the waves of change indiscriminately propel them one against another along the shore. There is solidness, a comforting feeling as new images of hope emerge as I attempt to fill the bottomless void. I believe the spirit that has led me to this place of discovery brings a gift. My narrative is a journey of discovery. An excerpt from a poem by Robinson (1991) entitled "Walking Between Two Worlds" speaks to my narrative:

> Walking between two worlds is on a battleground of fear, logic and
> the illusions of distance and of crippling cold. It is a kingdom of dreams,
> a place to pass through them...to survive. It is the distance between real
> and forever and death. (17)

It is fitting that I begin with a quote by a Lakota visionary and healer, Black Elk of the Oglala Sioux, in an effort to immerse myself within the cultural beliefs. He states,

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[14] Fyre Jean Graveline uses unconventional spelling and grammar to describe her struggles and strengths in her book "Healing Wounded Hearts."

> ...everything an Indian does is in a circle,
> and that is because the power of the world always works
> in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days
> when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us
> from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken,
> the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop, and
> the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave
> warmth, the west gave rain, the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and
> endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the
> Power of the World does is in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard the earth is round
> like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their
> nests in circles, for theirs in the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes
> down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the
> seasons have a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to
> where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood,
> and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round
> like the nest of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the
> nations hoop, a nest of many nests where the Great
> Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.
> (Neihardt, 2000:150-151)

I too am traveling in a circle, back to my roots. I trust that my circle will interweave with many other circles as the storytelling unravels the mysteries of time.

"Hear the wind whistle its secrets as the Eagle flies past."

"I will not remain Silenced any more. No More" (Graveline, 2004:149). My life is as primitive and rough as the hands of time that caress my body, soul, and spirit. Tears flow as new adventures are placed before me. Crying for what could have been, what was not, and for what may be a new beginning that is, as yet, beyond my reach. The words, the unconscious quotes and the poems that will arise during my journey, and the poems that I have written over time will hopefully, upon reflection, enable me to understand my heritage, my life, and my reason for being. I resonate with the strength and fragility of Mother Earth when I hear her call and become as one with the ravaged landscape. Within my story I have begun to awaken from the depths of despair of a shame-laden past. The journey to this point has truly been perilous, and yet, I would

walk the path again if it would lead me to this place of knowing. I am the maker of my own discomfort—all the guilt, anger and fears goad me to resist that which is mine alone to endure. Decisions made, mistakes acknowledged—love lost. I have paid a heavy price for an unknown past that haunts the present. The unknown future is stretching before me like a cascading waterfall as it bubbles past the roots of a tree that once embodied the lifeblood of a mighty oak.

Hierarchical Power Structures

I accept that my narrative is based on my ideological positioning and, as such, provides a conceptual framework that is laced with the patriarchal ideology and biases encountered during my upbringing. In an effort to better understand my distrust of the White patriarchal professors in higher education, I need to acknowledge an experience from the past, racist in origin, that involved a White male vice-principal in high school. The incident took place at Pauline Johnson High School, named so after the famous poet daughter of the Mohawk Chief of the Six Nations on the Grand and an English woman—the irony does not escape me—who grew up belonging to two cultures. The vice-principal berated me in a spiteful angry voice with a look of contempt for not knowing my true racial origins. I was bewildered and frightened for I had no idea what he was referring to, and he did not actually state that my background was partly an Aboriginal one. I did not report this incident to anyone for two reasons: (1) I was anxious that it might escalate and lead to problems for my family because I feared a power imbalance between the vice-principal and my father, and (2) I did not know my true origin nor could I ask my parents, which left me powerless in the face of bigotry. However, had he been challenged, he would have undoubtedly, in hooks' words, "denied any culpability" (1989:57).

This snippet of my background actually lays the groundwork for how I perceived higher education and how I wove my pattern of understanding as to how the system worked. It might

be inferred that my intrinsic Aboriginal characteristics led me to strain against the pedagogical "old ways" of thinking in the hegemonic Euro-Western institutions. These old ways have persisted in higher education, as have my views about some male academics in positions of power. By contrast, the old ways in most Native societies, before White contact, were matriarchal, not patriarchal, and these Indigenous old ways were peaceful and egalitarian. However, according to Weaver (1993), the Aboriginal Women's Association of Canada noted the following. "By 1971, this patriarchal system was so ingrained within our communities, that 'patriarchy' was seen as a 'traditional trait.' Even the memory of our matriarchal forms of government and our matrilineal forms of descent were forgotten or unacknowledged" (96). It was not until the late 1960s, when the women's movement for equality in Canada began to emerge, that the enfranchised First Nations women began their own struggle for sexual equality under the law. In addition to sexual equality in the 1990s, Aboriginal women included the right for women to represent themselves in constitutional discussions as part of their struggle for equality (Weaver, 1993). Unfortunately, the predominately patriarchal systems of law have made the move towards eliminating the discriminatory provisions towards Aboriginal women a difficult task.

The males in positions of power whom Lenskyj (2005) labels "gatekeepers—traditionally white, heterosexual men" (150) have controlled the content of the curricula, the hidden practices and the politics of the university. Acker (2001) likened the "hidden curriculum of the graduate school to an iceberg, with the more overt requirements above the water and the rest submerged" (61). I have found the majority of women professors to be consistently open, interested, clear, and accommodating, unlike some male professors that I encountered who would miss scheduled appointments, no apology or explanation given, or become irritated when enquiries were made

about their course content. They made it clear that they did not have the time or inclination to discuss or answer any questions. These are examples of the hidden abuse of power in the academy. Conceivably, more of what the iceberg has been hiding will be readily available as the academic waters heat up, thereby providing equal opportunity for women of every race and class attending university. It is hoped that there will not be as much of a need for a "keen eye or appropriate equipment" (Acker 2001:61) to fulfill the degree requirements once the current under-representation of women faculty lessens.

My experiences at university demarcated more clearly my understanding of the external rules and regulations imposed in a Euro-Western society. As previously stated, I had expected that the standards in institutions of higher learning would be more inclusive, based on the presence of students of varying races. Unfortunately, I experienced the same bigotry in the form of racism and ageism from some of the students. As a result of my age and White appearance, younger women of different races to me viewed me in ways for which I was not prepared. I had become the "other" in the classroom. Acknowledging my Indigenous heritage (my effort to be accepted as part of the whole) was to no avail. I felt I was viewed as part of the first wave of feminism whereby White, middle-class feminists were alleged to have dismissed, denigrated, and denied the experiences of women of different races and classes. As a consequence, I remained on the outside of many discussions, or was vigorously challenged in the classroom about my feminist beliefs. The four chilly climate practices, "stereotyping, devaluation, exclusion and revictimization" (Acker, 1999:1), were apparent. In hindsight, I believe I was seen as being a proponent of "White solipsism" (Spelman, 1988:116), a term coined by Adrienne Rich with respect to how feminist theory contributed to imagining, thinking, and speaking as if Whiteness described the world. Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees (1998) state, "anti-racism examines the

meaning of Whiteness and the power and privilege of White skin, which is largely invisible to those who possess it" (41). I could not agree more. I suspect that when I was a very young female child, my family's silence about our Aboriginal heritage was to protect me from the racism they had experienced.

It had never occurred to me, however, that I would be viewed as a White racist. I was shocked and angered at being perceived as something other than what I imagined. I had never considered myself to be part of the political movement labelled feminism, nor had I treated the experiences of women of colour, poor women, women with disabilities as having struggles that were different from my own. As a result of being challenged, I began to see that I was guilty of White solipsism for I had not perceived the "other" as having other experiences different from my own. I had not questioned my social position of privilege, which made me an "oppressor as well as feminist ally" (Maher and Tetreault, 1997:322).

In higher education, I discovered that the definition of what is classified as being the 'norm' tends to depend on who is defining it. In my search for identity, I found amid the other multiple racial backgrounds in the classroom that a persona was being constructed for me, which brought me to a point where I no longer had a sense of whom I was. As a result, I kept silent in the classrooms and waited for answers and a better understanding of the sociological implications of my presence in a Women's Studies feminist course. Curriculum had become more than an abstract concept. I now understood it as a cultural construct that has within its grasp the power to reproduce cultural and social inequalities. By the end of my undergraduate program, I was more aware of the challenges within feminist theory for some women. It became important to re-theorize differences so that the teaching and practice of feminism would lessen the marginalization of women within its narrowly constructed boundaries. In the process, the

oppressive boundaries that had cocooned me were loosened by my increased awareness and knowledge of the lives of other women.

My White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) appearance afforded me the option of adopting or negating my Aboriginal heritage, unlike individuals whose Native appearance does not offer them the same opportunity. Lawrence (2004) refers to the pressure bestowed upon Aboriginal people in the apartheid situation created by the "colonialist nature of Canadian society, where Native realties are distorted everywhere but in all-Native contexts" (7). No middle ground exists. Perhaps this is why the matriarchal side of my family of origin remained what I term "Closeted Indians." I am sure that the options offered by the colonized world would have felt more appealing and less hazardous. I acknowledge that everything we experience colours all that follows, so it is important to validate such an awakening to better understand how the silent pieces of my early life have brought me to where I locate myself within academia. My Euro-Western cultural experiences have impacted how I interpret the sociocultural aspects of the ivory towers of higher education. Therefore, my personal history and cultural background is an important element to be considered when evaluating the academy as a contested site.

Exclusion and Separation: Marginalizing Whiteness

In situations where White hegemony is considered to be the norm, the surrounding political, social and economic life of other cultures is accordingly impacted by its values. Consequently, such a world becomes very toxic for non-White women and men. Any attempts to achieve anti-racist values and structures are difficult in such a world. As a perceived White student, in my undergraduate years I was sometimes in a position to observe the oppressive practices towards marginalized students of colour without being a target myself at that point, beyond the cloak of bias towards my femaleness. I found the latter to be a problem when some

male teachers would dominate the classroom discussions, appearing uninterested and, in many cases, negating the comments of many female students. Racist practices were a concern in many of the classes I attended, and I eventually realized they were due to the belief that "Whiteness" is the ideal, and that anyone who is biologically different is of lesser value. Originally, I assumed that within the walls of higher education one could expect to be treated equally, fairly, and respectfully without prejudice, bigotry, and racism. I was wrong. Unfortunately, what I encountered in the classroom was a microcosm of the milieu that permeates race and gender relations in society. I was amazed to encounter even less "safe space" in the Women's Studies classrooms, a place that I trusted would provide equality for all. The rubric of Women's Studies, as I understood it, was to critique and analyze the gender challenges of women's own experiences in the androcentric systems of knowledge to correct the misconceptions about women in traditionally male-dominated higher educational settings. I was unprepared for what ensued. For example, my level of consciousness was raised in the Women's Studies classrooms, as Lenskyj (1993) suggests, when I encountered what marginalized women experience in society, namely, oppression. Graveline (2004) asks: "what is oppression? But a weight on the back of a Person...it is up to the individual" (153). I agree, however, that internalized racism is hard to challenge. A particular class discussion centred on the interlocking forms of oppression that women of different races and classes endure in society. The White professor's lecturing style and questions were directed primarily towards the Black women, consequently marginalizing my Whiteness in the classroom. Knowledge and its presentation, in this instance, were a powerful combination. I could neither comfortably construct myself as an Aboriginal student, nor a White student. I felt caught between two cultures, which Monture-Angus (1995) believed was the best place to be in terms of "building bridges of understanding," (7) by being able to walk in both

directions. At that point, I was unable to do that and I found myself becoming increasingly silent and distrustful.

Trust in the classroom, states Lenskyj (2005), is a shared responsibility among the students and teachers, which allows room for critique to occur. For example, increasing the time that each student is afforded in a classroom can lend itself to building trust. When knowledge and experiences are shared, a comfort and a sense of connectedness to others deepen. For me, higher education had turned into a double-edged sword. The content and atmosphere in the above-mentioned Women's Studies classroom did not lend itself towards empathy or respect for the experiences of others. I felt more could have been accomplished if the interaction had included not only all members of the class in the discussion, but was utilized as a tool to bring women of different races together. In the process of making people so separate and different, inclusiveness was negated. Based on this experience, I had become what Sandra Acker (2001) in a different context refers to as a "semi-detached student" (71), marginalized by a member of the faculty and some of the student body. At the time, I was a married, part-time student who had full-time and part-time employment off campus with minimal university life contacts, which in and of itself, is an oppressive situation. We have all been oppressed to various extents. Ng (1997) recommends that we accept that we are all racialized, gendered, and differently constructed participants and implement anti-racist and anti-sexist approaches to combat minoritizing experiences in the university. In addition, as Lenskyj (1993) suggests, women come from different political realities and as such, the political becomes part of the systemic interlocking of race, gender, sexuality and ability, promoting oppression. To presume that one culture is better than any other is to suggest that humans do not have the capacity to deal with the differences imposed upon them by the other in and outside the academy.

Feminism—My Reality

I believe that every woman in a feminist classroom experiences something different, depending on their history, race, age, sexual orientation and economic circumstances. My experiences as an undergraduate student in the Women's Studies classroom in my forties was not what I had expected. I felt that I was being labelled in a totally different context than how I saw my life experiences or myself. Morra and Smith (1995) state, "...feminism's most basic principle: women are free agents with the capacity to forge their individual destinies" (185). Yet even within feminism, participants have different levels of agency. I became more aware that the concerns which pertained to women who were marginalized in the feminist courses (non-White/disabled) were not being addressed, even though the class was studying social, liberal, Marxist and radical feminism. These theories are meant to challenge women's oppression in the course of patriarchal domination, including economic oppression, through the analysis of *all* women's experiences. Many non-marginalized feminists, predominantly White, middle-class women, have challenged the economic status differentials between men and women, but not the economic disparities that exist among women. There are roles that not only men, but also women, play in creating hierarchies that invalidate a woman's learning. Social class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual diversity divide women.

As a result of my experiences in higher education, it is appropriate that I situate myself. Maher and Tétreault (2001) found that "Whiteness was assumed to be a normal condition...not a privileged position within networks of power" (230). My own Whiteness was invisible to me. Until then, I did not recognize how racism was a social construct in which I was embedded. Initially I was unable to recognize my Whiteness, the race I grew up believing I was, as a privileged racial identity and heterosexuality as a culturally conditioned advantage. I did not

recognize that oppression could be created when gender, class, race, sexuality, and ability interlock. Perhaps it is due to the interlocking nature of oppressions that I felt my journey was "protracted, difficult, uncomfortable, painful and risky" (45) in the classroom, a condition which Ng (1993) deems necessary in order to change the status quo. Paradoxically, I felt diminished due to my White skin and age and, as a result, became silent for fear of being perceived as different.

CHALLENGING THE COLONIZED WORLD – AND IDENTITY

Another problem surfaced in the Women's Studies classroom that challenged my beliefs, my identity and my colonized reality and with these revelations another door opened to the past. When I began the process of researching for this narrative, I had not expected it to become so personal, nor had I planned for the possibility of struggling with my identity. There was something enigmatic about this process as I ruminated over past memories. I began to have a better understanding of how the dominant patriarchal Euro-Western social forces shaped the experiences of my family's environment, turning it toxic. The subsequent creeping veil of self-imposed silence had cast a long shadow of shame and denial over generations of my ancestors, blanketing and distorting their Indigenous historical gifts of knowledge. As a consequence, I was denied the privilege of knowing about my Indigenous heritage. Questions were not welcomed, nor answers given when it came to the topic of heredity. It was becoming apparent how the caustic infiltration of the Euro-Western colonized ideology within the Indigenous communities' cultural norms had led to the assimilation and degradation of the Aboriginal way of life. This realization had taken me beyond my bounded experiences within the Euro-Western educational constructs and enabled me to see more clearly two aspects that negatively impacted my educational experiences: (1) that I was an *Aboriginal person* in a very Euro-Western educational

setting, and (2) that I was *female* in a very patriarchal institution. With this knowledge surfaced yet another marginalizing obstacle in the classroom, not from other students, but from myself—a case of mistaken cultural identity. I had not only just learned that I was of Aboriginal descent, but was now learning about the stigma attached to this race.

"Look behind that rock, I think I see a bleached WHITE bone."

Weeping Willow

There is still much to do before the last star falls from the sky…I begin a journey that is filled with my yesterdays. The answers lay ahead, the questions not yet formed. I fear that if I awaken from my dream, reality will set in. I wait, I wonder, and I worry that what might be will never be known—darkness will overtake me, bringing down the stars that light my path. A magical, whimsical, luminous horse appears in a dream and I know I need to climb aboard and ride the ride of many nights where darkness reigns and life begins. Luminous pieces of thesis float before my eyes and I marvel at the magic they possess. I am in awe at the wonders of the mind and what the entire universe possesses as they both present before me a path, not of my making, but the wishes of a spiritual being that owns my soul. I cannot stop crying at the thought of the gifts I am about to receive. Perhaps that which brought death to my door will enable me to float, suspended high above yesterday's pain—I wonder, I wait, I worry and I pray. I fear that which will be, that which could have been, and that which will never be. Do you believe, I ask with all the innocence of a child, this adventure will heal and fill the bottomless void through which I plummet?

"Serendipity, I scream!"

So many questions, feelings of abandonment and betrayal close my senses to the outside world. My heart broken in so many pieces that I know not how to mend. Yet, another

question…mend what and how? I cling to a non-existent past, afraid to let go of the nothingness—fearing the void, the black hole that lives within my soul. Can it ever be filled? Filled with what I wonder? The tears have definitely created a river of sadness. A memory sneaks in and a twinge is felt. "Love Many. Trus'Few. Always Paddle Yer Own Canoe" (Graveline, 2004:63). My mother wrote in my autograph book many, many years ago: "Love many, trust few and always paddle a sunny canoe." I wonder if the memory from the grave is trying to reach out and touch me, helping me to understand the first piece that will fill the black hole inside my soul. Interesting point—"MyOwn Canoe" (63). I have cut myself off from so many. The bitterness eating at my very core—I have mourned a lifetime in a few years—more years to go as I bathe in the brightness of the day. "Ready or not. I begin my HealingJourney" (64). I carefully place the memory in the void and a smile gently touches the corners of my mouth as I wonder…what will take the pain away? Graveline (2004) touches a nerve when she alludes to the many who try to solve complex problems with single solutions. One memory cannot erase the past. I suspect the struggle will never truly be over. The ending of one story opens the doorway to another. I have arrived at a place where endings do not require right answers; endings are filled with the spirits from the past, which till now have spoken on deaf ears. My life closed down when dad died. He was my *'medicine man'*. I saw him slip away, far away from my loving arms…my only link to the past and yet he kept silent—honoring the wishes of my First Nations mother. Silent – keep the silence. The only way to survive is to be silent. I am silent. I am ever vigilant.

"Did anyone hear the leaf hit the ground?"

I resonate with Graveline (2004): "I am TheOnlyOne. I am TheLonelyOne" (66). I escaped the racial hatred, the poverty…my father was a good provider, my mother an excellent

homemaker…I had it all, it seems, and yet, I did not own my soul; I did not know my heart; I did not know my heritage…I did not know, I did not know, I want to know! I have retreated into silence all my life, wondering, waiting, wanting until nothing remains beyond the silent beating of my own heart. I remember little, I was raised a "Mooniyâs[15]" (Graveline, 68). George Longfish states: "The more we are able to own our religious, spiritual and survival information, and even language, the less we can be controlled…to rid ourselves of these pictures and own who we are is to take control and not play the game by white rules" (Graveline, 2004:69). The words fly off the pages….

> (Con) soulless
> It hurts to walk along the path; I feel the need to scream.
> Falling is not an option for I know not where to land.
> Unwanted with each step, I know not who I am.
> You left me without a past, a future filled with pain.
> I struggle to discover, beneath the pages of my past,
> Who it is you left behind without a soul to love.
> (d. a. Hunt, 2007)

Boyd (1994) helped me along with my journey by reiterating a historical piece of information about the migration of the Tuscarora peoples. He is full-blood[16] Tuscarora. He states, "My people migrated up from North Carolina and we joined the five nations—the Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Mohawk, and Cayuga…at Niagara Falls, New York…which was all Iroquois country…—and we became the last of the Six Nations, the so-called Little Brothers of the Iroquois Confederacy" (29). He points to another example of colonization when the New York Water Authority took over this land to make a reservoir without a legal claim or deed to it. They just took it. This divide and conquer tactic by the government was established by drawing a

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[15] Mooniyâs refers to White people. It has its roots in a language spoken by Métis people, NorthernBush.Mitchif (Graveline, 2004).

[16] A full-blood First Nations person is deemed to have "no known white or other alien blood in the family line" (Phinney, 2008:2).

line through the middle of the land inhabited by the Iroquois Confederacy, thereby separating Canada and the United States (north from south), of not only the land, but nations, tribes and families as well. Free access was denied to First Nations People who wanted to attend family gatherings and powwows[17] on either side of the border. Historical pain has seeped into the present.

"I hear a door opening."

I want to honour all the pain that my mother carried in her silence. The heavy burdens that she bore eventually wore her down and only in death has she found the peace she so richly deserved here on earth. The ghosts from her past were left behind to haunt me. I do not want to feel that I must remain silent, but I have! I hope that in bringing to life the hidden recesses of her mind, I will achieve the peace that I have sought before the grave beckons me. Boyd offers a pathway when he states, "the key to survival is to embrace the transition" (37).

White Birch

I have chosen the medium of storying to bring together that which is ultimately mine to own...my heredity, my mother's silence. I am becoming stronger in my words, deeds, and self-preservation—I no longer tread softly. I too have a story to tell as did Graveline, and hopefully it will contain "Healing Medicine" (2004:149). The ceremonial smudging of sacred herbs is a safe place to position myself as I begin my journey into the past. Native Elders, according to Broden and Coyote (1991) from the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, state that a person cannot be healed or heal others unless they are first cleansed of negative energy and thoughts, and bad feelings and spirits. This is accomplished with the use of herbs; in particular the three plants in smudging are sweetgrass, sage, and cedar. The sage is used to keep any bad spirits or feelings

[17] A cultural gathering of Aboriginal peoples to discuss their concerns and where "men, women, and children compete for money, prizes, and trophies for their dancing, drumming, and singing" (Trafzer, 1992:102).

from entering the ceremonial area. "Cedar is burned while praying…the prayers rise on the cedar smoke and are carried to the Creator" (22). The sweetgrass, according to Broden and Coyote, should be burned after the cedar and sage have driven out any bad influences, because it brings in the good influences and the good spirits. I smudge and feel prepared to give voice to the silence. The "krirù-rę" (Rudes, 1999: 672) Tuscarora for Whiteman, world of White supremacy has silenced my story, a privileged place of unknowing. Sadness reigns for a past that was not acknowledged, known, nor respected. I mourn. The risk that I embarked upon is filled with fear—fears of the unknown and known. The price of knowledge may be too high. For the moment, I only look for insight. Perhaps the sharing of my story starts in the "Traditional manner. Talking Circle" (Graveline, 2004:150).

"Coloured glass glazed my eyes…I did not see."

Graveline was surprised at the unwillingness/inability of individuals to recognize the impact that issues of racism had on them. I readily confess that it has taken years to recognize, within my own family, the impact that racism played in the wall of silence that surrounded them and led to my feelings of isolation…an outsider who is just beginning to find her roots. Unfortunately, the wave of the unknown crashed against the shores of my own family damaging my marriage and surrounding my sons with a cloak of confusion. A tremendous amount of inner conflict, pain and damage. Repair—impossible—Understanding—possible—Acceptance—never.

The world as it revolves in a circle brings with it the serendipitous effects of the journey that has begun, a metaphorical calling to look at myself before the final sleep that follows the wakefulness of life. The moment of truth has arrived; it is time to become part of the solution…not of the perpetual problem. This will require "transformative action." I am

ready...at last. If I could go back in time I would speak up to that vice-principal of my high school who gave me a hard time with his racist and bigoted attitude when he challenged me about my heritage. I now see his questions, his mannerisms, and his sneering facial expressions, as totally inappropriate. I shake my head, as did Graveline, when her professor's response was "real bad" (151). The memory remains, the pain has begun to lessen. The hard life lesson has taken years to surface. "Misel. OurElder. Speaks last. Everyone'as something to teach us. like Coyote. We learn from tings. Even ones we don't want to see. from SomeOne who makes Mistakes. in front of us...dere is always some Truth. in every message" (153-154). I do not want to continue internalizing the bad; I want to make room for the good. The moment of truth has arrived. The fire burns brightly and I marvel at the flames that destroy and give light and warmth at the same time. So it was with my family of origin. They, within their inner circle, maintained the family unit while destroying other parts of the family with their silence. I was one of the latter parts. Where has the silence carried me? I fear a circle of one. Graveline asks: "what is oppression? But a weight on the back of a Person...it is up to the individual" (153). Internal racism is hard to challenge. There is nowhere left to run.

"The brook flows carrying all that remain atop the water."

I am ready to see the truth knowing that mistakes from the past will come to my door...they already block my pathway. I no longer want to carry the guilt, the hatred, the sadness, and the pain of yesterday's mistakes. My dreams have started to change; many people are talking to me...some from the grave. I listen and try to remember the nighttime whispers that enter through sleep's doorway. Graveline talks about the students who are too afraid to speak up for fear of losing their educational dream. I too have been frightened, but now, speaking up will enable me to finish my dream from long, long ago. "Silence to cover Fear. an Old. Deadly.

Combination" (158). My fear, a real fear for years, is abandonment...abandoned by my parents if I spoke up, asked questions, and challenged the status quo. "Don't bit Grandmothers Wisdom. "don't Bit da Hand dat Feeds ya."...Mahe'kun prefers to feed herself. will Bite. to escape confinement" (159). Graveline talks about swallowing disrespect and how important it is to keep trying to promote change in subtle ways. This is not acceptable in my case, for I have swallowed so much disrespect from others for so long until there seemed to be no room left for my own self-respect. I have respected the rights of others, before my own, and lost myself in the process. It is no longer acceptable for others to not engage in the process, to not pay attention to me, and I will no longer internalize others "disrespectful actions/attitudes"...I do not want to carry the weight of your collective unknowing...Pass Feather. to give opportunity for Voice" (161). I wonder if by breaking my silence, others will begin to speak.

"Soar to the highest peak and gaze at what lies beneath the wings of change."

I have White privilege, of this I do not deny, but I cannot change that which the world sees, only what I see inside. "Anti-racism examines the meaning of Whiteness and the power and privilege of White skin, which is largely invisible to those who possess it" (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees1998:41). I could not agree more. I venture to argue that my family knew the significance of complex social relations and how one's race, gender and class influence these social relations. Given this context, I suspect at that point in time in Canada when I was a very young female child, that their silence was to protect me from the invisible boundaries where the various nuances of one's "race, gender, class and sexuality...becomes lost in a hierarchicalization of oppressions" (Graveline, 2004:51). Therefore, it is understandable that I learned about my Whiteness by observing the silence within the family dynamics. Many words flew across the room. I caught a few, trying to put together the many pieces of the map of my life

that I had been given. The subliminal messages of discontent were interwoven within the tapestry of a life filled with lies, secrets, mistrust and uncertainty long before I was born. Unfortunately, I inherited the legacy of a family gone mad.

My earliest recollections of my existence resonate with aloneness – isolated from the 'real' world, totally sheltered from any historical underpinnings that would have given substance to life…my life. The impact of gender played a significant role in my life from the day of my birth. The unsaid feelings have haunted my existence with the words…"if only I had been born a male." Questions were not a part of the equations, only part of the dark cloud that surrounded my every moment. Wish I could remember all that was, to trade it for what might have been. "Winds of Change. Healing. Truth. can be like a Tornado. swirling Rainbow Winds. sweeping through. Bending. Twisting. Uprooting that which once seemed Strong. Unbendable. comes with Cleansing. Rain" (165). The denial of my whole existence has permeated my soul, leaving a black hole that remains dark and cold. The feelings of emptiness attack as darkness falls. Once again, I have forgotten to raise the drawbridge that covers the moat. I am vulnerable to the unwanted elements of yesterday's silence. Tears flow unabatedly, as my defenses crumble beneath the weight of wanting to know the unknown. Fear creeps in and my courage ebbs like the relentless tides of time as they indiscriminately crash against the shores of life, taking with them that which I no longer need back to the secret sources within the black void. Denial is no longer an option. "Break through Defensiveness. Denial. and what do you find on TheOtherSide" (168)? I know not but the key word is "other", there must be something other than what I know. "Can you learn from my Stories. Experiences. Pains. Triumphs" (168)? I hope so, but the key lies in believing that change will promote healing, in whatever form that turns out to be, of the mind, body and soul of all who believe.

"See the rotting limbs as they protrude from the water's edge."

"Backlash wears many Masks" (169). I have already experienced many that wore the face of the Trickster who tried, in various ways, to promote my unknowing as the norm. When is withholding one's heritage the norm? Apparently, in more cases than I would have believed, but who is to say or can know all the reasons? As it is with my journey, I just want to know, plain and simple, like the truth. The cyclonical patterns of my life have led me back to the past. The legacy that I inherited at birth will be, in part, the legacy I leave behind when sleep beckons. All I ask is that there will be less silence, less backlash, for those who follow. After all, this is life after death! I want the power that freedom brings and to become unencumbered by the ghosts that silence produces. I want to understand the political, the emotional and the cognitive rhetoric that has contributed to the discomfort that has infiltrated my being daily. Graveline (2004) speaks to her situation, "Livelihood is challenged. those projecting Fear. and Anger. are consistently part of Every work environment. whenever Administration decides" (170). I challenge this notion and believe family to be the ultimate projectile of one's Fear and Anger. Who, but those closest to the heart, have the power to stop it beating? Self-preservation is the key, survival tactics the ploy to move forward. "Strategies are Lived with Others. Shared in Story. offered as Condolences. Given Reciprocally...support others for change to Occur" (171). I do not want to feel helpless, hopeless or fatalistic. The need to dominate the future is strong as it relates to a sound body, mind and soul. The snake that bites the unsuspecting cub reminds me of my openness to the family that bit me with their uncaring natural instincts; that is, their self-preservation. I know that my family has the characteristics of a rattlesnake, and yet I want to enfold them to warm the uncertain memories of the past. I begin the journey at a place that will

surely elicit the expected venomous response…silence. I know, and yet I go! I have been attacked, bullied and I recoil at the thought of anger…"this is Not acceptable" (175).

Red Oak

I am searching for the "Traditional Teaching.Healing…SacredTeachings of OurAncestors" (Graveline, 2004:196). I wish to find a way to combine the mystical presence of the soundless, wordless images that will connect me deeply to the Elders' wisdom within the world of academia. Within this circle I will transform whom I have become into whom I truly am, to integrate "Nehiyâw'ak.Mooniyâs" (196). The words risk, resist, fear, denial, assimilation and survival all lay before me…I place them within a circle of rocks, hoping against hope, to cleanse the fears away and walk upon a path that will honour all that was and all that will cross my path as I journey forward listening, respectful. I find I have been colonized without my permission. I am the Oak Table to which Graveline refers. I feel the confines of polished wood getting tighter and tighter, and yet I feel naked to the winds of change. The bark strewn about somewhere unbeknownst to me…I want the "SacredSmudge. to Cleanse" and all that surrounds my Mooniyâs world. I want to introduce all to my world with a "Handshake. Hug. Tobacco Tie" (198).

"Trees offer hope with their seasons of change."

Change is the very essence of life. How can that which has been lost, be found again? Graveline defends her thesis when challenged by "MyOldChair…[and]…to his unwavering Eurocentric commitment. to Dualities," the knife that is held cuts in both directions. Graveline answers my question through her story, which connects me to the "Spirits of Ancestors…always available to Teach. Pass on Lessons we need to survive. Flourish. and Thrive in Traditional ways" (200). As do the trees, I continue to evolve season-to-season to enable me to reach into

the tomorrows of time and make them mine. The Eurocentric worldview believes in the domination and control of nature, and that man is apart from nature…not as one. The answers I need in life come from many sources: the land, the sea, the sky, the animals, others, all that Mother Earth has to offer. Open-up to the Universe, and it will come, togetherness is the key to our tomorrows. I do not believe in the Eurocentric worldview that separateness, individual rights, independence and competition are the key values for which all should strive to achieve. We are not all different; we are all the same. Do not exploit other cultures or Mother Earth! The highest value of life does not lie in the acquisition of objects, but in the appropriate utilization of the others' knowledge, of the earth's materials, in harmony with each other and nature. We are all like trees, unique! As young saplings we are spry, we bend easier. In middle age we look down in wonderment at the young saplings, which are growing in the shadow of our existence. As we age, it becomes harder to bend when the winds of change blow, our skin (bark) becomes tougher, more lined and sometimes our joints become gnarled with the passage of time; our root system digs deeper and deeper into the soil as we seek out more knowledge, understanding, something to make us grounded, solid in life. Then, sometimes we are uprooted, our very existence changed forever. Breaking the cloak of silence can do that.

"The mighty Oak becomes a ship gliding through rough and calm seas."

I had always thought of myself as a mighty oak…strong, enduring all, but as the knowledge that change brings approached I became a weeping willow, feeling controlled by the slightest breeze—bending at the whim of my emotions. As I leaned into the wind, I saw the Spirit's outstretched hand, and I held it feeling the warmth of change surge through me. Change occurs in a natural, evolutionary cycle…I am in the cycle of change. I seek the wisdom, as did Graveline, from the "MedicineMan …Nehiyâw'ak. Asian. AfricanCanadian. Mooniyâs. Red.

Yellow. Black. White...Rainbow Teachings are a Gift" (201). I release my soul so that it may seek out Spiritual assistance.

> Silent Moccasins
> Silent moccasins walk above the mist leaving no mark.
> The path leads us within the light of our yesterdays. I look towards my tomorrows.
> Is there a tomorrow or only the illusion as the clouds part and reveal nothing?
> The desolation felt is blended with a knowing that nothing exists beyond the mind.
> Where does the rain fall when we do not see the clouds? I feel the tears as the water streams down my face. It amazes me how the clouds cry with discontent.
> The trees bend as the wind whistles releasing my soul. Time is needed to watch the rain and feel the wind. Amidst the nothingness the pain of yesterday fills my heart.
> (d. a. Hunt, 2007)

I am confined by the collective unconscious of the Mooniyâs, as Graveline indicated, by the realities that exist because of my interactions with Euro-Western colonialism. I have found that the sharing of other stories, my story in the classroom, have enabled voices that were once denied sound to spring forth challenging the "widely held Eurocentric Patriarchal notions. Hegemony...WhiteMaleExperts can Not. Should Not study Others" (Graveline, 2004:202). I prefer to speak for myself. I want the privilege, the honour, the right to "Empower and Enfranchise...[myself, not be] ...Disempower[d] and Disenfranchise[d]...[by the]...Others" (202-203). In therapeutic and educational forums, I have talked, challenged and encouraged many to shift their paradigms...the patterns that have disempowered their being, surrounded by "Hegemonic Rules," and yet, find it hard to follow that which I know as the truth for others, for myself. The "Medicine Wheel as Paradigm. Circular. Flowing. Integrative" (203) is, perhaps, a way of accessing the range of behaviours that will enable me to acquire further knowledge about my open and closed attitude towards other people. I need to find my direction and how to walk in another's moccasins by walking the Medicine Wheel, "The Four Directions and their Patterns" (Cianci and Nadon, 1991:5).

"Seahorses can change colour to match their background."

If the Indigenous peoples, not unlike the seahorses, are lost through exploitation by the Mooniyâs who is to say there may not be wider repercussions in society and to the environment? When the Mooniyâs expropriated the wisdom of the Indigenous peoples, mutilated the meanings to fit in with their world, they exploited the true sociocultural entity in a disrespectful and unacceptable manner. Graveline (2004) quotes Elder Sarah: "I'd like the dominant society to learn from this, but I don't want them to exploit it or to do damage to it, or make fun of it. That's my biggest fear" (204). The Mooniyâs' norms, that is the hegemonic rules take the faces and erase the features in the process. Upon reading this, I make the decision to empower myself with a pseudonym that will speak to the journey that I have made mine. My reasons do not come from the cultural, historical, familial or spiritual reasons that Graveline speaks of, but from the dawn of a new beginning in my life. 'EarlyMorn' is my chosen empowering pseudonym. In some respects my life narrative is just beginning. I do not want to be rendered invisible. I want there to be meaning to my life and to my words, so do not edit my words; they belong to me and to the collective unconscious. In Graveline's writings, a student remarks, "There is a union without the words having been expressed. We don't have to respond to everything, there is a degree of understanding" (206). I want the light to shine in, and between, my two worlds.

"The warm river of hope runs through my soul and down my cheeks."

"[L]ucky for Mahêkun. She 'ad Friends. Family dere" (208), unlike the silence that existed in my family—half Mooniyâs, the other half Nehiyâw'ak—no light shining between the two, only silence. Invisible, not seen, not heard…I would have burned as did Mahê'kun's long fur. I feel as if some of my fur, metaphorically speaking, is missing. I know, as did Mahê'kun, that I need to take the "teachins of OldOnes to 'eart….when ya start Ceremony. ya gotta carry on

wit it. til it's done. No matter what" (210). And so I shall. The wounded heart needs healing, but I know that it has to evolve from the inside out. How can I possibly reach others when I cannot reach my soul? Pain, hatred, anguish, shame, distrust, and control have all played a part in silencing the inner soul. Graveline suggests; "Participate in Ceremony...Establish healthy social Connections...Self-Care...Healing individuals requires Supports... HealWoundedHearts" (219). It is imperative that I heal so that I will be healthy in every respect. To this end I need to honour myself. "Life changing. is bigger than one life" (220) and I could not agree more. I am tired of carrying the load of unknowing on my back; I need the help of others. To bear the fruit of any relationship, I must first cultivate and nourish the soil in which it grows. Bitterness and pain has poisoned the soil—nothing grows. I will endeavour to put the ancestral words of wisdom into the wind, letting them blow at will. I am at my most powerful when I release the negative power that has enveloped, and almost destroyed me over the years. It will be hard to rebuild that which I have damaged with my words, actions, and deeds. I need to heal my entire body with all that Graveline suggests.

> Not only with our Minds. or Hearts. Ceremony. Meditation. Dreaming.
> Smudge. Circle. Feasting. Crystals. Feathers. Herbs. Drumming. Singing.
> Dancing. Art. Drama. Poetry. Story. Externalize inner Thoughts.
> Reach for deeper Understandings. (221)

I already have the urge to create with my whole being as a result of the stories I hear. I do not want to pass by any stone that beckons to be noticed and duly caressed. "Nyà-wę" (Rudes, 1999), which is Tuscarora for, "Thank you, Creator for all your gifts" (660).

> ...Poetry is a way of speaking to souls. It is at once direct and cyclical and illuminates its own trusts for those that would venture into the unlit areas of our being. The power of poetry then, would be in its unique ability to speak to us in its own 'parallel' language addressed to our 'parallel' selves...
> (Robinson, 1991: Frontispiece)

Eastern Fir

LaDuke (1999) affirms that "Most Indigenous cultures of the western hemisphere suffer from a historical unresolved grief. That is a grief that is accumulated over generations of trauma" (148). Dickason (2002) states, "While the millions who came to Canada from other shores throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries carved out new lives for themselves in a wide open land, for the original inhabitants of that land the process was reversed as they were exiled to the margins of the new society. For them, the challenge has been to regain their lost self-determination" (34). Metaphorically speaking, I am involved in a similar process as I work to reclaim my heritage, a heritage that was lost when my mother's father enfranchised his entire family when he moved them off the Six Nations of the Grand River and travelled to another province. Subsequently, they returned to Brantford and set up residence as Mooniyâs. Colonialism seeped in under the door and the secrets that the silence held encompassed all who lived within the family unit. The door to my heritage, and all that it behooves, was slammed shut, and with it untold challenges that would not come into the light of day for many, many years. It took the death of the matriarch of the family, my mother, before the truth was spoken. The words were carried to me by the wind, as a child would tell a forbidden secret, and the impact was equally traumatic. Life forever changed, and the process of reversing the damage was denied and challenged by the remaining family members. The silence, in many ways, left me orphaned from my own soul. I know that I am not alone, but I feel alone.

"Death has silenced many who carried their secrets to the grave."

Maybe in the taking of the secrets of my heritage to the grave, my family was trying to spare me the pain that this knowledge would bring. LaDuke (1999) states, "Even in death, there are lessons" (141). I fought to regain my status, only to find that I was denied the right, the

honour, and the privilege of passing to my sons the right to claim their status and to stand proud in the heritage they so richly deserve. Lawrence (2004) states, "Women who regained their status will not be able to pass it down further than their mixed-blood children, restoration of status to one generation of women who lost it has simply deferred Native families' experiences of gender discrimination for a generation." The restrictions placed on preserving First Nations status are "genocidal in scope" (65). World War II brought changes for First Nations People. My mother's two brothers volunteered and fought for Canada. Indigenous people played an "important role in Canada's war effort" (Voyageur, 2005:81). Voyageur acknowledges that First Nations soldiers were still regarded as lesser than other soldiers in Canadian society. Aboriginal women were ranked as the most severely disadvantaged group in Canadian society by the demographic profiling from the Department of Indian Affairs. It is becoming clearer and clearer the reasoning behind the silent approach taken by my Aboriginal relatives. They wished to protect me in some ways but, at the same time, left me adrift to flounder and fetter amidst my closeted thoughts.

"Deeds of men have beclouded my thoughts."

Personal rights, land rights, First Nations title, and our dominions, all refer to "occupancy and use, not outright ownership, 'fee simple' in legal term" (Dickason, 2002:38). Subsequent trade agreements equalled the surrender of First Nations lands. I feel I am in the process of surrendering/trading to regain that which is rightfully mine. This will be a balancing act that will require the acquisition of new information and the regurgitation of old information as I endeavour to bring the past into the light of day. I must prepare for an uphill battle on many fronts: Bill C-31, the Mooniyâs, gender/power issues that beset women and my inner conflict as I walk between the two worlds. Voyageur (2005) highlights the inequalities relegated against First

Nations women who organized lobby groups to fight the injustices, such as the social issues, political rights and economic state of affairs that is discriminatory and racist. Green (1993) stated, "As Aboriginal women, we face discrimination and racism because we are Aboriginal people and because we are women. We lack access to jobs, to support, to training programs, and to positions of influence and authority" (Voyageur, 2005:83). I have experienced discrimination in the Mooniyâs world because I am a woman, and discrimination when I went to the Six Nations of the Grand River to obtain information about my family of origin, because I look White. A double-edged sword, once again the appropriation of my voice by both cultures has made it difficult to enter into either world.

"I struggle to speak from beyond the living grave. This is life after death!"

Bill C-31 did renew my life and the opportunity to reclaim my heritage. For this I am grateful. However, in the process, I see that limitations abound for my Indigenous designation ends with me. This process is described as "bleeding-off of individuals from legal recognition as Indians" (Lawrence, 2004:64).

Southern Arrowwood

A prophecy by Hopi Elder Thomas Banyaca spoke to the future of the American Indigenous peoples: "...when the Eagle landed on the moon, the people would recover" (Maracle, 2003:70). It was believed that this event, in 1969, foreshadowed major changes in the Indigenous communities. Maracle speaks of the tremendous development in the community of the past thirty-five years, such as the healing and the reshaping, which has occurred because of the tireless efforts of women. They have worked on "rampant addictions, low education levels, poor housing, few employment opportunities and numerous family stresses...[that] internalized the many forms of violence we experienced with colonization and had learned to express it

laterally, against one another…[unable] to appreciate the value of our cultures, or to see their application as vibrant and vital forms of community developments" (71). It was difficult for these women, as it has been for me, to make changes when one does not have a vision of the future. I am compelled to acknowledge that, perhaps, I would not have embarked upon my journey if my awareness had not been heightened by their efforts. Nyà-wę!

The Aboriginal women stepped forward to answer the many interpersonal questions that define not only a community but, also, each individual within that community. Rita Joe (1991), a poet and Micmac Indian, in her collection of poems serves as a reminder that the Native culture was here long before the Europeans. A particularly moving poem was entitled, "I Am An Indian On This Land" …[She wrote:]…

I am just an Indian on this land
I am sad, my culture you do not understand.
I am just an Indian to you now
You wrinkle your brow…
…Today I will show I am just like you… (69)

This poem speaks to Maracle's (2003) questions that need answers in order to reshape the future of the Indigenous communities. "Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? What are my responsibilities" (71)?

"I feel the Eagle's talons as it flies high above my head."

The conference "Rève-Toi!" (Wake up!) sparked many Aboriginal women to put together many visions that would inspire others to redeem their culture via Friendship Centres. The Centres were a way of bringing women together and to act as change agents against tremendous odds. The Aboriginal women have waged an uphill battle to regain their power, as do I on my journey. Regrettably, when the European treaty parties came to the Aboriginal communities, they did not want to deal with the "women who were the leaders of our families, clans, communities

and Nations...Colonial government policies and laws, including the *Indian Act*, reinforced political practices that excluded women" (Maracle, 2003:73). Aboriginal traditions tell women that they are not the same as men, nor should they approach leadership in the manner in which men do. When Maracle tried to describe feminism and women wanting to attain equality with men, it came as no surprise that her grandmother laughed and said in Mohawk: "Why would women want to lower themselves to be equal to men" (74)? Women have always been powerful and, in many instances, they have been denied or have denied themselves of this truism. I no longer want to deny myself the truth. Women were placed on Mother Earth first, and it was their responsibility, according to Maracle's grandmother, to nurture and create. It follows then that it is the women's responsibility to regenerate the Aboriginal community to reclaim its sociocultural life. Agnes Whistling Elk states:

> There are no medicine men, without medicine women. A medicine man is given power by a woman, and it has always been that way. A medicine man stands in the place of the dog. He is merely an instrument of woman. It doesn't look that way any more, but it is true. (Andrews, 1981:Frontispiece)

I begin the work of reclaiming my life. I need to embrace, and not inhibit, my creativity suggests Maracle (2003). I need to incorporate the rituals of my ancestors—singing, drumming, especially the big drum "which challenges the cultural norms" (77). Nature, with all its offerings, beckons me as well.

"Send me a rainbow to ride the crest of the tide."

Western Soapberry

> The trees want me to listen,
> The corn begs for me to know their secrets,
> Neither want to die, only to live.
> (d. a. Hunt, 2007)

Without a moment's hesitation I need to rush like Hogan's (2000) pigs, past the corn that lies on the ground and listen to the "denser song of corn where it still lives inside its dress of husk" (115). Hogan's passage articulates a world beyond, which is readily available to those who do not seek to strip away the layers of a life that lives in its existential reality. This passage speaks to me. I do not want the useless rhetoric that resembles silence; I want the true words of wisdom to penetrate the silence so that I may live, to grow towards a tomorrow filled with the inner voices of women and the songs that the corn sings. I offer, as evidence, the tulips that turn their backs towards the sun to welcome the warmth of the day. Another example deals with the animal kingdom. Vickie Hearne provides good reasons for giving "horses their heads" (116) as a means to survival. The animal kingdom has a lot to offer humans, if only we listen to the sounds of nature. Many years ago, so the story goes, in a Quebec village all the dogs began to bark and would not stop. They tried to warn of an impending mudslide—few listened to their constant cries—many died. The dogs were listening to the spirits of Mother Earth. Unfortunately, the dogs' owners did not. The muse, states Hogan, characterizes the inspirational thoughts from a world in which the spirits live. One of the most poignant truisms was a point made by Paul Kleen, "Original law fosters all evolution, to the organic centre of all movement in time and space, which is the mind or heart of creation" (Hogan, 2000:116-117). Interpretation of the stories and songs contain the wisdom that could heal Mother Earth and all that reside therein. The key is in the listening to enable future generations to continue the traditions from the past.

According to Hogan, Orpheus was able to communicate with the water, minerals, and all the plants and animals, and Psyche received solutions from the ants and river reeds. Is it not true that a stone chooses us, not the reverse, and that the leaves turn their backs when it is going to rain? These are stories that I have heard, believe in, and practice; others might deem them as

myths. Hogan states, ..."myths... are a high form of truth...They are the deepest, innermost cultural stories of our human journeys toward spiritual and psychological growth" (117). The evolution of Mother Earth depends on listening. A prime example of Mother Earth taking care of the planet and all who will listen, centres on the wind and the messages it brings. It was the wind, not humans that carried the death dealing news of Chernobyl around the world states Hogan. If not for the wind, the deathly silence would not have forewarned the world of the possible devastation that nuclear reactors can cause. "The wind is a prophet, a scientist, a talker" (116). The wind has also sent me a message. I have come to an understanding that I must step back even further in time to obtain the wisdom that Mother Earth bestows. I need to build the Indigenous house of life from the ground up. I realize that I have not laid a solid enough foundation that could withstand the test of time. I have not incorporated the 'spirit strength' from the spirit world that I will need to guide, shelter and comfort me on this painful journey. I seek to have a better understanding of what the Native world around me has to offer.

"Hear the corn as it sings stories for all to hear."

Hogan talks about how sacred the pollen of corn is with respect to it being the "life-giving seed of creation and fertility." She further states that the corn is called grandmother, because the "seeds fell out of her skin...[when she]...rubbed her palms against her body" (122). The oral tradition that she passed down to her sons was invaluable. She said, "Plant the beans and corn together, plant their little sister, squash, between them" (122), and in doing so, this will ensure that the soil continues to be fertile year after year. Hogan's recounting of a bracelet of corn that she was given by Carroll Arnett, a Cherokee writer, moved me. Hogan said, "If I wear it when I die and am buried, won't it be wonderful to know that my life will grow up, out from beneath the earth? My life inside the green blades of corn, the stalks and tassels and flying

pollen, the red corn, that corn will be this woman" (123). Hogan breaks down the pollen and cornmeal that are offered to the sun at dawn. She states:

> The ears of corn are listening and waiting. They want peace.
> The stalks of the corn want clean water, sun that is in its full clean shining.
> The leaves of the corn want good earth. The earth wants peace. The birds
> who eat the corn do not want poison. Nothing wants to suffer. The wind
> does not want to carry the stories of death....At night...the wind passes
> through. It's all there, the languages, the voices of wind, dove, corn, stones.
> The language of life won't be silenced. (123)

I do not want to be silenced either. Chaco Canyon talks about a ceremonial room, called a *kiva*, in the earth, where a single corn plant grows replanting itself every year with no one to take care of it, or water it and yet, it rises up and when it does the earth yields (Brant, 1994). Left to my own devices all these years, I continue to grow. The *kiva*, for me, is my inner 'spirit strength.'

Northern White Cedar

Brant (1994) speaks of a "spiritual practice that occurs in many First Nations Peoples of venturing out alone to an isolated place to experience a dream, an interaction with spirits, a communion with animal beings in order to find a life-time path to dwell on" (67). This I need to do, to become connected to what I describe as my spirit strength. Brant states that the Europeans labelled this journey as a vision quest. She believes that the label does not adequately describe the religious ceremony that is a complicated process to become centred and balanced. I hear her anger at the dominant culture's stereotypical use of the word vision to describe whole peoples and the colonization and assimilation of the beliefs and ceremonies, to suit their needs. But, speaking from the colonized mind of a Mooniyâs who has witnessed the world through the Euro-Western White lens, are Native people not more spiritual and in touch with Mother Earth? Am I able to bond more easily to their connectedness because I have the same innate connection

to all that is, as a part of my Aboriginal heritage? I have much work to do before I fully understand the process of how to decolonize as I journey towards the First Nations culture. Brant (1994) awakens my sensitivity with her "cultural definition of vision [as] a vast and far-reaching one. It is also a holy one" (68). Perhaps, I am the protagonist. I have battled for my emotional survival for many years, not so much living or dying, but for survival. Brant defines the "split within our individual selves and souls... [as part of the]...shattering of our cultural and community system" (68). The depression that followed the realization that I had been denied my heritage was, I believe, a part of the curse of colonialism. It is colonialism that led my family into silence, into denial, and into a place of fear that robbed them of their souls. This is not unlike the journey of Anna May. In Brant's story, she speaks of the journey of Anna May and the death of her son, believing that it is her existence that has brought this about; that is, "she deserves to die for the "sins" she has of being who she is" (69). Brant believes that this encoded rape of her mind and her resultant alcoholism was not her choice but rather as a result of colonialism.

I admit, like Brant, to being directed. I am the "Salmon" struggling on a painful journey to "carry life to new beginnings and new generations" (70), namely, my sons. I, like Anna May, am trying to heal my mind. To do this I believe that I need to acquire more stories, beliefs, myths, and symbols of nature and of mankind. Brant states, "Vision is not just a perception of what is possible, it is a window to the knowledge of what *has* happened and what is happening" (72). I need the knowledge that is allowed, according to Brant, to seep through when there is a crack in the window. I do not want to continue to be a victim of the colonized world, but rather begin to explore the "abundance of Earth's messages...[to]...drown out the un-Earthly message...witness to what has been and what is to be." Salmon's desire to go home is our desire also. Blue Heron's desire to fly long distances to make a home is our desire also. Corn's desire to

grow is ours also. For we are part of them and they are parts of us...listening to the stories brought to us by other beings. Renewing ourselves in the midst of chaos" (73-74).

I feel the need to explore that which the medicine man used to help Joseph, in Brant's story, reconcile his life and his impending death. That is, I need to gather up the pieces, as did Joseph, which I have cast aside or lost in my struggle between the two worlds. Brant states: "Vision is not just a perception of what is possible, it is a window to the knowledge of what *has* happened and what is happening." I look through the "crack in the window" (72) and catch a glimpse of the stories, the many traditions that are carried by the wind from one generation to another. Stiffarm (1998) states that there is tragedy within every story. They are filled with "pain...humiliation...vibrancy...shame... resilience...grief [and]...hope" (1). My story is filled with all of these and I have come to accept that there are many ways to heal including by way of this thesis. Creative forms of expression can have a cleansing quality when the environment is non-threatening. Stiffarm (1998) speaks of going within to rid the body of the pain that has hosted in every organ. This is a time-consuming process that takes on many shapes as it slowly speeds towards "attaining knowledge [that] encompasses four domains—mental, physical, emotional and spiritual" (Weenie, 2005: 59). Part of the process throughout this journey has felt like a death and, to honour that part of the journey, I offer the condolence speech made by Joseph Brant at Fort George on the 24th of February 1801 to Captain Clause on the death of his mother Ann Johnson Clause.

CONDOLENCE SPEECH

> Brother! We are here now met in the presence of the Spirit above, with the intent to keep up the ancient custom of condolement. We therefore condole with you for your late loss of our well beloved sister, whom now you have interred.
>
> Brother! We hope that this may not damp your heart so much as to make you forget us, who are your brothers, not only ourselves but our wives and children.
>
> Brother! We say now again that by our late loss it seems our fire is

> somewhat extinguished. But now we have found a few brands remaining and have collected them together and have raised a straight smoke to the clouds.
>
> Brother! We therefore with this string of Wampum wipe away the tears from your eyes and would take away all sorrow from your heart. But that is impossible, still it is the customary way of making the speech. We, therefore, mention it and with the said Wampum we wipe away all stains of whatever should remain on your seat so that you may sit down in comfort.
>
> Brother! We say again with this string of Wampum, as you seem to be all in darkness, we with the same string enlighten the skies about us so that it may appear to us all as it formerly used to do.
>
> Brother! We say again with this string of Wampum as we now have made our speech of condolement, we hope to raise you upon your feet as you formerly used to be for since our late loss it seems you have been confined as one absent.
>
> Brother! We hope you will not forget our calamities; hoping that this shock may not put us out of your memory entirely; and also that you may continue to keep us as you formerly used to do.
>
> Brother! This last string which now I give you is given by the whole Six Nations so as to strengthen your mind and body that you may not be cast down by the occasion of our late loss. (Moses and Goldie, 1992:16)

IN THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

To honour the life-giving portion of my journey, I offer the following excerpt from a poem by Marcie Rendon (Awanewquay) entitled, "This woman that I am becoming," as a fitting tribute to the journey that I have embarked upon.

> this woman that I am becoming
> is a combination of the woman that I am
> and was
> this journey backward will help me to walk forward...(Brant, 1988:219)

Nyà-wę!

This chapter has been for me an incredible journey of self-discovery. Examining my own history in the context of cross-cultural awareness, Euro-Western and First Nations, has provided a basis from which to examine the narratives of other Aboriginal women, some of whom are of mixed race, as am I. Examining all the Indigenous women's experiences has consequently been a very personal experience for me. I acknowledge that within my narrative, confusion around my

identity has surfaced as a core topic. Can I state, with any certainty that I am an authentic Aboriginal woman? My answer lies within the following narratives of the eight Aboriginal women.

CHAPTER V: WE SPEAK AS ONE

SACRED FEATHERS – CONTRIBUTORS' PROFILES

KIM ANDERSON is an (Cree/Métis) educator, writer, and editor. She writes and does research on social and health policy for Aboriginal organizations in Ontario. Anderson is the author of *Recognition of Being. Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (2000) and co-editor with Bonita Lawrence of *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival* (2003). Her contribution to Atlantis, entitled *"Indigenous Women: The State of Our Nations"* (Vol.29.2, Spring, 2005) was guest-edited by Bonita Lawrence.

MARIE BATTISTE is a Mi'kmaq educator from the Potlo'tek First Nations in Nova Scotia. She is a full professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Education. She is also the coordinator of the Indian and Northern Education Program within Educational Foundations, academic director of the new Aboriginal Education Research Centre, and co-director of the Humanities Research Unit at the U of S. She is the author of *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (2000), co-author with Jean Barman on *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (1995), and with James Youngblood Henderson on *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage* (2000). Battiste remains involved in research on Aboriginal education, teachers and teacher education and languages. She received the 2000 First Peoples Publishing Award for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge, from the Saskatchewan Book Awards and in 2004 the Distinguished Researcher Award.

FYRE JEAN GRAVELINE is a Métis feminist, anti-racist advocate and scholar. She was born and raised in Canadian Northern Manitoba Bush Country. She is an educator, consultant, therapist, community organizer, and ceremonial leader who has worked across Canada for the past 34 years in education and social work. She is the Director of the First

Nations and Aboriginal Counselling Degree Program at Brandon University. She is a prolific writer and the author of *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness* (1998), and *Healing Wounded Hearts* (2004).

EMMA LAROCQUE is a Plains Cree Métis from northeastern Alberta. She is a poet, historian, writer, social and literary critic. Since 1977 she has been a professor at the University of Manitoba in the Department of Native Studies. She has lectured both nationally and internationally on issues of human rights. Her primary focus has been on Native history, education, colonization, literature, and identity. She is the author of *Defeathering the Indian* (1975), *Three Conventional Approaches to Native People in Society and in Literature* (1984). Articles that she has written centre on Native literature, violence against women, racism, colonization, and Canadian historiography.

BONITA LAWRENCE (Mi'kmaq) is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Sciences at Atkinson College of York University where she teaches Native Studies and Women's Studies. Her research and publications have focused primarily on urban, non-status Native identities, mixed race, gender and colonization, and federally unrecognized Aboriginal communities. She is the author of *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native People and Indigenous Nationhood.* She is co-editor with Kim Anderson of *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival* (2003), a collection of Aboriginal women's scholarly and activist writing. She also guest-edited a recent edition of Atlantis, entitled *"Indigenous Women: The State of Our Nations"* (Vol.29.2, Spring, 2005) with Kim Anderson. With Enakshi Dua she co-wrote *"Challenging White Hegemony In University Classrooms: Whose Canada Is It?"* Atlantis, (Vol. 24.2, Spring 2000).

LEE MARACLE is a member of the Stoh:lo Nation of British Columbia. She is a writer of both short and long prose, fiction, and is an orator, poet, and essayist. She currently works as a partner in Native Futures Group, where she integrates her traditional Indigenous teachings with her European education to create culturally appropriate processes of healing for Native people. Various First Nations groups and governments have employed her to teach general health seminars from a traditional perspective and to reclaim culture, sociology, law and government through language, creative writing and counselling. She is the Aboriginal "Mentor in Residence" at the University of Toronto, an award-winning teacher and the Traditional Cultural Director at the Centre for Indigenous Theatre. She is the author of *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism, Bobbi Lee, and Sojourner's Truth and Other stories,* and co-editor of *Telling It: Women and Language Across Culture* (all 1990); and *Sun Dogs* (1991).

PATRICIA MONTURE-ANGUS is a Mohawk from the Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford, Ontario. She is a lawyer and currently a professor of Natives Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She lives on the Thunderchild First Nation in Saskatchewan. Monture-Angus has a degree from York's Osgoode Hall Law School and in addition two degrees, one from the University of Western Ontario and one from Queen's University. Over the years, she has been involved in politics and activism advocating for the rights of Aboriginal prisoners and Aboriginal women. She is the author of *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (1995), a collection of essays based on articles published specifically to be available for Aboriginal people who would not have access to the law libraries. In 2000 she was the featured lecturer at York University as part of a day-long celebration to commemorate the United Nations

"International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination." She also wrote *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nation's Independence* (1999).

MARY ISABELLE YOUNG is Anishinabe Kwe from Bloodvein First Nations. She attended Pine Creek Residential School for three years. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Winnipeg and her Post-Baccalaureate in Education and Masters of Education from the University of Manitoba. Her Ph.D. is in First Nations Education from the University of Alberta. She is a Native Student Advisor, Counsellor at the University of Winnipeg and the Director of Aboriginal Student Services. Her research examines the Aboriginal students' experiences in the university setting and the effects of reconnecting with their culture. She is the author of *Anishinabe Voice, The Cost of Education in a non-Aboriginal World: A Narrative Inquiry* (1997), and *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way* (2005).

CAMEO APPEARANCES

EMILY PAULINE JOHNSON (Tekahionwake) was a Mohawk born on the Six Nations of the Grand River. Her father George Henry Martin Johnson was the Mohawk Chief. Her mother Emily Susanna Howells was an English gentlewoman. Johnson was one of the most popular and successful entertainers at the turn of the century. Johnson was a multifaceted writer who wrote in three genres. She also wrote and performed in amateur theatre productions. Her poetry focused primarily on the patriotic and pastoral Indian in addition to other subjects. Her short prose narratives often have a moral direction, as did her adventure stories. She was the authoress of *Legends of Vancouver* (1911), *The Shagganappi* (1913), Her story entitled *My Mother*, emphasized the matriarchal elements of Mohawk society. Some of her writings have been labelled as pro-Native and feminist. Her poem *The Song My Paddle Sings* (1895) is often anthologized. Her poem *Ode to Brant* (1886) expressed the importance of brotherhood between

Native and European immigrants while ultimately endorsing British authority. To argue against the racist assumption that the Native society was dying, Johnson used the "noble savage" archetype.

BETH BRANT (Degonwadonti) (Mohawk/Irish-Scot) is a Bay of Quinte Mohawk from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Reserve in Deseronto, Ontario. She has been writing since the age of forty and her work has appeared in numerous Native and Feminist journals and anthologies in Canada and the United States. Brant is the author of *A Gathering of Spirit:A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1984). This book was the first anthology of its kind. She is also the author of *Mohawk Trail* (1985), a collection of prose and poetry and *Food and Spirits* (1991) which is a collection of short stories. In 1994 Brant published a collection of the speeches and lectures she has given. It is entitled *Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk* (1994). Her works on Native and/or gay and lesbian issues have appeared in many literary journals.

EAGLES TAKE FLIGHT

As I journeyed through the narratives, I was aware that I wanted to showcase each woman's unique colonized experience based on her understanding of her truth, and not the truth as I might comprehend and interpret her situation as a non-Indigenous writer. This approach, in my opinion, would be a further colonization of her life history and, as such, a dichotomization of the truth while placing yet another colonizing layer of Euro-Western arrogance and dishonour upon her narrative with "White" man's words. I did not want to show disrespect towards the Aboriginal women, their life experiences or their cultural beliefs. Therefore, I examined the content of the narratives using the women's own thoughts with respect to the interlocking oppressive practices that they experienced in higher education as students or as academics at the hands of the colonizing "White" man. Also, I wanted to identify what they judged to be points of tension and/or contradictions embedded within the systems of knowledge (Euro-Western and First Nations), for it would be foolish to assume that only White academics are more predisposed to bias than Native academics. And finally, I wanted to document what changes in higher educational pedagogies that the narratives suggest in terms of changing the status quo.

Kim Anderson

> I propose that Aboriginal women engage in a process of self-definition that includes four steps: *resist, reclaim, construct and act*...the identity formation process that I have documented involves:
>
> - resisting negative definitions of being;
> - reclaiming Aboriginal tradition;
> - constructing a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context; and
> - acting on that identity in a way that nourishes the overall well-being of our communities. (Anderson, 2000:15)

Kim Anderson (2000) writes in the Aboriginal method of contextualizing knowledge, not in the prevalent Euro-Western White academic method that objectifies knowledge. Anderson

reiterates a story, as told by Monture-Angus (1995), about an editor that removed all the "I's" from her story. This demonstrates one of the key differences between the two approaches to knowledge. Anderson shares her story in the "spirit of Aboriginal teaching and sharing practices" (Anderson, 2000:22). It is to be noted that Monture-Angus was not the first woman to have her first person accounts altered. Non-Aboriginal feminists in the eighties experienced the same oppression.

Anderson's mother was a White woman whose ancestry was primarily upper-middle class English Protestant. Her father was of mixed Cree/Métis and Scottish ancestry from a working-class family. Anderson and her brother were raised in a White middle-class neighbourhood. Presently, she labels herself as a Cree/Métis woman, based on her father's heritage and, since she is of mixed-blood heritage, she wanted to also acknowledge her mother's Euro-Western ancestry. But she is unsure if this Native designation will remain, as such, because her development as an Indigenous person took place among the Ojibway and the Iroquois. She has retained the Cree designation because this was the language of her Native ancestors. She admits that she has struggled with her identity in adulthood because she was raised without the benefit of contact with Native people, other than her father's extended family, or with the experiences derived from a Native community. She has felt embarrassed, ashamed and confused about identifying herself as a Native woman because of "racism, cultural genocide and policies" (23) that have persuaded Aboriginal people to abandon their birthright.

As a child, Anderson attended a rural school where everyone else was White and issues pertaining to non-Euro-Canadian, non-Christian races and cultures were insignificant. At high school, in the city, race and culture were not acknowledged. At puberty she became aware of the oppression of women as a result of recognizing and experiencing threats of violence and sexual

harassment from men. This made her angry and fearful. At university the gaps in her Native experiences, as a result of an argument with a White woman classmate, brought her face-to-face with her own position as an assimilated Native person. This awareness was the result of her becoming more conscious spiritually, emotionally and mentally of the persecution and losses experienced by her ancestors at the hands of the colonists, and of her own personal loss of identity. Her experience at university was the beginning of her reclaiming her Aboriginal identity. To accomplish this goal, Anderson had to revisit the past by seeking out other Native peoples through community organizations in urban Toronto. In the process, she encountered the stereotypical notion of the 'vanishing Indian.' Anderson quotes Plains Cree/Métis professor Emma LaRocque's explanation of this. The 'vanishing Indian' is "a white construct that comes from a combination of old history, old anthropology and the civilization/savagery paradigm that informed much of western intellectual tradition" (26). Change for First Nations People, according to Euro-Western ideology, meant either assimilation or vanishing. To consider anything else, beyond being savage and primitive, meant that they were no longer considered to be a First Nations person.

In her efforts to become more of an Aboriginal person, Anderson struggled at times with her feelings of not meeting the 'Indianness' standard, but in spite of this found a sense of belonging and community and a wealth of knowledge about her heritage on her journey. She stated that she does experience racist attitudes from some White people who question her 'Indianness' as a result of her not having grown up on a reserve. Some are quick to remind her that she is 'only half Native', a statement that she has come to understand as part of the assimilation practices to make First Nations People disappear. The key, asserts Anderson, for Native people who do not have a land-based culture is to view Indigenous traditions and

ceremonies as ideals and tools in an effort to reconcile Native lives as they have come to be, not as a tool to question how Indigenous they are.

Anderson stated that she also struggles with defining her mixed-blood identity. The complex path of mixed-blood ancestry has to do with the political climate, one's location and one's appearance. She could pass for either a White or Aboriginal person, dependent upon the context and group of people around her. Anderson was fortunate to be accepted by the Elders in her community and began to feel like she belonged. Some are not accorded this honor as Anderson's friend Bonita Lawrence, a Mi'kmaq Native, pointed out to her.

Anderson also acknowledged that it is equally important to her to investigate and foster her Euro-Canadian heritage, although she had more knowledge of this as she had been well schooled in Euro-Western hegemony. She had spent eighteen years in a school system whose viewpoint of the White Euro-Western male was promoted throughout. Although inspired by some of the knowledge the school system had to offer, some of it she found problematic. She understands that recognizing and reconciling the polar opposite views within her mixed-blood heritage is a difficult task. In her search to find the middle ground between the oppressor and the oppressed, she referred to Cree/Métis educator Myra Laramee who encouraged Aboriginal women of mixed-blood to resist closing the Euro-Western doorway. Anderson realized that she had a lot to learn from her non-Indigenous grandmothers also. Her Euro-Canadian heritage has afforded her privileges as a result of her "race, [her] class, education and upbringing" (30). She refers to herself as a privileged Native person with no lived experiences of violent or overt racism, abuse, and poverty or family breakdown. She believes that her privileges, which are nothing more than just basic human rights, may allow her the opportunity to raise Euro-Western people's awareness of First Nations People who are not privileged as a result of race and class,

and are not accorded the same rights as was she. Unfortunately, as she points out, the lives of all Native people are bound together by 'assimilationist policies' and 'cultural genocidal attacks.' As a result of her efforts she hopes to be a benefit to both cultures, and in particular to keep the Aboriginal world alive and visible.

Marie Battiste

> Indigenous peoples regard all products of the human mind and hearts as inter-related within Indigenous knowledge. They assert that all knowledge flows from the same source: the relationships between a global flux that needs to be renewed, the people's kinship with the other living creatures that share the land, and the people's kinship with the spirit world. Since the ultimate source of knowledge is the changing ecosystem itself, the art and science of a specific people manifest these relationships and can be considered as manifestations of the people's knowledge as a whole. (Battiste, 2000:41-42)

Marie Battiste is a Mi'kmaq educator from the Potlo'tek First Nations in Nova Scotia. She is a full professor at the University of Saskatchewan, coordinator of the Indian and Northern Education Program within Educational Foundations. She is also the academic director of the new Aboriginal Education Research Centre and co-director of the Humanities Research Unit at the University of Saskatchewan. Behind these accomplishments lies a fundamental motivation for her. She states that in her generation, "'Indian education' has become a particularly adaptable site for confronting the formal contradictions besetting Aboriginal consciousness within Canada" (vii). She believes that the Indigenous communities are filled up with a dominant White paradigm, which the former need to "unpack." Also, the Indigenous people need to be able to rid themselves of feelings of inferiority.

The Indigenous knowledge base has been eroded away by these imperialistic policies and the effects of colonization she stated. As a result, the oppression of Aboriginal communities continues with the federal government stipulating that First Nations must, as a minimum

requirement, adopt provincial curricula if they want to assume control of their education. This, Battiste acknowledged, is another colonial device that will negate Aboriginal communities of their languages, knowledge, and cultures. The teaching of Aboriginal rights, states Chief Justice Lamer, is a constitutional right.

> In the Aboriginal tradition, societal practices and customs are passed from one generation to the next by means of oral description and actual demonstration. As such, to ensure the continuity of Aboriginal customs and traditions, a substantive Aboriginal right will normally include the incidental right to teach such a practice, custom and tradition to a younger generation. (Battiste, 1998:17)

Battiste (1998) stated that in most Canadian educational systems, Aboriginal knowledge and languages are still excluded because they are felt to be valueless. Without these commodities, the lessons, the knowledge, and the way of life for the Aboriginal communities are greatly affected and, as a consequence, the communities cease to exist as a separate entity. It is an inherent right, as spelled out by the United Nations, stated Battiste, to speak and belong to a language family. Unfortunately, Battiste claims, the existing Aboriginal rights that are supposed to be protected by treaties and the Canadian constitutional reforms since 1982 have been negatively affected by the continued dominating imperialistic policies and colonial educational practices in Canada. However, educators and Aboriginal scholars have already started the process of decolonizing Canadian education. The challenge that exists in such a process requires finding scholars and educators who have the ability to speak their own language and rise above their own Euro-Western contaminated education. This dream of equality for Aboriginal knowledge and language is being pursued, indicated Battiste. The importance of language for Aboriginal people cannot be overstated, for the belief is that contained within it are the Creator's instructions for their survival and development as a people.

The sharing of language, therefore, is a basic shared belief about how the world works and how to ensure that the world receives what it needs to survive. For tribal societies, this cognitive experience that becomes part of the tapestry of existence as an Indigenous people is tribal epistemology from which the Creator gives the Elders guidance in visions, dreams, and life experience (Battiste, 1998). The Aboriginal people's right to speak an Aboriginal language is the most integral, and yet ignored, of all Aboriginal rights. Contained in the treaties with the Crown, it was stipulated that the Crown could maintain schools, thereby, enriching the Aboriginal knowledge base with new non-Aboriginal knowledge. This was not accomplished as a result of the authority contained in the Indian Act whereby the White, colonial federal government assimilated the Aboriginal knowledge into what the former deemed to be a 'superior knowledge', breaching its obligations to the Aboriginal peoples. This, she claims, is a manipulation on the part of Eurocentric idealism to empower what they considered to be a superior knowledge base, while discrediting all that the Indigenous people value, including their knowledge base. Not all of the fifty-two Aboriginal languages that have survived in Canada are strong, as a result of colonialism's continued efforts to destroy that part of their heritage. Statistics put forth by Battiste attest to the results of these eradicating practices by the colonists.

In 1990, the Assembly of First Nations found that out of one hundred and one First Nations communities, only slightly more than one-third had languages that would be considered as thriving. This figure meant that within all age groups in the community to qualify as thriving, over eighty percent had to be fluent in their Native tongue. One quarter of Aboriginal communities were listed as declining in the use of their language, and, of these, seventy-five percent of the older age groups were more fluent than the young children whose alarming percentage rate was less than ten percent. A community is considered to be on the endangered

list if there are no, or only a few of, the younger generation that speak the language when coupled with only the older adult Native people who are fluent. Indigenous communities are considered to be in a critical condition if less than ten speakers are fluent in their language.

Residential schools, which Battiste referred to as boarding schools that were run by Catholic and Protestant clerics, were responsible for the persistent physical and cognitive violence, exploitation, sense of powerlessness, and cultural imperialism inflicted on Native children. This abuse at the residential schools has impacted Aboriginal communities for decades, resulting in loss of identity in individuals, low self-esteem, and drug and alcohol abuse. This colonial siege has not abated since 1972 when a new policy of 'Indian Control of Indian Education' was accepted by the federal government although many Canadians, states Battiste, believe the opposite to be true. Little has been done to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the current culturally biased provincial curricula. Indigenous people are not the only culture to have been denied access into the exclusive hierarchal and racist imperialistic educational forum that maintains there is only "one language, one culture, and one frame of reference" (Battiste, 1998:5). She goes on to say that as a result of the colonists disengaging minorities in Canada from their historical experiences, from their own knowledge and voices, minority groups must accept the blame for their impoverished status and lack of power based on their cultural and racial status and origins. In essence, it is their fault for whom they are, and not the colonists. Battiste quotes Memmi (1969): "Racism is the generalized and final assignment of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privileges of aggressions" (5). Memmi also identified racist strategies that are used to sustain colonial power over Aboriginal people, which could be applied to any minorities group but, in this case, have primarily been the basis of Eurocentric theory that frames the

discourse in school texts on Indigenous peoples: "(a) stressing real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victim; (b) assigning values to these differences to the advantage of the racist and the detriment of the victim; (c) trying to make these values absolutes by generalizing from them and claiming that they are final; and (d) using these values to justify any present or possible aggression or privileges" (Battiste, 1998:6).

The patriarchal, Eurocentric, assimilationist curricula that existed in residential schools years ago, with the attempts to isolate and make the Aboriginal culture disappear, states Battiste, is as isolating and invisible-making today to women and other cultural minorities, and, of course, the Indigenous peoples generally, as it was then. Unfortunately, it is not the Eurocentric White knowledge base that is challenged, but rather the First Nations' knowledge that is not recognized in the same manner. In the twenty-first century, Battiste suggests that there is a great need for an educational forum that views diversity as an asset and not as a basis for prejudice. Fundamentally, the fact that some public schools have not included academic frameworks that offer literature pertaining to Indigenous knowledge is a reflection of what continues at universities as well. Cross-cultural awareness about Indigenous peoples is not part of the reality of many public school teachers, for they have not taken courses that pertain to Indigenous peoples. As a result, the traditional academic studies in schools and universities reinforced the Eurocentric context that polarizes Europeans (the centre) over non-Europeans (the marginalized), or as Battiste states, the "civilized" over the "savage" when referring specifically to Indigenous peoples. This universality of Eurocentrism leads to racism and the resultant exploiting of marginalized cultures.

According to Battiste, ethnocentrism affects one's "daily [life] and one's negotiated, often manufactured, identities." She quotes historian Noel's (1994) statement that captures the end result of the cognitive reality of Eurocentrism:

> Alienation is to the oppressed what self-righteousness is to the oppressor. Each really believes that their unequal relationship is part of the natural order of things or desires by some higher power. The dominator does not feel that he is exercising unjust power, and the dominated do not feel the need to withdraw from his tutelage. The dominator will even believe, in all good faith, that he is looking out for the good of the dominated, while the latter will insist that they want an authority more enlightened than their own to determine their fate. (Battiste, 1998:7)

This type of passive thinking on the part of the oppressed, enables the Eurocentric powers in the political and academic realms to continue unabated, thereby, perpetuating colonialism.

The Indigenous peoples do not have to be legitimized by way of the Euro-Western lens as many have come to realize. The Aboriginal peoples also recognize, stated Battiste, that they need to be an active part of the transformation of knowledge that exists in schools and textbooks in an effort to stem the flow of reinforced prejudices about their culture by the dominant culture. Battiste refers to those who preserve Eurocentric knowledge and "interpretive monopolies" as the gatekeepers in the name of universal truth. The restrictions placed on First Nations schools to engage in this curriculum bias by federally based government policies intensifies the problems for Aboriginal students to become a part of their conspiracy. Prejudices exist and Battiste (1998) suggests that Indigenous peoples examine their own traditions as a way to "rebuild, heal, recover, and restore healthy relationships" that will enable them to disperse the "colonial shadow." This process will require Aboriginal people, she admits, to have a heightened awareness of the "sociohistoric" reality that created their culture's current collective "soul wound" (8).

Decolonization is a very complex task that Aboriginal educators recognize, but a necessary one if the current curricula are to shift towards one that is more conducive to Indigenous ways. Fragmented curricula that does not mirror the Aboriginal students' "world view, environment, languages, and how these construct [their] humanity" (8) is not acceptable according to Battiste. It is a requirement that Indigenous peoples be a part of the process of framing their identity and sustaining their Aboriginal knowledge in the future. To this end, the call for self-determination is becoming more of a reality to many Aboriginal people who are beginning to acknowledge the "illegitimacy of Eurocentric thought in defining Aboriginal knowledge and people, and the recovery of Aboriginality in local ecologies and languages" (9).

Fyre Jean Graveline

Embrace First Voice...“the Voice of Experience”
Rooted in Identity.
The Authority of Live Experience.
Particular...Specific...Detailed
Embedded...Imbued with meaning
Our Personal...Structural
Political Cultural Locatedness.
First Voice.
(Graveline, 1998:116)

Graveline (1998) is a Métis/Cree who has worked in education and social work for the last twenty-five years. She was born in the mid-fifties and grew up in Canadian Northern Bush Country. She went to a Mission School, (a day school), which she acknowledged was better than a residential school, but it was run by priests and nuns who used the same methods as they did at residential school to exact obedience. What she experienced there, she now labels as "Oppression. Colonization. Acculturation. Assimilation. Racism. Ethnocide...Spirit is Devalued.

Denigrated. Subject to Abuse. on a daily basis" (Graveline, 2004:31).[18] Her grandmother had attended residential school and advised her to obey the nuns as the rules of the colonizers were taught with abuse. In grade one she was expected to memorize the catechism book from cover to cover. If mistakes were made, she was assaulted with a pointer. When she was six, she was beaten with a strap on the back of her hands at school, turning them black and blue. Humiliated, she ran six miles to her home and hid under her bed, waiting to be taken to hell, as the priests and nuns had threatened would happen. However, her father did stand up to the nuns, priests, and principal of the Mission School, to the school board and to members of the community after her hands were beaten. He threatened to pull her and all the other children out of the school if the abuse did not stop. His activism resulted in him becoming a Trustee on a school board to change the abusive practices towards Nehiyâw'ak[19] children and to the eventual closing of the school.

The incidents at school deeply implanted the seeds of oppression into Graveline's psyche, changing her forever. She said "I am Changed. my Spirit now knows. a Cage" (33). She realizes today that her parents were being quietly assimilated. One sign of the assimilation was that she and her family spoke more English than Mitchif, their Native language, at home. Fortunately, her family kept up with traditional activities. Her father was a wise man, a healer of animals and people. Both her parents knew numbers and letters, a skill that not many Indigenous peoples knew, so their services were in demand. The big lessen that she learned from her father was that oppressive authority is wrong. This saved her "Spirit of Resistance" (Graveline, 2004:35).

When the nuns stopped beating Graveline, they focused on other darker children who had no parents to protect them. This gave her a sense of what being privileged can do in a

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[18] In her book, Graveline used a variety of creative formats and page layouts for the sections I quote in this discussion. I present some of the quotes in a conventional format.

[19] Nehiyâw'ak is a Métis Cree word that refers to Indigenous peoples (Graveline, 2004).

community, especially if you have a light skin colour. She indicated that she experienced and saw a lot more abuse than she cares to story. One priest she knew remained a practicing pedophile for eighteen years in the north until he developed raging dementia and was finally removed. In 1997 the Canadian government apologized and established...

> Healing Fund. 350 million dollars. 1,200 former pupils file lawsuits by 1998. mistrust of Police. confrontational court proceedings. followed by relatively light sentences handed to perpetrators. leads many to look for other routes. 2002. Five years later. notice given. Aboriginal Healing Fund is soon Broke. (Graveline, 2004:35/36)

Today, Graveline refers to herself as a "Métis Traditionalist. Feminist. Mother. Healer.Scholar.Activist.Artist" (149). She is consistently challenging individuals and organizations to examine their oppressive, Eurocentric, patriarchal attitudes and practices. Graveline (1998) considered the starting point of the journey for individuals who have been acculturated to hold dominant views to be the subsequent altering of consciousness about their views. One who has been acculturated can also be unacculturated. Many critical educators, anti-racists and feminists also believe this goal, that is, to develop an awareness of one's cultural conditioning with the subsequent changes in behaviours and attitudes. Graveline locates herself at the intersection of Euro-Western and Aboriginal cultures. As a result of having one foot in both worlds, she calls upon her traditional Aboriginal knowing to support her in what she deems the "nightmares" of contemporary society. Unnatural divisions between categories such as "Indian" and "White" are byproducts of history and politics (Graveline, 1998:21). In her narrative, Graveline chooses to rename these byproducts. This renaming is evidenced in her narrative when she chooses to replace terms such as Indian, First Nations, Aboriginal, Native, and Métis unless they appear in another's quotes. Instead, she uses a Mitchif.Cree word (language spoken by Métis people) "Nehiyâw'ak" when referring to Indigenous people. She also

uses the language of NorthernBush.Mitchif, "Mooniyâs" to describe White people and cultures (Graveline, 2004:8). As a vehicle to explore these relations and challenge them interpersonally and structurally, Graveline (1998) uses the contemporary classroom to "walk my talk" (8) around the Medicine Wheel, which she deems to be her "life work" (8). She believes that it is important to put into action in her community the knowledge that she is acquiring, as an act of reciprocity.

In her role as a critical educator, Graveline struggles to understand and confront the domination of Euro-Western patriarchal colonialism. Teaching about the Aboriginal interconnectedness between the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions is a technique that enables her to sublimate, in her classroom, the colonized, repressive ideology that exists in current Euro-Western curricula. Although contradictions exist as a result of acknowledging the domination of modern Euro-Western practices while embracing traditional teaching strategies, she considers this dichotomous interaction to be nothing more than a basis from which to learn. She warns against assuming that there is only one "Indian Way," which she refers to as a colloquialism within the Native consciousness. The singularity that this implies does not encompass the variety of cultural, economic and geographical conditions of the lived experiences of First Nations People in today's contemporary society.

> [C]ompounding socio-historical differences, individual choices to live on or off reserve, to follow traditional cultural values, majority-culture ways, or varying combinations of both, created an extremely diverse reality of aboriginal life in North America." (Graveline, 1998:22)

The colonizing process that appropriated the Indigenous voice, and the government appropriation, through the Indian Act, of the Indigenous people's right to define their own identities still leads to questions about their cultural identity. That is, who is the "real" Indian?

"Who is authentic enough to be *the* authoritative voice on what an "Indian" is" (30)? A Plains Cree artist and educator, Alfred Young Man, explores authenticity:

> Are North American Indians "real"? Can a non-Indian do Native American art?... Does the loss of language necessarily imply cultural loss and if so why does this raise questions of whether or not an artist is still culturally a Native American? Who finally decides when an Indian is something other than an Indian? And when this "someone" decides, why must it always be a "specialist"—someone who is mysteriously given authority by society at large—who decides rather than an Indian? (Graveline, 1998:30/31)

The Euro-Western linear view of culture is biased in its definition of authenticity. The linear timeline has allowed colonists to distance themselves from their ancestors who colonized the First Nations People. As a result, their interpretations serve the best interests of the dominant class. Current challenges to the interpretations of reality include battles over "authenticity" and "cultural appropriation" (31). Therefore, what defines a "real" Indian is of the utmost concern to those who wish to retain the power within their economic, social, and political schema.

Graveline wants her acquired knowledge to be a contribution to education, a practice of freedom. Academic freedom, she acknowledges, should include everyone. However, academic discourse privileges only some. It is used to control, minimize and marginalize minorities. Graveline believes, "Tradition is not lost if it can be remembered and revitalized to symbolize a possible future" (8). As an educator, she feels it is important for all Aboriginal educators to maintain this discourse to eliminate some, if not all, of the biases that are contained in the knowledge base that has predominantly been developed by White, middle-class urban, male theorists. This is an important point when considering the power that has been exerted in the classroom by the dominant Euro-Western White educators for, she asserts, the more control one has over the body of knowledge, in all likelihood, the more control "the educator's role will be an exercise of control over the learners" (9).

Graveline (2004) experienced fear and confusion as an Aboriginal educator in a predominantly White middle-class group of students, when she realized they were either unwilling or unable to recognize the impact of racism and, more importantly, that they were totally unaware of having experienced racism. One's silence, when someone is making a racist joke or remark, does not indicate disapproval, but rather compliance. It is important to "speak out and educate people as to how harmful these things are" (155). It requires effort to maintain a balance in the classroom between "teachable moments" about racial discrimination, without being labelled as an agitator. It is important to incorporate her list of experiences that are not unlike the other women whose narratives are in my thesis. Personally, she has experienced threatening phone calls, anonymous hate-filled mail, notes, harassment by colleagues and administrators who withheld necessary information from her. Her "non-collegial" behaviour, "narrowness" of research and "misguided" focus on the Nehiyâw'ak and women's community work were also attacked for not being sufficiently linked to the university community. She also experienced personal slurs in the classroom by angry students, one male in particular, who then reported her to the administrator who, in turn, suggested that she examine her teaching style. Her grades have been overturned, approved course outlines reviewed, and she has been interrogated for being "AboriginiCentric," (169) critical, a feminist and too lesbian. Her contracts have not been renewed in some instances, which seemed to cover up homophobic abuse, racial harassment and discrimination. She has had her monetary increments withheld. She has been involved in tenure wars, denied research and travel funds, and has been labelled as too angry, negative, a troublemaker, paranoid, a Christian, and chastised for intimidating others and being accusatory. In the end she stated, "I am left Wondering. "is it Me? Or is it Them" (Graveline,

2004:170-171)? It is very apparent then, that Graveline is no stranger to oppression, racism, and sexism. She reminds herself that she has withstood the following:

> Strapping by MissionSchoolNuns.
> Raping by WhiteMillBoys and Truckers.
> Brainwashing. twenty-six years as Student.
> SpinDoctoring. twenty years as Academic.
> In Eurocentric. Patriarchal. Homophobic. systems.
> (Graveline, 2004:193)

Graveline warns Aboriginal educators to keep focused and be aware that politics play a major role behind the personal attacks. For strength and answers, she turns to the Elders, Guides, dreams and ceremonies. She smudges, lifts the Sacred pipe and consults her ancestors.

A second writing of Graveline's that I feel is important to include in its entirety has to do with the truths that she realized as a result of turning to her traditional teachings.

> Guides teach: Never choose Greed. Seek TheHighestGood for TheMost. Truth must Speak your Voice.
>
> Truth is. I can Never be. ultimately Clear. Who my Enemies are. When They hire me. They want me. want to be my Friends. When I speak Truth to Power. They want my Silence.
>
> True is. I have Not changed who I am. They have changed their Minds. I am Dangerous. when I Challenge their agenda. I Destabilize their status quo.
>
> Truth is. University Administrators. Management. can Abuse us. Slur us. Strip our AcademicFreedom. Breach Human Rights. Let us Die in Poisoned Work Environments. Fire us. (Graveline 2004:183)

Oppression seeps into all areas of society, education being one. To become aware, as one who is oppressed, one has to identify oneself as belonging to a particular class, race, gender, etc., and in the process, gain insights that enable one to see oneself in relation to others. Graveline uses the terms "Self-In-Relation"[20] and "In-Relation" as short forms to describe the foundation

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[20] The knowledge that each person is responsible for his or her actions In-Relation to the larger community is a fundamental shared belief. A person must first know him-or herself and his or her family line, tribal nation and responsibilities to all relations if he or she is to function within an Aboriginal identity" (Graveline, 1998:57).

of a traditional Aboriginal worldview. Uncovering one's role as an oppressor involves time, patience and risk taking. In one of the narratives a woman was not able to identify a time when she had ever oppressed anyone until, in the group, she discovered that she was an oppressor through her simple inaction, which she admitted perpetuated the unfair treatment of certain individuals, including herself. She labelled herself as being weak-willed to speak up by following others, and not taking the lead. The outcome of her experience was in the recognition that "beliefs in cultural equality are only of value if acted upon" (Graveline 1998:95).

Graveline (1998) is concerned with education's role in challenging and maintaining the existing structures of domination, social and political, that are divisive where culture and race are concerned. How legitimate, she questions, is it to place the Aboriginal holistic model within diverse frameworks such as feminist and anti-racist pedagogies and experiential learning? She is aware that challenges exist for educators in their efforts to combine different models of learning. There are questions that need to be addressed around the implementation of these dichotomist educational models, and their theoretical designs. Historically, and in today's society, "the Indian way" and the "White way" are two completely different belief sets (Graveline, 1998:17).

Indigenous education requires learning and teaching of lessons about one's emotional, physical, spiritual dimensions in addition to lessons about balance and interconnectness. Prior to colonial intervention, Aboriginal consciousness was named "mimetic." This "participatory consciousness" involved all the senses in their oral-aural, face-to-face transactions; a connecting with the spirit that the Aboriginal peoples believed exists in all things (18). The environment and culture shaped their integrative collective consciousness. This collective consciousness is also seen as having a worldview, i.e., a set of assumptions and images about the world. The colonists shifted this way of knowing and understanding of the environment and events around

them to a consciousness based primarily on vision. As a result of this dominating colonizing mentality, the Indigenous people's belief system and how they experienced the world was challenged (Graveline, 1998). Their sense of belonging, their feeling of rootedness with a distinctive set of values, their identity was being eroded.

As an educator, Graveline (2002) knows the importance of the Medicine Wheel in maintaining a balance between the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental dimensions involved in Indigenous education. Individuals thrive when there is interrelatedness between community, Mother Earth and individuals. The traditional ceremonies provided by Elders enable one to learn from past history, to be aware of present struggles, and to envision the future. They allow one to assemble ideas of culture that are not easily defined as many come from diverse communities, with their own unique sets of traditions. Hence, the intrinsic value of narratives is apparent for each narrative speaks to these differences. Traditional ceremonies and teachings educate one about building relationships within diverse communities.

In Graveline's group educational teaching "Model", Native and non-Native participants gave feedback on the value of sharing and being open to receive the feelings and thoughts of others.

> Your method of teaching was refreshing to me. I have learned ways of assessing myself and the affects racism has on me…I was able to express my learning and processing in non-traditional (white) ways. Extremely empowering…The circles, with the groups each week was an opportunity to try to deal with the immediate frustrations and the racism of the day or week, for me…very good…with the model that was being used…The native culture and the Circle and this class is invaluable. Even if people are uncomfortable, that's learning! And that's good, that's great, you need to be uncomfortable in your life. (Graveline, 1998:74-75)

Emma LaRocque

> The history of Canada is a history of the colonization of Aboriginal [P]eoples. Colonization is a pervasive structural and psychological relationship between the

> colonizer and the colonized and is ultimately reflected in the dominant institutions, policies, histories, and literatures of occupying powers. (LaRocque 1990:11)

LaRocque (1990) indicated that in the beginning of her early educational experiences, which she fought her parents to allow her to have, she was unaware of and had not predicted the power that Euro-Western schools had to malign Native people. She admitted to eventually 'hating' what she referred to as institutions of colonization and the violence that she said she experienced in the classroom and in the playgrounds between White and Native alike. She did however idealize learning in her pursuit of higher education and admitted that she was not aware of how much of what Howard Adams, a Métis author, called the "white ideal" (LaRocque, 1990:77) that she had internalized. The "White ideal" consists of White males in positions of power who control the curricula content that perpetuates the myths about the Indigenous peoples. This power imbalance is one factor that enables Eurocentric systems of knowledge to continue to be the dominant race as a result of the untruths that are taught in classrooms.

LaRocque (1996) stated that the many varied layers of the colonization of Canadian scholarship have taken their toll on all Native peoples, in particular women including herself. She suffered from sexism as well as racism in and outside the community. Recently, indicated LaRocque, Canadian scholars locate the Native/White relationship within a dominance-subjugation framework. The tensions that exist in the colonizer/colonized dichotomy cannot be treated as mere scholarly or intellectual exercises. These tensions have created divisiveness in the academic community that needs to be critically investigated to "acknowledge the dialectics of colonization in Canadian scholarship" (13). A long-standing scholar in Native studies, she revealed what it is like for Aboriginal women who are researchers and intellectuals, to pursue their Indigenous knowledge when caught in the ideologically rooted Euro-Western based tenets in institutions of higher education that teach colonial history. The ethical and social consequence

of being foreshadowed by the very subject one studies and teaches she found to be an extraordinary situation. Is it any wonder that the biases and the destructive attitudes contained within Euro-Western policies are affecting the everyday lives of Native people? In higher education she found that the university textbooks were as distorted and insulting to First Nations People as were elementary textbooks. Words such as 'primitive' and 'simple' coupled with the racist themes of Indigenous people as 'dirty savages', and women as 'squaws', to describe Aboriginals did nothing more than perpetuate the myths and untruths about them and their way of life. As she assimilated into the White world, her problems and subsequent conflict within herself and everyone around her increased, as did her awareness about the White man's incredible lack of understanding of the Indigenous people. Forced changes as opposed to free choice, in terms of what constitutes knowledge and how it is taught, have pervaded the schooling where Aboriginal individuals were and still are taught.

As a result of LaRocque's (1990) internalization of the "White ideals," she admits that she began to reject her traditional roles (e.g., hunting, trapping, berry picking, fishing, making tools, healing, processing food and animal hides, sewing clothes, and gardening to name a few) expected of her by her ancestors, family and community. Her rejection of the traditional ways of life, in turn, disrupted the rhythm of living off the land, which she acknowledged helps to shape a well integrated, functioning culture. Cultural differences, she admitted, in and of themselves, that Native people experience, do not appear to be the central issue so much as a political issue, with the taking of Native lands and resources. Therefore, she concluded, the balance of power does not lie within cultural differences, but it is only a weapon with which to skillfully hide the truth of the colonization of the Native people. She spoke of the alienation and shame that she experienced reading her textbooks and listening to her teachers. She admitted that her student life

was filled with anger, discomfort and loneliness. To combat the racist and sexist remarks she became politicized. As she peeled away the layer of colonialism that shrouded her, she became the "Uncomfortable Mirror" (85) in her efforts to educate the oppressors as well as the oppressed. This was not an easy task, for she found that neither was comfortable with change, and self-inspection evoked fear and anger.

In terms of her role as a scholar, LaRocque (1996) expressed her scholarship quite differently from non-Native academics. She attempted to use her voice as an expression of cultural integrity, preserving orality in writing, taking an interdisciplinary approach to genre, and requesting ethical re/considerations in archiving hate material in her efforts to "balance the legacy of dehumanization and bias entrenched in Canadian studies about Native [Peoples]" (13). In her efforts to lessen the implicit and explicit contradictions in academic materials she encouraged readers (editors, publishers and colleagues) to critically analyze the political nature of the English language contained within hegemonic doctrines of these editorial and scholarly practices. She stated that part of the challenge to her colleagues is to ask them to re-evaluate their colonial frameworks of interpretation, how they portray Indigenous peoples, and why Native scholars are more often than not excluded from the footnotes of scholarly writings.

Endeavouring to make changes is a struggle in academia when colleagues perpetuate the myths about Native people's existence as "hand-to-mouth" (86), or discredit the Indigenous culture by listing what LaRocque (1990) described as 'pathetic traits' that are congruent only with the White beliefs about Native peoples. Stereotypical labels that proliferate in contemporary and archival materials, created by those in power, enable them to control and sustain the status quo. LaRocque (1990) has been labelled as 'disadvantaged', a 'radical' and blamed by Euro-Western colonizers who do not take responsibility for their incessant oppressive

actions towards Native peoples for what they deem to be "the Indian problem" (89). LaRocque (1996) believed that there is a direct relationship between the stereotypical notions of Aboriginal women being over-sexualized beings, coupled with racist overtones that lead to violence against Aboriginal women. She affirmed that Aboriginal women must be prudent as they return to some of their traditional Native ways, away from colonialism. She warned that not all of the traditions liberate or empower Aboriginal women for, even when Indigenous communities were considered to be matriarchal, there were still incidents of male oppression.

LaRocque's real wish was for the 'transformation' of society and of people in society. To this end, she encouraged Aboriginal women to speak up rather than to remain in the shadow of their male contemporaries. She quoted Joyce Green, a Native doctoral student at the University of Alberta..."knowledge is dynamic, and there is nothing preventing the incorporation of new female and Aboriginal ways of knowing" (15). LaRocque believed that by standing firm in dignity, and by assuming one's humanity and equality as one's right as a woman in society, whilst being buffeted by the colonial patriarchy, is the way into the future that can hopefully lessen the 'ghettoization' of every educated Native woman. She advocated for the continuous writing of the truth, a textual resistance technique that she has used in her efforts to combat the untruths about Indigenous peoples. She stated that it is important to not condone but to challenge the stereotypical myths that persist in the systems of knowledge in the academy about Native reality. As part of the ongoing challenges, she also suggested that Aboriginal women confront racist and sexist remarks made by those in society who are part of the ill-informed ethnocentric populace.

Bonita Lawrence

> ...for if I gradually begin to realize that I was not white, there was certainly no way that I, with my years of light-skin privilege and my unexamined notions of who or what

> was "Indian," could understand myself to be a Native person...I grew up in a family that identified itself, for the first few years of my life, as expatriate British.
> (Lawrence 2004:xiii, xvi)

Lawrence (2004) stated that her father's account of their family's heritage was that of a working-class British family which settled in Montreal after World War II. Her mother remained silent when asked about her father's story. Lawrence describes her mother as a dark, French-speaking Catholic who was eschewed by both the French and English people where they lived. The degree of shunning was so extensive, coupled with Lawrence and her siblings being rejected by the same discriminatory acts and by the same people's children at school, that the issue for the most part became a non-issue. Only recently has she begun to understand the reasons behind their behaviour. Her mother's 'mahogany-skinned' relatives, with French accents, who visited from time to time, did not fit with the 'Britishness' identity that her father claimed. The family's secret about their true identity was kept hidden from the children by way of silence in the beginning. Her parents split up when she was quite young. Against tremendous odds, her mother, with the help of her sister who lived with them, was able to keep the family together, six children in total without applying for social assistance. She was afraid of applying for fear that the children would be taken away. For them life had become a fierce struggle, versus having the social stability which Whiteness can offer. Appearances were to be kept up at any cost, and the bills paid. There were times that when she got a tan she believed that she was 'mistaken' for Indian. Her mother did tell the children that there was Indian in them (Mi'kmaq) and they were taught to not identify with their Native ancestry. She had little chance to socialize with Native people except for a brief period when they traveled out west.

There was another cultural divide that the family had to circumvent. It was that of having a "French" mother with "English" children in Quebec society at the time of the nationalist

movement. The common-sense definition that evolved as a result of this, when she was a young adult, was for the family to describe themselves as English and White. As a young adult she was self-destructive, abused alcohol and drugs and was involved with abusive partners. She started to take control of her life at the age of thirty-one when she entered university. It was here that she realized the divisiveness between her and the middle-class, White and Anglo "real" Canadian students. As a result of recognizing how poor a fit she actually was with her surroundings at university, she did some serious self-analysis through the lenses of class and gender. Because of her light skin and her ability to pass as White, race was not an issue for her at that time. Consequently, she did not have the 'tools' to better understand how the "struggle to attain the respectability which Whiteness represents in this society that had not only marked my experiences in university, but had already been a central issue in my family for a generation" (xv).

Lawrence's (2004) mother began to talk more about "the Indian in us" after the events of Oka in 1990, and even more so in 1992 when Lawrence was able to spend two months in a Cree community after receiving a student grant. It was at this point that she began to struggle with her 'in-between' feelings about race and how, through the eyes of White society, she now saw the Native people that surrounded her as the "others". Fortunately, as a result of her mother's stories and Lawrence's immersion with many Cree Métis women in the Cree community, she began to have a quasi-connection, albeit confused, between herself and the Aboriginal people.

Initially, researching the Mi'kmaq family history with her mother in the Maritimes created more questions about who they truly were as Native people. Her mother had lived her life as an Acadian woman who was 'part Indian' in a profoundly apartheid society. In spite of living under this condition, her mother did not in any way change her allegiances or sense of

identity with her own heritage. Unfortunately, any entry point for her mother back into the Mi'kmaq society of her childhood was no longer an option after so many years, for the "closed world of contemporary reserve life could only see her as a stranger" (Lawrence, 2004:xvii). As a result, she was left to weave the tapestry of their Aboriginal history from her family members as they remembered it amidst profound silences. Her mother was the eleventh child in her family and by the time she was born talk of Nativeness had grown more and more silent. It was obvious how deep shame and denial was a part of many generations of her family as a result of colonialism. Going back to the turn of the century in her research, Lawrence learned that when her grandmother would take Lawrence's mother, as a child, to visit relatives they were not welcomed into their homes. Instead they were required to pitch tents in the woods next to the town and speak the Mi'kmaq language in low voices so as not to be overheard.

Storying was still prevalent within the imposed silencing of Indigenous peoples. Lawrence's mother spoke of teachings, without labeling them as "Native values," that her mother had passed onto her, such as the value of using herbs as natural medicines, in having faith, and in being resilient and independent. Stepping back to a time when Lawrence's mother attended school, Lawrence indicated that her mother had identity issues as well. She grew up off reserve, non-status, brown skinned but blue eyed, versus the traditional brown eyes, and unable to speak the Mi'kmaq language. As a result, the other children, in addition to other degrading remarks, had called her a savage, and she also endured racist treatment from the nuns at school. Her mother and her siblings all married White people and, as a consequence, Lawrence's generation grew up as a White family. A central question arises as a result of her White family background. "Is my family a Native family" (Lawrence, 2004:xx)? This raised issues of identity for her, which have lessened as she has become more comfortable with identifying herself as a

Native person. However, the often contradictory, uneasy relationships that most of her family members still express towards their Native heritage has not abated. If they did acknowledge it at all, after many years of trying to distance themselves from their Native reality, it was in a deprecating manner. Lawrence, like her mother and grandmother before her, had learned how to minimize her Native identity. This behaviour could prove problematic if the next generation of Indigenous peoples is not to be obliterated by Euro-Western colonial practices.

The Nativeness will always be in Lawrence, as well as the other privileges that her pale skin affords her, no matter how she chooses to identify herself. She states it is also important for her to remember that her family's experiences of assimilation did exist. She believes that the decision to choose between identifying as "Native or not" for mixed race urban Natives is a crucial and necessary step towards decolonization in a society that is White dominated and racist. In a study that Lawrence did on urban mixed race Native identity she found that higher education is not the best place to explore it. There is a profound gap between the theory produced in "enclaves of the universities where most theory on identity is produced" (19) and the lived experiences of the majority of Native people who tend to experience racism, poverty, brutality, and addiction. Her research also showed the extent that government regulates Native identity through its restrictions within the Indian Act. This has led to individuals becoming alienated from their communities and also has fragmented many Native people's identities.

Any attempt to claim Nativeness, in a White-dominated world, can be risky in terms of the negative ramifications that may ensue when Native people try to assert their Native rights; e.g., when negotiating land claims. Euro-Western Whites sometimes view them as trespassers, and, as such, not having valid claims to their Indigenous rights, unlike their ancestors. As a consequence, Native people who are viewed as transgressing the "authentic boundaries" of

Nativehood; e.g., mixed race Aboriginal individuals whose appearance does not fit the accepted Indigenous profile or if living contemporary urban lives versus living off the land, they are not considered to be authentic Aboriginal peoples by many "mainstream [W]hites...[and]... "inevitably dismissed as fakes" (21). Lawrence also refers to "anti-racist activists" who stunningly appear to hold similar views as to what constitutes a true Native person when theorizing about the authenticity of one's mixed race identity. Another avenue of resistance comes from anthropologists and environmentalists in the form of a challenge to the authenticity of the modernity of contemporary Native existence, by campaigning for new limitations on emergent Native rights. This ploy, it is argued, is used as a tool of enfranchisement whereby non-Aboriginal academics, who want to maintain their position of superiority as the "Indian experts," can do so by determining what constitutes an "authentic" Indian (Lawrence 2004:22). Consequently, there is an understandable fear in Native peoples that they could lose collective control over Native identity.

Within the dominant culture there is a large and varied body of images of Nativeness with which every Native person, in particular, urban mixed race Native peoples, must contend when forming one's identity. In her study, Lawrence was attempting to search for a broader sense of Native identity for herself, and one that would also include her mother's generation. Part of her own struggle with identity surfaced as a result of concerns that the individuals she was interviewing might be "more Indian" (xxii), thus negating her identity claims. She considered herself to be somewhat fraudulent, in part for not having lived on a reserve and not having solid connections to a home community.

Lawrence warns of mixed race, heavily assimilated Native scholars becoming "otherness machines" [whose principal role it is to become]...the manufacture[r] of alterity" (24). She did,

however, give credence to the valuable alternative sources of resistance regarding the 'war of images' that are being internally debated by many urban Native peoples around issues of Native identity. A prime example is one put forth by a mixed-blood Chippewa writer named Gerald Vizenor who challenges mixed race urban Native peoples to create new identities that are anchored in the old ways, instead of searching for "authentic" First Nations identities. He indicates that these 'authentic' identities are modeled on the ideals of the dominant culture and, as such, not to be valued. He goes on to suggest that they resist trying to resolve their urban mixed-blood identity issues to gain a deeper sense of whom they are within their 'real' specific cultural context as members of their Indigenous nations, not as an Aboriginal person. Lawrence noted, irrespective of Vizenor's 'alterity', that it is not possible for the dominant culture to extinguish or absorb the solid core of Native cultural identity.

Traditional teachings by the Elders do not have to be accepted at face value, as suggested by Vizenor, but rather, taking a less literal approach to the teachings can be conducive to the life that Aboriginal women of mixed-heritage are living. Lawrence does not, however, negate the significance of and the strength in the teachings that are taught, but when there is not much time to attend ceremonies and teaching circles, it is more important to apply the traditions where one's family is or where one is. As she was learning about her culture, she struggled with feeling that she was not 'allowed' to question the teachings of the Elders who may not have, for example, approved of her wearing pants instead of a skirt. This teaching angered her, for the Elders did not know of her history of sexual and physical abuse, nor her role as "the male" in a family that was devoid of male protectors or male helpers. Her belief is that following the teachings is about finding balance and being as authentic to the teachings as life permits.

Lawrence (2004) states that Native people, particularly those of mixed race, have to struggle to consciously seek out what is real in their specific cultural contexts and to see themselves as members of Indigenous nations, rather than fitting with the notion of Native people living off the land as in the past. She asserts that Indigenous sovereignty will not evolve simply by trying to reclaim a past, but will "involve different nations recreating a future which is truer to their pasts than the colonial frameworks which have intervened. In this way of thinking, membership in Indigenous nations is something that can, and must, be strategized, clearly articulated, and in some ways reconceptualized" (31). In fact, Lawrence herself is very involved in this process.

Lee Maracle

> As a child, one of my teachers told me humans were like ants—co-operative and social. I doubted him but said nothing. Later I learned about the procreative habits of the Praying Mantis; after copulation the female bites off the head of the male. That's more like humans, I thought. Fall in love and spend the rest of life biting each other's heads off—except writers. We watch everyone pop and crack, then turn it into a story. (Moses and Goldie, 1992:381)

At first I thought that Lee Maracle (1996) had a unique way of presenting her story in her narrative in that she placed herself as the "central figure" in her story and in the lives of the stories of other people, whether she was there or not. She based her/their reality on her visual, emotional and spiritual perceptions and admitted to fabricating portions of the experiences of the others to make the story her own. "Hindsight is always slightly fictitious" (5), which I would agree is part of any recollection, not by choice but more by chance of what surfaces based on one's past experiences. It is with this in mind that I gradually approached her narrative more as commonplace than unique, the reality of which was based on her truth as she knew it, not perhaps as the "others" would have her remember. She indicated that the common tangible thread of racism ran through every story and, with it, the non-relenting pain and shame that had

become a way of life. This composition of lives lived brought with it a reality of the present existence of Indigenous people, a reality that was created as a result of their combined histories. The many stories altered and changed the course of her life so when she spoke of what others experienced, she was speaking on behalf of herself. Her narrative also humbled me and enabled me to see my naivety in thinking that one could blend White colonized academia along with the true traditional teachings of the Aboriginal community. Maracle engaged me in the "madness which the colonial process creates" (143) through her angry discourse about her life and the lives of those around her, Native and non-Native alike.

Maracle (1996) stated, "The result of being colonized is the internalization of the need to remain invisible. The colonizers erase you, not easily, but with shame and brutality. Eventually you want to stay that way" (8). The colonization of the systems of knowledge has led to the enslavement of the Native people who cannot be free until all Aboriginal women are free. The most 'deep-seated bias' in the history of class society that inhibits a woman is a woman's right to choose, whether it is a physical, intellectual or an emotional choice. For Maracle, this oppressive practice produced rage when she realized that she constantly had to convince the White colonial society that she was not a stupid, alcoholic Native woman. She knew that as long as she had to convince them, she remained a slave to colonialism. She indicated that such rage is a cover for self-hatred whereby Aboriginal people can become self-destructive as a result of the bleak circumstances created as a result of the colonial process. She herself had fallen victim to the colonial racist ideology that had defined a Native woman as nonexistent, a person without sexuality and feelings. It was not until 1982 that the notion of womanhood and feminism had any meaning for her and it was at this time that she reconnected with all Aboriginal women.

Maracle (1996) admitted to having strayed away from the traditional teachings of her ancestors when she turned in the direction of European ideology in the 1960s and 1970s. She believed that some of the self-proclaimed spiritual leaders misinterpreted the ancestral teachings and that traditionalism in the urban areas was from mis-educated leaders as a result of being educated in Euro-Western educational institutions. "Culture is the great separator that decides which direction a person will go when faced with a fork in the road" (Maracle, 1996:37). Today she resists the corporate system of exploitation that houses such mis-educated elite of the Indigenous community that was created by Canadian government-funded opportunities in the sphere of education. There are, she admitted, Native intellectuals who did not fall prey, as did she, to Euro-Western systems of knowledge that imprisoned the Native minds in the ideology of the oppressor. The traditional teachings, she affirms, are unlike the 'self-indulgent ideology' of the Euro-Western teachings that promote individualism. Traditional teachers encouraged Native people to see to the well being of others, to maintain a sense of self and to contribute to the community and to the nation as a whole. Maracle believes that any other manner of thinking is contrary to Native laws, and is undemocratic. To better understand the true meaning of independence, Maracle knew that she needed to break away from the Euro-Western oppressive chains that "imprison me in the present, impede my understanding of the past, and blind me to the future" (40).

Maracle challenged some but not all Native teachers for she indicated that there were some Native intellectuals whom she considered as "precious gems in a sea of mis-education" (40) that did not lose themselves in settlers' universities. Some Native teachers who were educated in the European system wanted to establish a separate school for Native people that contained Native content. She argues that segregated schools will not change the course of

colonialism; only decolonization will create a new world of knowledge for Indigenous people. Maracle admonished fellow educators, labeling them as the "primary thrust of racism" (77). The phenomenon has continued to transmit the belief that Aboriginal people are lesser than Whites and as such, they and their knowledge base are to be accorded less respect. To demonstrate how internalized racism remains, Maracle speaks about her two daughters, third generation Natives, who have also struggled with the 'cruelty of racism' and lack of respect as a result of their 'Nativeness' in school and in the Euro-Western community, as did she. She stated that the society she and her children live in is racist; therefore, education is racist, and as a consequence, students have continued to become the victims of racism.

Euro-Western knowledge is not respected by Aboriginal people, nor is it the only knowledge that Aboriginal people seek. Maracle suggested that Native People pursue empowerment by being tenacious and dogged in their efforts to change the status quo of Euro-Western knowledge that has mired or destroyed the Indigenous ways of knowing as a result of colonial ideology. "Education is all about maintaining culture" (91). If the course of history is to be changed there must be unity between the Native People and the colonists. To decolonize the expropriated Native knowledge and lay to rest one hundred years of cultural exclusion, a thorough examination of both the history of the Euro-Western society and the Native society is required. At the very basis of such a feat, Native educators would be required to first understand the purpose of knowledge. The purpose of knowledge, she believes does not mean becoming successful but rather, achieving something that benefits the whole of humanity, not just the few who seek power and authority over others. As a teacher, it is important that students not disconnect themselves from the past, and not become entangled in colonialism if change is to happen. To accomplish freedom from the grip of colonialism she suggested a critical

examination of the Native Peoples and the settlers' society to educate both how to live in a society that neither segregates nor subordinates the other. The accumulated knowledge of Native people is not lost, only expropriated, as a result of colonization and as such, is retrievable. "Decolonization will require the repatriation and the rematriation of that knowledge by Native peoples themselves" (Maracle, 1996:92).

Patricia Monture-Angus

> ...if the goal of women, or Aboriginal Peoples, is to change the structure of society we must also develop new ways of challenging the philosophies and beliefs of the mainstream. To not encourage structural change is to continue to accept the marginalization of any perspective that is not White or male and so on. Structural change is the only way which meaningful and substantive long-term change can be secured. (Monture-Angus, 1995:221)

Monture-Angus stated that for individuals and Indigenous communities to move forward, they must revisit the past. To this end, she puts forth teachings that she received from the Elders when she was young that substantiate this Native belief: "You have to know what is behind you in order to know where you are going. If you do not understand that history, you cannot ever have a vision about where it is you want to go" (134). This teaching is important if Native people are to deal with past transgressions, physical, sexual, spiritual and linguistic, that they experienced from the colonial world. She lays the blame on the doorstep of residential schooling, which, she stated, hurt all the First Nations and had a subsequent impact on entire communities. Her grandparents consequently shaped a different reality for their children by moving off the Six Nations of the Grand River to avoid the 'mush-hole' schooling that served their community. This led to their grandchildren, including her, to be well educated. This move did not come without a price, however. They suffered "dislocation from [their] home community, the clan, ceremony and the language" (Monture-Angus 1999:25) as a direct result of leaving the reserve, even though her family was spared residential schooling.

As a young woman, Monture-Angus (1995) said she was lonely and felt different and her passion for reading provided her with an escape and comfort from the reality she was experiencing. In addition, this reading stimulated her desire to become a writer. By the age of twelve she said she discovered drugs and was raped by two young men. Her parents died when she was very young and as a result she ended up 'cruising the streets' where she said a lot of her values that have sustained her throughout her life were shaped. She was able to complete high school as a result of her maternal aunt and uncle allowing her to live with them. These pieces of her history are important, she concluded, for they explain why she chose public law and not private law. She was searching for justice and equality, particularly related to constitutional issues that concerned Aboriginal rights. As a result of living off reserve, she felt caught in the middle. She stated:

> I was half White and Whites clearly thought I was an "Indian." They tended to not want me around. But the "Indians" also felt I did not belong with them. Having been raised off reserve, I really could not be an "Indian." (Monture-Angus 1995:46)

This type of reserve-based thinking, according to Monture-Angus, is oppressive and facilitates the continued colonization of reserves. Her understanding of oppression grew from the margins of her university experience, not in any course of study. The lessons learned on the street and at university both contain value and one has no more value than the other. She stated that in high school she was told that she was "simply not smart enough"...to go to university. At university she received a different message..."you can do better!" As a result, she pushed herself harder, thus negating her inferiority complex and believing less and less that she was a "stupid Indian" as society would have her believe (48).

Monture-Angus (1999) asserted that the myth that continues to permeate the educational system today is that First Nations People need to be educated in the colonized manner in order to

become a more civilized race. This concept of First Nations People as inferior in White Euro-Western educational institutions is based on misunderstanding, arrogance and White ignorance. The holistic concept of education belongs to First Nations People and not the Euro-Western Whites. She felt it important to break through the misguided belief that educational concepts arise from only one truth and one knowledge base, that of the Euro-Western colonizer. She indicated that there is a rich tapestry contained within the Aboriginal systems of knowledge, something that Euro-Western education fails to recognize. There is more than one Aboriginal system based on the immense diversity of Aboriginal people. They are bonded together, however, by "common patterns with shared concepts and beliefs" (22). As a professor, she felt that she was in a position of privilege, whereby she could challenge the long-held beliefs and colonized values in search of the truth of what holds value for her—inclusion, not exclusion, in education. To this end, she endeavoured to bring Elders into her Euro-Western classroom, which was not always successful because non-Native students had not always known how to value Elders, and, as a consequence, she felt that the Elders could have left feeling disrespected. Renovating educational concepts requires a deep understanding of where the other is situated in their knowledge base.

Monture-Angus (1995) begins by stating the obvious that most First Nations People, the "others", do not have access to 'learned journals', even though there are more Native people in post-secondary institutions since 1979 when she began her university education. She clearly stated that she is more comfortable with the word 'Indian' as opposed to Aboriginal or Native because it is the word with which she was raised. Her intellectual evolution has not remained static and allowed her over time, she admitted, to feel easier about whom she is and to have a better understanding of herself. She stated categorically that women of color and Aboriginal

women students are dramatically under-represented in institutions of higher learning. The same under-representation applies to women generally within Canadian universities, with respect to those who hold faculty positions that, for the most part, are held by White males.

Monture-Angus acknowledged that her tenure at the university was complicated because she is both a Mohawk and a woman. The oppression she experienced as a student in law school continued to be very painful throughout the years there. This oppression was around her culture, race and/or gender and complicated her teaching when she chose to exercise her power over others. Her experiences of discrimination and oppression continue to be complicated as a consequence of her professional privilege. As a result of these uncomfortable and confusing oppressive experiences, which she labelled as an "openly hostile" environment when she was a professor at law school, she made the conscious decision to leave and teach at the University of Saskatchewan in the Native Studies Department. This decision enabled her to live part-time on her husband's reserve, which she said, led to a much healthier and happier environment for her and, as a consequence, she felt less disconnected to herself and to the Native community. Contradictions and tensions remained, however, and it is ironic that she is still seen as an outsider in her new department where there should be a place and a space for an Native woman.

As a result of working in Native Studies, Monture-Angus feels that her energy is committed to writing and researching, using her "Indian intellect" and not the writing that she had been previously committed to, the regimes of Euro-Western White constitutional and property law. It was in the Native Studies classes, she said that for the first time she had not felt as much resentment, and for the most part felt more respected as a Native teacher. She did, however, experience some incidents of superiority from a few students who, in their course evaluations, suggested that she had made them feel guilty for the Aboriginal people's colonizing

experiences at the hands of the Euro-Western oppressors. Some of the comments were openly hostile, but not overt enough to be considered racist comments. She felt discouraged and disturbed by her experiences at this university, not unlike at her previous law school, and acknowledged "Racism and sexism transcends all social and economic boundaries" (63).

Monture-Angus stated that she initially focused on Canadian law, believing it would provide just and fair treatment for Aboriginal people, but came to realize that it "was and is my ultimate lesson in colonial oppression" (Monture-Angus, 1999:10). Part of what helped her to make the decision to move away from law was teachings she received from the Elders when she was younger that later had great value when determining what were 'equality rights', whereby all people, male and female, are to be equally protected under the law. 'Equality rights' for Canadian women were not automatic, but were something that had to be fought for in order to be included within the 'Charter of Rights and Freedoms' (Section 28). Within Section 15 it is written that the guarantee to be free from discrimination is the 'stepping stone' towards equality. The Charter, she argues, is not about individual acts of discrimination so much as it is about legal equality. Section 35 in the constitution, but not part of the 'Charter of Rights and Freedoms', pertains to Indigenous peoples under the heading "Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada... [Within this section]...Aboriginal and treaty rights...are guaranteed equally to male and female persons" (61). She stated that her experience of Canadian law was one of confusion and contradictions. Equality for everyone she found, is not necessarily an accepted practice in institutions of higher learning in terms of how Aboriginal academics are treated, and how and what knowledge is deemed appropriate. By way of example, she reiterated her story about applying to graduate school. She received a letter from the graduate school that stated she was a "lesser qualified candidate" (50) and therefore, placed on a waiting list. It was evident to her that

the university was being discriminatory in its decision, as she had won one of five national scholarships to pursue her graduate studies in law. She felt that their decision-making was as brutal as what she had experienced on the streets, but was less honest and direct in the approach.

The oppressive nature of Canadian law prior to and especially since 1982 that is called "Aboriginal Rights" is not the same as the Native Peoples' understanding of law. They refer to their law as the natural law, which is an unwritten law that entails the expectations of the Indigenous community to be responsible in all its dealings with people. When there are problems, historically the community would talk them out and resolve them. Once again, the colonized legal system with its focus on right and wrong and on the individual, not the community, further alienated the Native Peoples from their identity and their community, and undermined First Nations values. These values were the basis of their society and subsequent laws. Fear, stated Monture-Angus, is a consequence of being oppressed and the two major oppressors that have oppressed and colonized First Nations have been the systems of education and of law. She believes that the legal system in Canada remains a battleground and is at the heart of many problems, unlike Mohawk law, the 'Great Law of Peace', which is about living together peacefully. It is easy to understand why Monture-Angus left law school for a friendlier environment in Native studies.

Discrimination was two-fold for Monture-Angus at law school, related to her gender and race. As a result of knowing the history of oppression towards Indigenous peoples and personally experiencing discriminatory practices at the university, she indicated that the word 'equality' "resonates a particular kind of emptiness" (131) for her. The color of her skin, or her gender should not have made a difference in how she was treated. She believed that she should be viewed for what is inside, not for outside appearances. Unfortunately, some White males in

positions of power tend to perpetuate the myth that Canada began in 1867, thereby negating non-European heritages. Aboriginal heritage becomes non-existent, stated Monture-Angus, and in the process First Nations history and beliefs are negated. Monture-Angus attributed her educational struggles to the inhospitable environment that the university presented. The physical structure and teaching format were not very conducive to Indigenous ways of teaching; for example, windowless rooms, rigid fixed seating and podiums for professors were very different to her history of sitting together in a circle sharing experiences on an equal footing. These classroom constraints affect all students from various cultures and races. Understanding one's real life experiences is what education is about. "True wisdom requires much self-reflecting. It is the way that First Nations recognize and credential people" (Monture-Angus, 1995:77).

She defined First Nations education by stating that it is important to acknowledge that the Creator put First Nations on North America (known as Turtle Island) to take control and be responsible in its care of "Mother Earth, for the water [and to] respect all other living beings" (84). The answer to eliminating isolation, alienation, racism, sexism, etc., beyond the colonized trappings of Euro-Western beliefs, lay in one's 'living in respect.' Her Elders taught her that she only has one right and that is to live the way the Creator made her, a Mohawk woman. Beyond that, she has many responsibilities as a Native woman. The core of her identity lay in the fact that she is a Mohawk woman and a mother, not that she survived formal Euro-Western education.

> The ways of my people teach that there is a special beauty in living life according to the old First Nations ways...Learning is, therefore, a lifelong process... It is the way in which our experiences are understood. (Monture-Angus 1995:26)

Monture-Angus pointed out that First Nations has difficulty accepting and understanding the Euro-Western systems of knowledge with respect to the educational process. As a result

there is a tension that arises between the First Nations Peoples' aspirations and higher educational programs, which does not lead towards the development of self-respect and confidence in one's identity. Promoting a positive self-image is a crucial cornerstone that must be built into the Euro-Western educational system of knowledge. This would, in turn, lead to a positive First Nations identity. Before implementing changes in the current formal educational practices, it is important to define collectively what education means to Aboriginal people, and secondly, to examine what patterns and beliefs are currently available in the Euro-Western model. The standard must be based and defined by First Nations as meaningful educational opportunities. She challenged the assimilation tactics in the Euro-Western systems of knowledge that are based on the misguided belief that it is the Aboriginal people who are inferior, not the Euro-Western educational pedagogies. The way forward is to develop educational opportunities for Aboriginal students that do not alienate or isolate. Monture-Angus found that many Aboriginal people she spoke to in higher education shared this view. It is important to educate First Nations People in a decolonized way.

Monture-Angus (1999) stated that her interest in self-determination started as an academic and legal pursuit. She believes that self-determination begins with living responsibly and most of all responsibly about relationships. It is more difficult for individuals to be self-determining if they are not living as part of a community. Reserves are colonial constructs, and hence not a true First Nations community. She is very forthright about the limited opportunities she would have had, had she continued to live on the reserve. She knows she would not have pursued a legal education and believes that as long as she is a university teacher, living off reserve part-time will be her reality.

Monture-Angus believed her role in higher education, as a student and a professor in the White world, coupled with having followed a good 'Indian' path, place her in the middle of the path. Her real work lay between the two cultures, where the Creator put her, not law, for it only provides a means to an end of colonization. She has the benefit of a university education and the advantage of traditional teachings. This is where the bridges of understanding are brought together. This positioning affords her the opportunity to encourage the university to provide meaningful educational opportunities to First Nations students. It would be a difficult task for First Nations People to reclaim their place in formal educational institutions, but nevertheless, a task worthy of their effort and patience. Education is important if done in a decolonized way. It is important, she noted, that First Nations People rely on themselves, on their creativity, not on institutions of colonial governments. Within each person is a gift from the Creator that is to be shared with other people. Her gift from the Creator is the ability to tell stories, usually her own, which is an invaluable medium by which to reach other Native people as they struggle in White institutions of higher education. Her story is a gift to many who want to hear the wisdom from a Native woman who has survived in the non-Indigenous world of post-secondary education. The stories of Monture-Angus and other Native people will hopefully instil enough confidence in First Nations People to explore what educational opportunities mean for them within the current Euro-Western systems of knowledge. Monture-Angus (1999) believes change will come from the people and not from institutions. She has faith that her people will overcome colonial burdens. Their fundamental belief in Mother Earth's ability to contain their language, songs and ceremonies, thereby continuing to negate the possibility of Aboriginal cultures being destroyed, is part of the answer. She also believes that when Aboriginal people accept responsibility and acknowledge their abilities to make changes, to rely on themselves and not be dependent upon

the colonizer they will shake off the classic condition of colonialism and the ensuing helplessness.

Mary Isabelle Young

> ...the passion to understand one's Residential School past, and the past of those who went before, is the desire to see the present in ways other than as it would be depicted by those responsible for it. It is a desire to make sense of one's own experiences, as they relate to Residential Schooling, to sort out one's own current life dynamics in terms (to some degree) of what has happened before. Indeed the past is not dead, for those for whom Residential School is a continuing reality, undoing the myths and half-truths of their experiences is a step forward toward personal and social freedom. (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997:177)

Young (2005) attended residential school for her three years of high school. During that time she was not permitted to speak in her Native tongue, Saulteaux. The only contact she was allowed with her family was through letters, all screened by the nuns, whether going to or coming from her parents. The nuns would not let her display her family pictures nor wear the clothes she brought from home; both were to remain in her suitcase that the nuns locked in a cupboard. This period in her life, she acknowledged, was very lonely. In addition, her relationships with her siblings had become more distant when she returned home from her lengthy stay at residential school. Today she understands intellectually, not emotionally, the rationale of how important it was for the nuns to prolong the period of separation between the Native children and their parents and family. It was to ensure that the Native students assimilated into the White colonial world without benefit of Native interference. It did not occur to her that at the age of fourteen they were trying to erase her Anishinabe identity and make her feel ashamed of her heritage. It was not until she accidentally overheard two other students at the school speak Anishinabe did her spirit awaken. It was only safe to whisper when speaking Anishinabe to the other students, for the rules allowed only English to be spoken. The rules were not to be broken if she wanted to escape being punished; once again, another tactic to further

disconnect her from her Native culture. The Royal Report Commission on Aboriginal Peoples says, "language...is symbolic of identity, emblems of group existence...symbol of belonging" (19).

Young is very grateful for the traditional education that she received from her parents. Young's (2005) mother was a proud Cree-Métis woman who made great contributions to her husband's Anishinabe community. Initially the community did not accept her as a result of her heritage, which was different from her husband's. She was finally accepted because she learned to speak Saulteaux, and also because she cared for her husband, her children and the community. Her father had extensive knowledge about the environment and passed this information on to Young, her sister and her brothers. They were very clear that she was an Anishinabe Native and that the language spoken in their home was Saulteaux, a gift of learning that she received from her parents. She learned later that not all Native children were recipients of that gift. Her father maintained that learning is connected to whom one is and that it is a "process that continuously resolves, involves and revolves" (21-22). Her mother was a very active and significant woman in her educational journey, which included the Catholic Church doctrines, when she was a young child and later, as an adult. Her mother identified herself as a Métis woman who spoke Saulteaux, Cree, English and some French. Young believes that one of the most important teachings that both her parents gave her was to always remember she is Anishinabe whatever she is experiencing, and wherever she is in the world.

When Young started high school she was sent to live at the Assiniboia Residential School, and for her education was sent to a local private girls' school. Here she experienced the racist and discriminatory attitudes of fellow female students towards Aboriginal students and quickly learned that being a Native person was not a good thing. Shame crept in and she

accepted Euro-Western White education as the best and only kind of education, based on what she was experiencing within the school environment. As a consequence, Young admits, she also became silent, disassociated herself from her community and began questioning her father's wisdom. As an Aboriginal person in the city she experienced discriminatory tactics by individuals in restaurants (no service), and in stores (followed and judged). She admits to not knowing who she was in the late 1960s and in the 1970s as a result of her experiences away from her family in the bush. She began to place less value on her education at home, including the importance of speaking the language of the community, Anishinabe.

Her dream was to go as far as she could in school because no one in her family or community had ever finished high school. Her father had a grade two education and never did learn to write. Her mother had a grade four education and she was able to read. She was not aware that her dream of higher education would cause her to acquire a new identity, to question her former way of life, her way of being, and her parents with their values and beliefs. She also did not know and understand how the tapestry of their beliefs and values were an important part of her dreams to become highly educated. During this period, she no longer had a positive self-identity and was filled with shame and self-doubt. Young resonated with Antone (2000) who, upon examination of her own learning maintained, "the Aboriginal voice is lifted up when traditional knowledge and values are incorporated into the education of Native students in the school system. To be in balance, one must have a positive self-identity" (Young, 2005:26). Young said she liked whom she was when she was listening to the Anishinabe teachings, but not when she was at university.

One of the most heartbreaking oppressive incidences that Young recounted had to do with a priest who informed her after one Christmas that even though her mother and father had

sent money for her to go home for the holidays, he had felt it best that she stay at school. At the time, she did not know how to respond, but today Young feels resentment at the control he exercised over her and her parents and fully realizes that the residential school system's main objective was to educate, Christianize and civilize children by keeping them apart from their Native families. When she told her mother years later what the priest had done her mother cried, for she was a Catholic and had trusted the Catholics who were in charge of her daughter. Young said that this was the only time she ever heard her mother swear. The impact of the priest's control scarred Young for many years, and it was not until she relived and restoried her life in her Masters thesis (1997) that she began to share how the emotional and mental abuse she experienced had threatened to erase her identity. Young realizes now that she has more control and say in the kind of education she wants for herself, unlike in her early years.

Young is still unraveling the many colonized layers of identity that she has lived since residential school, high school, and university. She was seventeen and not mature enough when she entered university, but felt that if she did not go at that time, she would probably not go later. She felt attending university was expected of her, even though her father did not openly force her to go. Her life at university was a lonely period as a result of feeling excluded, as she had at other educational institutions. She drank heavily in her second year, taking a year off and when she did return took her educational endeavours more seriously. For the most part, however, her life at university was a valuable experience and comfortable except for the first two years which were tough. She does not regret going, even though university proved to be no different in terms of her colonizing experiences; all three educational institutions affected her ability to speak Anishinabemowin fluently and her identity. She believes that in the process of losing one's language, one loses one's core spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Young's decolonization attempts involved the transition from being ashamed that she was a Native person to acknowledging pride in her heritage, which is ongoing. The past will never completely be fixed, but rather it offers a continuous ebb and flow of memories that require restorying in the present in an effort to make sense of one's journey into the future. Young (2005) quotes Battiste and Henderson (2003) who write, "Stories are enfolding lessons. Not only do they transmit validated experiences, they also renew, awaken, and honour spiritual forces" (38). Young never imagined that the experience of unpacking her suitcase at the residential school was going to "impact my identity and my educational journey as an Aboriginal woman and an educator in my later years," (16) but it did. The impact of residential schools was intergenerational, something that is still felt today.

In her search to regain her Anishinabe identity, she enrolled in a Native Awareness Workshop at the age of twenty-seven years old in 1979. This was a new experience for her as she was a Probation Officer at the time. During this period she was still ashamed and embarrassed to admit she was a Native person. "I was still trying to be somebody I was not" (36). An Elder who ran the workshop told her that she was lucky to be able to meld and live in the two worlds. Today, she still struggles with trying to find a balance between the two worlds. Her need to be formally educated was more a desire at the time to assimilate, rather than hoping to become a better person. It was at the workshop that she began questioning her values, her beliefs, her identity and the importance of understanding and knowing her cultural background. Her reason for attending the workshop was to increase her knowledge about the traditional and spiritual teachings of her people. As a result of the workshop, she learned that there is more than one way to get an education beyond the university experience and this, in part, is what she wants to convey as an advisor.

Young has worked as a Native Student Advisor at the University of Winnipeg for many years, enabling Aboriginal students to deal with many of the same issues that she had experienced. She felt that in her position she had no credibility as an educator because she did not have her Masters degree, a program that she spent years trying to get into as a result of doing poorly in her undergraduate degree program. She began by taking courses in Native Studies in 1986 at the University of Manitoba. At the time she had no intention of doing the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Education. She credits extremely helpful professors who were instrumental in helping transfer her credits into the above certificate program, which she then completed in 1993. She was accepted into the Masters program in January 1994 at the University of Manitoba. It was at this point that Aboriginal scholars introduced her to updated and new material. Monture-Angus and Hampton, 1995 were two scholars who wrote about the historical development of and the meaning of Aboriginal education. Their analyses did not look at the residential school experience from the perspective of the missionaries or the government whose policies controlled them, but rather from the Aboriginal perspective.

Young confides that the decision to focus her thesis on her own schooling experiences made her anxious but the experience was also challenging and rewarding. She quotes Connelly and Clandinin (1988):

> Constructing a narrative account of oneself...is difficult rewarding work. It is difficult because so many aspects of life need consideration and because people are so complex that they all have many stories, not only one. It is rewarding because it is curricular and educational. It is a way of making educational meaning of our lives as we continue with the daily grind.
> (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, quoted in Young, 1997:6)

She experienced incidences of oppression and racism with all the associated feelings in residential school, high school and university and some even today as a Native Student Advisor. Her experiences as an Aboriginal female student in a non-Aboriginal world, coupled with her

reflections and subsequent analysis of her feelings at that time, have given her a foundation upon which to build and to help the Aboriginal students that she counsels. "It is important for me to belong to the system; a system, that was 'systemically racist'...I can work within the university system without feeling the need to give up who I am" (Young, 1997:12). Young shares her stories with students at the university so that they will feel supported and not alone in their struggles with the oppressiveness of colonialism towards Aboriginal students in higher education. Her thesis was a healing journey for her personally and she believes it has contributed to the kind of educator she is today. It has helped her to resolve her own issues with racism by not blocking out the emotional abuse she had encountered. This has allowed her to undergo a decolonization process. Systemic racism still exists and it impacts the students who are affected by it, which Young finds disturbing both personally and professionally. She has faith that change will continue to occur for the betterment of Aboriginal students, as has been the case since she started her schooling from 1966 to the present. Young strongly believes that it is essential for Aboriginal people and educators to persist in their discussions about the residential school system with its subsequent intergenerational reverberations on Native communities. She also places great importance on one speaking their Aboriginal language, thereby keeping a strong link to one's identity and to First Nations.

She asks all who read her book to find ways to strengthen Aboriginal languages.

Kwa yuk ka kwe pimosata. Let's walk in a good way.

Key themes emerged from the Aboriginal women's narratives. In the next chapter, I am now going to examine each theme in turn, in addition to lesser themes within each category.

CHAPTER VI - THEMES

PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION – FROM WHENCE THEY CAME

The process used to examine the narratives of the eight Aboriginal women, and my own, began with extracting common themes. Initially, I looked at their experiences in a Euro-Western educational climate, their understanding of the systems of knowledge that pervade higher education and their visions for educational opportunities in the future. I then assembled a profile of each woman to organize what she wrote about with respect to the above three areas. Once this was completed, I classified and delineated my findings under four major headings: identity, oppression/racism, education and vision – combatting annihilation. In addition, within these four categories, I clustered my findings under sub-headings (authenticity, on the margins, colonial constructs, the veil of racism, traditional backdrops – sidebar, and Elders – traditional beliefs), in order to further understand each woman's unique experience. As a result of looking at the experiences, concerns and visions through different lenses, one being my White Eurocentric background as I peered into their world of Nativeness, I was able to make sense of and give meaning to their lived experiences.

I apologize in advance for any biases that may have crept into my analyses, thereby distorting any of the narratives. I know it is impossible to speak from one voice without traces of the other voice interrupting my thoughts. As Maracle (1996) so succinctly put it, "It is inevitable that Europeans will read my work. If you do not find yourselves spoken to, it is not because I intended rudeness—you just don't concern me now" (10). I foresee neither growth nor a coming together of the European and Native cultures within her generalized comments of what she deems to be the unfriendly truth. I do not deny that the colonialist arrows that she has endured as an Indigenous woman give her valid reasons for her lack of concern. I speak from a different

place. I do not intend any disrespect. I was appalled as I read the narratives at the historical degradation that has been imposed upon the Indigenous peoples by Euro-Western settlers in their efforts to attain control and extinguish the Indigenous culture. I hope that my infinitesimal attempts at cross-cultural dialogue within the theme analysis will in some small way open the doors to further dialogue between both of my cultures.

The women's narratives have enabled me to feel a part of the Native community, based on similarities with my experiences within the family unit and in society. Perhaps I could even go so far as to say that I feel more authentic than I ever have in the past. The themes within the narratives of the Aboriginal women further instilled in me an excitement of discovery of the past, the present and what the future might hold for all First Nations People. They sparked many memories that had been hidden within the recesses of my mind, brought to light by the remembrances of the writers' lost legacies, their realizations of how the Euro-Western cultural constraints have exiled many of them behind a wall of unknowing, and uncertainty. My thesis turned into a journey of self-discovery as a result of the many themes that have emerged from the Aboriginal women's narratives. Not only do they speak <u>about</u> the struggles they have endured as a result of the cultural genocide of their First Nations People, they speak <u>to</u> the soul of every Aboriginal person, myself included. Never have my Indigenous and White family members been so clear to me as a result of the Aboriginal women's narratives. Their generous giving of themselves in their writings enables all who choose to read them to have an opportunity to better understand the negative effects that colonization has had on the Indigenous people, the Native community and First Nations history. The opportunity to grow is contained within each narrative, based on the experiences of cultural genocide, recovery and self-preservation. Their words of wisdom and encouragement speak to Aboriginal women who have lived within the

walls of silence, as a result of being colonized and exiled from a cultural heritage that is rich in a history tied to the Creator and Mother Earth.

IDENTITY

> Native identity in Canada has for generations been legally defined by the *Indian Act*, a body of legislation based on race, and on colonialist assumptions about Nativeness and civilization, which are deeply rooted in European modernity. (Lawrence, 2004:23)

Authenticity

One of the central themes that was apparent in the women's narratives was the need to feel authenticity in their race. The claiming or reclaiming of one's heritage should be an inherent right, not one that is stipulated by Canadian laws, but by the Native people's understanding of law. Monture-Angus (1999) found Canadian laws to be confusing and contradictory. Native people refer to their law as the natural law, which is an unwritten law that entails the expectations of the Indigenous community to be responsible in all its dealings with people. Who then gets to decide what the eligibility requirements are that enables one to claim membership, with all its rights and privileges, to First Nations? Feelings of membership and authenticity carry with them the sense of, and privilege of, belonging. Ellesworth (1989) states:

> By speaking, in their "authentic voices," students are seen to make themselves visible and define themselves as authors of their own world. Such self-definition presumably gives students an identity and political position from which to act as agents of social change. (309)

This development of sense of self in a society is based on one's gender, race, age, class, language, appearance, beliefs, values, and historical references. Ideas about, or misconceptions placed upon a culture by another culture, are pivotal in the determination of what is and what is not accepted as the norm. Awareness of one's true identity is the cornerstone upon which the learning process is based. Consequently, Aboriginal women need to be able to sustain a strong Native identity in today's world (Antone, 1997). "Internal miscegenation" (Lawrence, 2004:21)

has led to a generalized blending of White, Native and Black people; as a result, claims of being Native can be hard to prove and the Native race becomes in further danger of vanishing.

In some narratives, there were feelings of not measuring up to a certain standard of authentic Nativeness, in terms of being accepted by Euro-Western society and by other Indigenous people. Contained within Graveline's (1998) narrative, there was a story about a Native woman who recounted her daily encounters with oppression that are threefold as a result of being a Native, a woman, and a lesbian. The challenges of authenticity she encountered were only a part of the multitude of challenges she faced inside and outside the Native community. She felt that individuals in each community did not understand oppression to the point of having one's identity as a person subjected to scrutiny and subjugated by the other. If the position of the other was to be reversed, as was indicated in Graveline's circle work, in all likelihood so would the element of who holds the power. For instance, in a circle where everyone would be classified as non-White, save one, who represents the dominant White class, the latter now becomes the other, thereby reversing the sociocultural positioning. If, hypothetically, the dominant White Euro-Western class allowed First Nations to include everyone who claims Native ancestry to register as a Native person, perhaps the position of power might be reversed, or at the very least, be less disproportionate. In order for the dominant White culture to maintain its accustomed position of power it needs to continue its strategies of "divide" and "conquer." That is, to "divide" by marginalizing Native people from the Whites, or by inciting Native people against other Native people; to "conquer," by continuing to oppress and eventually to assimilate Indigenous cultures, to the point of vanquishing them completely.

Maracle (1996) indicated that the many stories she encountered altered and changed the course of her life so, when she spoke of what others experienced, she indicated that she was

speaking on behalf of herself. Issues of authenticity are closely tied to one's sense of identity as was indicative within some of the women's narratives. Each of the women, especially those of mixed race ancestry, experienced self-doubt in their lives at some point that pertained to questions of identity.

On the Margins

> Indian children face a daily struggle against attacks on their identity, their intelligence, their way of life, their essential worth. They must continually struggle to find self- worth, dignity, and freedom in being who they are. I know that I participate in my own oppression. (Hampton, 1995:35)

In four of the eight narratives, plus mine, challenges at varying points in their lives associated with establishing and maintaining dualistic authenticity were expressed. Their home environment and experiences were, for the most part, consistent with mine. The family unit contained one Native parent and one non-Native parent both of whom remained silent about the Native ancestry. As a consequence, maintaining the family secret was a high priority at the expense of knowing about and/or participating in any Nativeness. One's identity is the unique attribute of selfhood, the core of one's being caught in a mirror image that reflects all that one is. Feelings of loneliness and being different pervaded for a majority of the women in their early years, as they did with me, although I did not know at the time what was creating these feelings. Years later I would learn that I was the only one in my entire family who was not aware of my Native heritage.

A quotation by Anderson (2000), "You have to know where you come from to know where you are going" (15), is at the very foundation of my identity struggles based on my mixed race heritage. Monture-Angus (1995) also alluded to this same teaching that she had received from the Elders in her community. She stated that this teaching is important if Native people are to deal with past transgressions and move forward into a new reality, an Indigenous reality that is

not fraught with the same annihilating outcomes. Lawrence (2004) has struggled with her dual ancestry because she was raised with limited contact with the Native side of her family. I too began to be aware of the importance placed on this distinctive Aboriginal way of knowing, as professed by the Elders, of how my past, my present and my future are inextricably entwined when I read the narratives. As an educator, I have put forth a guideline, similar in nature to Anderson's above quote, to my students at the beginning of every new class. "You have to know where you are today to move forward in life." I was unaware that my hidden "Nativeness" had been surfacing without my knowledge. Sylvia Maracle refers to this manifestation as "blood memory" (Anderson, 2000:24), or the innate ability to carry the memories of one's ancestors. She states that this phenomenon can be physically, emotionally or spiritually driven. I have never been ensconced in the knowledge of the progenitors of my being, and as a result, I have never fully understood the circumstances that have led to the loss of my "Nativeness" to the world of "Whiteness," the place where I saw myself belonging.

As a Native person, I now fell into the range with "others" in society who are "neither white nor black" (Dyer, 1997:11). My life had taken on a colour/colourless form, non-White, that began to change my thought processes. How should I refer to my heritage, my identity? Do I call myself an Indian (Status Indian, Bill C-31 Indian), an Indigenous person, a Native person, an Aboriginal person, a Métis person, an Irish/ English/First Nations Person (tri-racial) person or simply a person of mixed race or mixed-blood, the latter terms speaking of a more indiscriminate sense of identity? I have also come to understand that to use the term Métis is controversial with respect to the political claims around who has the right to use or refuse the term. As a result of reclaiming my status through my mother, the term Métis does not apply to me. In denoting the term Nativeness, not all wanted to use the label of Indian. One who did was very accepting of

the term because she was raised with it; others were not. The word Indian carries with it a negativity that has been applied by the dominant culture to suggest drunken, lazy and dirty. The critical processes that led each of these women to feel easier about whom they are and to have a better understanding of what it means to be a Native person is a result of peeling away the layers of colonization. This process also applies to my narrative experience. I cannot admit, as does one woman, that the core of my being is centred on my Nativeness. I have, however, been able to grasp the extent to which these women have had to fight against the tensions that exist and impact them in the Euro-Western systems of knowledge, and their aspirations towards the development of self-respect and confidence in their Native identity. Identity gives meaning to one's life, for it is a spiritual feeling that one carries throughout one's lifetime. One is entitled to have a sense of identify and to pass on one's unique identity to one's offspring. This right encompasses one's values, beliefs and understanding of one's community, customs, language, religion and culture. Unfortunately, in the colonized Euro-Western society, most Whites misconstrue the nature of Aboriginal identity. Consequently, in this racist setting, a child of mixed heritage is viewed as belonging to the minority community even if the child looks White (Butler, 1993). Hence, it is clear why my parents of mixed heritage chose to keep the Aboriginal portion silent.

A positive self-identity, states Antone (2000), is "imperative for academic success" (99). I found it challenging to try to assimilate into the Indigenous world. As I delved into it, it became apparent that the Aboriginal voice that contains traditional knowledge was not part of the Euro-Western educational system. Seemingly caught in the middle, I endeavoured to balance the White world in which I lived with the recently acquired knowledge of the Indigenous world of my ancestors. It is important for Aboriginal people to maintain a balance between Euro-

Western White society and the First Nations society. In First Nations communities education is seen as a primary socializing agent. As such, programs that develop a positive self-identity in their own traditions should be incorporated into the education of Aboriginal students (Antone, 2000). This, I discovered, is a difficult task when conflicting views and identities collide. It was not until the early 1970s, states Weaver (1993), that the concerns of Aboriginal women in the male-dominated First Nations political organizations were noticed. The government refused to recognize that First Nations women had the right to represent their own interests in policy matters.

There were also periods of feeling comfortable by some of the non-mixed race Aboriginal women who had willingly assimilated into the White world, victims of the colonizing efforts. As a result of LaRocque (1990) being immersed in the Euro-Western dominant ideology, her problems and subsequent conflict within herself increased. For a while, she turned away from the traditional roles (e.g., trapping, processing animal hides, healing and making tools) that were an expectation of her ancestors, family and community. She also became aware of how uneducated the White man is in terms of truly understanding the First Nations People and their way of life. I must admit to having been among the uneducated in this respect.

OPPRESSION/RACISM

Colonial Constructs

Dunn and Dobzhansky (1959) state that many people believe that it is the "[W]hite man's burden to rule men of all other colors" (108). Freire's (1989) description of oppression, states Calliou (1995), could be applied to racism:

> One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor [racist] and oppressed [receiver] is *prescription.* Every [radically] prescribed prescription represents the imposition of one's choice upon another... the behaviour of the oppressed is a prescribed behaviour, following as it

does the guidelines of the oppressor. (64)

The women in the narratives did not portray themselves as helpless, hapless victims of colonialism. Although issues of marginalization, oppression and racism continued because of colonialism, the women demonstrated agency. One woman, Maracle, centred her story amongst the stories of other Indigenous people, men and women. In doing so, she wove their pain, her pain, and ultimately my understanding about a legacy of rage, overt and covert, that attests to the far-reaching damages that originated as a result of the colonizing, interlocking forms of oppression bestowed upon First Nations People by the dominant group. The web of shame, silence and surrender of one's heritage undeniably illustrates how the personal pain that accompanies the internalization of assimilation by one Native woman becomes part of the collective pain that Aboriginal women bear. This knowledge is transmitted by written stories, or orally conveyed, to all who hear, read or write about their stories. The lives of all Native people are bound together by assimilationist policies and cultural genocidal attacks. The tyrannical nature of racism and discriminatory devices used to dominate and possibly annihilate another culture is, over time, internalized and begins to feed upon itself. All of the narratives indicated, in one form or another, how this repressive behaviour between Aboriginal people, Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal family members, neighbours, clans, friends and Aboriginal academic colleagues are systemic. Maracle (1996) states, "By its very nature, racism only permits the victimized race to engage that hatred among its own" (11). The women experienced racist attitudes from Native and White people alike who questioned their Nativeness. Some of the women experienced discrimination because they had never lived on a reserve; others because of their appearance were considered to be too White looking to be real 'Indians'; others as a result of their mixed race heritage were considered to be only half Native as opposed to being a full-

blooded Native person; and some of the women as a result of how they attained their status, i.e., Bill C-31.

Some of the women indicated that they, like I was, were colonized in their own home of origin, and were made to feel invisible by the 'closeted' Aboriginal people who remained silent behind closed doors. All of the women were aware of the colonizing effects that had taken place in their families, in them as children and as adults. The resultant cruelty of racism that had marked them because of their Nativeness continues on and, in some instances, their children have become the victims of racism. The interlocking forms of oppression experienced by these women as a result of their race, gender and class are all part of the assimilation tactics of the dominant European class. The dominant class primarily consists of White heterosexual males. Unfortunately, experiences of racism and sexism within their Indigenous communities were also evident as a result of treatment received at the hands of some Native males who had incorporated the oppressive values of some White males. "Indian women don't whine and cry around, nag or complain...At least not "real" or "true" Indian women" (Maracle, 1996:17). As a consequence of this treatment, Aboriginal women are denied their womanhood. Gender discrimination is but one aspect of the interlocking nature of oppressions.

Interlocking forms of oppression work together to create and maintain oppression through systems of privilege that are based on one's sex, class, race, sexuality and gender. Oppression is not limited to the dominant culture. It is also experienced amongst individuals in any given culture. In the narratives, the interlocking forms of oppression that each woman experienced to varying degrees at different points in their lives on and off reserve include: alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, domination by White and Native men, rape, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, segregation, colonization, trauma, assaults, racism, discrimination, silence,

stigmatization, disrespect, feelings of rage and helplessness, less educational opportunities, loss of identity and self-respect, and cultural genocide. As a result of these quasi-normal experiences all of the women at different times have felt embarrassed, ashamed about identifying themselves as Native people and confused about how to identify themselves as First Nations People. It is important to note, stated Monture-Angus (1999), that reserves are colonial constructs, not true Indian communities and, as such, must bear the burden for the lack of healthy normalcy which, for the most part, does not appear to exist for women of Native descent. I, for example, have struggled with my Native label for many years. I look White so I am not perceived in the White world as Native enough, and vice-versa in the Native world. As a consequence of the latter, I have felt the sting of discrimination when I went to the reserve to research my ancestry. Like some other mixed raced Aboriginal women, I want to investigate and foster both my heritages.

The Veil of Racism

> ...a basis of existence is the striving for this unconditional respectfulness. Racism is not an act of respect. Racism is a complex set of feelings, behaviours, and rationalizations that deny the wisdom of this sensibility of respectfulness. Racism is not concerned with the promotion of right relations or harmony but becomes an instrument to justify disrespectful, harmful, and oppressive actions rendered by force or by more gentle methods like legislation. (Calliou, 1995:68)

Each woman described in her narrative how she had experienced racism, both personally and professionally. It was very evident that they also perceived education as racist. The Euro-Western systems of knowledge in addition to the seeming mental laziness of would-be authentic Native educators were believed to be responsible for not recognizing that decolonization was the only answer to alter both the historical pattern of colonialism and to stop the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge (Maracle, 1996). The women wrote of racism as ongoing when they spoke of how their parents and grandparents had been impacted. Today, the women and their children are still experiencing racism. As a result of the racist acts towards them, there appears to

be a general mistrust, understandably so, of all Whites. This I find disturbing, for it negates the efforts of a few Euro-Western educators who are working to change these practices.

Each of the women acknowledged experiencing oppression, racism and sexism at school. They felt judged by their appearance at university, not for their scholarly attributes. Racism was everywhere: within the educational institutions (residential school, high school and university), in teachers, fellow students, in the community, within families, in anyone who perceived themselves to be in a position of power, or in mixed race Aboriginal people who wanted to distance and negate their First Nations heritage. Some of the women were challenged with respect to their skin (too pale to be an Aboriginal person), or where they had lived (on or off reserve) as a basis to defy and/or deny them their Nativeness. It was noted that to survive in such a negative environment a number chose to remain silent about their heritage. The overriding message that these women received was that it was not good to be a Native person.

Racism has also followed the women into their careers as academics. They are finding that they experienced the same discrimination and prejudice, and the systemic racism that they had to deal with as students as do the Native students who come to them for guidance today. The stereotypical derogatory words written about Native people, in all genres, breed contempt, alienate them and perpetuate the myths and untruths about First Nations People and their way of life. The Native students, like the women, admitted to feeling shame as they read about or listened to non-Aboriginal teachers propagate the negative images that label First Nations People and blame them for "the Indian problem" (LaRocque, 1990:89). As a result of challenging these misnomers, these women in the narratives have become a looking glass into which their students can gaze and find the truths about their culture. The women did acknowledge that there are still

non-Aboriginal colleagues who continue to oppress Aboriginal students by not examining the curricula and eliminating material that promotes hatred towards First Nations People.

> Racism is the generalized and final assignment of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the formers own privileges of aggressions. (Battiste, 1998:21)

The women in the narratives concur that neo-colonialist educators, for the most part, are racists who work in what Monture-Angus (1995) labelled an openly hostile environment. Their experiences have been that Euro-Western doctrines take precedence over and negate the more holistic Aboriginal systems of knowledge throughout the educational forum. This belief, they acknowledged, results in the exploitation of marginalized cultures, and in particular, of Aboriginal women who daily face the ongoing challenge of combating racist and sexist remarks in a predominantly apartheid society. Bernice Sandler and Roberta Hall first "coined the term "chilly climate" in 1982 to capture the combined effect of a number of practices which cumulatively communicate lack of confidence, lack of recognition and devaluation, and which result in women's marginalization" (Prentice, 2000:196). These chilly climate practices exclude, devalue and stereotype women and their full participation in university settings. In particular, marginalized women, including the Aboriginal women in the narratives, continue to experience chilly climate discriminatory practices that revictimize them.

EDUCATION

A vital component of the colonial process of appropriation, distortion and/or destruction of Native customs, systems of knowledge and language relies on the oppressed to acquiesce (Maracle, 1996). Within the narratives, the ethos of the Aboriginal women's experiences demonstrated recurrent structures of domination, which are consistent with the marginalizing principles embedded in patriarchy. I had a sense, via the narratives, of how difficult it was for

some of these women of Aboriginal ancestry to walk in the two worlds (academic and Aboriginal) because of the profound cultural differences that exist in the ways that wisdom, truth and knowledge are constructed. Eurocentric institutionalized education has tended to require that one look for knowledge and truth outside of oneself, which is in direct conflict with the internal source of truth for Aboriginal people. Therefore, when Aboriginal academics endeavour to explain their unique culture within the objective style of academic writing, it quickly becomes apparent to them how different these two styles of education are. All the women indicated that their educational experiences in the predominantly White Euro-Western educational institutions had negatively impacted their lives in some ways.

In Young's (2005) role as a Native Student Advisor, she found that the students' experiences with the distorted and incomplete textbooks reflected her own experiences of the Native content, or lack thereof, in the textbooks that she was subjected to when growing up. The university curriculum illustrates the ongoing neo-colonialists' exclusion of the struggles of First Nations People. This is a way for neo-colonialist educators to continue to circumvent responsibility for the cultural genocide they have committed, and to avoid acknowledging guilt or shame for what they inflicted on First Nations People. The curricula continued to focus on other places in the world where conflict is occurring, such as the Middle East, instead of the conflict that exists between the colonialists and First Nations. This act further demonstrates the divide that continues to exist between the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people in education. It was evident that books used in Native Studies contained condescending attitudes towards Native people. For example, there were distortions when recounting battles between Native and non-Native people. If Native people were killed, they were deemed slaughtered in wars and battles, as opposed to the killing of non-Native people who were reported as massacred at the

hands of the "Indians". Young admitted that she was not able to write down the names of Native leaders that she knew, when asked, because the history she had been taught throughout her schooling did not include First Nations. The historical content she encountered in the textbooks also indicated that the only two founding nations of North America were the British and the French, which is to say that the history of North America then only began with European contact, negating the existence of First Nations People. LaRocque (1996) also found that the textbooks in university were as insulting as they had been in elementary school. As a result, as a Native student and now an academic, she found it difficult to pursue Indigenous knowledge in the biased Euro-Western based tenets that dehumanize Aboriginal people.

Similarly, Monture-Angus' (1995) university education at law school was fraught with coercion as a student and subsequently during her tenure as a university professor. She attributed this to being a woman and a Mohawk. When she changed universities and went to another to teach Native Studies, she was still discriminated against by her Native peers and viewed as the outsider. She encountered non-Native students who, as a result of feeling uncomfortable with the legacy of oppression and racism towards Native people by their culture, demonstrated their superiority in their course evaluations, which were openly hostile towards Monture-Angus. She stated, "...racism and sexism transcends all social and economic boundaries" (63).

My experiences at university challenged my beliefs, my identity and my colonized reality. I experienced racial discrimination in the educational system, as did the other women in their narratives. I was shunned in public school by the parents of other White students, and openly confronted at high school by the vice-principal about my identity, and challenged at university by non-White students in the Women's Studies program. Interestingly enough, I had become the "other" in a classroom of marginalized women, whereas the reverse had been true for

the other women. I remained on the outside and, for the most part, silent. As a result of my university experiences, I have a better understanding of how the dominant patriarchal Euro-Western social forces had shaped my family's educational opportunities, or lack thereof, as a result of racism. Henry et al. (1998) contends that one's "race, gender, class and sexuality... becomes lost in a hierarchicalization of oppressions" (51). I clearly know that had my family remained on the reserve, I would not be where I am today in academia, similar to Monture-Angus (1999), but, of course, this is not to be considered a generalized truth for all Aboriginal academics.

Battiste (1998) acknowledges, as do the other women in the narratives, that imperialistic polices have eroded away the Indigenous knowledge base. One of the ongoing main concerns centres on the federal government's requirement that First Nations must adopt provincial curricula if they want to assume control of their education, which does not enable the Native communities to peel away one of many layers of colonialism towards achieving self-determination. There was a firm belief by the women that decolonization is the answer to altering the historical pattern of colonialism and the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge. When the need for self-determination is respected by the Euro-Western culture and First Nations People are recognized as having a separate history, perhaps equality can be realized (Maracle, 1996).

Chief Justice Lamer states that the teaching of the Aboriginal people's rights is a constitutional right. If this is the case, then why is there a lack of the Aboriginal people's knowledge being taught in Canadian educational institutions? All of the women in the narratives concur with this thinking and believe it is important for First Nations intellectuals to maintain their identity and teach according to the traditional Aboriginal people's ways, rather than to succumb into a "sea of mis-education" (Maracle, 1996:40). Lawrence (2004) also warned that

heavily assimilated mixed race First Nations scholars may become "otherness machines" (24) who look for other ways to define First Nations authenticity.

> In the aboriginal tradition, societal practices and customs are passed from one generation to the next by means of oral description and actual demonstration. As such, to ensure the continuity of aboriginal customs and traditions, a substantive aboriginal right will normally include the incidental right to teach such a practice, custom and tradition to a younger generation. (Battiste, 1998:17)

Although not all of the women in the narratives could speak their Native tongue, it was generally agreed that this is an important element if the Indigenous peoples are to survive as a culture. Language conveys the heritage of the Indigenous Peoples, and as such it is unique. If they lose it, they lose the ability to pass a part of their heritage on and it gets lost. The right of the Aboriginal People to speak their language is the most integral of all the Aboriginal rights, and one that many have lost due to colonialist rule.

It was evident in the narratives that all the women strive to maintain a "good Indian path," as a result of not wanting to lose their Nativeness or to reclaim their Native identity as a result of a mixed race background. Having a university education affords them the opportunity to teach Aboriginal knowledge and as Monture-Angus (1999) indicated, places her in a position to push for meaningful educational opportunities for First Nations students. The women generally noted that this is difficult when colleagues perpetuate the myths about First Nation Peoples' experiences through colonized lens. Education is important if done in a decolonized way. Graveline's (1998) answer to this lay in her life work, which is to "walk my talk" (8) around the Medicine Wheel whereby she endeavours to give back, as have all the women in the narratives, the knowledge she has been acquiring. Her teaching involves the interconnectedness between the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions, which is a part of incorporating the "good Indian path" towards wholeness in educational institutions that, as all the women agree,

contain biases developed by White, middle-class urban male theorists. There were concerns on the part of the women about placing the Aboriginal holistic model within the Euro-Western educational frameworks and that before implementation, Graveline warned, issues around their theoretical designs need to be addressed. Education is political and the Euro-Western educational forum has a vested interest in maintaining the "existing social and political structures of domination as they are divided along race and cultural lines" (Graveline, 1998:10).

When traditional teachings are taught by neo-colonialists much gets lost, thereby disconnecting the First Nations People from their learning. Humour is central to Aboriginal teachings and gets distorted when translated by Eurocentric educators who do not know how to approach the teachings in the traditional manner. In the process they co-opt the Aboriginal teachings and make them fit the Euro-Western model of education and the original teachings (meanings) disappear. In doing so, these educators exploit the Aboriginal people's beliefs and values to their benefit. Graveline takes the "oppositional" stance whenever she perceives the Euro-Western educational system operating to "oppress, repress or disenfranchise" (11). The Trickster, in Aboriginal thought, teaches individuals humility, and to not exert superiority over others, lest wise the Trickster will challenge through humour (Graveline, 1998). In every Aboriginal culture, the Trickster is evident in some form and is responsible for changes that take place in the world. Fortunately, the Trickster is beginning to be revitalized in Aboriginal traditions as the caretaker and teacher of Indigenous values.

Traditional Backdrops – Sidebar

Lessons learned in the home and in the community, be they good or bad, provide a primary basis for all that follows. Accepted or rejected by family and/or members of the community, all leave an indelible mark on one's identity within a particular culture. I was

indoctrinated with, and have internalized, the "White ideal." However, I have never felt completely comfortable within my family of origin. Perhaps, unknowingly, it was my ancestors who ignited these hidden 'blood memories' that pushed me to seek out and eventually claim, my Native identity. I do not believe that it matters so much what led each of the women, myself included, to a place of knowing, but rather how the knowledge is used to promote and sustain the Indigenous culture. The mixed race, in between feelings associated with dual identities, was not uncommon among the women as each struggled to sustain and promote a positive Native identity. As a result of internalizing the "White ideal," continued efforts to combine the two, for me, will be ongoing well beyond my thesis, for I still struggle on some level as to where I fit in either world. It is with this in mind that I continue to examine the Indigenous holistic approach to attaining knowledge in order to bridge the gap between the Western and Aboriginal educational systems.

Elders – Traditional Beliefs

> The traditional knowledge and values of Native people have not been valued by mainstream approaches to education; consequently their voice has been silenced. (Antone, 2000:97)

The women in the narratives value their traditional Aboriginal knowledge and Graveline (1998) particularly noted its relevance when faced with the challenges of the dominant Euro-Western paternalistic society. They feel that traditional teachings ground them whether they come from the Elders, their parents, or from being with other Aboriginal women in a Native community. Young (2005) received the gift of language, Saulteaux, and indicated that the most important teaching was to always remember that she is Anishinabe. Lawrence's (2004) mother taught her the traditional teachings, but did not label them as such, because of the imposed silence within the home regarding their Native heritage. Some admitted to having strayed from the traditional teachings of their ancestors towards the Eurocentric ideology as a result of their

being assimilated into the dominant cultures while at university. Initially Young (2005) did not recognize that the traditional beliefs and values were a part of her quest to be highly educated. She came to realize that she was happier when listening to her Native teachings than those she listened to at university. The traditional teachings of the Elders encourage Native peoples to contribute to the well being of others, to maintain a sense of self and to contribute to the community and to the nation as whole. Regrettably, Euro-Western education, for the most part, has a tendency to promote individualism.

One's traditional role in the community involves searching for new meaning. It is one's responsibility to learn. "Education is about understanding our real life experiences in both our hearts and minds" (Monture-Angus, 1995:83). The journey for the Indigenous people involves a circle, for this, according to Black Elk, is how the power of the world always works; therefore, everything a Native person does is in a circle for that is where the power lies. It was evident in the narratives how important it is to be as authentic to the traditional teachings as life permits. When the Aboriginal power is either ignored or misguided the power of the Native teachings becomes lost in the colonized rhetoric. As a result, the traditional teachings are not followed, and the Native's ability to live off the land is consequently disrupted (LaRocque, 1996). Anderson views the Indigenous traditions and ceremonies as tools and ideals that enable Native people who do not have a land-based culture, to reconcile themselves with their lives as they have come to be, not as a tool to question how Indigenous they are. Understanding one's real life experiences is what education is about. "True wisdom requires much self-reflecting. It is the way that First Nations recognize and credential people" (Monture-Angus, 1995:77).

Battiste (2000) shares a story that speaks to the sacredness of the Aboriginal languages that contains the Creator's instructions for the survival and development of the Native people.

> In the beginning when the Mi'kmaq people awoke
> in the world lost and naked, the Mi'kmaq asked our
> Creator how we should live. Our Creator taught us how
> to hunt and fish, how to cure what we took, how to clothe
> ourselves with the skins, and how to heal our bodies with the
> plants of the earth. Our Creator taught us about the constellations
> and the stars and how to make our way through the darkest of nights.
> Our Creator showed us the path of the milky way, Skite'kmujeouti, which
> is the path of our ancestors as they moved on to the next world. Our Creator
> taught us all that was wise and good and, then, gave us a language that we could
> pass on this knowledge to our children so that they might be able to survive and flourish.
> Finally, the Creator told us about the two worlds, separated by a cloud-like substance that
> would open and fall at different intervals. The strong and believing at heart would be able
> to pass through those worlds unscathed, but the weak and unbelieving would be crushed.
>
> (Battiste, 2000:2-3)

It was acknowledged by LaRocque (1996) that not all traditions liberate or empower Aboriginal women. This point may particularly apply to urban mixed race Natives who live in contemporary society.

VISION – COMBATTING ANNIHILATION

> The result of being colonized is the internalization of the need to remain
> invisible. The colonizers erase you, not easily, but with shame and brutality.
>
> (Maracle, 1996:8)

The tensions that exist in the colonizer/colonized dichotomy cannot be treated as mere scholarly or intellectual exercises. The divisiveness in the academic community has created tensions that need to be critically investigated to "acknowledge the dialectics of colonization in Canadian scholarship" (LaRocque, 1990:13). The future ghettoization of every educated Native woman can be diminished if Aboriginal women know that they have the right to be treated equally. One way this can be achieved is through storying, written or orally that speaks to the truth about Native reality, not through the stereotypical myths that persist in academia. Obviously the women whose narratives I studied are all contributing by voicing their experiences. They all indicated that First Nations People must be tenacious in their attack on the current Euro-Western ideology that has mired or destroyed the Indigenous ways of knowing.

It became apparent in the narratives that the social and ethical ramifications of colonization contained within literature, history and popular culture that portray Native peoples, particularly women, in a negative manner need to be studied and corrected. Segregated schools will not change the course of colonialism, but conscious decolonization will, for example, by carefully scrutizing the type of education offered. Education, the women agree, is about "maintaining culture...Decolonization will require the repatriation and the rematriation of that knowledge by Native peoples themselves" (Maracle, 1996:91-92). It was further suggested that to accomplish such a task, there would have to be unity between the Native people and the colonists, which would require a thorough examination of the historical background of the Native and Euro-Western society. Part of this process would be for First Nations to collectively define what education means to them. Aboriginal educators, including the women academics in the narratives, recognize that decolonization is not easily attainable, but nonetheless a necessary task if Aboriginal people are to continue to proliferate in and outside the academy. There was also a consensus amongst the women that it is essential to offer educational opportunities to Aboriginal students that are not alienating, isolating, or racist in content. Monture-Angus (1999) found that many Aboriginal students she spoke to in higher education shared this view. The women agreed that it is also important that updated and new material continue to be written that enhances the Native people. The outcome of such a venture would, hopefully, negate the need for the dominant White society to continue to segregate the Native society.

Aboriginal curricula do not have a foothold in Euro-Western education. As a consequence, teachers who graduate from institutions of higher learning lack cross-cultural awareness where Indigenous peoples are concerned. These predominantly Eurocentric curricula polarize what is valued as knowledge, and what is not. Battiste (2000) refers to this as the

"civilized over the savage" in terms of Indigenous peoples, leading to the exploitation of marginalized cultures. To combat these racist tactics, Aboriginal people need to take part in transforming the racist content contained in textbooks, and that is ultimately taught in classrooms, into a format that is more conducive to Indigenous ideology. In addition, Aboriginal scholars who have been educated by the colonists raise concerns for Native people with respect to their ability to maintain and convey the Native traditions within their class curricula. Maracle (1996), in particular, felt that some of the Aboriginal spiritual leaders were mis-educated in the Euro-Western educational institutions and, as a result, were misinterpreting the ancestral teachings. One of the new ideas put forth by some of them centres on mixed race urban Natives taking a less literal approach to the teachings of the Elders. The way of life that many urban Aboriginal people are living does not include a solid Native community that would enable a more formalized approach to the traditional teachings. Their lifestyle does not promote their attending formal ceremonies and teaching circles that would take them away from their families. The Euro-Western educated Aboriginal teachers encourage parents to stay at home with their families where they can celebrate the traditions together in a less formalized manner, but still in keeping with the Elders' traditional teachings. In this way it is believed that the traditional teachings are still being honored. In such a context, I have concerns that over time the true meaning and value contained within the traditional teachings could weaken and become less meaningful which would impact First Nations People as a culture. This new way of approaching one's authentic Native identity brings into question how visible the Elders are to urban mixed race Natives.

Another way the Elders are losing their authority is in relation to the current lifestyle of Aboriginal women in an urban setting. Not all of the traditions fit with the contemporary lifestyle

of urban mixed race Aboriginal women. As a result of the discrepancies of what is considered acceptable by the Elders in the community, not all mixed race Aboriginal women are welcomed back into their Indigenous communities. Difficulties arise, in any culture, when traditions are challenged as a result of lifestyle changes. Unfortunately, the effects of colonialism with the belief that First Nations People need to be vanquished, along with their traditional knowledge, remain and the struggle continues. "Tradition is not lost if it can be remembered and revitalized to symbolize a possible future" (Graveline, 1998:8). Anderson (2000), who could pass for either a Native or a White person, was accorded this honor of being accepted into a Native community and, as a consequence, felt that she belonged as a Native woman in an Aboriginal setting. Reclaiming the gift of being able to identify with her mixed race heritage will benefit both cultures and give her the tools, like some of the other women in the narratives, to keep the Aboriginal heritage alive and visible.

The importance of maintaining one's identity was a primary concern for the women in the narratives, as it is essential for the Native populace in general, if they are not to be eradicated. The women felt that this was one way to ensure that the continuing White, racist, colonial practices will not diminish future generations of Indigenous peoples. Within the narratives there were two areas, in particular, that raised concerns in terms of First Nation Peoples being able to shift the status quo for the betterment of Aboriginal people in society. One area centred on Native people being seen as contemporary trespassers who do not have a valid right to their Indigenous heritage, a result of not being able to speak their Indigenous language as did their ancestors. The ability to speak in their Native tongue is considered to be an essential link to Native heritage. Many contemporary urban mixed race Native people lack this ability. The second area of concern resides with Native academics who have been educated in White

colonized institutions, and are not the best qualified to negate the racist untruths that are contained within the textbooks. Monture-Angus (1999) believes change will come from the people and not from institutions, and only when Aboriginal people accept responsibility, believe that their traditional knowledge is not inferior, and that they have the power to initiate changes without relying on the colonists. A very crucial first step here is for mixed race urban Native people to identify themselves as being a Native person or not.

On a positive note, however, the women agreed that some small change is happening. The process of decolonizing has already begun in Canadian education by both educators and Aboriginal scholars. There are more Aboriginal educators, and more Aboriginal-focused programs. Indigenous institutions have been established, and some tribal authorities and individual bands have taken local control of some Aboriginal education. Most importantly, the women's narratives are a testament towards positive change for Aboriginal people. By the continuous documentation of their discriminatory racist experiences at the hands of the colonists, they are continuing the process of educating Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people, Euro-Western educators, educational and government institutions and society as a whole. The damage that has been inflicted upon First Nations People as a result of the cultural genocidal attempts are no longer acceptable.

Although not central to the themes discussed, Johnson and Brant's experiences resonated with all of the other Aboriginal women's narratives. The continuity of their past and present experiences binds these women together. The rite of passage for the women into the Indigenous world hinged on identity, how they saw themselves and how others viewed them. Authenticity within one's culture seemed to vary between individuals from community to community, across North America. Mixed race women struggled with walking between two worlds, while

maintaining a connection with their mixed identity, being careful not to assimilate or be assimilated into one from the other. Part of understanding the complex concerns of the present required visiting the past to better understand a part of themselves that, for some, had a cloak of silence wrapped around the Indigenous heritage rendering it silent and invisible. For many the cloak opened up after the unseen issues of oppression, anger and racism experienced as children, as adults, as students and as educators had become visible.

Education opened many doorways to the past injustices towards Aboriginal women and to the ongoing discriminatory practices of today. It also generated the possibility of shifting the balance away from the dominant colonists via the academy. The privilege to educate others, change the curricula and make the Indigenous people visible is within the grasp of Aboriginal educators. Part of this process involves the traditional teachings by the Aboriginal Elders, by Aboriginal parents and by First Nations People in the community to engage and promote the Aboriginal way within Aboriginal communities, contemporary urban settings and the academy. Lifting up the Aboriginal voice combats the extinction of the Aboriginal culture. This is particularly difficult for mixed race Native people whose current lifestyle pushes them further away from the traditional ceremonies. This lifestyle aids the colonizers in their efforts to reduce the Indigenous populace, figuratively and literally. Decolonization has already begun to undo some of the damage that has been inflicted by the European influences over the past five hundred plus years. First Nations was a vibrant culture for thousands of years before this devastating era, so there is every hope that this once proud Nation will again rise from the ashes of the colonialists' powerful grip.

The next chapter concludes this thesis with a summary of the overall experiences of the Aboriginal women in higher education. It includes an open letter from the Trickster, an

Aboriginal archetype who speaks to the injustices experienced by the First Nations People as a result of colonialism.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

My study of Indigenous women's narratives reflects their overall experiences in higher education (Defining the Beast); contradictions between Euro-Western and Indigenous knowledge systems (Talons of the Eagle); and visions for higher education practices as implied by the narratives (Sweetgrass Grows). In conclusion, I use the Aboriginal archetype of the Trickster to present an open letter that labels the immoral treatment of the First Nations People by the dominant colonial society.

DEFINING THE BEAST – REFLECTIONS FROM THE PAST

I discovered that the women's educational experiences were negatively impacted. All the women were affected by the lack of Indigenous culture and/or erroneous cultural beliefs about First Nations People that they encountered in their teachers and their textbooks from primary grades onward. The Euro-Western pedagogical content did not provide the necessary and important basis of an all-inclusive learning environment, for Indigenous children or for adults. They encountered all types of psychological and emotional abuse at the hands of educators and other students. It was evident that the negative experiences in the predominantly White educational practices in higher education impacted their lives in every way imaginable. Whites often misconstrued the nature of the Aboriginal person's identity. Whites questioned them, as did some other Aboriginal people, if they appeared too pale to be a First Nations person. In some instances, the women faculty were accorded less respect; their course outlines, content and research were seemingly challenged more than those of non-Aboriginal women academics; they received less support from university colleagues and administrators and endured discrimination, sexism and racism. They were also subjected to racial slurs and received threats from some of the students. Coercion not only existed between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal faculty

members; it was also evidenced between Native colleagues. There was a strong indication in the women's narratives that biases and hierarchical positioning were the norm, rather than the exception, in the academy. It was apparent that these Aboriginal women had faced a multitude of challenges daily, in and out of the academy, and also shared a common legacy of marginalization and oppression. It appeared that these First Nations women had to pay a higher price than did White women.

In addition, the Aboriginal faculty members encountered Aboriginal students who were being oppressed by non-Aboriginal colleagues, by being presented with curricula that included racist and discriminatory untruths about the First Nations People. They found that the textbooks at university contained material that promoted hatred towards Aboriginal people, similar to what they had experienced in their own schooling. In educational institutions racism is taught, experienced and learned (Iseke-Barnes, 2006). In spite of all that they experienced, they knew the importance of higher education and the role it played in contributing to their sense of self. It was an essential key in working toward the survival of the First Nations in the modern world. It gave them a place of privilege in the Euro-Western world to fight for their own people, many of whom were not in a position to speak and write their stories.

On the basis of what I experienced growing up as a Mooniyâs and how I interpreted the narratives, I am still somewhat hesitant to truly consider myself to be a Nehiyâw'ak writer. I continue to feel like an outsider, peering into the window of my ancestors' hidden past, knowing that I have not experienced life as an Aboriginal woman. Nonetheless I exercised my right to First Voice, as did the women in their narratives who were in search of the truth. I believe it is not possible to replicate or repackage identity to accommodate the needs of any dominant society, nor should one have to, First Nations being no exception. In addition, each woman's

narrative had an impact on how I viewed my own previous educational experiences, with my becoming aware for the first time that I had also experienced prejudice from primary school right through to university. Each woman's narrative had an impact on my previous understanding of my family's silence, how my family had been dominated and, as a consequence, my identity as a White woman and as an Indigenous woman. At this point, I am still unable to put the two cultures firmly together and perhaps I never will be able to complete the circle. I travelled the four directions but I still have not reconciled all the issues that these narratives brought to the forefront. This, I suspect, will take years as a result of the closely guarded secrets from the past coupled with the many deaths of my mother's family who have carried these secrets to their graves. The entire process surrounding the narratives has been a gift in many ways. It presented a challenge that I knew from the outset would be filled with risks, for I was not sure what I would uncover in the process. It was, and in some ways remains, a risky experience for me filled with a whole gamut of emotions that have led me to and from the depths of despair.

My family's silence had left me in a sea of black clouds that shrouded my existence with sadness. As a result of the wisdom I have received during my doctoral process, I have freed my soul to walk within the Indigenous Sacred Circle. This process, unlike the Euro-Western linear pattern of thought, evolves like the unending circle that celebrates the changing of the seasons, as does the restorying of past events. I felt that I was also unpacking a suitcase, initially not mine, as did Young, but my suitcase contained my family and my ancestry. As I began to intertwine my story with my family, with Young's and those of the other Aboriginal women, I realized that I was, in effect, truly unpacking my suitcase. The stories that I am beginning to tell today are almost the mirror opposite of my stories from the past. Unpacking was infinitely harder than packing my suitcase, for I did not know where it would take me. I needed a structure to enable

the process to unfold in the Native traditional manner. The women's narratives provided this for me. As their lives unfolded before me, I found many familial and sociocultural similarities that cleared away many of the historical black clouds that had blocked my Indigenous path. I am forever grateful to each of them for storying their experiences.

TALONS OF THE EAGLE – CONTRADICTIONS AND TENSIONS

In support of the variations of women's experiences in society, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted the following at the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 that defines discrimination against women as:

> ...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (Womenwatch, 2003)

Despite CEDAW's support and definition of discrimination, our society is riddled with contradictions about the fundamental freedoms when it comes to women. One example is the current structuring of society's approach to education which favors individualism and instrumentalism that are embedded in raced, gendered and classed organizations, designs that contain biases (Jackson, 1994).

The federal government has put restrictions on the pedagogical content that the Aboriginal community must adopt if they want to assume control of their education. It must include some of the current Euro-Western teachings. This contradicts Chief Justice Lamer's ruling that Aboriginal people have a right to their culture and traditions. Consequently, then, Native people should be allowed to formulate their own pedagogical curricula, as they deem appropriate. The federal restrictions stipulate the inclusion of some Euro-Western content, which is preferable to the White colonialists creating Aboriginal pedagogy with no Aboriginal

input. Aboriginal educators have found that non-Aboriginal educators are not able, for the most part, to capture the essence of Indigenousness found in traditional teachings, nor do they possess the ability to teach in the Aboriginal manner. As a result, they exploit the Aboriginal people's beliefs and values. As more Aboriginal women have university degrees, they are provided with the opportunity to teach Aboriginal knowledge through the lens of First Nations, not the colonized lens that currently exists. Education for Native peoples requires decolonization of the educational process.

The Native educator, when attempting to change the Eurocentric images of the Native people, needs to appreciate and fully comprehend that some non-Native educators are unaware of the subtleties and intricacies of Native traditions. This lack of contextual knowledge, or desire for such, has led to the proliferation of further Eurocentric cultural conditioning. Each woman wrote about the White Euro-Western colonialist's vicious betrayal and portrayal of them, coupled with the media-savvy book publishers, theatres, television broadcasts, and newspapers that perpetuated the images of Native people as "White-killer savages" who were "blood-thirsty" and "drunks" (Sanchez, 1988). Hence the important reasons that were behind Aboriginal women's writings to "act, resist, construct and reclaim" to dispel these images and reestablish the Aboriginal people's realities, their histories, and their worldviews (Anderson, 2000).

The consequent oppressive relationship that exists between Aboriginal and Euro-Western people then, leads to oppression in the educational arena. The tensions in education for the Aboriginal women also arose with respect to how knowledge was taught and how the educators perceived their students. It was evidenced in their narratives that the manner in which they were treated, for the most part, contradicted the notion of what education is all about. The ability to question, to discuss and to challenge the curricula, the teachers, fellow colleagues, the

administrators and the students from the beginning of their educational experiences was thwarted by the colonialists' approach. Some of the women learned to not question, first hand, what the nuns were teaching them, out of fear of reprisal. Their parents and grandparents also warned of the colonialists' brutality towards Indigenous students that they themselves had experienced. Some in Euro-Western society, it was noted, found it "shocking" to think of an Aboriginal person as being educated. The Euro-Westerners tended to label them as "dumb Indians," "unskilled," "non-competitive" and "immoral heathens" to name just a few of the disparaging remarks used to describe a First Nations Person (Sanchez, 1988). As a consequence, some of the women in the narratives and some members of their families denied their heritage for periods of time, trying to distance themselves from identifying as Native people. One does not have to possess a degree to be educated, as is evidenced in the two narratives that I included, that attest to this truth. Pauline Johnson and Beth Brant were, in their own way, very educated women. Their writings exhibit(ed) a talent for challenging the injustices that resulted from the Eurocentric colonialists' domination of the Aboriginal peoples.

Euro-Western educators have developed discourses and regulations in the development of educational theories as a basis of social management. Some of the Aboriginal women who were educated in a Eurocentric classroom experienced tensions in terms of the information taught when it conflicted with their Aboriginal traditions. As a result of this, they found the university to be a hostile environment and experienced some of the colonialist educators to be racist. The doctrines of the colonialists took precedence over the more holistic Aboriginal systems of knowledge and, as such, exploited and promoted racism towards First Nations women in the university setting.

It is important to challenge the Euro-Western approach to education in an attempt to develop new paradigms of knowledge. As I see it, Native educators need to make a conscious decision to examine what sets them apart from non-Native people. There is a need for scholars/poets/translators who are trained and gifted in both English and in a First Nations language. They would have to be familiar with specific cultural contexts to accurately translate texts figuratively, not literally, as happens within some Euro-Western translations. As Aboriginal communities become threatened as a result of governmental policies, as the Native language is lost due to the acculturation into Euro-Western ways, the fissure that divides the two cultures is less likely to be easily bridged. Native communities are not only vital for Indigenous life to flourish but, are also important vehicles in contesting misrepresentation of Native people in Euro-Western history and in demolishing the illusion of the Native population as a vanishing race.

Another marginalizing and contradictory experience for Aboriginal women was that of Euro-Western White feminist theory which, for the most part, was incompatible with Aboriginal women's concepts of human nature. Hence, the latter must act alone on some issues. Consequently, I found that many Aboriginal women do not see or label themselves as feminists in the same sense as do Euro-Western feminists. In one of the narratives a woman stated that while feminists and Indigenous women have a lot in common, they are in separate movements (Monture-Angus, 1995). One question arose as to why feminists try to convert Aboriginal women to believing in the universality of sisterhood and male dominance. There was a desire for feminists to know the reason behind Aboriginal women's inability to identify with them. The basic contradiction that existed between them centred on their real life concerns that were not relevant to Euro-Western White feminism. Aboriginal women's views contained more

spirituality, and they believed in the philosophy of life that is contained within the Circle of Life that defined their worldviews, roles and responsibilities as women. From the Aboriginal women's perspective, the Euro-Western White feminist analytical structure produced barriers that were incompatible. This does not preclude a future where these two parallel, yet distinct, movements will meet on a common ground to learn, share, and support, rather than attempting to convert one to the other. Aboriginal women can use feminism as a source of analysis as they search for their own answers, which in turn, can be shared in a positive way across collectives.

SWEETGRASS GROWS - VISION

> ...Sister
> here me now
> let us take this
> journey together. (Brant 1988:220)

"The eagle cannot fly with only one wing beating" (Jackson, 1994:195). It is important to remember this metaphor when referring to the power imbalance between Native men and women, or between Euro-Westerners and Aboriginal Peoples. The idea that diverse members of society can participate democratically in higher education is a myth. Educational institutions could be powerful sites of cultural diversity, but this can only be accomplished as a result of agreed-upon criteria in such institutions. It became evident that the Euro-Western pedagogical way of learning was unlike the First Nations way of learning and understanding. If race relations are to improve between First Nations and Euro-Western cultures, there needs to be a concerted effort on each of their parts to recognize and respect what constitutes knowledge for each other. For this to happen, it requires the dominant Euro-Western educators to alter their preconceived notions of what constitutes knowledge for Aboriginal people. As part of this process they would, in turn, learn and define the truth about the values inherent in other cultures; how they view varied social relations and what constitutes knowledge in other institutions of learning. This

process of incorporating a multitude of different perspectives would enable learning to take on a function that is more inclusive, thereby giving voice to those who have been silent. The Euro-Western hierarchical and exclusive approach to learning promotes such silencing.

Knowledge is described as structures of discourse that establish and regulate forms of social management. To establish new forms of knowledge requires breaking the silence, which feminists refer to as the "mute symptom of misery" (Graveline, 1998:68). Within any transformational process, awareness of what is happening is the beginning of change. Self-In-Relation to the larger community is linked to a tribal worldview and is considered to be very important in the formation of an Aboriginal identity. In terms of envisioning a new reality for the future of First Nations People, the women felt that it was important to examine the past to ensure that the Indigenous culture does not cease to exist. A part of one's Aboriginal identity is to understand the importance of one's past collective experiences, for Aboriginal people believe that any pain experienced throughout their life is imprinted, and if the pain is inflicted on an entire tribe, for example, the tribe too can remember. Denying such pain prevents or affects the memory of it. Recalling it can lead to learning, to problem solving so that a new tomorrow may be possible (Graveline, 1998).

It is essential to find a way to bridge the chasm that separates the two cultures. It is imperative to develop a more inclusive understanding of all women in academia, and this begins by challenging those who teach, the way they teach and the language that is used in the classroom. Knowledge for Aboriginal women involves celebrating and reclaiming their cultures, their histories and their identities. The women in the narratives wanted to empower, educate and support other Aboriginal women by their writings. They believed Euro-Western education would be enriched were it to include some of these Aboriginal teachings and practices. This

collaboration might initially be feared by the Euro-Western academy as if night and day are fighting for the same sky.

I discovered that First Nations education is not a compilation of esoteric idioms that preclude the need to integrate with the Euro-Western world, but rather is an adjunct that would lend value to the more linear thinking of the dominant Western industrial world. This interconnectedness would enable Aboriginal women to be more successful when dealing with all aspects of modern contemporary society, while maintaining their cultural identity, values and beliefs. I suggest that a well-rounded curriculum could enhance educational opportunities for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely as a result of a fundamental mismatch between Aboriginal students, curricula and educators. It would require all three counterparts to interact equally to produce knowledge that is not predominantly male and White in content in the academy. Therefore, I acknowledge that the road to change has many obstacles. Unfortunately, I view the educational arena with skepticism, as it operates in much the same manner as my family of origin. The contradictions and ambiguities that burden the theoretical base, predominantly White, within my family also existed within the confines of institutions of higher learning. The impact of racism and bigotry in the home denied me my heritage; in the classroom it rendered me invisible. I am at a place then, as a result of my own personal and educational experiences, where I question the possibility of an integration of educational philosophies at present. My hope is that the academy will incorporate further Indigenous classes as one step to widen the knowledge base about Aboriginal education.

Decolonization must involve deconstructing and reshaping how one understands Indigenous identity. The defining of Native identity has been central to the colonization process in both Canada and the United States. In Canada, the Native population has been divided into

legal categories through federal legislation. These categories, with their different rights and restrictions, determine who is eligible to be registered as a Status Indian under the Indian Act[21]. Systems of classification and control have enabled settler governments to state who is "Indian," and who has access to Native land. One of the most controversial is the blood quantum[22] requirement. These regulatory systems have forcibly supplanted traditional Indigenous ways of identifying the Self-in-Relation to land and to community. In addition to this Euro-Western/Aboriginal struggle, divisions continue to exist between and within Aboriginal groups as a result of their different economic, cultural, political and historical circumstances (Jackson, 1994). These differences will require ongoing negotiations between the various Indigenous communities. In the meantime, Aboriginal people have been fighting for their rights to their land and to self-government in terms of community affairs for a very long time. Central to the process of self-determination is control over education, for therein lies the transmission of the culture (spiritual beliefs, language, history, traditions) to future generations of Indigenous people. All of the women in the narratives were aware of the cultural genocidal attacks and assimilationist polices that had impacted them their entire lives. As a step towards changing some of these policies they felt it was important for Aboriginal women to be part of the academic and policy-making institutions. They hoped that within these policies their fading cultural identity could be recovered (Jackson, 1994).

As a way of stemming the flow of misguided historical facts about Indigenous people, it was suggested that non-Natives be strongly discouraged from writing, or stop altogether, writing articles and publications about First Nations People (Sanchez, 1988). I disagree, for I believe it is

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[21] "The *Act* sets out a complex system for registering Indians. Definitions have shifted according to revisions of the *Indian Act*, and have been based on various criteria including blood quantum requirements, kinship, style of life, and membership in a charter group…Possession of Indian blood remains a factor in determining status, as does kinship" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008:3).

[22] "Blood Quantum is the total percentage of your blood that is tribal native due to bloodlines" (Cook , 2008:1).

the continuous flow of dialogue, be it the truth or not, between different cultures that results in an exchange of each other's reality that can then be refuted and changed as the case may be. Eventually, it is hoped that the truth will eventually emerge and the abyss that divides the two cultures will become less and less as a bridge of understanding is formed. Silencing of the other does nothing more than reverse the pendulum of what has been the experience of the First Nations People, and in the end achieves nothing.

My journey is but a minuscule example of how racism and bigotry create a plague that needs to be eradicated everywhere. This hindsight/post-mortem of Aboriginal women in higher education provides a cautionary example of the dangers involved and the significance that gender, class, race, age and sexual orientation play in higher education. Lest Euro-Western colonialists forget the injustices placed upon the First Nations People by them, in the Indigenous culture, everything is a vessel of memory.

TRICKSTER – COYOTE WRITES AN OPEN LETTER

I consult with Coyote to see how she would deal with the paradoxes that riddle the Eurocentric worldview, with its subsequent negative impact on First Nations People. Initially, Coyote is not pleased at being disturbed, but quickly recovers when she grasps the meaning of my visit. She strokes her reddish grey fur and cautiously observes my every move wondering, I suspect, what the real motive is behind my query. It is obvious that she feels quite superior with being asked for advice by a human being. Jumping up on her hind legs, as if to make herself even more important, she begins.

"Truth is what you make it," says Coyote.

"How so?" I innocently ask.

Coyote replies, "Don't give credence to the colonialists' words."

"What good will it do to ignore the negative comments, the outright lies about our First Nations People and culture!?" I counter.

Coyote shows her displeasure at having her words unaccepted at face value. She paces back and forth ignoring me for the moment, and then suddenly springs towards me, delighted that she has startled me. She says, "I am not suggesting that you disregard them. I think the words put forth as truths are all fabrications, meant to discredit and annihilate the First Nations culture."

"I know that!" I am beginning to question my own judgment in coming to talk with Coyote and my voice and level of annoyance are both rising. But I continue, "With respect to the multitude of concerns raised by the First Nations women in their narratives, what advice would you give?"

Coyote replies with a hint of arrogance. "I would like to suggest writing an open letter as a teaching tool."

"A letter to whom?" I query.

"To whom?" Coyote mused, "Haven't you taken in what is truly going on?"

"What are you talking about?" I ask defensively, feeling challenged.

"Write to the Eurocentric hegemonic patriarchal society, of course," shouts Coyote who is clearly becoming agitated with my persistent questions.

Undaunted by her anger, I continue with another question. "About what, exactly?"

"The truth!" she says, her voice getting louder and angrier.

Trying to remain unruffled, I ask yet another question. "Why are you so angry about the truth?"

"Not my truth, their truth," she quickly quips. Coyote laughs and laughs.

I dislike the tone of her voice. Now I'm agitated. "What are you laughing at?" I ask.

"What? Not what, whom," exclaims Coyote. "I'm laughing at the Euro-Westerners who are about to receive a letter that reverses their ways of knowing. What better way to deal with

adversity than to make people look at their own reality, the role they play in perpetuating untruths about a culture that they know nothing about, or about which they choose to remain ignorant. Hopefully, the contents of the letter will enlighten them and they will come to acknowledge their own unjust activity, the errors of their ways, and will change and right the wrongs that they have committed against First Nations People."

I start to make a comment, but she gestures with her paw for me to be silent. "Let me tell you what I have in mind by way of an example," Coyote muses. "I would strongly urge them White guys to replace the word 'Indian' with their own names any time they write or talk about First Nations People. See how they like being talked about in such a negative way. Then, let them try to avoid taking responsibility for their actions!"

"What?" I ask in astonishment. "Are you out of your mind?"

Coyote laughs even harder. "Don't you see? In this way they will be experiencing racism and bigotry, possibly even the prospect of annihilation as a result of what is now being written as 'the truths' about them. Until they walk in another person's moccasins, they will never know how it feels to be confronted with the interlocking forms of oppression that deny a person, a nation, the simple right to exist without fear of extinction. It's so simple. They become us." Coyote grins with delight.

"Us?" I question. Coyote quickly explains that she had once been a First Nations person, so knows how it feels to be the butt of racism and discrimination.

Her comment leads me to wonder what all this reversal business will mean for me, so I cautiously ask Coyote, "As a mixed-race person how does that affect me?"

"Hmmm," says Coyote, "you have the inside edge, you're already half-assimilated, so what's your problem?"

"Half-assimilated," I sputter, searching for words. I sit down and stare at Coyote in disbelief at what I am hearing.

Coyote quickly adds, "Don't you get it? The Euro-Western curricula only speaks to one-half of you and the other half is silenced. Their textbooks continue to perpetuate the stereotypical myths that sustain and promote the ongoing stigma, hatred and violence towards the First Nations part of your culture. If this keeps up you won't even need to bother trying to understand your Aboriginal ancestry. You have the privilege of looking White. Don't abuse it. You have had the privilege of attending institutions of higher education. Not many First Nations women are afforded that honour. Don't abuse it. Use it to lessen discrimination."

I am beginning to see where Coyote is going with this letter idea. "It's a trick isn't it?" I ask. "The more Eurocentric society recognizes, and focuses on, its own problems, the less it will focus on our First Nations People, leaving us live our own lives in our own way. They have enough problems to solve without trying to civilize us." I laugh at Coyote's cleverness.

Coyote laughs unabashedly at her own cleverness. Her parting words to me ring with the truth. "As a mixed-race person, it is important that you walk softly in both worlds, being careful not to tread on the rights of others. Be respectful towards all who cross your life's path, honour your ancestors and work at making changes towards the betterment of Mother Earth and all the Creator's creatures."

I say, "Nyà-wę", which is Tuscarora for "Thank you Creator for all your gifts."

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Coyote Goes to School

Coyote was once again fed up with running around all day in the hot sun for a few scrawny gophers and rabbits. Dirt up his nose, dirt in his eyes, and what for? Barely a mouthful. Coyote had tried getting food at the supermarket one time like the Human People do but he got the shit kicked out of him for that. So, once again, he went to his brother, Raven, to ask him for advice.

Coyote said, "Raven, there's got to be an easier way to get fed. I tried the supermarket-got beaten up. Tired to get money from welfare but came up against the Devil's Spawn in a K-Mart dress. Nothing's worked so far. You got any other ideas?"

"Well," Raven said thoughtfully, "the White Humans seem pretty well fed and they say that the key to success is a good education. Maybe you could go to school."

"Hmmm." Coyote mused, "maybe I'll try it. Couldn't hurt."

Well, Coyote went off to the city to the university because that's where Raven said adults go to school.

In a few day Coyote was back.

"Well my brother," Raven inquired, "did you get your education?"

"Not exactly," Coyote replied, "education is as hard to get as a welfare cheque. To get an education like the teachers at the university takes at least 10 years-that's a Coyote's entire lifetime-and, in the end, you don't get paid much anyways."

"When I got to the university they asked me what program I was in. I didn't know so they sent me to this guy who told me about the programs. I kinda liked the idea of biology-if I learned more about gophers maybe they'd be easier to catch. I liked the idea of engineering-maybe I could invent a great rabbit trap. But in the end I settled on Native Studies. Now that's something I can understand-I've known those guys for thousands of years, even been one when it suited me."

"So I went to my Introduction to Native Studies course and, can you believe it, the teacher was a white guy? Now how much sense does that make? I saw native people around town-any one of 'em has got to know more about native people than some white guy."

"When I asked this guy what Indian told him the stuff he was saying. He said non-he read it in a book. Then I asked who the Indian was who wrote the book. And he said, it wasn't an Indian, it was a white guy. Then I asked him what Indian the guy who wrote the book learned from and the teach got mad and told me to sit down."

The next day I went to my Indians of North America class. I was really looking forward to meeting all those Indians. And you know what? There was another white guy standing up there and not an Indian in sight. I asked the teacher, "Are we going to visit all the Indians?" He said, No. So I asked him. "How are we going to learn about Indians then?" And he said, just like the other guy, from a book written by a white guy. So I asked him if I could talk to this guy who wrote the book and the teach said, "No, he's dead."

"By then, I was getting pretty confused about this education stuff but I went to my next class-Indian Religions. And guess what? When I went in, there wasn't another white guy standing up at the front of the room-there was a white woman!"

"I sat down and I asked her, 'Are we going to the sweatlodge?' 'No.' 'Sundance?' 'No.' 'Yuwipi?' 'No.' then how are we going to learn-no wait, I know-from a book written by a dead white guy! I'm starting to get the hang of this education business."

"So then I go to my Research Methods class thinking I've got it figured out. In this class the teacher (you've go it-another white guy) said that our research must be ethical, that we must follow the guidelines set out by the university for research on human subjects. The rules are there, my teacher said, to protect the Indians from unscrupulous researchers. Who made these rules I asked-you guessed it-a bunch of white guys. They decided we need protecting and that they were the ones to decide how bet to protect us from them. So I told my teacher that I wanted to interview my father. The teacher said, you've got to ask the ethics review committee for permission. What?! I've got to ask a bunch of white guys for permission to talk to my own dad? That can't be right. I was confused all over again."

"So I sat down and thought about all this for a long time. Finally I figured it out. If white guys teach all the courses about Indians and they teach in the way white people think, then to find Indians teaching the way Indians think, all I had to do was give up Native Studies and join the White Studies program!"

(Harris, 2002, 194-195)
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