TEACHING AND LEARNING FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT

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Dedication

To my Métis ancestors, and the Niitsitapi people whose traditional lands I reside on, and all Indigenous people who call Turtle Island their home. Our shared and individual histories, stories, songs, and knowledge, both past and contemporary, are invaluable. Hand to heart, thank you, to the countless Elders and knowledge keepers that have welcomed me and shared their knowledge and ceremonies with me.

Thank you to my committee members for your efforts, time, and patience working with me.

To my family and friends who helped me persevere along this journey, thank you, all my love.

Abstract

This study examined the primary question of: W*hat characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive to be influential in relation to increasing confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people?* A qualitative research approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews with ten elementary school teachers from a Southern Alberta school division. The study incorporated elements of Indigenous methodology, an interpretivist approach, and thematic analysis as described by Neuman (2014) for data coding. Drawing on relevant literature and frameworks such as the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS), the research emphasizes the profound moral and professional responsibility of educators in effectively teaching and learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foundational knowledge.

The findings reveal significant challenges faced by educators, including fear, pan-Indigeneity, and differing perspectives from colleagues and parents/guardians. Despite these challenges, several key characteristics of professional learning were identified as particularly impactful: collaboration, experiential learning, immediate applicability, credible facilitators, alignment with teacher needs and passions, learning alongside, and the ability to sit in discomfort. These insights highlight the need for school leaders to actively support teachers in building confidence and competence in teaching Indigenous knowledge, while providing clear guidance and resources to help them succeed.

Ethics Statement

Work described in this thesis received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Teaching and Learning Foundational Knowledge with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit”, No. 00125855, 2024.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing and reconciliation have become increasingly important areas of focus for school divisions and educators across Alberta and Canada. The increased engagement for understanding and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit stems partially from the Memorandum of Understanding for First Nation Education in Alberta that states,

> Canada, Alberta, and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta hold a common vision for First Nations students in Alberta where First Nations students are achieving or exceeding the full educational outcomes, levels, and successes of all other students in Alberta. (Government of Alberta, 2010, p. 3)

The phrase *Indigenous ways of knowing* or *foundational knowledge* relates to the multifaceted traditions, values, and beliefs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Reconciliation, in an educational context, is active engagement in educating oneself and others of Indigenous Canadian history and "establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 24). Provincial and federal frameworks that address reconciliation in education such as the "First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework" (Government of Alberta, 2002), the "*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC): *Calls to Action* (CTA)" (Government of Canada, 2015), the "*Leadership Quality Standard*" (LQS) (Alberta Education, 2018a), and the "*Teaching Quality Standard*" (TQS) (Alberta Education, 2018b) have had important implications for school leaders, teachers, and students. These frameworks have made necessary a further inquiry into *professional learning* (PL) strategies that support educators and specifically teachers in walking their journey towards an understanding of foundational knowledge of Indigenous people and action

towards reconciliation. Moreover, strategies that help build awareness, understanding, and knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories and perspectives must be acknowledged and put into practice to advance these efforts.

In addition to federal and provincial frameworks, a prominent motivation for exploring PL related to foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples is the need for increased awareness, understanding, and ability to support Indigenous students to meaningfully engage and have agency within their education. Secondary school data collected from 2004 to 2009 identified "the rate of First Nation graduation at approximately 36% compared to the Canadian graduation rate of 72%" (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). According to the Assembly of First Nations (2011),

> …there are 40 First Nation communities without schools, and there are First Nation communities where children haven't been to school in more than two years. The K-12 completion rate for First Nation students living on-reserve is 49%. First Nation students are more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school. (p. 2)

In addition to these statistics, Alicia Elliott (2019), in her novel *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, brings attention to the disproportionate rates of suicide and depression amongst Indigenous people and indicated that, “suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for Indigenous people under the age of forty-four (Elliott, 2019, p. 8).

Fullan (2015) posits that a moral commitment is required by all educators to address achievement for every student. This is particularly necessary for those students who are disenfranchised by inequities stemming from being part of a minority, being disabled or, in this case, Indigenous. The actualization of this moral imperative requires addressing the systemic inequalities that contribute to greater life challenges and result in educational underachievement.

Educators can no longer articulate a teaching philosophy stating that all children matter and that all students can learn without also addressing underlying and disparate disadvantages. Rather, educators must move towards the reality of continuously working to narrow achievement gaps and improve student achievement (Fullan, 2005).

Professional Learning

PL is an influential process through which teachers can address the moral imperative of increasing their knowledge and confidence of foundational Indigenous knowledge by taking part in a sustained and focused process with the goal of optimizing their students' understandings and success. Decades of PL strategies implemented by educational leaders and teachers have been explored, supported, debated, and put into practice (Timperley, 2007). Inspiration for ongoing inquiry into effective PL characteristics and strategies stems from a common understanding that PL is an essential component in bolstering high-quality educational practice and professional confidence. Teacher confidence as described by Hoy (2000) is a "teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning" (p. 2). A healthy and strong sense of teacher confidence has been said "to encourage individual teachers to make a more effective use of the skills they already have" (Waack, 2018, para. 4). While many factors guide and transform student learning, "it is increasingly clear that what teachers know and are able to do is one of the most important" (Timperley, 2007, p. vii). As Timperley (2007) maintained,

> …teachers are the ones who work directly with students, who translate and shape curricular goals and theoretical ideas into classroom practice, and who shape the environment for learning. Teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions have direct and serious implications for the success of the students they teach. (p. vii)

Timperley's statement supports the assertion that an increased understanding and confidence surrounding foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldview will lead to improved opportunities for students "to learn about the Indigenous people with whom they share the land, and on whose ancestral territories all Canadians currently reside" (Freeman, 2018, para. 2). Shulman (1968) further argued the importance of teachers' continuous participation in PL through his contention that a "person who presumes to teach subject matter to children must demonstrate knowledge of that subject matter as a prerequisite to teaching" (p. 5).

Learning and Teaching Quality Standard/Leadership Quality Standard

As outlined by the TQS, it is the responsibility of teachers to commit to and engage in ongoing PL and strive to enhance their content knowledge, confidence, pedagogy, and practice for the benefit of all students. The LQS outlines the professional expectations that school leaders understand and demonstrate to support the growth of teachers (Alberta Education, 2020). Aptly described within the LQS is a leader's responsibility related to PL in Competency two, Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning (Alberta Education, 2020). Affirmed within this competency is that "a leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching, and learning" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4). Similarly, the TQS "describes the professional expectations for teachers who work directly with students" (Government of Alberta, 2021, para. 4). The TQS describes teachers' responsibility to participate in PL in Competency two when it reinforces that "a teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4). Evidence that school leaders and teachers may be succeeding in realizing the requirements of the LQS and TQS may include engaging in collaborative processes to inform a shared understanding, increased immersion in educational

research, actively perusing opportunities that may "build capacity to support student success in inclusive learning environments," as well as "enhancing understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews, cultural beliefs, languages, and values" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4). In addition, the “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework” (Government of Alberta, 2002) addressed the necessity to "increase and strengthen knowledge and understanding among all Albertans of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governance, history, treaty, and Aboriginal rights, lands, cultures, and languages" (Government of Canada, 2002, p. 3).

PL in the areas of building empathy, acknowledging the need for trauma-informed practice, and embodying restorative practices are additional elements necessary in the work towards reconciliation in addition to understanding and applying foundational knowledge. While acknowledging and appreciating foundational knowledge is essential in walking towards reconciliation and fulfilling professional goals, the pathway is not so clear and requires further exploration. This study attempts to contribute to this exploration through qualitative research with data collected from interviews with teachers from a school division in Southern Alberta. In doing so, Southern Alberta teachers’ understanding and confidence about foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and culture are explored. Additionally, potential PL strategies that may enhance teacher confidence in this context may be discovered.

Statement of the Research Problem

Research suggests that many educators in Alberta have low exposure, awareness, and understanding of foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and culture (Donald, 2009). Many educators face challenges because they are unsure how to approach and embed foundational Indigenous knowledge into their pedagogy, classrooms, and schools in ways that are appropriate, accurate, and respectful. Denomme (2014) contended that

leaders and teachers, pre-service and practicing, have very little to no previous experience learning or teaching about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Another problem identified by Lorenz (2017) is that "teachers may not have been taught or been given the skills and tools necessary in their undergraduate education" (p. 91) to sufficiently embed knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Moreover, teacher hesitance to approach Indigenous topics may be because "although many teachers are themselves highly educated, there is a huge informational gap when it comes to Aboriginal knowledge systems and perspectives" (Donald, 2009, p. 28). This lack of knowledge inhibits teachers' ability "to break the cycle of discrimination within, and outside of, their classrooms" (Pratt, 2017, p. 7). Inquiry into specific PL strategies to "prepare and support educators to meet the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and communities effectively" (Government of Canada, 2002, p. 19) is, therefore, essential. Lack of awareness, confidence, and knowledge regarding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing creates an even bigger issue when considering the implications of the TRC, LQS, and TQS.

The consequences of colonization, Residential schools, and widespread racism and discrimination against Indigenous people are felt far and wide and "for many Indigenous people, experience with Canada's formal education systems has been a traumatic one" (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017, p. 1) resulting in a general lack of trust in the education system. Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous people had their own accepted and traditional education systems that were rooted in the community, in nature, and grounded in a spiritual way of thinking. (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). Today, Canadian formal education systems are run predominately by Eurocentric ideologies (Battiste, 2004). Is it possible for educators to enable and hold safe spaces for

conversations about race without this privileged lens? Can educators learn to be more empathetic and compassionate? How can teachers be supported in bolstering empathy and embodying trauma informed and restorative practices? At the core of these questions lies an acknowledgment of one of the primary sources of the trauma: the experiences of children in residential schools. The next section explores the legacy of Residential schools and their everlasting consequences on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Residential Schools

The legacy of Residential schools is a national tragedy in Canada. Residential schools operated for over 120 years, working to assimilate an estimated 150,000 Indigenous children between 1857 and 1996 (Glover, 2020). The purpose of Residential schools "was to assimilate Indigenous children into white, Christian society" (Glover, 2020, para. 1). Duncan Campbell Scott, referred to by McDougall (2018) as a "poet of Confederation" (para. 1) is often quoted saying "kill the Indian save the child" and let us "get rid of the Indian problem" (para. 1). First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were taken against their will from their families, banned from speaking their languages, and forced to live in appalling conditions. "Thousands died either at school or because of their experiences in the system. Many more remain missing" (Glover, 2020, para. 3). Hanson (2009) reported that within Residential schools' teachers prohibited children from acknowledging their Indigenous heritage and culture or to speak their own languages. Children were severely punished if these, among other, strict rules were broken. Former students from Residential schools have spoken of horrendous abuse at the hands of staff: physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Residential schools systematically undermined First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures across Canada and disrupted families for generations, severing the ties through which Indigenous culture is taught and sustained. Because they were removed from their

families, many children grew up without experiencing a nurturing family life and without the proper model to raise their own families.

> The devastating effects of the Residential schools are far-reaching and continue to have a significant impact on Indigenous communities. Due to the deliberate undertaking of exterminating Indigenous ways of knowing through the Residential school system, these schools are often referred to as tool of genocide. (Hanson, 2020, para. 2)

In addition to these issues, Chief Medical Officer for the Departments of Interior and Indian Affairs, Peter Bryce (1907) revealed that upwards of 25 percent of Residential school children perished from tuberculosis. The many deaths of Indigenous children were a direct result of "poor sanitary conditions, a lack of medical knowledge among school officials, and the ambiguous partnership between church and state for the management of these schools" (Sproule-Jones, 1996, pp. 200-201). Despite the report, complaints made by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families and communities, and the health impacts on children, Residential schools continued to operate under atrocious conditions for another 89 years until the last school in Canada was closed in 1996. Residential schools have resulted in decades of trauma and confusion for many Indigenous people and as an attempt to move forward and reconcile the TRC was introduced.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2008, the Government of Canada publicly apologized to the survivors of Residential schools (Glover, 2020). As an outcome of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (Government of Canada, 2006), "the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history" (Government of Canada, n.d, para. 2), the TRC of Canada was born. The TRC was created in collaboration with "Residential Schools Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, representatives and the parties responsible for creation and operation of the schools: the federal

government and the church bodies" (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d, para. 1). The TRC's directive expressed the need to communicate to all Canadians the truth and stories of Residential school "survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the Residential school experience" (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d, para. 2). The mobilization of the TRC's mandate was made recognizable with the support of community events, the formation of an Indian Residential Schools Survivor Committee, "a Commemoration Initiative that provided funding for activities that honour and pay tribute in a permanent and lasting manner to former Residential school students" (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d, para. 7), as well as the formation of the "94 *Calls to Action"* (CTA).

The CTA articulated the importance and insistence of curriculum development. Call 62 sought an "age-appropriate curriculum on Residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada (TRC, 2015, p. 7). Additionally, Call 63 (TRC, 2015) insisted upon

> …an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of Residential schools, sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history, building student capacity for Intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect, and identifying teacher- training needs relating to the above. (p. 7)

As a result of the CTA, Alberta Education updated the LQS and TQS in 2018 to include a professional responsibility to implement First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives in leadership and teacher practice.

Leadership and Teacher Quality Standards

In 1997, Alberta became the first province to introduce a standard for teachers with the implementation of the *Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS). "Now, alongside a TQS that has been updated to reflect changing times, the province also has implemented the *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) to describe the competencies expected of school leaders and school jurisdiction leaders" (Hare, 2018, para. 4). These standards influence the perceptions and tasks necessary to successfully provide students with first-rate education (Hare, 2018).

For the purpose of this study, Competency five of the LQS (2020) is particularly relevant: "a leader supports the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (p. 6). Similarly, the TQS addresses the roles and responsibilities of Alberta teachers. The TQS articulates competencies within the standard that inform teachers professional practice to provide optimum learning for all children. Competency five of the TQS indicates, "A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). Additionally, competency five holds Alberta teachers accountable for having an "understanding of the historical, social, economic, and political implications of; treaties and agreements with First Nations, legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis, and Residential schools and their legacy" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). Competency five also asserts that teachers ought to use the current curriculum to offer opportunities "for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and a respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences, and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6).

In response to the TRC's recognition of the broken relationships between Indigenous communities and Canadians, school leaders and teachers must undergo what Fullan (2006) called capacity building and deep learning regarding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history in Canada. Doing so is consistent with a moral imperative to ensure optimum learning of all students (Fullan, 2015). The CTA (Government of Canada, 2015) put forth by the TRC (2015) makes clear the need for the inclusion of foundational knowledge that is reinforced in both the LQS (Alberta Education, 2020) and TQS (Alberta Education, 2020). Both documents describe the need to address teachers' learning needs in this area. Supporting teachers in attaining a deeper understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foundational knowledge will require a focus on discovering what kind of opportunities will result in high yield PL as well as an inquiry into building trusting relationships, and trauma informed and restorative practices.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to discover useful and authentic ways in which educators can seek out, facilitate, and engage in profound PL opportunities that specifically support their confidence around foundational knowledge of Indigenous people. The following section addresses specific research questions and how the research was carried out.

The Research

For teachers to strengthen their foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, they must engage in *professional learning* (PL). How do teachers apply foundational Indigenous knowledge when they themselves have limited understanding and experiences with these rich and diverse cultures? What authentic and effective strategies can assist in the process of learning for educators?

Guiding Question

The central question that led this inquiry was, *what characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive to be influential in relation to increasing confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people?* To help answer this question qualitative data was collected and utilized to uncover potential strategies for more influential professional learning (PL) opportunities for educators in Alberta to enhance capacity and confidence in TQS Competency five.

Research Method

With the permission of the Superintendent, all elementary teachers in a Southern Alberta school division were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview related to the research question. Interested participants names were mixed, and a draw was made for participants. Semi-structured interviews or conversations as Margaret Kovach (2021) called them, were conducted with each selected participant. Kovach (2021) indicated that within Indigenous methodology, story is a "means for knowing. Conversation is a non-structured method of gathering knowledge (p. 56). The conversations focused primarily on teachers' perspectives and participants were encouraged to share their experiences, stories, reflections, and perceptions of influential characteristics of PL that they perceive to bolster their own and others confidence in foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and worldviews.

A qualitative method was employed in this study as the qualitative method focuses on understanding interpretations and perspectives of people "at a particular point in time and in a particular context" (Sharan, 2002, p. 4). The perspectives and data discovered through this study are of grave importance for the design and facilitation of authentic and influential PL experiences

for educators. Specific and detailed aspects of this methodology will be further described in chapter three.

Researchers' Perspectives and Positionality

Within Indigenous methodologies, which Margaret Kovach (2021) recounted in detail in her book, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, self-situating oneself in research is essential as "introducing ourselves shows respect to the ancestors and allows community to locate us through cues such as name, kinship, culture, and territory" (p. 146). Moreover, Kovach (2021) asserted self-situating ourselves and professing our positionality greatly influences our research as "the stories of both the researcher and the research participants are reflected in research" (p. 26). Therefore, according to Kovach (2021), self-situating requires considering the motivation and purpose of research and necessitates sharing these details.

I am a Métis woman and an educator. My paternal grandmother, Léona (Schmidt) Morrow, was born in 1920 in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, and attended St. Michael's Indian Residential School. Successfully assimilated, she was prohibited from practicing and learning her traditional ways of knowing and, as such, could not and dare not teach her children or grandchildren. Positioning myself within this identity and history is essential for this research in honouring my ancestors and acknowledging my lived experience as experiential knowing is held in high regard within Indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2021). My journey has been and will continue to be a winding river with ebbs and flows, and I will continue to proudly and persistently engage and advocate with whom I share this space. The land on which I live and where this research will be carried out is Treaty 7 Territory—the home and land of the Siksikaitsitapi, The Blackfoot people. I honour and appreciate the many Nittsitapi elders,

colleagues, and friends who have shared their knowledge and teachings with me. This land, since the early 1800's has also been the homeland of the Métis.

The motivation for this research is multifaceted. Professional learning in education, as previously indicated, is essential for effective teaching and learning. There exists a profound professional and moral responsibility for educators to acknowledge and be receptive to the after-effects of generations of racism, Residential schools, the recommendations of the TRC, and the implications of the LQS and TQS documents. As a practicing teacher in Alberta, and an Indigenous woman, I believe it is my duty, my call to action, to share knowledge, teach all students practical and social-emotional skills, and model how to live with one another in ways that are respectful and compassionate. It is abundantly clear to most people that Indigenous communities struggle with racism which is the direct result of a lack of awareness, empathy, and compassion of non-Indigenous people. I ask myself how, as a Métis woman and an educator, can I contribute to moving this work forward authentically and effectively?

Being Métis is a claim that today I make proudly and with a sincere sense of identity and pride. Admittedly, this has not always been the case. Growing up in downtown Calgary, I was exposed to stereotypical ideology regarding Indigenous peoples, and I do not recall learning about the true history or culture of the diverse Indigenous communities within our province or country. The schools I attended were far from diverse. While playing in playgrounds with my peers, I had no idea that Indigenous children, for generations, had attended Residential schools and were still attending until 1996. I had no knowledge that my own family felt they had no choice but to hide who they were as they became successfully assimilated into Western society. In hindsight, it seems as though me, my peers, and countless other Albertans and Canadians grew up in an alternate universe, completely sheltered from the realities of the history and trauma

caused by overt racism, discrimination, and colonization. We were taught that people who appeared to have strayed from the norm were vagrants, addicts, ill, or less than. These individuals were used as cautionary tales, fear tactics to do as we were told, do well in school, and live within societies' rules and expectations. We generally, were not taught empathy, compassion, to seek first to understand, or even think critically about why we were seeing some Indigenous people within these circumstances.

I discovered I was Métis as my father lay in the hospital when I was 17. He had struggled with alcohol and drug addiction for years, and it finally had taken its toll on his body. I was given a sizeable red duo-tang containing years of information regarding my family history and Métis roots with his passing. When I learned of my Métis heritage, like my grandmother, I felt it had to be hidden. I share this with discomfort but feel it is important to share, nonetheless. My grandmother did not heavily discuss her Métis heritage and culture with her six children. Prior to and during the 1950's when my father was born,

> …the Métis were in a precarious state. Many had begun to move into the cities after living on road allowances in makeshift squatting communities. The Métis were part of the larger Indigenous migration to the cities, since reserves and road allowance communities provided few opportunities…racism in the cities meant Indigenous people struggled to find housing, jobs, and educational and social services. (Canadian Geographic, 2021, para. 2)

She chose to keep her culture hidden to protect her children from societal struggles, judgement, and racism. The only story I have been told was partial and had to do with my grandmother sitting on a buffalo robe as a child. She felt it was best for her own children to be hidden from their culture and ancestry, I figured I would follow suit. Due to the continuous and widespread

discrimination against Indigenous people in Canada, I felt I could not be proud of my identity. Years afterward, I read a novel written by Beatrice Culleton (1983), *In Search of April Raintree*, and I'm saddened to say that many passages in this novel were deeply relatable in the discovery of my heritage. For example, Cheryl, the novel's main character, expressed her hesitance and her fear of being Métis stating that,

> …what I'd read and what I'd heard indicated that Métis and Indians were inclined to be alcoholics. That's because they were weak people. Oh, and they were put down more than anyone else...being a half-breed meant being poor and dirty. It meant being weak. (p. 49)

It was not until my first few years of my undergraduate degree that I began to question these misguided thoughts, and I vowed to learn more and consider my culture and ancestry as a blessing and a privilege. I chose to see this time as an opportunity to learn what others before me could not and revitalize my Métis identity in my own life, to increase my own understanding of Indigenous spirituality and worldviews and began to raise awareness for Indigenous communities and educate others.

I did not have the opportunity to learn traditional Métis ways of knowing from my family. My grandmother, through colonization, became a devout Catholic and was forced to put aside her and her family's Métis values, traditions, and beliefs. Léona, my grandmother, felt she was unable to freely celebrate or express her Indigeneity and, as a result, did not raise her children as Métis. Her children and grandchildren are now working to revitalize and celebrate our unique family history and Métis roots. The more I learn, the prouder I become, and the more I uncover myself. Through exploring the red duo-tang, I discovered that I had relatives who played significant roles in the Métis community during the 1800s, roles worth acknowledging and being proud of. In 1858, my great-great grandfather Louis Schmidt was sent with Louis Riel

and Daniel McDougall to pursue their education in Québec. In 1869, Louis Riel asked Louis Schmidt to join him in St. Vital, and Schmidt accepted. They discussed the changes taking place in the Red River and committed themselves to becoming more involved in public affairs. When Riel became leader, Louis Schmidt became his secretary. In 1870, when the English residents agreed to join the French in creating the Provisional Government of Red River, Schmidt was elected Assistant Secretary of State. He was also elected MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for St. Boniface-Ouest. My great-great-grandfather was passionate about education and dedicated to the French language. He criticized Premier John Norquay for his attempts to eliminate official texts' publication in French and advocated for improved allocation for school funds. Louis Schmidt never denied that he was Métis and took great pride in his ancestry and culture.

I was required to complete one course related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives throughout my undergraduate degree. This course was highly focused on general and stereotypical issues in Indigenous communities, such as addictions and other health issues. While somewhat beneficial, this course did not adequately prepare me to be confident in implementing foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit into my pedagogy, nor did it improve my understanding of legislation such as the Indian Act, Residential schools, or the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and Alberta. Over the last several years, I have been seeking out PL opportunities relating specifically to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing to strengthen my knowledge and positively influence my pedagogy. I have collected resources, practiced skills useful in building trusting relationships, and shared new knowledge with many colleagues. I have been actively involved with the Lethbridge and Area Métis Association and am passionate about Indigenous Education, reconciliation, and specifically

supporting educators to engage in and access PL that positively influences awareness and understanding of foundational knowledge. In my position in a Southern Alberta school division, it is my mandate to assist elementary teachers in informing their pedagogy and confidence with foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and assisting in building bridges between their respective perspectives and the Alberta curriculum. There are many access points within the curriculum to connect to foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. However, I have seen firsthand how a lack of knowledge, confidence, and understanding of Indigenous history, perspectives, and current realities impact the ability of teachers to embed elements of foundational knowledge effectively and authentically into their classrooms.

I acknowledge my own privilege and relate closely with a quote from Elliott's (2019) novel, *A Mind Spread on the Ground* as a light skinned Indigenous person, I have a certain responsibility to other Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people.

> My white-passing privilege gives me a complex responsibility. I must use my white privilege like an undercover agent would use a good disguise, leveraging my lightness to drop the guard of non-Indigenous people around me, then slowly, methodically picking at their inherited colonialism, forcing them to re-evaluate their own complicity in a way they may not have if they could easily identify me as Indigenous. (p. 22)

This research is motivated partially by my desire for revitalization and recognition of my Métis traditional ways of knowing but also for the recognition and acknowledgement of all Indigenous groups who are here today and those who have traditionally walked this land before us with respect and compassion.

Organization of Thesis

Following the introduction, chapter two presents a literature review that forms the conceptual frameworks of this study, including Foundational Knowledge and Assimilation through Education. The literature review also explores what researchers have discussed pertaining to the concept of reconciliation, trauma informed teaching and restorative practice. In chapter three, research methodology is discussed, including the rationale for the method used throughout the research period and an analysis of discoveries is offered. Following research methods, a review of the research problem occurs, and the results and findings of the research are then discussed and interpreted. In conclusion, the findings are expressed with practical and theoretical implications for leaders and teachers. Recommendations and future directions are addressed, focusing on teacher practice and further research that may need to be completed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two offers insight into the language used within the thesis and a summary of literature necessary to understand PL for educators specifically engaging in Competency Five (Alberta Education, 2020) and Indigenous foundational knowledge. Accompanying the key terms are literature review summaries beginning with Foundational Indigenous Knowledge and its importance in understanding and taking appropriate action in this work. The key terms section is followed by an overview of Assimilation through Education, including the Residential school system. Next, the concepts of Trauma Informed and Restorative Practices are described and how they are essential in building trusting and supportive relationships with students and coworkers. Lastly, a synopsis of Professional Learning and Effective Leadership of Learning are presented.

Key Terms

Different terms and concepts are understood as individuals perceive them through various lenses, experiences, and perspectives. As a result, the following terms are offered with definitions as they are to be understood and used for this thesis.

Foundational Indigenous Knowledge

Foundational Indigenous Knowledge broadly refers to and "recognizes the beautiful complexity and diversity of Indigenous ways of learning" (Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2022, para. 1) teaching and living. While Indigenous knowledge amongst a multitude of communities is vastly diverse, many similarities exist connecting all Indigenous people. According to Greenwood (2007)

> the foundations of Indigeneity are these: values that privilege the interrelationships among the spiritual, the natural, and the self; a sacred orientation to place and space; a

> fluidity of knowledge exchange between past, present, and future; and an honoring of language orality as an important means of knowledge transmission. (p. 2)

This research also takes into consideration Leroy Little Bear's (2000) thoughts regarding Indigenous foundational knowledge and that amongst Indigenous people far and wide, "all things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion. In this realm of energy and spirit, interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance" (p. 1).

Pan-Indigeneity

This research uses a definition Darrell Dennis wrote in his 2014 novel, *Peace Pipe Dreams*, for pan-Indigeneity. Darrell (2014) described pan-Indigeneity as essentially an amalgamation of Indigenous cultures to "arrive at one all-encompassing Indian" (p. 66). In addition, this research considers the conclusions of Vowel (2011) that pan-Indigenous theory is harmful, especially to those who are attempting to be reunited with their specific culture, as they are "potentially fed a culture that isn't theirs. It devalues and obscures their own traditions" (para. 12). Pan-Indigeneity is a colonial construct of Indigeneity that gives authorization to an oversimplified and stereotypical view of Indigenous knowledge and people (McGuinne, 2014, para. 2).

Animacy

“Animacy, in quite a few languages, is the classification of nouns, and the things these words refer, based on the degree to which they are “alive” or animate” (Higa, 2022, para. 1). In English, “we reserve the pronouns of personhood for humans— “he,” “she,” “they”—and not for animals, plants, and landscapes. Yet in many of America’s indigenous languages, such barriers are dissolved” (Kimmerer, 2017, para. 1). Animacy is an integral element in Indigenous epistemology (Kimmerer, 2013) and is further discussed below.

Assimilation through Education

Assimilation is “the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society” (Pauls, 2008, para. 1). Assimilation of Indigenous people into settler society was the primary goal of the government and their main method of assimilation was through educational institutions (Miller, 2012). To understand Indigenous history in relation to assimilation is to know that it began long before Residential schools. Assimilation through education was widely implemented for over 120 years through Day Schools, followed by Industrial Schools, Boarding Schools, and then Residential Schools (Prete, 2021).

Treaty 7

Treaty 7 is one of the treaties signed between the Canadian government and the First Nations. Treaty 7 was "signed on 22 September 1877 by five First Nations: The Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee)" (Tesar, 2016, para. 1). The singing of Treaty 7 has been a contentious topic, "on the part of the chiefs, their agenda was very specific: they wanted the encroachment of newcomers controlled, they wanted the buffalo protected, and they wanted the American traders controlled" (Hildebrandt, 1996, p. 25). To the First Nations, the signing of Treaty 7 was "a peace treaty rather than a land surrender" (Hildebrandt, 1996, p. xi) and was intended "to safeguard their territory and to protect their way of life" (Hildebrandt, 1996, p. 25). On the other hand, the Canadian government was motivated to sign Treaty with the Plains First Nations to avoid further threats to settlement if no treaty was reached and mounting pressure from missionaries and White traders (Hildebrandt, 1996). The government's intentions were "to extinguish all Indian title to land and to facilitate settlement of the Northwest by placing Indians on reserves" (Hildebrandt, 1996, p. 25). These

intentions were not communicated or translated clearly, and the First Nations groups signed with the understanding of promises. "Most prominent and repeated were promises of money, unrestricted hunting, education, and medical assistance" (Hildebrandt, 1996, p. 120). While there are many details regarding Treaty 7, what is most relevant for this research is to understand and acknowledge that Treaty 7 encompasses the agreement made between the Plains First Nations and the Canadian government and acknowledges the traditional lands of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee) Nations (Hildebrandt, 1996).

Blackfoot Confederacy

Niitsitapi, meaning “the real people,” or Siksikaitsitapi, meaning “Blackfoot-speaking real people” (Dempsey, 2010, para. 1), comprise the Blackfoot Confederacy. Four nations make up the Siksikaitsitapi, “three of these - the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Kainai (Blood), and the Piikani (North Piegan) reside in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia in Canada. The fourth nation, the Aamskapi Pikuni (Southern Piegan), is in the United States” (The Alberta Foundation of the Arts, n.d, p.1) in Montana.

Métis People

The Métis have “insisted on its existence as an Indigenous people and a nation” (Teillet, 2019, p. x111) for over two hundred years. **“**As descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada, the Métis evolved into a new and distinct Indigenous group. The federal *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes the Métis as one of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, along with First Nations and Inuit” (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 1). Métis people have been in what is now known as Alberta since the early 1800’s (Métis Nation of Alberta, 2018).

Inuit

"Inuit are Indigenous people of the Arctic. The word Inuit means "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk" (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 1).

Doctrine of Discovery

"The Doctrine of Discovery is a legal principle that European countries extinguished Indigenous sovereignty and acquired the underlying title to Indigenous Peoples' lands upon 'discovering' them" (McIver, 2022, para. 1).

LQS Competency Five

The leadership quality standard is one of the professional practice standards that helps to identify "the competency requirements for members of a profession" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 1). "The Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) outlines the professional expectations that principals and school jurisdiction leaders must demonstrate to create the conditions under which teachers can do their best work" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 3). There are nine competencies included within the LQS. This research references LQS Competency five consistently. Competency five indicates that "a leader supports the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4).

TQS Competency Five

"The Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) describes the professional expectations for teachers who work directly with students" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 3). There are six teaching competencies outlined in the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2020). This research primarily references competency five, which indicates, "A teacher develops and applies

foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Government of Alberta, 2020, p. 7).

Colonialism

In North America, colonialism occurred when European settlers attempted to assimilate and control Indigenous people. "Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another" (Kohn, 2022, para. 1). In Canada, Colonialism can be perceived as "Indigenous peoples' forced disconnection from land, culture, and community by another group. It has its roots in Canada's history, but it is alive and well today, too (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 1).

Truth and Reconciliation

Merriam-Webster dictionary (2022) defines truth as "the body of real things, events, and facts" (para. 1). The facts and events that are considered within this research are the history and mistreatment of Indigenous people in Canada, including the legacy of Residential schools. "The traditional lands, practices, values, cultures, languages, systems and understandings of Indigenous Peoples have been systematically attacked, dismantled and destroyed at the hands of the Canadian state" (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2018, para 2).

Reconciliation, according to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), occurs in "a situation in which two people or groups of people become friendly again after they have argued" and is "the process of making two opposite beliefs, ideas, or situations agree" (p. 1). In Canada, Reconciliation relates specifically to the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous people (Sterritt, 2020). As explained by Sterritt (2020),

> The term has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples.

> Reconciliation also refers to efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization, such as residential schools. (para. 1)

Truth and Reconciliation is both concept and action. Discovering the truth about the treatment and history of Indigenous people is primary. Reconciliation is the continuous action, the change that follows the discovery of the truth.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2007, as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC) was established (Government of Canada, 2022). "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences" (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 1). The TRC facilitated events across Canada to educate the public about Residential schools and to raise awareness. Additionally, the TRC created a detailed record of the Residential school system, submitted a final report, and created 94 "calls to action to further reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 5).

Trauma Informed Practices

Trauma-informed practice is a "strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of Trauma. It emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment" (Government of British Columbia, n.d, para. 2). According to the Government of Alberta, trauma-informed practice, also known as "trauma-sensitive practice or safe and supportive schools, creates a shared understanding and common language about how to create welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools" (Government of

Alberta, 2022, para. 1). Trauma-informed practices focus on building supportive relationships and environments where people feel accepted, safe, understood, and supported (Government of Alberta, 2022). In addition, trauma-informed practices provide teachers with the skills and abilities necessary to see challenging behaviors as communication instead of ill intent and respond to them in a way that maintains student pride, safety, and care (De Lapp, 2021).\

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices go hand in hand with trauma-informed practices. Restorative practices are "a set of strategies that can transform learning environments and help school staff respond more effectively to unacceptable behaviour" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 1). Restorative practices stem from the field of restorative justice and emphasize repairing "the harm done to people and relationships, rather than punishing people" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 2). "Though newer to the social sciences, restorative practices have deep roots within indigenous communities throughout the world" (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2022, para. 3). Restorative practices have been favoured as described by Ferlazzo (2020) for their "strength in their ability to empower students to learn from unacceptable choices, to understand their impact, and to grow personally in their ability to make more sound decisions and resolve problems" (para. 6). Many benefits can result from implementing restorative practices in teacher pedagogy as "restorative practice can:

- Reduce social barriers to learning
- Engage more students
- Create a context for understanding and valuing diversity
- Nurture a sense of belonging
- Promote positive mental health" (Government of Alberta, 2022, para. 3).

Professional Learning

For this research, professional learning is understood as a process in which teachers continuously build upon their knowledge and professional capacity through learning engagements to effectively support student learning needs (Washington State Legislature, 2022). In Alberta, professional learning is described as "deepening the understanding and applying the learning to support implementation of professional practice" (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2022, para. 3). Professional learning in Alberta is a professional obligation, and "all teachers, including education leaders, have primary responsibility for their professional growth. A teacher's professional growth plan should articulate strategies for strengthening his or her professional practice" (Government of Alberta, 2010, p. 8). For the purposes of this research, professional learning is discussed explicitly in relation to Indigenous Foundational Knowledge.

Professional Development

Professional development "happens to teachers" (Scherff, 2018, para. 3). The word development "evokes images of what someone does to someone else: develop them. In education, professional development has, in fact, often been what someone does to others" (Easton, 2008, p. 755). Professional development often includes passive seminars and workshops resulting in teachers becoming disengaged (Western Governors University, 2014).

Effective Leadership of Learning

Many theories of Educational Leadership influence decision-making and a leader's philosophy about leading professional learning. Effective leadership of learning refers to the successful practices used by leaders to foster a school and work environment that is as safe and accessible for teachers to learn as it is for students (Leithwood, 2004) The practices further

explored in this thesis specifically support teachers' learning in the area of Foundational Indigenous Knowledge.

Andragogy

Andragogy is "defined as the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles,1980, p. 43). Andragogy operates under the assumptions that "as individuals mature:

1. Their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being.
2. They accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning. (Knowles, 1980, p. 44-45)

Review of Literature: Foundational Indigenous Knowledge

One may not ever truly come to know the intricacies of *Foundational Indigenous Knowledge* (FIK) as the histories of Indigenous peoples predate our country's founding and so much of it resides within an oral tradition. Nonetheless, Alberta teachers are being called to action to increase their understanding and capacity to teach about these foundational ways to all students. To begin to understand and learn about FIK, a discussion of the Indigenous worldview is necessary. Nelson (2004) explained that "a culture's worldview evolves from its history, which is the collective experiences of the people within that culture over all the years of its existence" (p. 66-70). Additionally,

> …a worldview pertains to an individual, group, or society. Overall, a worldview is a set of beliefs and values that are honoured and held by a number of people. A worldview includes how the person or group interacts with the world around them, including land, animals, and people. (Teaching Treaties, 2013, p.1)

Passing on knowledge from person to person is essential in ensuring the survival and continuation of worldviews within communities. It is the Indigenous way to pass down traditions and knowledge orally and through storytelling.

When considering the Indigenous worldview Greenwood (2007) suggested,

> …the foundations of Indigeneity are these: values that privilege the interrelationships among the spiritual, the natural, and the self; a sacred orientation to place and space; a fluidity of knowledge exchange between past, present, and future; and an honoring of language orality as an important means of knowledge transmission. (p. 2)

In addition, Dr. Leroy Little Bear asserted that within Indigenous philosophy, "existence consists of energy. All things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion. In this realm of energy and spirit, interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 1).

Essential to this work is to acknowledge that “despite the ravages of colonialism, every Indigenous nation across the country, each with its own distinctive culture and language, has kept its legal traditions and peacemaking practices alive in its communities” (TRC, 2018, p. 17). Caution is required so as not to speak of foundational ways of knowing as if they are non-existent in the world of today or simply outdated, as this is not the case. These articulations offer a glimpse into the world of Indigenous knowledges, yet caution is also offered as to not to generalize this information and apply it all to every Indigenous group. Generalizing Indigenous knowledge is also understood as Pan-Indigeneity, which can be harmful to many.

Pan-Indigeneity

Coming to know foundational Indigenous knowledge is undoubtedly influenced by the group being engaged with and the geographical location in which the group is situated. It would

be naive to think every Indigenous group and community across the country shares the same traditional knowledge and beliefs. This naivety can be understood as pan-Indigeneity. Darrell Dennis, in his 2014 novel, *Peace Pipe Dreams,* described pan-Indigeneity as essentially an amalgamation of Indigenous cultures in efforts to "arrive at one all-encompassing Indian. This is why you often see movies where a tribe is wearing the wrong ceremonial wardrobe for their people or are practicing traditions that didn't exist in their culture" (p. 66). Dennis described harmful elements of pan-Indigeneity, whereas Vowel (2011) reported a few possible benefits.

> If you've ever been to an urban ceremony, you are probably used to hearing about the medicine wheel, about Turtle Island, the grandfathers, the Creator, and so on. You may hear about a woman's moon-time, tobacco offerings, burning sage or sweetgrass or cedar when smudging. There is a common 'lingo' at play that is easily picked up as being common to all aboriginal peoples, regardless of which nation you are actually from. This 'lingo' can help create a sense of community and can make you feel like you are a part of something legitimate and valuable. (para. 2)

In addition, when groups of Indigenous people come together, alliances are more likely to form, and advocacy for Indigenous communities as a result becomes more robust with a more unified voice (Vowel, 2011). "Particularly in an urban context where there can be people from many different native communities, it is difficult to know whose traditions should be represented. There is a need to be inclusive" (Vowel, 2011, para. 6). Vowel (2011) did conclude, however, that pan-Indigenous theory is harmful, especially to those who are attempting to be reunited with their specific culture, as they are “potentially fed a culture that isn't theirs. It devalues and obscures their own traditions" (para. 12).

Overall, pan-Indigeneity is unfavorable as it undermines countless Indigenous peoples' unique history, diversity, culture, and knowledge. This "colonial understanding of indigeneity allows for a simplified stereotypical uniformity to become the norm when discussing" (McGuinne, 2014, para. 2) Indigenous peoples. "There is no single worldview common to all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals; however, it is possible to identify several similarities between many First peoples' cultures" (Nelson, 2004, pp. 66-70). A similarity observed in several Indigenous knowledge systems is the concept of animacy.

Animacy

Indigenous worldviews are deeply rooted in the concept of animacy. Collins dictionary (2022) defined animacy as “the state of being alive and animate” (para. 1). Things in nature such as rocks, trees, plants, mountains, rivers, lakes, fire, wind, and places are animate; they all have spirit and purpose and are animate within Indigenous worldview. In contrast, Euro-Canadian culture separates the living and non-living and, as a result, sees things, objects in nature, as less than and under their control. Robbin Wall Kimmerer, in her 2013 novel, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* presents a beautiful explanation of the language of animacy.

> A bay is a noun only if water is dead. When bay is a noun, it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores and contained by the word. But the verb, to be a bay, releases the water from the bondage and lets it live. 'To be a bay' holds the wonder that, for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing with cedar roots and a flock of baby mergansers. Because it could do otherwise- become a stream or an ocean or a waterfall, and there are verbs for that too. To be a hill, to be a sandy beach, to be a Saturday, all are possible verbs in a world where everything is alive. (p. 55)

Children are not born knowing what is alive and what is not. What has spirit and what does not. They are socialized through exposure to teachings and experiences which are heavily influenced by their parents' and caregivers' perspectives and worldviews (Laible, 2018). "Our toddlers speak of plants and animals as if they were people until we teach them not to" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 57). In Indigenous worldview, "human beings are seen as just one element in the greater circle of unity with all Creation. Understanding this relationship is foundational to learning one's place in the world" (Madjidi, 2008, p. 160). This way of life sees humans and the surrounding environment living harmoniously, not separately. Embedded within the concept of animacy is the notion that everything is interconnected, which is in and of itself a way we can begin to understand Indigenous perspectives.

Interconnectedness

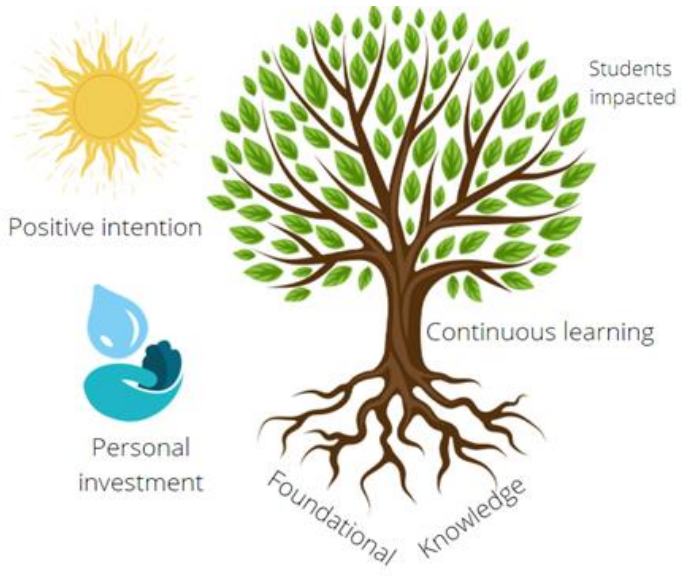
The Executive Director of The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Cindy Blackstock (2007), identified four weaving dimensions of knowledge that are common in Indigenous communities, "emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical" (p. 4). While academic knowledge is valued among Indigenous communities, the focus of education is holistic and considers the whole child, including specifically these four dimensions. "Self-awareness, emotional growth, social growth, and spiritual development are also valued" (Antoine, n.d, p. 2). Blackstock’s four quadrants are often symbolized within the Medicine Wheel. However, it is important to note not all Indigenous groups identify the same way with the medicine wheel – the caution being, to watch out for that pan-Indigenous perspective.

Kainai Board of Education (2004) compared Euro-Canadian and First Nations worldviews and offered a visual representation indicating that a circle represents a First Nations worldview. In contrast, a line best represents the Euro-Canadian worldview. "The circular First

Nations worldview focuses on connections between all things, including the visible physical world and the invisible spiritual world. It sees time as always in a cycle of renewal that links past and present and future" (p. 66-67). In opposition, a linear worldview such as that of Euro-Canadians, is hierarchical and categorizes places, people, and things separately. A Euro-Canadian worldview has "separations between elements of existence (spiritual and material, life and death, animal and human, living and non-living)" (Nelson, 2004, p. 66-67). A tree can also represent the interconnectedness of the Indigenous worldview (see Figure 1). The tree itself would not survive if any other elements (i.e., sunlight, water, roots, trunk, leaves) were absent - everything is interconnected and of equal significance (Jewison, 2022).

Figure 1

Foundational Knowledge Tree



Note. Retrieved from Indigenizing Literacy (Jewison, 2022).

Traditionally, European ideologies are based on scientific facts while Blackfoot knowledge occurs from interacting with the natural environment and all the opportunities it provides for its people and its teachings it has to offer (Bastien, 2004). Dr. Leroy Little Bear (2020) expressed that within Indigenous epistemology,

> …the idea of all things being in constant motion or flux leads to a holistic and cyclical view of the world. If everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns. For instance, the cosmic cycles are in constant motion, but they have regular patterns that result in recurrences such as the seasons of the year, the migration of the animals, renewal ceremonies, songs, and stories. Constant motion, as manifested in cyclical or repetitive patterns, emphasizes process as opposed to product. (p. 1)

The interconnectedness of the physical world is an element of the Indigenous worldview that is present in a myriad of legends and stories found throughout various communities. This interconnectedness has resulted in many Indigenous people having an exceptionally strong personal connection to the land and physical world around them.

Indigenous communities were traditionally built on cooperation and constructive collaboration, as their daily lives depended on it. Many tasks for many people, and as Katz (2018) indicated,

> …your membership in a clan defined what role was expected of you, and your community counted on you to serve the greater good of the collective. Obligation was to the community over oneself. This was not thought of self-sacrifice, but rather that 'there is no me without the collective.' (p. 23)

Additionally, ancestral ties are upheld and communicated from generation to generation. These ties “teach youth a respect for Elders and lineage, and in turn provide a sense of connectedness across time” (Katz, 2018, p. 25).

Extending the concept of interconnectedness within Indigenous worldview an exploration of the roles played by extended family in raising children are required. According to Cajete (2017)

> …parenting was actively undertaken by all the adult members of a child’s extended family, clan, and tribe. All adults were considered teachers, and any adult member of a group could guide, discipline, or otherwise play a direct role in “educating” a child. (p. 1)

There also exists a great depth of interconnectedness between people and animals. Legge (2017) discussed animals within Indigenous epistemologies and concluded that animals are integral as they are sources of valuable, observable lessons, are crucial in ceremonies, and are historically significant. Stories about the world and animals teach many lessons, and these lessons are often passed on orally through the tradition of storytelling.

Oral tradition

A deep understanding of foundational Indigenous knowledge can only be accomplished through true intention and investment of time in people and stories. One way to attempt this is through the exploration of the oral tradition. For time immemorial, Indigenous communities have relied primarily "on the oral transmission of stories, histories, lessons, and other knowledge to maintain a historical record and sustain their cultures identities" (Hanson, 2009, para. 1). Sharing stories can occur through various mediums, including but not limited to oral language, song lyrics, drumming, or even drawings, otherwise known as pictographs (Alberta Regional Consortia, 2022). Bastien (2004) professed that it is through the oral tradition that children learn

their relationships within the world, and the Indigenous "theory of knowledge is found in the sacred stories that are the living knowledge of the people" (p.104). Ball (2009) complemented Bastien's perspective in stating, "language is central to how children gain access to cultural knowledge and learn to participate within their cultural communities" (p. 22). Bastien (2004) also argued that "oral tradition is the medium through which tribal people enter into relationships" (p.139-140) with the world. The wisdom in these stories represents a collection of knowledge accumulated for centuries and must be continuously passed down to each generation (Bastian, 2004). According to Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2014), knowledge concerning creation, connection to the land, history, ecological information, language, and culture are all retained within stories. Storytelling was the primary method of knowledge transference. "The sound, the meaning, and the relationships conveyed in the spoken word manifest the very essence of Indigenous knowledge in a way that the written word cannot" (Greenwood, 2005, p. 2). Storytelling must be done correctly and carefully, engaging the audience, and maintaining the validity of the story's lesson. Stories are often told by a specific person who has been acknowledged for holding the wisdom of the story (Hansen, 2009).

> Notwithstanding the importance of accuracy, oral narratives often present variations—subtle or otherwise—each time they are told. Narrators may adjust a story variations—subtle or otherwise—each time they are told. Narrators may adjust a story to place it in context, to emphasize of the story or to present a lesson in a new light, among other reasons. Through multiple telling's, a story is fleshed out, creating a broader, more comprehensive narrative. Should listeners ever recount the narrative elsewhere, they would it reflect their understandings of events and to better apply the story to its present context. (Hansen, 2009, para. 7)

In his 2003 novel, *The Truth about Stories,* Thomas King warned to expect stories to have slight changes in detail, depending on the storyteller. Occasionally, the storyteller is different, their voice, their pace, the order in which the events unfold is different. Yet, regardless of the minute changes, King (2003) insisted when discussing a particular creation story that "in all the telling's of all the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle's back. And the turtle never swims away" (p. 31). We learn here that regardless of slight exaggerations or changes in details the core elements of a story stay the same.

The above section only begins to scratch the surface of Indigenous perspectives, traditions, and ways of life. When considering the later there exists a clear juxtaposition between Indigenous and Euro-Canadian worldviews. These differences were seen by European settlers as disadvantages and problems that needed to be eradicated. The Canadian government vowed to assimilate Indigenous people into mainstream society, and they did so primarily through various forms of education**.**

Literature Review: Assimilation Through Education

The tensions between Eurocentric and Indigenous epistemologies "can be traced back to 'first contact,' meaning the moments in which colonial and Aboriginal cultures collided" (Restoule, 2008, p. 156). Hanson (2020) stated,

> The churches and European settlers brought with them the assumption that their own civilization was the pinnacle of human achievement. They interpreted the socio-cultural differences between themselves and Indigenous Peoples as "proof" that Canada's first inhabitants were ignorant, savage, and—like children—in need of guidance. They felt the need to "civilize" Indigenous Peoples. Education became the primary means to this end. (para. 4)

Government policies included the aggressive assimilation of Indigenous people long before Residential schools were made compulsory. Since before the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877, Indigenous children of southern Alberta were subjected to assimilation through formal education (Prete, 2021). Day schools, Industrial schools, Boarding schools, and Residential Schools were among the educational institutions Indigenous children were exposed to. Below, a brief explanation of each of these educational institutions, beginning with Day schools is explored.

Day Schools

Over 700 Indian Day Schools were run across Canada by the Roman Catholic, United, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches (McGill, 2022). “Day classes initially began as a component of mission work on First Nations reserves and were held in missionary homes, churches, or in a separate school room or house” (United Church of Canada Archives, 2020). Children who attended Day Schools could return to their homes in the evenings as these schools were built on reserves (Prete, 2021). Dr. Tiffany Prete (2021) reported that the Blood Tribe had nine Day Schools for 15 clans, and the schools were situated in areas where the population of children was highest. The curriculum in these schools had a rigid focus on teaching Religion, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic (Prete, 2021). However, because children could return home at night and continue to live their traditional ways, the church and government felt their goal of assimilation was not being achieved fast enough and determined a different form of education should be introduced. These new educational institutions were known as Industrial Schools (Prete, 2021).

Industrial Schools

Established in the mid 1880’s, Industrial schools “aimed at a major transformation of western Indian society by means of by assimilating children in classrooms, chapels, shops, and

farms" (Miller, 1997, p. 1) and "were intended to prepare First Nations people for integration into Canadian society" (TRC, 2018, p. 57). "Nicholas Davin, a Regina newspaper editor and the M.P. for Assiniboia West, concluded that Industrial schools in which children learned a trade and which were similar to those in the United States would be appropriate and useful in the West" (Pettit, 2016, p.?). Unlike Day schools, Industrial schools were built miles away, so children were obligated to live away from their homes (Prete, 2021).

> Red Deer was the first Methodist Industrial Institute in what would become the province of Alberta. It was built at a great distance from the communities it was meant to serve—the signing Cree and Saulteaux nations of Treaty 6, who lived around and north of Edmonton. Located five kilometres west of Red Deer, the nearest reserve was 65 kilometres away. This distance contributed to the school's eventual demise, since the Edmonton, Hobbema, and Saddle Lake First Nations preferred to keep their children closer to home. (United Church of Canada, 2022, para. 3)

Industrial schools were not popular among First Nations families for many reasons but especially because of their distance. Industrial schools committed to providing instruction in Religion and academics. They would also instruct students in trades focussing heavily upon farming, carpentry, shoemaking, and blacksmithing. Distance and fear of further assimilation resulted in low attendance and again the government was unsatisfied (Prete, 2021). Industrial Schools were costly for the government as well and eventually resulted once again in a different school system being created (Pettit, 2016). In 1894, the Indian Act required First Nations children to attend school and therefore forced Indigenous parents to send their children either to Industrial school or Boarding school (Prete, 2021).

Boarding Schools

In 1923 the Canadian Government revamped their Indigenous education system by merging the costly Industrial Schools into Boarding Schools (Titley, 1986). Duncan Campbell Scott, who was the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs for close to 20 years (McDougall, R, 2008) maintained that Indigenous people ought to be fully assimilated. Here were his thoughts,

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point…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. (McDougall, 2008)

To accomplish the goal of the Indigenous population and culture demise, "educating" children continued to be the primary method of attack.

"Boarding schools were similar to the Industrial schools but were typically smaller with a much-reduced focus on trades instruction" (Pettit, 2016, para. 2). The Boarding schools hoped to produce students that were economically self-sufficient by teaching work skills and instilling values and beliefs of possessive individualism, meaning care about oneself and personal ownership. Personal ownership and selfishness opposed the fundamental Indigenous belief of communal ownership, which held that the land was for all people (American Indian Relief Council. n.d). Ownership of the land was certainly not the only ideology that opposed the Indigenous worldview and when children expressed their traditions, language, and ways of knowing, they were reprimanded. The government was unsatisfied with the rate at which Indigenous children were assimilating, resulting in a shift in schooling. Boarding schools were built on reserves to attract more students but were designed to ensure students lost their culture

by ensuring that students did not return to their homes at night or to visit, hence, losing contact with family and extended community. Children were required to stay at Boarding school from ages 6 to 15 years of age (Prete, 2021). For the government to control and enforce student attendance, Government of Canada implemented the following.

> The Governor in Council may make regulations, either general or affecting the Indians of any province or of any named band, to secure the compulsory attendance of children at school. Such regulations, in addition to any other provisions deemed expedient, may provide for the arrest and conveyance to school, and detention there, of truant children and of children who are prevented by their parents or guardians from attending; and such regulations may provide for the punishment, upon summary conviction, by fine or imprisonment. (Indian Act, 1907, p. 177)

According to Prete (2021), the twentieth century saw an increased liking for Residential schools opposed to Boarding schools and deemed Residential schools as a more powerful system of colonization. The school names changed from Boarding schools to Residential schools.

Residential Schools

By the 1900's, the government had actively attempted to dismantle Indigenous worldview and culture through Day schools, Industrial schools, and boarding schools. In the 1920's compulsory Boarding schools turned into Residential schools (Prete, 2021) "funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and were run by Christian churches" (Dennis, 2014, p. 119). Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and his supporters "understood that the aggressive removal of Aboriginal children would have an impact not only on them and their families but on future generations" (Florence, 2016, p. 43). These schools were purposeful and intentional in their creation and operation. They separated Indigenous children from their homes

and their families "to weaken ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture" (Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, 2015, p. V). These buildings, these schools, were not meant to provide a space to foster and support children's curiosity, emotional well-being, or proper education. As Dennis (2014) indicated,

> For the most part, the schools offered a substandard education that focused on nothing more than training the boys and girls for a life of manual and domestic labour. In addition, the schools were riddled with sexual abuse, physical abuse, and mental torture at the hands of the priests and nuns in charge. (p. 65)

Furthermore, Dennis (2014) stated an extremely thought-provoking remark concerning Residential Schools,

> …laws allowed the Residential schools to perform compulsory sterilizations on Native students in a number of provinces. It's interesting to note that around this time, Canada went to war in Europe to end Nazi atrocities that included similar forced sterilization on Jews in concentration camps. So, in other words: European sterilization - bad; Indian sterilization - government-funded policy (p. 120).

The Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada (2018) describes documents revealing…

> Appalling stories of children being locked in the school basement for days, being forced to wear soiled underwear on their heads for hours and being forced to eat their own vomit. Staff used metal fashioned whips for corporal punishment. The most shocking account that emerged was the use of a homemade electric chair to punish children, often for the amusement of staff working at the school. The electrocutions were often administered in front of other children. (para. 5)

The primary intent of Residential schools was to erase every trace of Indigenous culture, beliefs, and languages. “Students were stripped of all things associated with Native life. Their long hair, a source of pride for many Native peoples, was cut short” (Pember, 2019, para. 4). The students were forced to give up their clothing and were given uniforms. Pember (2019) described Indigenous children were forced to participate in

> …a life influenced by strict military-style regimentation. Students were physically punished for speaking their Native languages. Contact with family and community members was discouraged or forbidden altogether. Survivors have described a culture of pervasive physical and sexual abuse at the schools. Food and medical attention were often scarce. Many students died. (para. 4)

One of the most life-changing effects of the Residential School system was the loss of language and culture (NCTR, 2022).

Residential schools and their profound effects are not history, they are living trauma (Prete, 2021), Canadians and educators must acknowledge how the legacy of Residential schools influences their roles as educators and the significant consequences this legacy still has on Indigenous students and their families today. Educators are called to ensure due diligence in supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in all classrooms and in doing so will actively walk forward in their journeys with truth and reconciliation.

Review of Literature: Truth and Reconciliation

The legacy of assimilation through education and Residential schools is a Canadian tragedy. However, Indigenous people have been the target of assimilation and discrimination since long before the atrocities of Residential schools. It began in the 1400’s with the Doctrine of Discovery, the arrival of Christopher Columbus, and his overwhelming sense of ownership of the

lands he found when he sailed from Spain to North America (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). The Doctrine of Discovery was "made without consulting Indigenous populations nor with any recognition of their rights. It was the means by which Europeans claim(ed) legal title to the 'new world'" (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022, para. 6).

With the arrival of more Europeans in the early 1600s, Indigenous people and early settlers formed trading and working relationships. The willingness of the First Nations people to teach and share their knowledge and skills was essential for the survival of the Europeans (Pajer-Rogers, 2005). First Nations people taught the Europeans how to hunt, how to use plants for medicinal and nutritional purposes, and provided them with animal furs. In return, First Nations communities were given access to new tools and goods from Europe (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). These peaceful and reciprocal relationships were momentary. It did not take long before Indigenous people across Canada were being unsympathetically impacted by the presence and goals of the Europeans. For example:

- new diseases
- the arrival and enforcement of a new worldview
- battles between communities
- the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, which led to the eventual and devastating overhunting of many animals, including the buffalo
- the introduction of education as means of assimilation; the introduction of treaties and government policies such as the Gradual Civilization Act 1857 and the Indian Act 1876
- Indian agents
- rations

- enfranchisement
- the banning of cultural expression and ceremonies
- mandatory attendance at Residential Schools in 1920
- the Sixties Scoop

all led to dramatic and exceedingly negative outcomes for Indigenous peoples throughout this country (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022). As Canadians, it is necessary to know and understand this history, these events, and their resulting impacts. To know these impacts, both past and present, is just the beginning. Canadians must learn the truth and must acknowledge that these examples, among countless others, are for what we must all actively learn, engage, and participate in reconciling.

Reconciliation

For hundreds of years, Indigenous people in Canada have been mistreated and manipulated by the people who settled on their homelands. As a result of the trauma these mistreatments have caused and as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC) was established in 2007 (Government of Canada, 2022). "The TRC provided those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences" (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 1). The TRC facilitated events across Canada to educate the public about Residential schools and to raise awareness. Additionally, the TRC created a detailed record of the Residential school system, submitted a final report, and created 94 "calls to action to further reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 5). The 94 calls to action "are actionable policy recommendations meant to aid the healing process in two ways: acknowledging the full,

horrifying history of the residential schools' system, and creating systems to prevent these abuses from ever happening again in the future" (Reconciliation Education, 2022, para. 33).

The assumption that reconciliation is about the healing of Indigenous people is a half-sided story. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) (2015), reconciliation "is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one" (p. vi). Prior to discussing and moving forward with reconciliation, there must be an initial understanding of the truth. Sit with it and be uncomfortable because "to grow, you have to embrace the discomfort. The transition will be uncomfortable and scary, but that's the nature of the beast" (Oppong, 2017, p. 1). The truth is primary in the process of reconciliation as "without truth, justice, and healing, there can be no genuine reconciliation" (TRC, 2015, p. 12). It is essential to remember, however, that simply knowing the truth does not result in automatic, successful, and meaningful reconciliation (TRC, 2015) as "reconciliation cannot occur without listening, contemplation, meditation, and deeper internal deliberation" (TRC, 2015, p. 18). It is "what we do with the notion of reconciliation that stands to make a difference in the stories we tell and the lives we touch" (MacDonald, 2018, p. 216). Unfortunately, far too many Canadians know little to nothing about the historical roots of the conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (TRC, 2018). This, too, is something that must be reconciled.

The dictionary describes reconciliation as the "process of two people or groups in a conflict agreeing to make amends or come to a truce" (Dictionary, 2022). In an interview, an instructor of Reconciliation Studies at the University of British Columbia, Sandlanee Gid, mentioned that she wrestles with the very word 'reconciliation' as it implies there was a good relationship to repair in the first place (Sterritt, 2019). Whether or not there was a relationship to reconcile, to begin with, working together towards strengthening relationships between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the present and future is where educators' sights and efforts must lie. “Whether one is First Nations, Inuit, Métis, a descendant of European settlers, a member of a minority group, or a new Canadian, we all inherit both the benefits and obligations of Canada” (TRC, 2015, p. 12). Indigenous people were and continue to be immeasurably impacted by colonization, assimilation, and the legacy of Residential schools. Reconciliation requires an understanding of those impacts. Lastly, and as stated in the Final Report of the TRC (2015), reconciliation

> …is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. For that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior. (p. 7)

Along with this definition, the TRC indicated several critical elements in working towards reconciliation, including consistent, genuine efforts in re-establishing relationships by apologizing and making amends, bringing promises to fruition, and bringing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into consideration to inform processes (TRC, 2015). The TRC also released the 94 Calls to Action (CTA) along with these guidelines. The TRC and the CTA are more intricately discussed below.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

“The need for reconciliation pre-dates the TRC” (MacDonald, 2018, p. 216) as the experiences and histories of the treatment of Indigenous people had been

> hidden for most of Canada's history. That is until survivors of the Residential School system were finally able to find the strength, courage, and support to bring their

> experiences to light in several thousand court cases that ultimately led to the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada's history (Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, 2015, p. v).

The TRC was initiated in 2008 as result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and as such spent six years sitting with survivors and families discussing their Residential school experiences. The commission spoke with and heard from over 6000 witnesses who experienced forceful assimilation (TRC, 2015). "For those involved, working on the TRC was both a labour of love and a test of resilience" (Katz, 2018, p. 48). Outlined in the TRC's (2015) mandate was to

> reveal to Canadians the complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run Residential Schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples, and honours the resilience and courage of former students, their families, and communities; and guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading toward reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people, communities, churches, governments, and Canadians generally. The process was to work to renew relationships on a basis on inclusion, mutual understanding, and respect. (p. 23)

Discussions regarding the above can be exceedingly difficult and emotional and, for some, will require much thought and "inner and outer work" (MacDonald, 2018, p. 229).

The TRC was tasked with collecting information and documentation from survivors, hosting reconciliation events nationally and locally, and was to provide recommendations to the federal government (TRC, 2018). Additionally, the TRC opened the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) at the University of Manitoba in 2015 (TRC, 2015). The NCTR provides a space for Indigenous people and survivors of Residential Schools to have access to

their histories. Educators have space here to take their students to observe and learn. It serves as a research location with a plethora of documentation and history regarding Indigenous people and Canadian history. The NCTR is also a public space that hopes to encourage reconciliation and education so that more Canadians know the truth of Canada's true history (TRC, 2018).

As mentioned, in 2015, the TRC outlined 94 Calls to Action (CTA), which called "on all levels of government to work together to repair the harm caused by Residential Schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (University of Toronto, 2022) with Indigenous people. The CTA "are a road map to reconciliation" (Katz, 2018, p. 48) and specifically call upon several sectors in Canadian society, including education, justice, health, business, and others (Indian Horse Productions, n.d), to take specific actions in the name of reconciliation. CTA that specifically implicate educators and the education of Indigenous students in Canada will be discussed in broader detail in the next section.

Educators and the Calls to Action

CTA 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 62, 63, and 64 specifically influence educators in Alberta and across Canada. The TRC articulated that Residential Schools, and other forms of educational institutions made in the name of assimilation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children, failed to provide children who attended with an adequate education (TRC, 2015). These establishments were built on biased perspectives that Indigenous knowledge systems were inferior, and that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were incapable of really learning anything (TRC, 2015). When children did not obey, leaders and missionaries in the schools would often resort to physical forms of punishment and abuse. Due to Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada, they were protected in this form of punishment (Barnett, 2016). In her Background paper, "The Spanking Law: Section 43 of the Criminal Code", Barnett (2016) expressed

> …section 43 of the Criminal Code reads as follows: Every schoolteacher, parent, or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances. (p. 1)

CTA 6 called "upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada in 2015." Section 43 remains in effect today in 2022.

- CTA 7 called upon the government to collaborate with Indigenous groups to develop strategies and solutions for the educational and employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- CTA 8 and 9 address funding discrepancies and requests documentation regarding children attending on and off-reserve schools (TRC, 2015).
- CTA 10, which called for an updated curriculum, has been a looming topic for years as Alberta's curriculum updates have been an enormous and political undertaking. CTA 10 called upon the government to collaboratively create new Indigenous education legislation, funding models, culturally appropriate curriculum, including Indigenous languages, and increased parental involvement and improved relationships (TRC, 2018). In addition,
- CTA 11 requests funding for post-Secondary education, and CTA 12 asks for improvements in Early Childhood Education Programs for Indigenous children and families (TRC 2018). CTA 62-64 echoes many of the above sentiments and specifically address the need to develop and implement an "age-appropriate curriculum on Residential Schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada" (TRC, 2018, p. 238) for all students Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Additionally, in CTA 62-64, the Canadian government has been called to "share information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to Residential Schools and Aboriginal history, build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect, (and) identify teacher training needs relating to the above" (TRC, 2018, p. 238-239). These recommendations have had significant implications for educators across the country.

Implications for Educators

Whether or not the current Alberta curriculum changes include Indigenous perspectives, educators have been called to include FIK in their classrooms by the TRC and the CTA. Educators, in addition, are obligated by the LQS and TQS Competency five to be informed and invite students to explore multiple perspectives of the world, including those of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and culture (Alberta Education, 2020). As discussed in Chapter One, the LQS and TQS are the standards by which Alberta educators are evaluated and held accountable. Competency Five of the LQS is particularly relevant as it states, "a leader supports the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). Similarly, Competency five of the TQS indicates, "A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). Additionally, Competency five of both LQS and TQS hold Alberta educators accountable for having an "understanding of the historical, social, economic, and political implications of; treaties and agreements with First Nations, legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis, and Residential Schools and their legacy" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). Competency five also asserts that teachers ought to use the current curriculum to offer opportunities "for all students to

develop a knowledge and understanding of, and a respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences, and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6). The TQS and LQS affirms the need for reconciliation by doing the following,

> …schools must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy, and engagement. All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the Residential Schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of Indigenous nations. (TRC, 2015, p. 21-22)

Great anguish was caused under the guise of education and as Katz (2018) stated while today's teachers are not responsible for the pain, "we can be a part of the healing" (p. 50). "Teachers have amazing potential to help make Truth and Reconciliation a reality, to move the next generation forward in creating a fairer, more just, and more inclusive Canada (Freeman, 2018, p. 2). Additionally, Freeman (2018) reported,

> …infusing Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives into educational curriculum is a way to contribute towards the goal of reconciliation by providing students with an opportunity to learn about the Indigenous people with whom they share they land, and on whose ancestral territories all Canadian currently reside. (p. 2)

"Reconciliation in schools means educating for change, equity in education, and reclaiming identity for Indigenous students and for all Canadians" (Katz, 2018, p. 50). If teachers begin to teach children in every school across the country about the true history of the country, the vitality of Indigenous cultures and foundational knowledge, if teachers help to instill the notion of acceptance and celebration of each other's differences, and learn from one another, they will actively walk towards a goal of the TRC's, that "our children and grandchildren can live together

in dignity, peace, and prosperity on the lands we now share" (p. 8). "To not do so is to perpetuate the silence and ignorance of non-Indigenous people for yet another generation" (Katz, 2018, p. 50).

In the spirit of reconciliation, educators must also broaden their understanding of the historical trauma felt by many Indigenous communities and people "in light of past atrocities endured through European and Euro-American colonization" (Hartmann, 2014, p. 275). The Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation described being colonized includes immense loss, "loss of culture, land, resources, political autonomy, religious freedom, and, often, personal autonomy" (Archibald, 2006, p. v). Educators are in the position to aid in the process of reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and decolonization of schools with restorative processes (Hartmann, 2014). Accomplishing and responding appropriately to the CTA and the Alberta LQS & TQS necessitates educators to understand FIK and restorative and trauma-informed practices.

Review of Literature: Restorative and Trauma Informed Practices

Unfortunately, many Indigenous families have a natural trepidation to trust and participate in a partnership with the institution of school. Given the historical-cultural context, this is understandable (Boklaschuk, 2020; The Guardian, 202; Leckey et al., 2021)**.** Educators are responsible for advancing relationships to better support student success, and teachers can begin to support them through restorative and trauma-informed practices. Hartmann, (2014) indicated that within the process of building relationships, cultural revitalization, and decolonization, using "restorative processes that directly address losses experienced through subjugation and dispossession" (p. 276) are essential. In other words, to move forward with reconciliation

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people there needs to be an acknowledgement of the trauma caused by Canadian history and a focus on restorative practices.

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices (RP) in this context are ways in which educators proactively and purposefully work to build and rebuild relationships with students and the school community including all school staff and families (Smith, 2017; McCluskey, 2008). The needs of students are multifaceted and recognition of needs that arise from personal and family circumstances such as loss, caring for family members, family illness or trauma are just as imperative as academic needs (McCluskey, 2008). When children are exposed to ongoing adversity early in life, there can be harmful effects on their academic achievement, emotional well-being, behavior in the classroom and negative outcomes later in life (Breedlove et al., 2021). Utilization of RP is a way for educators to combat the impacts of childhood adversity.

> The IIRP Graduate School (2018) has expressed that,
>
> restorative practices are an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals and within communities. When put into practice, the effects are profound. In schools' students experience greater safety and sense of belonging resulting in improved behavior, less bullying and less violence. In workplaces, leaders facilitate direct communication among staff and address conflict as it arises. The result is higher performance, greater accountability, and effective collaboration.

These restorative relationships strive to "prevent problems from arising and use dialogue, not punishment, when problems do occur" (Smith, 2017, p. 1). Research has also shown that schools which foster RP have the potential to build school communities that are positive, feel safe, build, and display empathy, and have increased student-teacher relationships (Zakszeski, 2021;

Breedlove et al., 2020). The more students feel cared for and appreciated, the more likely they will thrive.

> The opposite of feeling cared for is feeling rejected, alienated, and unwelcome. Research has long shown that when youth feel their lives are not worthwhile, or if they become disconnected from their community or society, the experience of alienation that often follows can promote mental and emotional instability. (Katz, 2018, p. 14)

Schools in which educators are using RP implement strategies described by Smith (2017) as "peacekeeping, peace building, and peace making" (p. 1). Peacemaking is especially relevant in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation as peace making "focuses on the use of dialogue and conflict resolution, especially through forums that purposefully lead individuals to greater knowledge about themselves and others" (Smith, 2017, p. 1).

Supporting RP in a school or classroom can occur in many ways. Collaborative discussions both formal and informal, learning each other's interests and passions, class meetings, using affirmative language, and using several types of teaching and learning circles are among the strategies identified by Smith (2017). Smith (2017) discussed sequential circles, fishbowl circles, and non-sequential circles where an item can be used as an identifier for whose turn it is to share. These circles are opportunities for open dialogue and are in direct relationship with FIK as Indigenous people have been engaging in this kind of discourse for time immemorial. Ultimately, there are two primary elements in RP: "1. build and maintain relationships and 2. repair relationships that have been harmed" (Smith, 2017, p. 1). A particular strategy utilized in the realization of RP is trauma informed practice as it is a practice which similarly aims to build supportive relationships.

Trauma informed practice

Initially when speaking of trauma, people assume it is a response to one unfathomable situation or event (Katz, 2018).

> However, researchers have begun to understand that ongoing exposure to high stress events can cause a form of post-traumatic stress that can have devastating effects on a child's physiology, emotions, ability to think, learn and concentrate, impulse control, self-image, and relationships with others (Katz, 2018).

When an individual believes that they are in danger or becomes triggered emotionally, the brain releases a stress hormone known as cortisol into one's blood (Katz 2018). “Our heart rates rise, we go on alert, and we become totally focused on survival” (Katz, 2018, p. 30). “When a student experiences frequent or prolonged adversity the stress experience can become intolerable and toxic” (Government of Alberta, 2022) and may result in trauma. Understanding trauma has significant implications for educators as they may be better equipped to influentially respond to behaviours in the classroom. "When educators understand trauma, they are less likely to view trauma-related behaviours as intentional or stemming from a lack of motivation or laziness. This will reduce punitive types of responses that can retraumatize students” (Government of Alberta, 2022, p. 1). Mitigating the effects of trauma will require educators to nurture caring, supportive, and safe learning environments with a specific focus on fostering respectful relationships (Government of Alberta, 2022). “A trauma sensitive environment is a classroom, nook, or any other teaching location in which each and every student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged” (Souers, 2016, p. 1).

Acquiring confidence in restorative and trauma informed practices will require a commitment of participation and meaningful engagement in ongoing, authentic, and

collaborative professional learning. The increased understanding and capacity of educators in these areas may lead to tremendous outcomes in reconciliation and in working with all children but in working with those who have experienced trauma in particular.

Review of Literature: Professional Learning

Professional learning (PL) is an action where professionals expand their knowledge and build their professional capacity through learning engagements. In other words, PL is the "means by which new knowledge is added to the teacher's professional repertoire" (Joyce, 2002, p. 1). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) described PL as "intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific content; is connected to other school initiatives and builds strong working relationships among teachers" (p. 5). "Professional learning necessitates trying something out, working at it, feeling uncomfortable for a while, and adapting practice as a result" (Harris, 2014, p. 118). Notably, Schaap et al. (2019) indicated students' achievement and success are related to the quality of instruction they receive from their educators. If educators "are going to develop high-level capabilities in their students, they will need to have learned and acquired a lot of capital themselves" (Fullan, 2012, p. 101-102). If done correctly, PL inspires ideas and pushes educators toward taking risks in changing their practices to improve student learning. "Improvements in student learning and well-being are not a by-product of professional learning but rather its central purpose" (Timperley, 2011, p. 5).

Alberta educators are not only encouraged to engage in PL but are contractually obliged to do so, as outlined in the LQS & TQS. For example, Competency two of the LQS, Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning, indicates “a leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching and learning” (Alberta Education, p. 4). Similarly, Competency two of the TQS

(Alberta Education, 2018) states that "a teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning" (p.4).

There are many challenges associated with professional learning and its influence on professional practice. One challenge, for example, as Harris (2014) described, is that "many professional learning programs or courses operate on the assumption that knowledge gained from a workshop can be readily transferred into the workplace" (p. 91). Additionally, educators "tend to go to external training or professional development events alone. However good the training might be, the chances of convincing colleagues back at schools of its merits will be low" (Harris, 2014, p. 91). Poorly done PL events entail reading documents or being spoken to and assuming attendance results in a change in practice. For PL to be effective it must not follow the "banking model" as discussed by Freire (1970) which expressed that knowledge from the teacher, in this case, the facilitator of the PD, is "deposited into others through a transfer of knowledge rather than an act of learning" (Goodall, 2018, p. 605). From this stance, the leader of PL stands in a place of authority rather than as a learning partner.

Professional learning and professional development have often been used synonymously however this research will acknowledge the difference between the two and focus on professional learning rather than development. The word development "evokes images of what someone does to someone else: develop them. In education, professional development has, in fact, often been what someone does to others" (Easton, 2008, p. 755). Professional development often includes passive seminars and workshops resulting in teachers becoming disengaged (Western Governors University, 2014). Occasionally, professional development opportunities are "vital to professional and organizational growth. But they are not sufficient" (Easton, 2008, p. 755). Professional learning "embodies many of the same ideas and goals of professional

development. However, this terminology emphasizes a modernized version that encourages interactive learning strategies rather than rote development techniques" (Western Governors University, 2014, para. 4). Professional learning has the potential to improve both student and teacher outcomes if done correctly and "encourages teachers to take responsibility for their own learning and to practice what they are learning in their own teaching contexts" (Scherff, 2018, para. 3).

Qualities of Influential Professional Learning

"Effective professional learning focuses on developing the core attributes of an effective teacher. It enhances teachers' understanding of the content that they teach and equips them with a range of strategies that enable their students to learn that content" (Cole, 2012, p. 6). Cole (2012) suggested for PL to be effective, it ought to be "routine practice, promoted within school by instructional coaches, include teaching demonstrations, workshops conducted by teachers and external experts, and other routines for formal and informal professional discussions" (p. 2). Influential PL must have a clear "purpose, cohesiveness, and direction" (Guskey, 2014, p. 5), be a collaborative process (Harris, 2019), have instructional focus (Hunzicker, 2010), and consider individual and school needs (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 4). PL is increasingly influential in an environment where "high levels of trust, positive relationships, and focused collaboration are the hallmarks of high performance" (Harris, 2019, para. 11). Furthermore, for PL to be notable, it must be understood as a process rather than an isolated event (Guskey, 1994) as "research shows that one-off events usually do not appreciably enhance the learning of teachers or their students" (Leadership and Teacher Development, 2005, p. 6). Educators must be provided with multiple opportunities to engage with "ideas and procedures or practice new skills" (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 8). Stewart (2014) argued that "reading and attending a training consist of exposure to content

and do not impact a teacher's practice unless they are reinforced through further exploration and practice" (p. 30). In summation, influential PL can be described as having clear instructional focus, is done in collaboration with other educators, and is interactive.

Clear instructional focus

Meaningful professional learning has a clear focus and responds specifically to educators pre-determined goals and needs (Plotinsky, 2020., Herrmann, 2021). Goal oriented and "instructionally focused professional development is effective because teachers consider the emphasis on subject area content and pedagogy relevant and authentic to their daily responsibilities" (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 5). Content knowledge and accuracy are essential when sharing information with others and "in order to be effective, teachers need a deep understanding of their subject area" (Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005, p. 2). Alongside a clear goal and focus, influential PL is done in an environment and manner where collaboration is encouraged.

Collaborative

Collaboration can act as an accelerant for deep learning as it offers the opportunity to discuss and learn from many voices and differing perspectives. When groups of people share common passions and gather to discuss their inquiries and discoveries, it can be referred to as a community of practice (Harris, 2014). "Over time, the members of the community develop a strong team identity; they develop personal relationships and establish ways of interacting, inquiring, and learning collectively" (Harris, 2014, p. 97). In addition, Hunzicker (2010) indicated that "peer feedback is a particularly important aspect of collaborative professional development" (p. 7) as it enables teachers to discuss "strengths, clarify ideas, and correct misconceptions" (p. 7). Collaborative PL

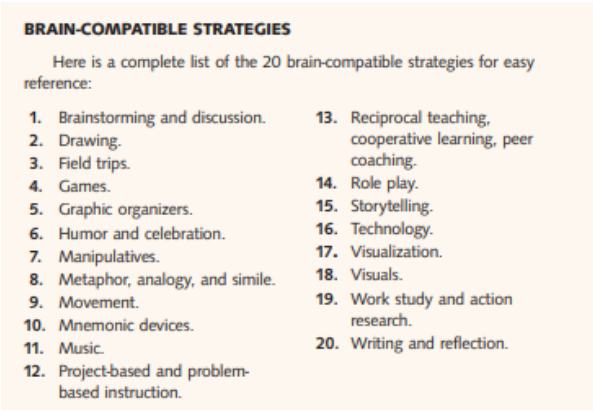
can reduce variations in learning outcomes between classes. This is because teachers actively support each other to construct knowledge and develop pedagogies that have the capacity to improve student learning. While students are clear beneficiaries of a team-based approach, benefits also flow to teachers by growing their knowledge. (Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005, p. 9)

Interactive

"Students learn with hands-on and interactive learning. Oftentimes, students express their need for project-based learning, group discussions, and hands-on activities. Similarly, this is true with teachers" (Washington, 2021, para. 12). When participants of PL have opportunities to engage in experiences that require them to be physically involved, they are more likely to experience deeper learning and remember more about their experiences (Tate, 2009). Tate (2009) discussed several ways to engage participants in more engaging learning.

Figure 2

Brain-compatible strategies



BRAIN-COMPATIBLE STRATEGIES

Here is a complete list of the 20 brain-compatible strategies for easy reference:

1. Brainstorming and discussion.
2. Drawing.
3. Field trips.
4. Games.
5. Graphic organizers.
6. Humor and celebration.
7. Manipulatives.
8. Metaphor, analogy, and simile.
9. Movement.
10. Mnemonic devices.
11. Music.
12. Project-based and problem-based instruction.
13. Reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning, peer coaching.
14. Role play.
15. Storytelling.
16. Technology.
17. Visualization.
18. Visuals.
19. Work study and action research.
20. Writing and reflection.

Note. Retrieved from Workshops (Tate, 2018).

Educators have the chance to respond and use their knowledge and experiences to inform their learning when information is presented differently. “Differentiation of content delivery for teachers is important in professional learning environments. Just as students need individualized instruction and content delivery, the same is true for teachers” (Washington, 2019, para. 5). When leaders consider and are guided by these principles of influential PL, they "can design meaningful learning experiences for all teachers" (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 2). Effective leadership is instrumental in schools not only students but for teachers and the entire school community at large.

Effective Leadership of Learning

Leaders of school communities have vast responsibilities but chief in their role is a commitment to instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is a particular practice “in which school leaders engage to intentionally support the development of effective teaching and learning in schools” (Le Fevre, 2021, para. 1). “In an effective professional learning system, school leaders learn from experts, mentors, and their peers about how to become true instructional leaders. They work with staff members to create the culture, structures, and dispositions for continuous professional learning” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 5). According to “Leadership and Teacher Development” (2005) effective instructional leaders provide learning opportunities for teachers to develop the knowledge, practices and attitudes that are needed to achieve agreed goals and expectations. They facilitate opportunities for staff to learn from each other, provide access to specialised knowledge and model continuous learning in their own practice. Effective school leaders also continuously evaluate the influence of professional learning on the basis of the effect it has on student achievement.” (p. 7) There are various approaches school leaders may apply when supporting instructional leadership and facilitating or supporting influential PL. A genuine focus on building

relationships, assuming competence, supporting andragogy, supporting distributed leadership, and open to learning conversations are a few beneficial strategies utilized by successful leaders of learning (Cranton, 1994; Bastian, 2017; Harris, 2011; Le Fevre, 2021). In addition to the above elements, delivery and facilitation of PL are also pertinent pieces that influence the outcome of PL experiences.

Relationships

At the heart of leadership is the relationships fostered and preserved with the individuals with whom leaders are collaborating and working (Timperley, 2011). Cherkowski (2018) expressed that in

> flourishing schools, relationships are central and at the core of all the work and all the learning that happens. Educators and staff feel a sense of common engagement in a higher purpose that unites them with a sense of passion, and in spirit of the playfulness to provide the very best learning environment and experience they can for their students. (p. 4)

Building these successful relationships requires a sense of relational trust (Timperley, 2011). Relationships lacking in relational trust among leaders and learners significantly hinder influential PL and a leader's ability to support teacher and student needs. Suppose leaders are hesitant to engage in open-to-learning conversations and fail to recognize and value the ideas and perspectives of their team. In that case, school leaders "will not be able to build the relational trust needed to get good feedback about their thinking and to build the collective responsibility and commitment required to improve teaching and learning" (Robinson, 2009, p. 4). Robinson (2009) also explained that "with respectful processes in which people feel heard and have genuine opportunities to exercise influence, the staff is more likely to feel committed to

decisions" (p. 4-5). For these types of relationships and interactions to occur, there must be trust among colleagues.

> Trust is forged through day-to-day social exchanges and is defined by respect through a genuine sense of listening to others, personal regard shown by a willingness of people to extend themselves beyond what is formally required, and beliefs that colleagues have the knowledge, skills and/or technical capacity to deliver on intentions and promises. (Timperley, 2011, p. 108)

Trust may also be the result of interactions in which leaders are modeling andragogy.

Andragogy

Andragogy is "defined as the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles,1980, p. 43). Andragogy operates under the assumptions that "as individuals mature:

- Their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being.
- They accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning (Knowles, 1980, p. 44-45).

With these principles in mind, a leader modelling the concept of andragogy listens and collaborates with learners rather than treating them as passive participants. Traditionally, PL opportunities have prescribed learners with the role of "a fairly passive recipient of the teacher's instruction. In contrast, in congruence with the adult's self-concept of self-directivity, andragogical practice treats the learning-teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learners" (Knowles, 1980, p. 48) and teachers. Andragogy is the belief and acknowledgement

that adults possess previous experiences, knowledge, and capacity and can be otherwise described as assuming competence in others.

Assuming Competence

Educators are professionals with innate abilities, unique experiences, and skills that allow them to guide and instruct their students. They are themselves, continuous learners, steadily adapting to the various needs presented within their classrooms. According to the Inclusive School Communities Project (2020), to 'presume' means to believe or accept that something is true until proven otherwise. Competence refers to the belief that one can think, learn, and understand (p. 1). Presuming competence in relation to PL therefore suggests that a leader assumes their colleagues are more than capable of applying new learning to practice. In addition to assuming competence effective leaders of learners also practice distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership

Harris (2014) explained distributed leadership as being focused on activating leadership within the staff to create more frequent opportunities for growth and improved opportunities for teachers to show and build capacity. Pushor and Amendt (2018) discuss Harris' (2011) notion of "leadership as interaction" (p. 205), where there are shifts of power and authority. "The school leader invites staff to take risks, be vulnerable and honest with" (Pusher, 2018, p. 205) everyone participating. "The leader too will be engaged alongside others" (Pushor, 2018, p. 205). Harris (2016) also contended that leadership does not solely reside in the official leads of an organization. It exists elsewhere within its people and uncovering that leadership is essential for transformation. Additionally, Harris (2016) clarified that facilitating distributed leadership is not the action of giving away authority or delegating tasks. Instead, it is the leaders exhibiting trust in others' competency to lead on their own.

Harris (2004) noted collegiality is at the heart of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership cannot be successful without a collaborative and collegial community. Collegial models stress that decisions should be made through a collaborative process where members engage in discussions, which eventually lead to a cohesive agreement (Bush, 2011). These elements must be present in the delivery and facilitation of PL events and experiences to be influential.

Delivery and Facilitation

"Facilitation is the process of taking a group through a process of learning or change in a way that encourages each member of the group to participate and to play an active part" (Harris, 2014, p. 119). To be compelling, a leader of learning will need to acknowledge that everyone is a unique and experienced individual and will have diverse perspectives to offer (Harris, 2014). Characteristics that are beneficial in a facilitator according to Harris (2014) include "empathy, humility, generosity, and patience, combined with understanding, acceptance, and affirmation" (p. 120). A facilitator is tasked with providing an environment where people are trusting to share their thoughts and ideas. Robinson (2009) indicated that one essential step in cultivating trust among colleagues is the "ability to engage in open-to-learning conversations" (p. 1-2).

Open to Learning Conversations

What distinguishes a conversation between being open to learning versus being closed is "whether there is openness to learning about the validity of one's point of view" (Robinson, 2009, p. 1) that differs from our own. Several components of open-to-learning conversations include offering feedback as a possibility rather than absolute, seeking feedback and inviting differing perspectives, and addressing assumptions (Robinson, 2009). When discussing professional practice and professional learning with educators, leaders need to have conversations that are open to learning to ensure they are not threatening relationships with

colleagues (Robinson, 2009). An open-to-learning conversation is when a leader is open to learning instead of "assuming the validity of their beliefs and trying to impose them on others" (Robinson, 2009, p. 9). An essential element in open-to-learning conversations is the notion of respect. Robinson (2009) expressed,

> respect involves treating others as autonomous agents, entitled to the expression of their own opinions especially when they differ from those of the leader. The values of increasing respect and increasing validity are mutually reinforcing for, without respect, leaders will not be able to build the relational trust they need to get honest feedback from colleagues. (p. 9)

Similarly, Adams et. al (2019) defined generative dialogue as a "process of deliberate conversations among leaders and teachers, focusing on learning" (p. 92). Furthermore, the principles of communicative learning, as described by Mezirow (1991) are comparable to those of open to learning conversations and generative dialogue. "Communicative learning focuses on achieving coherence rather than on exercising more effective control over the cause-and-effect relationship to improve performance" (p. 8). Mezirow (1991) also contended,

> we engage in reflective learning through the kind of discourse in which we bracket our prior judgements, attempt to hold our biases in abeyance, and, through a critical review of the evidence and arguments, make a determination about the justifiability of the expressed idea. (p.10)

The above offers a glimpse into a few strategies which bolster the effectiveness of leading learners in building their capacity to better support student achievement. This is by no means an exhaustive list of best practices related to effective leadership of learning.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has provided historical and contextual parameters necessary to understand Foundational Indigenous Knowledge and the resulting implications for professional learning and leading professional learning for educators in Alberta. Understanding Indigenous epistemology, awareness, acknowledgement of the dismal history of colonization and assimilation through education, and a commitment to open and continuous learning are steppingstones on the path of reconciliation. Simply stated, the history of Canada and its relationships with Indigenous peoples is an outrage and absolute heartbreak. As contended in the TRC (2018) "to gain control of the land of Indigenous people, colonists negotiated treaties, waged wars of extinction, eliminated traditional landholding practices, disrupted families, and imposed a political and spiritual order that came complete with new values and cultural practices" (p. 45) and for these atrocities' reconciliation must be pursued. For reconciliation to take place, educators must have a deeper understanding of the themes related throughout this thesis and have an unwavering commitment to the PL that will increase their confidence, improve their practice, and therefore their student's success and understanding. To accomplish this, teachers require leaders that are committed to instructional leadership. Teachers need to first be educated in Foundational Indigenous Knowledge and history, as well as restorative and trauma informed practices before the CTA and Competency five can be appropriately tended to (MacDonald, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research has shown that teachers generally lack confidence in applying Indigenous knowledge and worldview in their elementary classrooms (see, for example, Denomme, 2014; Donald, 2009; Lorenz, 2017). However, despite this lack of confidence, educators in Alberta are morally and professionally responsible for actively engaging in and applying foundational knowledge for the learning benefit of all students (Alberta Education, 2020). On this account, this research sought to discover useful and authentic ways in which educators can seek out and engage in profound PL opportunities that specifically support their confidence around foundational knowledge.

As such, this study was led explicitly by the following question: *What characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive will increase their confidence in applying foundational Indigenous knowledge?* The premise of this research is that particular attributes of PL may influence teacher confidence in coming to know and applying Indigenous history and ways of knowing to their pedagogy. These characteristics divulged themselves through the qualitative research process of semi-structured interviews with a sampling unit of elementary (K-5) teachers, who have been teaching for at least four months. The narratives and stories of participants constituted the data set for an interpretivist approach and were analyzed using coding methodologies suggested by Neuman (2014) which are further described below.

Methodology

The following section provides a rationale for employing elements of Indigenous methodology, the qualitative research method, the interview or conversation method, and the interpretivist stance used for this study. An exploration of the limitations of interpretivism is also included.

In honour and recognition of my Métis ancestry and the Niitsitapi land on which I live, elements of Indigenous methodologies are woven throughout this research. Firstly, self-situating oneself in research is vital in Indigenous methods as

> Indigenous thought and custom do not situate the self as separate or antecedent to community. Typically, a consciousness of self and community exist simultaneously, and we must view the self as interwoven into a larger tapestry not as a singular thread beyond the weave. (Kovach, 2021, p. 137)

As a qualitative approach relies chiefly upon interviews for data collection, the interrelatedness of the researcher and research participant is a meaningful relationship to consider. Kovach (2021) noted that "when we ask others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own" (p.159). If a trusting relationship is formed and researchers can be vulnerable with participants, the quality of data gathered may be enhanced.

Neuman (2014) argued that the qualitative method of study "has penetrated virtually all educational venues and has become established as a powerful and effective way to conduct educational research" (p. 2). Additionally, Neuman (2014) stated that qualitative research "is about depth rather than breadth, and researchers draw upon qualitative methods when their goal is to develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon as it is experienced" (p. 3). Both of Neuman's contentions align explicitly with the goal of this research, which was to understand elementary teachers' broad perceptions and experiences of their own learning relating to confidence in foundational Indigenous knowledge.

Moreover, a characteristic of qualitative research that aligns with the goal of this research is that engaged participants are "....co-creating the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon. Because the researcher works to develop an understanding of the phenomenon as it

is understood by the participants themselves" (Neuman, 2014, p. 4). Kovach (2021) reaffirmed Neuman's assertions when she articulated that qualitative research within an Indigenous epistemology "allows the researching self to participate as co-constructor of knowledge in a specific and defined" (p. 143) manner. Therefore, to come to a deeper understanding of foundational knowledge and PL to support teachers' confidence, information from teachers themselves must first be collected, which was done so through semi-structured interviews.

Interviews or conversations are one of the primary methods for data collection when embarking upon qualitative research (Neuman, 2014). "Qualitative interviews are generally informal and guided by interview guides designed to elicit participants' insights about the details of the phenomenon under study" (Neuman, 2014, p. 8). Interview guides are comprehensive and are used to drive the interviews while simultaneously holding space for flowing thoughts and discussions that occur during the interviews (Neuman, 2014). Neuman (2014) further noted that qualitative interview guides are not standardized but tailor the questions in ways that tap the unique perspectives of various participants, and that allows for probing and extension (p. 8). Doing so provided the opportunity for more open-ended discussions that unlocked a wide range of data and required an interpretivist approach. Complementary of Neuman's stance is Margaret Kovach's (2021) position that the interview method parallels the conversational method of gathering research used in Indigenous methodologies. She argued that "Indigenous methodologies coexist with qualitative research" (p. 25) and adopt an interpretivist approach.

Interpretivist Epistemology

The traditional epistemology applied to this qualitative research was interpretivist. (Alharahsheh, 2020; Lee, 2012; Neuman, 2014). As this study sought many perspectives, experiences, and understandings, an interpretivist approach was most appropriate. Interpretivism

gives thought to the varying worldviews and perspectives of individuals involved in the research. “Interpretivism is different from positivism as it aims to include richness in the insights gathered” (Alharahsheh, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, the interpretivist view “is also sometimes referred to as constructivism because it emphasizes the ability of the individual to construct meaning” (Mack, 2010, p. 3) of their experiences. The interpretivist view was essential to this study as teachers have all had incredibly diverse upbringings, educations, worldviews, experiences, and knowledge relating to Indigenous history and perspectives. Taking diverse perspectives and experiences into consideration aligns with a relativist ontology that Lee (2012) described as one in which multiple realities exist. “Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple” (Ness, 2013). Considering the varied experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of the participants necessitates accepting multiple realities.

Limitations and Positionality

Utilizing an interpretivist view requires a researcher to accept and consider all perspectives disclosed by participants. Neutralizing bias in qualitative research is a noteworthy limitation of the interpretivist paradigm as it requires the researcher to interrogate their previous assumptions and allow others to tell them about their experiences and perceptions (Mack, 2010). Mack (2010) identified another limitation of the interpretivist view being “that it abandons the scientific procedures of verification” (p. 4) as there are no quantitative measures. Within an Indigenous methodology however, bias or positionality is not considered a limitation but a necessity (Kovach, 2021).

Trustworthiness in qualitative research has been debated. Morse et al. (2002) indicated trustworthiness is realized when the researcher strictly follows several measurable verification strategies during the research process. “Together, all these verification strategies incrementally and interactively contribute to and build reliability and validity, thus ensuring rigor” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 19) and trustworthiness. However, Sandelowski (1993) argued that in qualitative research “trustworthiness becomes a matter of persuasion” (p. 2) where the researcher has made their “practices visible and, therefore, auditable; it is less a matter of claiming to be right about a phenomenon than having practiced good science” (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 2) and bringing light to the topic of interest.

I do hold a position in regard to pedagogy and PL. I firmly believe in creating an inclusive and safe learning environment that is representative of the diverse cultures of students in the classroom. I believe that continuous engagement in PL is essential, and that genuine joy can be found in learning at any age. In my opinion, PL should be tactile and engaging as well as be connected to pedagogy; furthermore, PL specific to foundational knowledge should be routed in building relationships with elders and the land, storytelling, and language, and focused on celebrating the resilience of Indigenous people and their cultures both traditional and contemporary. I acknowledge that I also carry a position regarding the education of foundational knowledge, Indigenous history, and reconciliation to my Métis relations but also to my many friendships with Indigenous people locally. I believe that all teachers should be expected to intentionally engage in learning about foundational knowledge. Finally, my position within a Southern Alberta school division must also be considered, as it is my responsibility to create curriculum connections and assist teachers in learning and applying Indigenous knowledge in their classrooms. There are no direct power implications between myself and the participants as

my role is to support teachers as opposed to evaluate or supervise. In no way have participants been impacted in terms of their contracts or evaluations by participating in the study and I ensured that participants were made aware of these dynamics pre and post interviews.

Data

The following section explores considerations regarding the data, participant selection, data saturation, data collection, interview or conversation questions, data analysis and interpretation, and the principle of trustworthiness. A definition and thoughts regarding data offered by Margaret Kovach (2021) outlined that according to *Oxford Dictionary of English*, data stems from the word Datum and "means literally 'something given.' Data, datum, give- the etymology of the word data, and thus the roots of data collection imply a gifting has, at some point, taken place (p. 155). This perspective was considered throughout the interview/conversation and analysis processes.

Participant and Site Selection

All elementary teachers, who have been teaching a minimum of four months, in a Southern Alberta school division were sent system email correspondence from the Superintendent's office for the opportunity to participate in a voluntary semi-structured interview. This research aimed to gain insight and information into teachers' perceptions of what they feel might assist them in developing a higher sense of confidence in teaching foundational knowledge in their classrooms. Consequently, grade level (inside the elementary level), and school site, are inconsequential as I was interested in hearing from all elementary teachers. Teachers at the middle and high school levels were not asked to participate, as this study focused on elementary teachers. Elementary teachers were considered specifically for this study because I am an elementary generalist, my teaching experience has been with the elementary levels and

because elementary teachers have a unique advantage when it comes to weaving various areas of curriculum into lessons and experiences. Sargeant (2012) concluded, "the subjects-sampled must be able to inform important facets and perspectives related to the phenomenon being studied" (p. 1). Since this study relates specifically to elementary teachers' confidence, the sampling unit was limited to teachers in that group.

An e-mail invitation was sent (Appendix. A) through the Superintendents' office to elementary teachers informing them of an opportunity to participate in a research study related to confidence in foundational Indigenous knowledge. It was indicated to them that interested participants' names would be included in a draw and a total of ten names would be randomly chosen through paper selection to form the sampling unit. However, Sargeant (2012) contended that the sampling size is not usually decided in advance when conducting qualitative research. "The number of participants depends upon the number required to inform fully all-important elements of the phenomenon being studied. That is, the sample size is sufficient when additional interviews or focus groups do not result in identification of new concepts, an endpoint called data saturation" (Sargeant, 2012, p. 1). The concept of data saturation referred to by Sargeant is a methodological principle used within qualitative research "to indicate that, on the basis of the data that have been collected or analyzed hitherto, further data collection and/or analysis are unnecessary" (Saunders, 2017, p. 1). "If one has reached the point of no new data, one has also most likely reached the point of no new themes; therefore, one has reached data saturation" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409) Specific to the sampling unit of this study, if data saturation was not acquired at the end of the ten interviews, another three names would have been randomly pulled, and this process would have continued until "no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and ability to replicate the study" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409) was attained.

The sampling unit, then, included the elementary teachers who indicated interest and were chosen through the random selection process. The selected participants received a letter of information outlining the research study and then a letter of consent to be signed and returned to myself for filling purposes. Once consent was obtained, interviews were scheduled. The interviews occurred in person and on Microsoft TEAMS if it was preferred by the participant. The sampling unit did not include administrators of elementary schools, support staff, Middle School teachers, nor High School teachers due to the specific aim of understanding elementary teachers' perspectives.

Data Collection

In *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* Margaret Kovach (2021) offered the following thoughts about data collection,

> Contemplated within an Indigenous episteme and applied to Indigenous methodologies, collecting data is the gifting of another's story to a researcher: data are more than things; they are living connections animated through the exchange of story. (p. 156)

The stories of the research participants were heard through semi-structured interviews or conversations. Interviews or conversations are a primary method in "gathering truly qualitative data" (Mertler, 2020, p. 134) and interviews enable qualitative research as they give the researcher flexibility to ask specific questions, while following up with probes based on comments, experiences, and perspectives (Mertler, 2020). The Indigenous methodology practice of conversation and story as data collection is similar to Mertler's (2020) ideas of semi-structured interviews and their flexible characteristics. Robina Thomas (2015), a Coast Salish scholar, says that "hearing story in Indigenous research is not solely the case of data collection

bounded by the sharp confines of an interview session but rather involves an elasticity with space for the affective dimension" (Kovach, 2021, p. 160).

The purpose of these conversations was to gather the perceptions of participants, their stories, their experiences, and their challenges about what would help them feel more confident in achieving the moral and professional responsibility of applying foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in their classrooms.

Participants were sent two letters. The first thoroughly described the intent of the research and outlined the details of participation. The second letter was a consent form for participation. Once consent was obtained and participants fully understood their role in the research, interviews were scheduled and completed. The facilitation of interviews was entirely up to the participants and their comfort and availability to meet in person or virtually. If a virtual meeting was preferred, interviews took place on Microsoft Teams and were video recorded, but only the audio portion was retained. If interviews took place in person, I used an audio recorder to record the interview's audio. All information provided by research participants remained confidential. Recordings and transcripts of the interviews were password protected on my personal computer. "The chief way that researchers seek to protect research participants from the accidental breaking of confidentiality is through the process of anonymization. Ethical guidelines and methods textbooks all note the importance of anonymizing research participants through the use of pseudonyms" (Wiles, 2008, p. 422). I ensured anonymity through pseudonyms to protect participants' identities throughout the study. After each interview, the recordings were transcribed and coded for data analysis. A plan B was prepared in case the number of interested research participants was insufficient; a letter of interest in participation would be sent to the superintendent of a neighboring school division. Including a secondary school division did not

hinder or negatively influence the data gathered, as the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' confidence in foundational knowledge in Southern Alberta.

Interview questions

The base questions for the interviews are as follows:

1. Please do provide an overview of your teaching career – years taught, grades.
2. Please consider the various types of professional learning you have participated in as a teacher. What characteristics of those experiences changed the ways in which you teach? Please provide a specific example where the type of professional learning directly influenced how you teach.
3. Next, I am going to ask you a series of questions specific to your professional learning experiences in the area of foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.
4. Think back to when you were an undergraduate student preparing to enter the teaching profession. Please describe a course or other academic experience you had that influenced your understanding or awareness of foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.
5. How confident do you feel about attending to the indicators in TQS (Teaching Quality Standard) #5?
6. Please describe a time when you felt confident teaching foundational knowledge. What experiences influenced your confidence during that teaching?
7. Please share a story about a time you felt unprepared or unconfident in teaching aspects of Indigenous culture or history? Why did you feel unprepared?
8. Please do describe your current understanding of the legacy of Residential schools.

9. What are areas of foundational knowledge that you would like to learn more about? What kind or types of professional learning opportunities would support you in learning this knowledge? 10. Please reflect upon the Indigenous specific professional learning you have participated in as a teacher. What characteristics of this professional learning influenced your foundational knowledge?
10. What haven't I asked you about that may be important for me to know? — (Neuman, 2014)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Sargeant (2012) stated that "the purpose of qualitative analysis is to interpret the data and the resulting themes, to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 1). In qualitative research, the collection and analysis of data coincided. Visiting and revisiting collected data enabled the researcher to identify similarities, themes, and differences among interviews, new inquiries, and new connections (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, Neuman (2014) explained that data collection and analysis overlapped in order to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon, as "the researcher must be engaged throughout the study in continually cycling back and forth through the data he or she has collected" (p. 10). To analyze the collected data, interviews were recorded and then transcribed as they were verbal interactions. Next, thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions occurred. Neuman (2014) suggested that this stage involved "organizing the data—dividing it into manageable 'chunks' that could be scrutinized for insights related to the research questions" (p. 11). Neuman (2014) and Sargeant (2012) described similar processes when analyzing qualitative interview data. Neuman (2014) described the first step as "generating and tagging the data with codes that represented major topics that emerged" (p. 11), while Sargeant (2012) labeled it as "deconstruction" (p. 2). This first step involved

combing through the data and creating simple codes to describe the content within sections of the interviews. The second step referred to by Neuman (2014) was to use those codes to separate the data into smaller segments for analysis" (p. 11). Sargeant (2012) described it as "interpretation" (p. 2). Comparisons of codes and interviews occurred during this step while the researcher looked for similarities, differences, relationships, and even negative findings—those that did not confirm the dominant themes in more detail (Sargeant, 2012, p. 2)—among emerging themes. Thirdly, both Neuman (2014) and Sargeant (2012) recounted the final step as a process of identifying "major concepts or themes that described the phenomenon under study" (Neuman, 2014, p. 11). This coding and analysis method contributed to the quality, rigor, and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Trustworthiness

Dependability, legitimacy, and reliability of research findings are characteristics of trustworthiness (Kovach, 2021). According to Neuman (2014), qualitative research has been criticized for its lack of a "built-in warrant for its value that is provided by the statistical conventions that underlie quantitative studies" (p. 15). However, the trustworthiness and reliability of this research were fundamental to its purpose; if the data themes were not authentic, they would have had no positive influence on pedagogy and teacher confidence, student learning, Indigenous education, or Reconciliation. Furthermore, they would not have been considered helpful in contributing to the scholarly conversation about professional learning or teacher efficacy, resulting in research that could be considered trustworthy. Mertler (2020) also associated reliability and dependability with the term trustworthiness and argued that characteristics of trustworthiness are "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (p. 141). Researchers could employ several strategies to ensure trustworthiness,

such as utilizing various sources, spending a significant amount of time with data, constantly checking biases, and member checking (Mertler, 2020). Various sources were utilized, biases were kept at bay, and considerable time was spent implementing the three steps of qualitative data analysis described by Neuman (2014) and Sargeant (2012).

Ethical Considerations

Through an Indigenous lens, "relational ethics are more expansive than the liability focus that marks university ethics standards" (Kovach, 2021, p. 98). Betty Bastien (2005) described the Niitsitapi perspective of trustworthiness and expressed that the trustworthiness of research lies within the unique character and integrity of the researcher. Adhering to ethical standards in this research was of utmost importance, and adherence to the criteria outlined by the Tri-Council Guidelines and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Government of Alberta, 2022) was prioritized throughout this study. Mertler (2020) summarized the notion of ethics in research. Research ethics considers the principled elements in conducting research, which is especially relevant in research involving human beings. Participants must have a guarantee from the researcher that they are both open and honest and will portray the findings appropriately and accurately (Mertler, 2020). Through the University of Alberta's online ethics system, *The Alberta Research Information Services System* (ARISE) (University of Alberta, 2022), an application for ethics approval for this study was completed. Ethics also includes determining which permissions must be obtained (Mertler, 2020). In this case, permission consists of seeking the consent of the Superintendent of the participating school division and all individual teachers. Teachers participating were made aware that in no way would their participation enable nor hinder their current/future positions within the school division, impact their contracts or evaluations, and that their involvement was entirely voluntary. Participants

could also take comfort in knowing that their personal information was to be protected, pseudonyms are used, and they had given ongoing and open consent throughout the process.

When conducting research, Mertler (2020) encouraged researchers to consider three essential principles: beneficence, honesty, and importance. "The term beneficence connotes acts or personal qualities of mercy, kindness, generosity, and charity. It is suggestive of altruism, love, humanity, and promoting the good of others" (Beauchamp, 2019, para. 3) and in relation to research never means intentionally harming participants. Honesty, as stated by Mertler (2020), "must be exhibited in all aspects of a research study- from the specification of the purpose of the research to the collection and analysis of data and the ultimate conclusions drawn" (p. 112). Finally, importance is crucial in research as its purpose is to seek and share knowledge, and it should "somehow be likely to contribute to human knowledge or be useful in a particular field" (Mertler, 2020, p. 112). This study's goal was to support educators along their journeys of learning about the beautiful cultures of Indigenous people and their history and moving forward on their pathway to reconciliation. In pursuit of that aim, I ensured that participants were treated with respect, dignity, and professionalism, protected their identities, and followed through with ongoing and informed consent by adhering to all ethical elements described above.

Summary

The questions asked to participants during interviews, inspired by understanding the guiding question, sought a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Professional Learning in the context of Indigenous ways of knowing. This research followed processes of the qualitative approach outlined by Neuman (2014) and an interpretivist epistemology as discussed by Alharahsheh (2020), Lee (2012), and Ness (2013). Voluntary interviews where participants gifted stories (Kovach, 2021) took place with teachers from a school division in Southern

Alberta. Participant data was deconstructed using Neuman's (2014) coding method and is discussed in further detail below in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Due to varying circumstances, post-secondary, and individual experiences, understanding Indigenous history, culture, and ways of knowing and implementing these lessons in classrooms is a complex position for teachers. The moral and professional obligations of attending to the indicators of TQS #5 require professional learning for pre-service and practicing teachers. This research sought to better understand teachers' perspectives regarding professional learning that may be impactful for them, particularly considering TQS #5, and to discover potential future recommendations for impactful professional learning in this context. This research explored the question w*hat characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive to be influential in increasing confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people*? The following section will articulate details of the interview participants.

Determining the Sample Unit

In late 2023, an e-mail of interest was sent from the office of the Superintendent of the Southern Alberta school division where this research occurred. The e-mail included a letter outlining the Intent of Research and Details Outlining Participation document (Appendix A) and instructions to communicate expressions of interest. In the coming weeks I received notice of interest from twelve elementary teachers. All twelve names were placed in a box, and ten were randomly selected to determine the interview participants. Once selected, participants were notified and given the Participant Consent Form in Appendix B to read, sign, and return. Interviews were then scheduled and carried out in person or through Microsoft TEAMS, depending on the participant's preference.

Participants

Ten teacher participants were randomly selected to partake in the interview process. All ten teachers currently teach in an elementary position at the same Southern Alberta School Division. Each holds a permanent teaching certificate and has at least five years of teaching experience. Table 1 summarizes the teaching and Education experience of each participant. Pseudonyms chosen for participants are the names of animals in Blackfoot or Southern Michif. I have done this intentionally not only to protect the identity of the participants but in honour of my Michif heritage and in recognition of the Siksikaitsitapi territory on which I reside.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Teaching Experience	Post Secondary Education and Specializations
Iinii (Blackfoot: Buffalo)	8 years Grades 1 & 2	French/Math University in Southern Alberta
Soorii (Michif: Mouse)	5 years Grades 1-2 Experience teaching on Reserve	Native American Studies University in Southern Alberta
Ponoká (Blackfoot: Elk)	6 years Kindergarten Grades 1 & 2	Early Literacy University in Southern Alberta
Rinaar (Michif: Fox)	10 years Grades 7-12, 4-5 split	Social Studies University in Southern Alberta
Ponokáómitaa (Blackfoot: Horse)	36 years 9 years teaching on Reserve Grades 1-2 split, 1 & 2	Social Studies University in Southern Alberta
Kaastor (Michif: Beaver)	26 years High School University Kindergarten Grade 1	Math Montessori University in West Africa University in Southern Alberta

Mamíí (Blackfoot: Fish)	17 years University College Grades 8-12, 2 & 3	Kinesiology Montessori Master's in Education University in Southern Alberta University in United States
Moshkwa (Michif: Bear)	8 years Grades 3, 1, & 5	Art Education French University in Southern Alberta
Makóyi (Blackfoot: Wolf)	18 years High School Grades 3, 2, & 1	Masters in Educational Leadership University in Southern Alberta
Pita (Blackfoot: Eagle)	7 years Grades 1-2 split, 1, & 3	Social Studies Social Sciences College in Central Alberta & University in Southern Alberta

Findings

All ethical considerations and research methodology described in Chapter Three were implemented and followed, and ten interviews took place between December 2023 and February 2024. Interviews were recorded on Microsoft TEAMS or an audio recorder if the interview occurred in person. TEAMS interviews were downloaded on a password protected laptop with a transcription, and I transcribed in-person interviews to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Participants were sent final copies of interview transcriptions to ensure findings accurately depicted their experiences, stories shared, and perspectives. This step helped to secure the trustworthiness and credibility (Mertler, 2020) of the data collected, and subsequently, the data analysis commenced. Later in this section, under Results, several tables depict the findings, major themes, and subthemes found throughout the interviews and how their experiences, perspectives, and knowledge assist in understanding the guiding question.

Data Analyses Process

Transcribed interviews were analyzed and deconstructed using data coding to categorize content. Neuman (2014) suggested the first stage, thematic analyses or open coding involves

breaking down the data and comparing for similarities and differences as well as "generating and tagging the data with codes that represent major topics that emerged." (p.11) To complete this, quotes, words, thoughts, and stories that contributed to answering the guiding questions of this study were highlighted, color-coded, and labeled with a code according to content, see Appendix C. A second list of reoccurring and main themes or codes was created and separated into smaller segments for analysis (Appendix D). A final analysis of the data took place to ensure all data was placed under the correct code and major concepts and themes were identified.

Results

Participant data was analyzed with the intent of finding a deeper understanding and insight into the question: *What characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive to be influential in relation to increasing confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people?* This section highlights the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data and includes specific examples of participants' perspectives related to the guiding question. Table 2 below summarizes how data received specifically regarding professional learning was deconstructed into main themes. The main themes were subsequently sorted into subthemes, which will be discussed in detail below. In addition, Table 3 below indicates which participants discussed which themes specifically.

Table 2

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Impactful professional learning	• Collaborative • Hands on/Experiential • Immediately Applicable • Credible facilitators • Connected to teacher needs and interests
Personal learning	• Learning alongside • Sitting in discomfort

Table 3

Theme to Participant Data

Characteristics of Impactful PL	**Participants**
Collaborative (COL)	Mamii, Pita, Ponoka, Kasstor, Rinaar, Ponokaamita
Hands on/experiential (HO)	Mamii, Moshkwa, Pita, Ponoka, Makoyi, Ponokaamita, Kasstor
Ready resources (RR)	Moshkwa, Pita, Soori, Ponoka, Makoyi,
Authentic Presenters (AP)	Pita, Soori, Ponokaamita, Makoyi
Connected to teacher needs/passions (CTNP)	Mamii, Soori, Ponoka, Kaastor, Moshkwa, Ponokaamita
Personal learning (PL)	Mamii, Pita, Soori, Iinii, Rinaar,

Characteristics of Impactful Professional Learning

Collaborative

Most teacher participants identified collaboration as an agent for impactful professional learning. Collaboration is fundamental to professional learning, fostering an environment where individuals can discuss diverse perspectives, share knowledge, and collectively innovate. Collaboration works particularly well when you have an existing relationship with those you are working with. Ponokaamitaa said, "Sometimes you'll do sessions, and they'll say okay, turn and talk...well, I don't want to turn and talk because I don't know anyone here. If you go to PL with

someone you work with, you can bring it back and figure it out together for your context. Instead of one person going and bringing it back, maybe missing something or not fully understanding it, and then sharing it with someone, it is not very impactful. It makes a big difference to have someone." Similarly, Ponoka described a professional learning experience they and a colleague attended. "It was more of a sit-and-get session. It wasn't until my colleague and I got back to school and were able to have time together to reflect about how we could bring it alive in our classrooms" that it all came together. Another participant, Mamii, expressed memories of impactful professional learning on two separate occasions. Both occasions included going to subject-specific conferences with colleagues. Mamii highlighted attending these conferences with like-minded people and having the opportunity to bounce ideas back and forth with each other as highly beneficial. Lastly, Rinaar shared similar sentiments and stated that professional learning is impactful "whenever I get to have a real discussion with others. Being able to say this is what I think and feel, actually being heard by the presenter or by other people within the session." These types of professional learning experiences, according to Rinaar, “help build your own ideas into better, richer things." Through collaboration, professionals engage in active dialogue, exchanging ideas, experiences, and best practices, which enriches their understanding and expands their skill sets. Collaboration encourages teamwork and communication, enabling individuals to tackle complex challenges more effectively by drawing upon each other's strengths and expertise.

Experiential

Throughout the research, hands-on and experiential opportunities were characterized as an essential piece of impactful professional learning. Hands-on experiences are crucial to professional learning as they allow individuals to apply theoretical knowledge in practical

contexts and foster a more profound understanding and skill development. Pita confidently said that impactful professional learning looks like "having time to make it, try it out, get the resource, do the thing, practice it right then and there." Moshkwa also expressed the benefits of hands-on professional learning and recounted a half-day professional learning event which they found to be one of the most impactful experiences of their teaching career. According to Moshkwa, the morning incorporated grade-specific learning centers where resources were ready for teachers to take and practice various activities and learning engagements supporting the resources provided. Moshkwa indicated that this morning was very hands-on and "gave you examples of how to talk about it and how you handle it in the classroom setting. Rather than getting a package saying here you go, make this work". Teachers develop competence and adaptability by immersing themselves in practical scenarios, preparing them to navigate diverse and dynamic professional environments effectively. Makoyi spoke of this explicitly in their interview, expressing that "it's when you play the game that the kids are going to, or you see it in action. Here's how it goes and then oh, maybe you have a kid who reacts this way, here's an alternative." Moreover, hands-on experiences promote sensory engagement, enhancing retention and transfer of learning to future tasks or challenges. Rinaar boldly admitted that they are "at the point where I if I know it's going to be a sit and get, I will almost have to bring something else to do or make myself stand up." Ponokaamitaa seconded this when they said that "good professional learning, it's no different than being in a classroom. It's not just about being spoken to and given a bunch of information but getting the opportunity to actually do something with it."

Immediately Applicable

The data indicated that some teachers' find resources that are ready to go can be helpful for several reasons. Teachers described time as a significant hinderance in applying new ideas

and programs into their classrooms. Ready-to-go resources created by professionals in a given discipline can save time and effort in not recreating the wheel. Soori, Pita, Moshkwa, Makoyi, and Ponoka all indicated having a liking for receiving resources that are ready for classroom implementation. Makoyi explained they appreciated ready to go resources because they are “not sitting there having to read through steps and manuals it’s just like here we go!” Moshkwa also expressed gratitude for a professional learning event that had a plethora of ready to go resources. “It was amazing because I came out of that with so much stuff that was just ready to go. I had things to do all year.” While there are many benefits of having ready to go resources including consistent structure, quality assurance, and access to resources created by experts in an area, the chief benefit according to participants is the time and convenience they provide.

Authenticity and Credibility

Several participants stated that authenticity in presenters and facilitation of professional learning were critical factors in impactful learning. Authentic presenters play a crucial role in impactful professional learning for several reasons. Authentic presenters bring real-world experience and expertise to the table. Their firsthand knowledge and insights make the learning experience more trustworthy and valuable. Pita emphasized, "I don't want to go and hear someone's secondhand telling of something. I want someone who has been in the classroom. Whether it's literacy or numeracy, but someone in that role, or if it was Indigenous education, for example, I want to hear from an Indigenous person." Ponokaamitaa echoed these feelings and said impactful professional learning does not come from "someone who's up at the front of room saying hey, look at me I have done this and this and this and here's some information because I have observed it, but I haven't been in the classroom for x amount of years, that just kind of turns me off." Authentic presenters have a deep understanding of the topics they cover. They can

provide practical tips, strategies, and examples that resonate with participants and directly apply to their roles, in this case, teaching. Soori said that reaching out to and learning from experts in the community is significantly beneficial as it allows us to see and hear "new perspectives and ways to support our students." Authentic presenters often serve as role models, motivating participants to strive for excellence and pursue their goals. By sharing their own journey and achievements, they inspire others to overcome challenges, embrace new opportunities, and continuously grow as professionals. Mamii told about a professional learning they were sent to. It was an international conference specific to the field in which they were teaching. At that conference, Mamii met world-renowned professionals and expressed how "great" and inspiring it was to learn from them. Additionally, Iinii and Soorii both made mention of the importance of feeling inspired and remarked that this is the most impactful characteristic of professional learning. Soori said, “the best opportunities are the ones that uplift me, speak to me.” Overall, authentic presenters bring a unique blend of credibility, relevance, and inspiration to professional learning experiences, making them essential for maximizing impact and fostering meaningful growth.

Connected to Teacher Needs and Passions

When professional learning aligns with teacher and student needs, it becomes more relevant to their daily work. Teachers are more likely to engage with and apply new knowledge and skills when it directly addresses challenges or goals they encounter in their classrooms. As indicated by Soori, "If the professional learning you're attending isn't aligned with your values and goals for the classroom, then it's no good." Ponokaamitaa reinforces this idea by stating, "We pick something that we are interested in, a topic, or something we need to work at. And I think that works a lot better than having mandated PL." Similarly, Moshkwa highlights the importance

of passion in learning: "It helps to be passionate about what you're learning." When professional learning is connected to teachers' interests and needs, it not only motivates them but also enhances their ability to implement what they learn effectively in their classrooms.

Teachers are more motivated to participate in professional learning opportunities that address their needs and interests, as feeling that their learning is tailored to them can increase their enthusiasm and willingness to invest time and effort into improving their practice. As Soori put it, effective professional learning is "aligned with what I'm excited about," emphasizing the importance of personal relevance. When professional learning aligns with teachers' passions, it fosters intrinsic motivation and a deeper sense of personal investment, encouraging educators to take ownership of their professional growth.

Furthermore, professional learning becomes particularly impactful when it connects to teacher interests, reinforcing a sense of agency and autonomy. By addressing areas for growth or providing solutions to everyday challenges, teachers can implement what they learn more effectively in their classrooms, leading to improved instructional practices and student outcomes. Importantly, some participants noted that passion is not always pertinent to professional learning. For instance, Mamii remarked, "Even professional learning that isn't necessarily something you're passionate about now is still important." They gave an example of professional learning about EAL (English Additional Language) learners, which, although not immediately relevant to their current classroom, provided valuable insights. Moshkwa added that "PL should be focused on something that you're passionate about, but when it comes to reconciliation, you don't need to be passionate about it because I know there's a lot of people who are nervous about First Nations topics." This highlights the need for professional learning to address both immediate needs and

broader, sometimes challenging, areas of growth, ensuring that educators are equipped to support all students effectively.

Personal Learning

A reemerging theme found throughout analyses was the concept of personal learning or in other words, transformational learning. Transformational learning experiences were deemed to be notably impactful by several interview participants. A transformational learning experience is one that emphasizes the process of change in a person's worldview. According to Mezirow (2000) transformational experiences allow individuals to question and revise their beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives. It often challenges existing assumptions, encourages critical reflection, and promotes personal growth and development. Transformational learning goes beyond simply acquiring new information; it involves a fundamental shift in how one understands oneself and the world. Kaastor indicated feeling overwhelmed when learning of the history of Indigenous people and feeling guilt, saying that they "should have known before." Mamii specifically indicated that "the most impactful sessions that I have had are ones where my current ways of knowing are being challenged and by challenged, I mean being asked to see things through a different lens." Many participants indicated that professional learning is most impactful when it elicits personal change, a transformational experience. Opportunities that provide time to reflect, speak to them personally, make space for questioning their assumptions, and even the opportunity to sit in discomfort were described as impactful professional learning characteristics. Also, most teachers said that letting their students know they are learning alongside them was an impactful way of learning new content and knowledge. Many commented on the positive impact laterally positioning themselves among students can have on relationships and learning for all.

Sitting in Discomfort

Sitting in discomfort was identified throughout the interviews as an impactful element in professional learning because it prompts reflection, personal growth, and transformative change. Pita said, “When I started teaching, math was very uncomfortable for me to teach. I felt very uncertain about how to do it, but I knew I had to do it because it was important. That’s how I feel about Indigenous education. People might be uncomfortable, but it’s important.” When individuals encounter challenging or unfamiliar ideas, perspectives, or situations, it can evoke feelings of discomfort. However, rather than avoiding or dismissing these discomforts, embracing them as opportunities for learning and growth is essential. Mamii said, “I think people think it’s easier to just not know, but then you get to a point where it’s like, okay, I have to be vulnerable here. You have to say wow, I don’t actually know anything about Residential schools and Indigenous ways of knowing and what can I do to be better? If I am not curious now, how can I incorporate this authentically? It won’t happen.” While perhaps uncomfortable, the discussions around First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history, diverse cultures, and ways of knowing must be done. As Rinaar indicated in “Southern Alberta racism is just such a powerful force, and I feel like elementary is almost the only chance we have to combat some of those embedded biases.”

Learning Alongside

The idea of professional learning occurring as an organic event was reoccurring throughout the research. Sometimes, according to participants, professional learning happens haphazardly through daily observations and experiences with students in the classroom. Rinaar said that much of their learning has been in the classroom and has been “so organic as opposed to specific.” Mamii also remarked, “There is also professional learning I do outside of school, like

parenting and navigating different situations. All those sessions or coaching sessions help me be a better teacher, connect with kids, and build relationships." In other words, learning can often happen alongside and in the moment. Teachers learning alongside students offer numerous benefits that enrich the educational experience for both educators and learners. Firstly, it cultivates a culture of shared inquiry and collaboration, where teachers and students collaborate as co-learners, fostering mutual respect and a sense of partnership in the learning process. Ponokáómitaa mentioned when having special guests in the classroom that even though experiences are planned for student learning, they "were learning and experiencing that too as teachers." This approach encourages open dialogue, curiosity, and a growth mindset among all participants.

Iinii indicated when they come upon a situation in the classroom they are not well versed in, they are "very comfortable saying that's not something I'm an expert in... let me ask." Mammii also expressed when speaking about Indigenous Education in particular, "You have to tell the kids, I am going to acknowledge that this is not my history, this is not my background, but I'm going to share it with you in the most authentic way that I understand, and if there is something you don't understand, or something I haven't said right, or you have questions, I am so open to learning and want to learn more." Moreover, Moshkwa indicated as well that they "tell the kids all the time that I'm learning along with you all. We are learning together. There's something so authentic about saying I'm learning alongside you. We are lifelong learners." Teachers who learn alongside their students demonstrate the value of lifelong learning and modeling intellectual curiosity, inspiring students to take ownership of their learning journey and pursue knowledge independently. This collaborative learning model promotes a dynamic, inclusive learning environment where teachers and students thrive.

Influences of Post-Secondary on Efficacy

Teachers were asked to describe their post-secondary education and experiences and or learning related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foundational knowledge and how these experiences relate to their efficacy and confidence in integrating foundational knowledge into their instructional strategies. Participant data retrieved from the coding process has been organized into the categories below. These categories express participant perceptions of the experiences and knowledge received during post-secondary education and whether these experiences were non-existent, fully immersed in Indigenous foundational knowledge, transactional experiences, or transformational experiences.

Table 5

Post-secondary experiences related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people

Non-existent	**Full Immersion**	**Transactional**	**Transformational**
Iinii	Soori (Native American Studies Major)	Ponoká	Rinaar
Ponokáómitaa		Moshkwa	Soori
Mamíí		Kaastor	
Makóyi		Pita	

The terms non-existent, full immersion, transactional, and transformational have been used to describe the experiences participants had during their post-secondary courses relating to foundational Indigenous knowledge and supporting Indigenous students. Non-existent describes an experience lacking coverage of these important topics completely. Full emersion describes an experience where participants felt fully supported and recalled several opportunities that lead to an increased confidence and competence. Transactional describes an experience that was surface level and did not result in impactful learning and lastly transformational describes the opposite, experiences that left a long-lasting impact and caused personal reflection and transformation.

Post-secondary experience is relevant to this study as teachers have, partially, these experiences, or lack thereof, to thank for their efficacy in attending to the indicators of TQS #5. The data shows consistent inconsistency in teachers' experiences learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people throughout post-secondary. While post-secondary experience does not necessarily determine a teacher's confidence in teaching and learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, it is undoubtedly a factor. The following section will divulge teachers' perspectives on their confidence and challenges in attending to the indicators in TQS #5.

Confidence and Challenges in TQS #5

Confidence

Table 6 summarizes participant data in relation to confidence in attending to the indicators in TQS #5. Data was presented in this way to authentically reflect the diverse responses gathered. For reference, the indicators that teachers may be succeeding in TQS #5 are as follows:

> (a) understanding the historical, social, economic, and political implications of:
>
> • treaties and agreements with First Nations;
>
> • legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis; and
>
> • residential schools and their legacy;
>
> (b) supporting student achievement by engaging in collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education;
>
> (c) using the programs of study to provide opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; and

(d) supporting the learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6)

Table 6

Teacher confidence in TQS #5

Iinii (Blackfoot: Buffalo)	"I feel very much that the confidence in which I teach it feels like I still segregate it from curriculum content."
Soorii (Michif: Mouse)	"I feel **quite** confident, but I feel that I have the background knowledge to share."
Ponoká (Blackfoot: Elk)	"I would say that I am **somewhat** confident."
Rinaar (Michif: Fox)	"I feel **good** about teaching it generally, especially at an elementary level."
Ponokáómitaa (Blackfoot: Horse)	"This is a hard question because some of it I feel yes, I can do this. If I were to say, 'oh no, yep! I got this.' **There's always something you don't have**."
Kaastor (Michif: Beaver)	"I feel like I'm **somewhat** confident and I think the reason I say so is because of the support received from the Indigenous team at the school division and the Indigenous education committee at my school."
Mamíí (Blackfoot: Fish)	"I would say in the last 2-3 years I feel **more confident**. If you asked me in my first few years of teaching, I would say **not confident at all.**"
Moshkwa (Michif: Bear)	"I'm **pretty** confident now after years and years of my own personal PL."
Makóyi (Blackfoot: Wolf)	"**I feel confident talking to my age group** in a very age appropriate but realistic way about Residential Schools, about Orange Shirt Day, about Rock your Mocs, and about Indigenous Peoples Day." "I'm confident in teaching the big pieces, but when it comes down to treaty and law and that **I don't know enough**."
Pita (Blackfoot: Eagle)	"I feel **relatively** confident. I don't think there's anything that I'm like, 'oh, I can't do that.' Part of it I think is because professional learning over the years but also personal learning." "I know where to start a conversation about having someone come in but would **need support** with that."

These findings are especially relevant for future considerations in supporting professional learning for teachers in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foundational knowledge. Some teachers expressed confidence about talking about residential schools with their students but added that their comfort level may be determined by the grade level that they teach. Some participants indicated their confidence level may decrease if the age level of students increased as conversations become more in-depth and complex. Many thanked the professional learning opportunities and resources organized and created by their school division's Indigenous Education team for their confidence. Although teachers noted some areas of efficacy, they also recounted many challenges which will be discussed in the following section.

Challenges to TQS #5

Teachers identified four main challenges throughout the research in terms of embedding, teaching, and learning foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in the classroom. These challenges are encapsulated in Table 7.

Table 7

Challenges

Fear	**Pan-Indigeneity**	**Colleagues**	**Parents/Guardians**
Ponoká Ponokáámitaa Soori Mamíí	Pita Ponoká Ponokáámitaa Rinaar	Pita Makóyi Rinaar	Pita Makóyi Iinii Soori

Fear

Teachers are tasked with imparting knowledge and guiding students through their educational journey, but if they are constantly worried about making a mistake, they may become hesitant to engage in meaningful discussions. Interview data divulged that fear is something that some teachers do experience when faced with having difficult conversations with

their students, especially conversations relating to the history of Residential schools and Indigenous people in Canada. Ponoká mentioned having a difficult "time talking about Residential schools in a way that is impactful, especially with littles. It's a hard conversation." Soori echoed this when they expressed, "Every year when we have Orange Shirt Say, and we talk about it, the way the kids hold themselves in this conversation, you can physically see them slouch back and their body language changes, sometimes it's hard to know what is appropriate for kids but also not hide it. We need to learn and be better." Another participant, Ponokáámitaa, disclosed, "I think sometimes, was that the right thing to say? Or I'm not quite sure how to say this..." Understandably, individuals without explicit education about Indigenous history and ways of knowing experience some trepidation in facilitating conversations with their students. The truth of the matter is that Canadian Indigenous history is complex information to share because it is not a positive history. However, consider the difference between how difficult it is to discuss and how difficult it was to endure in addition to the moral and professional responsibility teachers hold. Overcoming this fear of saying the wrong thing is therefore crucial for teachers to encourage critical thinking, adhere to their moral and professional responsibility, and work towards realizing the goals of reconciliation in schools.

Pan-Indigeneity

Pan-Indigeneity, as described in the above literature review, refers to recognizing commonalities among Indigenous peoples and emphasizes the shared experiences and challenges of Indigenous communities nationally. Occasionally, emphasizing commonalities amongst Indigenous people can achieve a sense of solidarity; however, it can also overlook or downplay the diversity of Indigenous groups and their unique traditions, languages, and identities. Teachers indicated throughout the research process that Pan-Indigeneity in numerous ways represents a

challenge. Ponoká indicated, "I find it hard not to make general statements about Indigenous people. I am learning more about different Indigenous groups and that they all don't have the same beliefs and traditions." Ponokáámitaa spoke about working collaboratively with a colleague from the West Coast who translated a phrase into a Northern Indigenous language. "When I mentioned translating the phrase into Blackfoot for Southern Alberta, they said, "Isn't it the same?" Pan-Indigeneity and geographic location revealed themselves connected to confidence in the classroom multiple times. Pita was initially quite critical of themselves when asked about their confidence in foundational Indigenous knowledge but discovered through conversation that they were more confident than originally thought, "I feel confident teaching about Inuit and Iqaluit from teaching Grade two for so long. I didn't think about that at first because when you're asking me these questions, I think about Blackfoot people and culture because we live on Blackfoot territory." Rinaar similarly expressed that when living in Northern Alberta, they "didn't feel confident in (their) knowledge of the Indigenous people in that area." In addition, Rinaar explained that because "we're living in Treaty seven and this is Blackfoot land, I have learned about the Blackfoot people, and I know a lot about Métis culture. Still, if I were to go elsewhere, it's a whole different ball game." Alongside pan-Indigeneity, participants also identified colleagues and parents/guardians as being a significant challenge in embedding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge and experiences into the classroom. This challenge will be discussed in the following section.

Colleagues and Parents/Guardians

Several teachers revealed colleagues and parents/guardians with differing perspectives and understanding of Indigenous history and people and the importance of teaching and learning Indigenous content in the classroom to be a notable challenge. School buildings are filled with

individuals, staff, and students alike, with diverse backgrounds, including religious, spiritual, linguistic, and cultural. Therefore, classrooms are immensely diverse, and creating a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and sensitive to student demographics is a teacher's responsibility. Teachers communicated through the study that due to the diverse perspectives that exist, colleagues and parents/guardians and the difficult conversations that can arise can be quite challenging. Occasionally, colleagues and parents/colleagues perceive the inclusion and teaching of Indigenous foundational knowledge to infringe or conflict with their own beliefs and preconceived notions. Makóyi discussed a time when a school smudge was hosted and that several parents preferred their children not to be included in the experience due to their religious beliefs and perceptions of the activity. In addition, Iinii described an incident when teaching about the Seven Sacred Teachings, and a parent communicated being very uncomfortable with the term sacred and voiced that a public school had no business teaching anything to do with spirituality of any kind. Soori explained that the "hardest part is not necessarily the kids but the parents. Some parents aren't on board generationally. They see the results and the trauma of the people experiencing it. Some parents themselves don't have an understanding of Residential schools."

Pita discussed having to navigate an uncomfortable situation with a colleague who boldly and publicly did not support an Indigenous initiative at their school. “In the moment I wasn’t prepared to have a conversation because I was just so mad but then once I gathered myself a took a look at TQS five and did some research, I felt better prepared to have a conversation with my colleague.” Pita’s narrative is affirmation that teachers are finding themselves in situations where they are having to educate themselves outside of school hours to better equip themselves with information and confidence relating to TQS five. Makóyi also recalled having a difficult

conversation with a colleague who felt uncomfortable and weary of discussing Residential schools with their students for fear of scaring them. Rinaar expressed in addition that as someone with knowledge and confidence in teaching and learning Indigenous history and ways of knowing, feeling frustrated "trying to support (their) team" with their apparent lack of knowledge and understanding. “I just want to tell them, you do it.”

Summary

This chapter presented the major themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis stage to address the question: *What characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive as influential in increasing their confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people?* Several factors were identified as necessary for impactful professional learning, including collaboration, experiential learning, access to resources, authentic presenters, and content tailored to specific teacher needs and passions. Notably, teachers indicated that professional learning encouraging transformational learning was perhaps the most impactful. The perspectives of participants and the identified characteristics of impactful professional learning have significant implications for school leaders and generate numerous ideas for future recommendations, which are discussed further below.

CHAPTER FIVE: DICUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Educators have a profound professional and moral responsibility to acknowledge and address the enduring impacts of generations of racism, the legacy of Residential schools, and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Additionally, they must consider the implications of the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) Competency Number Five concerning First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Research indicates that many educators in Alberta have limited exposure to, awareness of, and understanding of foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and culture (Donald, 2009). Consequently, many educators encounter challenges in confidently, appropriately, accurately, and respectfully integrating foundational Indigenous knowledge into their pedagogy, classroom practices, and school culture. To remedy this point, teachers must engage in professional learning that will bolster their sense of efficacy. This study aimed to identify characteristics of professional learning that teachers find impactful in enhancing this efficacy. Participating teachers identified five necessary characteristics for impactful professional learning: collaboration, experiential learning, access to resources, authentic presenters, and content tailored to specific teacher needs and passions. Notably, teachers indicated that professional learning encouraging transformation was perhaps the most impactful. This chapter will begin by comparing and contrasting the research findings of this study to various foundational literature presented in Chapter Two. The limitations of the study will be presented and implications for leaders of learning, concluding with future recommendations.

Connections to Literature Review

Chapter Two's literature review provides the historical and contextual parameters necessary to begin to understand foundational Indigenous knowledge, assimilation through

education, truth and reconciliation, restorative and trauma-informed practices, and professional learning in the context of teaching practices. This chapter will connect the emerging themes from this study to these components of the literature review, with a particular focus on foundational Indigenous knowledge, assimilation through education, and professional learning. The aim of this study is to address the question: *What characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive as influential in increasing their confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples?*

Foundational Indigenous Knowledge

In the literature review, it was noted that fully understanding the intricacies of Foundational Indigenous Knowledge may be impossible, as the histories of Indigenous peoples predate the settler's colonial founding of Canada. Accordingly, much of this knowledge is rooted in oral tradition and with the ancestors. Nonetheless, educators are being called to action to increase their understanding and capacity to teach these foundational ways to and for all students. Nelson (2004) argued that "a culture's worldview evolves from its history, which is the collective experiences of the people within that culture over all the years of its existence" (pp. 66-70). When considering Indigenous worldviews, Greenwood (2007) conveyed that:

> The foundations of Indigeneity are these; values that privilege the interrelationships among the spiritual, the natural, and the self: a sacred orientation to place and space; a fluidity of knowledge exchange between past, present, and future; and an honouring of language orality as an important means of knowledge transmission. (p. 2)

While these characteristics offer insight into commonalities among Indigenous worldviews, caution is required to avoid generalizing and treating Indigenous groups as a monolithic entity. This tendency to generalize Indigenous knowledge is known as *pan-Indigeneity*. In the literature

review, pan-Indigeneity was described as an amalgamation of Indigenous cultures in efforts to "arrive at one all-encompassing Indian" (Dennis, 2014, p. 66). Vowel (2011) noted a potential benefit of pan-Indigeneity being a "common lingo regardless of which nation you are actually from. This 'lingo' can help create a sense of community and make you feel like you are a part of something" (para. 2). However, pan-Indigeneity is generally considered unfavorable as it undermines the unique histories, languages, traditions, stories, and knowledge of countless Indigenous groups. This "colonial understanding of Indigeneity allows for an oversimplified and stereotypical" (McGuinne, 2014, para. 2) view of Indigenous people.

Throughout the interview process, several teachers identified elements of pan-Indigeneity identified by Dennis (2014) and McGuinne (2014) as a significant challenge when speaking about and teaching Indigenous content. Ponoká indicated, "I find it hard not to make general statements about Indigenous people. I am learning more about different Indigenous groups and that they all don't have the same beliefs and traditions." Similarly, Ponokáámitaa spoke about working collaboratively with a colleague from the West Coast who translated a phrase into a Northern Indigenous language. "When I mentioned translating the phrase into Blackfoot for Southern Alberta, they said, 'Isn't it all the same?'" These examples highlight that many non-Indigenous people, including educators, need assistance in understanding that Indigeneity is a unique experience depending on tribe, language, traditions, and geographic location.

Geographic location plays a significant role in the level and type of knowledge that educators possess relating to Indigenous people. Pita was initially quite critical of themselves when asked about their confidence in foundational Indigenous knowledge but discovered through conversation that they were more confident than originally thought: "I feel confident teaching about Inuit and Iqaluit from teaching Grade Two for so long. I didn't think about that at

first because when you're asking me these questions, I think about Blackfoot people and culture because we live on Blackfoot territory." Similarly, Rinaar expressed that when living in Northern Alberta, they "didn't feel confident in (their) knowledge of the Indigenous people in that area." Rinaar further explained that because "we're living in Treaty Seven and this is Blackfoot land, I have learned about the Blackfoot people, and I know a lot about Métis culture. Still, if I were to go elsewhere, it's a whole different ball game."

Increasing understanding of the history, legacy, and contemporary reality of Foundational Indigenous Knowledge to mitigate challenges surrounding pan-Indigeneity is an area where educators require support. Professional learning opportunities providing this knowledge transfer will be further discussed as possible recommendations later in this chapter.

Assimilation through Education

As discussed throughout the literature review, Indigenous people collectively have been targeted by assimilation through education for generations. The long-standing legacy of Day schools, Industrial schools, Boarding schools, and Residential schools has had devastating impacts on Indigenous communities by enforcing separation from family, suppressing language, eroding traditions, disrupting knowledge transfer, and actively attempting to reform Indigenous identity. The primary intent of residential schools was to erase every trace of Indigenous culture, beliefs, and languages. “Students were stripped of all things associated with Native life. Their long hair, a source of pride for many Native peoples, was cut short” (Pember, 2019, para. 4).

Assimilation through these institutions had profound effects that are not merely part of historical memory, they are living trauma (Prete, 2021). Accordingly, Canadians and educators must acknowledge how the legacy of Residential schools influences their roles as educators and the significant consequences this legacy still has on Indigenous students and their families today.

Mamii, an interview participant, suggested that maybe “people think it’s easier to just not know, but then you get to a point where it’s like, okay, I have to be vulnerable here. You have to say wow, I don’t actually know anything about Residential schools and Indigenous ways of knowing and what can I do to be better? If I am not curious now, how can I incorporate this authentically? It won’t happen.”

Understanding the concepts discussed above and feeling efficacious to teach them to children are two distinct paths. Throughout the interview process, teachers shared their confidence in this regard, as well as several challenges they face in the school setting. It's important to note that before understanding can occur, there must be teaching that is characterized by exposure and experience with the content. Many participants reported having either non-existent or merely transactional experiences related to Foundational Indigenous Knowledge during their post-secondary teacher training program. Mamíí said “I would say in the last 2-3 years I feel more confident. If you asked me in my first few years of teaching, I would say not confident at all.” Additionally, Makóyi indicated only feeling “confident talking to my age group in a very age appropriate but realistic way about Residential Schools, about Orange Shirt Day, about Rock your Mocs, and about Indigenous Peoples Day. I’m confident in teaching the big pieces, but when it comes down to treaty and law, I don’t know enough.” In addition to confidence, participants identified colleagues and families with differing perspectives as significant challenges in implementing Indigenous lessons and worldviews in their classrooms. The following are some of the pressures expressed by research participants. Makóyi recounted an incident where parents objected to their children participating in a school smudge due to religious beliefs. Iinii faced discomfort from a parent when teaching the Seven Sacred Teachings, as the term "sacred" was seen as inappropriate for public school content. Soori

highlighted that resistance often comes from parents, who may not understand Indigenous history or the impacts of Residential schools. Pita shared an experience of navigating a difficult situation with a colleague who opposed an Indigenous initiative, emphasizing the importance of preparation and understanding TQS #5 to address such conflicts.

Regardless of the challenges, lack of exposure, and low efficacy educators are seeing the importance and value of furthering their learning and increasing their confidence to better foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that honor Indigenous perspectives, languages, and knowledge systems. Rinaar indicated that in “Southern Alberta racism is just such a powerful force, and I feel like elementary is almost the only chance we have to combat some of those embedded biases.”

Professional Learning

Professional learning (PL), as described in the literature review, is an action many professionals, particularly educators, undertake to expand their knowledge and build their professional capacity through various learning opportunities. Joyce (2002) defined professional learning as the “means by which new knowledge is added to the teacher’s professional repertoire” (p. 1). Fullan (2012) emphasized that if educators "are going to develop high-level capabilities in their students, they will need to have learned and acquired a lot of capital themselves" (pp. 101). As Timperley (2007) maintained:

> teachers are the ones who work directly with students, who translate and shape curricular goals and theoretical ideas into classroom practice, and who shape the environment for learning. Teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions have direct and serious implications for the success of the students they teach. (p. vii)

When implemented correctly, PL inspires innovative ideas and encourages educators to take risks and change their practices to improve student learning. Timperley (2011) stated, "Improvements in student learning and well-being are not a by-product of professional learning but rather its central purpose" (p. 5).

Alberta educators are not only encouraged to engage in PL but are also contractually obliged to do so, as outlined in the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS). For instance, Competency Two of the LQS, Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning, states that “a leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching, and learning” (Alberta Education, p. 4). Similarly, Competency Two of the TQS (Alberta Education, 2018) asserts that “a teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning” (p. 4).

While professional learning may be customary practice for Alberta educators, this study aimed to gain insight into *impactful* professional learning practices. Research presented in Chapter Two indicated that impactful professional learning "necessitates trying something out, working at it, feeling uncomfortable for a while, and adapting practice as a result" (Harris, 2014, p. 118). Research participants confirmed that professional learning opportunities that were experiential and hands-on, as Harris (2014) expressed, were far more impactful in transformational learning and teaching practices. Pita stated in their interview that impactful professional learning involves "having time to make it, try it out, get the resource, do the thing, practice it right then and there" Makoyi, Moshkwa, Rinaar, and Ponokaamitaa all supported the importance of and preferred experiential learning during professional learning activities.

Professional learning was also deemed impactful when conducted in collaboration with colleagues. Harris (2014) noted that educators “tend to go to external training or professional development events alone. However good the training might be, the chances of convincing colleagues back at schools of its merits will be low” (p. 91). One research participant noted that it can be uncomfortable when you’re expected to share ideas and discuss perspectives and content with someone you’re unfamiliar with. Hunzicker (2010) indicated that “peer feedback is a particularly important aspect of collaborative professional development” (p. 7) as it enables teachers to discuss “strengths, clarify ideas, and correct misconceptions” (p. 7). These characteristics were strongly confirmed in several findings in the research results of this study. Ponoka described the benefits of having a colleague to discuss PL with afterward, so they could “sit and reflect on how to make it come alive in their classrooms.” Mamii also recalled impactful professional learning happening when attending various conferences with colleagues who were like-minded and interested in the same topics. Lastly, Rinaar shared similar sentiments and stated that professional learning is impactful "whenever I get to have a real discussion with others. Being able to say this is what I think and feel, actually being heard by the presenter or by other people within the session." According to Rinaar, these types of professional learning experiences “help build your own ideas into better, richer things."

Importantly, participants described professional learning as impactful when it led to personal change. Personal learning and change can be understood as transformative change or learning. As previously discussed,[1] transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997) may occur when individuals have opportunities to reflect upon "concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life" (p. 1) to better understand various

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perspectives. Unlike traditional learning, which often involves the acquisition of knowledge or skills, transformational learning emphasizes personal growth, changes in beliefs or undergoing a shift in worldview. Mamii specifically indicated that "the most impactful sessions that I have had are ones where my current ways of knowing are being challenged and by challenged, I mean being asked to see things through a different lens." When teachers are truly inquisitive and reflective about their perspectives and learning, profound change can occur, which in turn benefits and expands their teaching practices and enhances student knowledge and success.

Lastly, according to teacher interviews, most teachers genuinely appreciate positioning themselves laterally among their students as learners. They find this approach to learning extremely impactful and transformative of their teaching practices, especially in the context of learning about the foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Limitations of the Findings

While the research findings of this study provide valuable insights, several limitations must be considered. First, only ten teachers participated in this study, which is a relatively small sample size and may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although qualitative studies are not necessarily intended to be generalizable, a larger sample size could have produced richer or more diverse findings. Another limitation arises from the potential variations in teachers' understanding of the term "confidence" and their interpretation of interview questions, which could affect the consistency of the responses. Additionally, the study relied on semi-structured interviews, where participants provided accounts based on their perspectives and memory. This approach can introduce inaccuracies and potential reflexive biases. Furthermore, the research was conducted with teachers working within a single school division in a specific geographic location. The findings might differ if the sample were larger and more geographically diverse.

Lastly, interviewing only elementary teachers presents its own limitations. These teachers work primarily with younger students, and their experiences may not fully represent the challenges, perspectives, and dynamics faced by educators at the middle school, high school, or post-secondary levels. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for accurately interpreting the findings and guiding future recommendations and research efforts.

Implications for Leaders

The Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) is an important Alberta Education policy document that may frame findings as well as recommendations for the implementation of best practices. The LQS communicates and upholds the professional expectations for all school leaders in Alberta comprised of nine competencies that leaders must possess: demonstrate, including:

1. Fostering Effective Relationships
2. Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
3. Embodying Visionary Leadership
4. Leading a Learning Community
5. Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
6. Providing Instructional Leadership
7. Developing Leadership Capacity
8. Managing School Operations and Resources
9. Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context (Alberta Education, 2020a)

While all competencies are interrelated, competencies two and five directly connect to the guiding question of this study: *What characteristics of professional learning do elementary teachers perceive as influential in increasing their confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples?*

Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning

This competency states that "a leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching, and learning" (Alberta Education, p. 4). School leaders must provide teachers with the opportunity to express their learning needs; additionally, leaders must be reflective when planning professional learning opportunities based on the identified needs and preferences of teachers. Leaders should foster and support a culture of continuous learning and growth. According to the findings of this study, it is crucial for leaders to facilitate and acquire professional learning that is transformational, experiential, collaborative, and led by credible individuals.

School leaders can demonstrate authenticity by positioning themselves as learners alongside their teachers, an approach that has been identified by educators as highly impactful for classroom learning, particularly in the context of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. Learning alongside teachers specifically addresses the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS, 2020), which states that "achievement of this competency is demonstrated by...engaging with others to build personal and collective professional capacities and expertise" (p. 3). Several scholars discuss the concept of learning alongside, including Leithwood (2006), Fullan (2014), Senge (2006), and Tomlinson (2014). Tomlinson (2014) emphasizes the importance of leaders and teachers working collaboratively to meet diverse student needs. Her "side by side" approach involves leaders and teachers learning together, supporting one another, and engaging in shared

decision-making to enhance student learning. Similarly, Fullan (2014) highlights the role of leaders in modeling desired practices and behaviors to drive school improvement. In works such as *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*, Fullan discusses how leaders can inspire and guide their teams by acting as role models.

Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

LQS Competency five highlights the role of leaders in supporting the learning and growth of the school community, with a particular emphasis on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. This study has identified four key challenges that teachers encounter in acquiring and teaching this foundational knowledge, as well as issues related to their previous undergraduate exposure. These insights can inform leaders in developing targeted support and professional learning opportunities to enhance educators' effectiveness. Supporting teachers and fostering the growth of the school community are central to effective leadership. Karen Seashore-Lewis (2009) advocates for creating a collaborative professional learning environment where teachers and staff share best practices, engage in continuous improvement, and distributing responsibility throughout the school community. The literature underscores that successful leaders build relationships, assume competence, support andragogy, encourage distributed leadership, and foster open learning conversations (Cranton, 1994; Bastian, 2017; Harris, 2011; Le Fevre, 2021). This study has also highlighted the importance of leaders involving teachers in discussions and decision-making about their professional learning needs, which is crucial for transformational growth and effective support.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Based on the findings of this study, two recommendations are proposed to support educators in teaching and learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. As outlined throughout chapter two, and in combination with the LQS, there exists a profound moral and professional obligation to build understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing by creating a sense of professional efficacy for all educators. Participants in this study revealed challenges in applying foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in their classrooms and shared their perspectives on what constitutes impactful professional learning.

Firstly, it is recommended that school leaders facilitate and participate in reflective discussions with all school staff to identify and address challenges in teaching foundational knowledge of Indigenous peoples. These discussions should also include staff perspectives on what constitutes impactful professional learning. Leaders can then take perspectives shared during these discussions to tailor, encourage, and participate in professional learning which the school team has expressed need and/or interest in.

Secondly, given the inconsistencies in post-secondary experiences related to teaching and learning Indigenous ways of knowing and history, it is recommended to add an Indigenous awareness module during school staff onboarding. An Indigenous onboarding program for educators in Alberta could encompass several critical sections to ensure a comprehensive understanding and respectful integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. This program would include a section summarizing the professional responsibilities of Alberta teachers as they relate to Indigenous education, particularly focusing on the Teacher Quality Standard (TQS) #5. Another key component would address Indigenous history in Canada, providing educators with a deep understanding of the historical context, including a specific

section dedicated to the tragic legacy of Residential schools. The program would also include a section on local Indigenous communities, offering insights into their traditions and ways of knowing, which are essential for fostering meaningful connections and understanding. In addition, the program would guide educators on how to approach difficult conversations, as participants noted that some colleagues and families may have perspectives that question the appropriateness of Indigenous ways of knowing and information about Residential schools as school content. Importantly, these characteristics are informed by challenges identified by teachers throughout the interview process, ensuring it directly addresses the real-world experiences and needs of educators in navigating these complex topics. Through these sections, the onboarding would equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to honor and integrate awareness and Indigenous perspectives into their teaching practice. This Indigenous module could be incorporated into the yearly training courses many school divisions have in place for all staff, during teacher induction programs, or throughout the school year either virtually or through school-based professional learning days.

Future Directions

While this study provides insights into the guiding questions, several areas warrant further investigation. One limitation of this research was the small sample size, suggesting the need for future studies to explore educators' perspectives from different school divisions, levels of education, and even provinces. Additionally, this study provided some insight into post-secondary education programs and their inclusion or lack thereof of focus on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and ways of knowing. Future research should investigate how post-secondary institutions have updated their programs to be inclusive and support the learning needs of pre-service educators, particularly in achieving efficacy in competency five. In addition, it

may be prudent to conduct a similar study with teachers who teach middle school, high school, and even post-secondary education.

Conclusion

The intention of this study was to explore the characteristics of professional learning that elementary teachers perceive as influential in increasing their confidence in applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Using qualitative research methodology, the study involved analyzing ten interview transcripts. Interview participants were randomly selected following a call for interest sent to all elementary teachers in the same Southern Alberta school division. Several characteristics of impactful professional learning emerged from the study, including collaboration, experiential learning, credible facilitators, alignment with teachers' needs and interests, transformational experiences, and learning alongside students.

Professional learning plays a critical role in bolstering teacher efficacy, especially in unfamiliar or complex subject areas. Confident teachers are more effective in communicating difficult concepts, engaging students in meaningful discussions, and creating learning experiences that foster deeper understanding. Confidence also enables teachers to navigate unexpected challenges or questions with poise and clarity, maintaining students' trust and respect in their expertise. Ultimately, teacher confidence instills a sense of credibility, enthusiasm, and effectiveness that can profoundly impact student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

As I reflect on the journey of this thesis and study, I consider the broader story it tells: the painful history of Canadian education as a tool of assimilation, the troubling statistics related to Indigenous mental health and academic success, and the ongoing challenges educators face in integrating Indigenous ways of knowing in their classrooms. I aspire to one day write a story of

hope—one that highlights the success of Indigenous students and educators who are confident and competent in applying Indigenous knowledge to support Indigenous students and learning for all. I know that the work has started, but I hope to one day revel in the waves made in post-secondary institutions that lead the way in fostering this competence. I believe in the transformative power of Indigenous education because of the knowledge and experiences it has given me and through what I have seen transpire in schools where Indigenous ways of knowing are integrated. Through the kindness, acceptance, and generosity of the Niitsitapi people in Southern Alberta, my own Métis community, and countless other Indigenous people here in Sikoohkotoki I have found moments of self-reflection, growth, grief, a strengthened sense of identity and pride, and a deep sense of partnership and belonging. My commitment to this work remains unwavering and I believe it is hypocritical to profess to students, "we're lifelong learners," while some educators themselves find it challenging to undergo the transformational learning that is so necessary. My hope is to one day tell a story about educators who have embraced the challenge of confronting their assumptions and committing to this ongoing process of growth, understanding, and reconciliation.

The responsibility of reconciliation rests on all of us within education, and teacher efficacy in this context is both a moral and professional obligation. Those who create curriculum, school divisions, school leaders, classroom teachers, and post-secondary institutions all have important roles to play. By acknowledging and addressing the legacy of Residential schools, educators can actively contribute to truth and reconciliation efforts, promoting healing, understanding, and solidarity among all members of the educational community. Ultimately, incorporating this knowledge into teaching practice helps educators confront systemic inequities, challenge stereotypes, and work towards building a more just and equitable society.

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Appendix A

Intent of Research and Details Outlining Participation

Title of the study: *Teaching and Learning Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.*

Principal Investigator: Melanie Morrow

Graduate Student at University of Lethbridge

mk.morrow@uleth.ca

Supervisor: Pamela Adams

Associate Professor

adams@uleth.ca

403-332-4070

Invitation to Participate: You are being invited to participate in this research study about teaching and learning foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Alberta. You are being asked to join because you are an elementary teacher employed at an Alberta school division. I will ask elementary teachers who have been teaching for at least four months to participate.

Purpose of the Study: From this research, I wish to learn about your experiences and perceptions of teaching and learning foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and to gain insight into what methods and characteristics of professional learning may support your confidence in this area.

Participation: Participation in this research would ask you to participate in a one-time interview and conversation about your perceptions of teaching and learning foundational knowledge. Depending on your preference, the interview will take approximately half an hour in person or on TEAMS. An audio recording of the interview will be kept and then destroyed at the end of the five-year holding period.

Benefits: There are no direct or indirect benefits of participation in this study.

Risks: There are no direct or indirect risks of participation in this study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: All information you share in the interview will be kept confidential and only used for this research. Any personal information you share during the interview will be anonymized, and your personal identity and workplace will not be disclosed. I will be the only person with access to the research data.

Data Storage: As an interviewee, your participation is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate and have the right to refuse to answer any question during the interview process. You may withdraw your participation and any information you have shared up until the time where all interviews have been transcribed and the study is in the analysis stage.

Voluntary Participation: As an interviewee, your participation is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate and have the right to refuse to answer any question during the interview process. Furthermore, you may withdraw your participation and any information you have shared until all interviews have been transcribed, the study is in the analysis stage, or the thesis is complete.

Information about the Study Results: When the study is complete research findings will be made available to all participants through e-mail.

Contact Information: Please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers mentioned above if you have any questions or require more information about the study or interview.

This research study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being managed, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Please keep this form for your records.

Appendix B
Participant Consent

University of Lethbridge
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Iiniookaksini

4401 University Drive
Faculty of Education
Lethbridge, AB, Canada
T1K 3M4

Phone 403.329.2051
Fax 403.329.2252

mailto:mk.morrow@uleth.ca

DATE

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

RECIPIENT ADDRESS

Dear NAME,

Re: PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Title of Study: Teaching and Learning Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Melanie Morrow

Mailing Address: 2831 11th avenue South Lethbridge, AB T1K0L2

Phone: 403-813-4217

Email: mk.morrow@uleth.ca

Supervisor: Pamela Adams

Email: adams@uleth.ca

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, I am happy to explain the study and hope you ask any questions about anything you do not understand. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study? You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an elementary teacher employed at a Southern Alberta School Division.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to discover useful and authentic ways in which educators can seek out, facilitate, and engage in profound PL opportunities that specifically support their confidence around foundational knowledge of Indigenous people. learning may support teacher confidence in this area.

What is the reason for doing the study? From this research I wish to learn about the experiences and perceptions teachers hold regarding teaching and learning foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and to gain insight into what methods and characteristics of professional. The reason for doing this research is a having a profound sense of responsibility both morally and professionally to teach and learn about the true history and foundational knowledge of Indigenous people.

What will I be asked to do? You will be asked to participate in a one time in-person interview and conversation about your perceptions and experiences teaching and learning foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. If an interview via TEAMS is preferable that will be accommodated. The interview will require approximately half an hour of your time, and this is your only time commitment. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by myself. These transcriptions and audio recordings will be kept on a password protected laptop that only I will have access to. As per University of Alberta Ethics, all data will be kept stored and password protected for a minimum of five years.

What are the risks and discomforts? There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts related to participation in this study. "It is not possible to know all of the risks that may happen in a study, but the researchers have taken all reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to a study participant."

What are the benefits to me? There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. However, results from this research may assist in learning more about supporting teachers in their confidence about teaching and learning about foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Do I have to take part in the study? As an interviewee, your participation is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate and have the right to refuse to answer any question during the interview process should you feel uncomfortable. You may withdraw your participation and any information you have shared up until the time where all interviews have been transcribed and the study is in the analysis stage or is complete. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact Melanie Morrow at mk.morrow@uleth.ca

Will I be paid to be in the research? There is no financial incentive for participation in this study.

Will my information be kept private? Throughout the research process, all your information including your name, place of employment, and comments will be kept private. All data included within the thesis will be anonymized. When the interviews are transcribed, you will be given a pseudonym. You may choose your own pseudonym, or I will choose one for you.

During research studies it is important that the data we get is accurate. For this reason, your data, including your name, may be looked at by people from the Research Ethics Board.

What if I have questions? If you have any questions about the research now or later, please contact Melanie Morrow at mk.morrow@uleth.ca.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at reoffice@ualberta.ca or 780-492-2615 and quote Ethics ID Pro00125855. This office is independent of the study investigators.

https://www.ualberta.ca/research/research-support/research-ethics-office/forms-cabinet/forms-human.html

How do I indicate my agreement to be in this study? By signing below, you understand:

- That you have read the above information and have had anything that you do not understand explained to you to your satisfaction.

- That you will be taking part in a research study.
- That you may freely leave the research study at any time.
- That you do not waive your legal rights by being in the study
- That the legal and professional obligations of the investigators and involved institutions are not changed by your taking part in this study.
- That you agree to the data being stored as part of a data repository (where applicable)

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

_____ _____

Name of Participant Pseudonym (if necessary)

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____ _____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent Contact Number

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

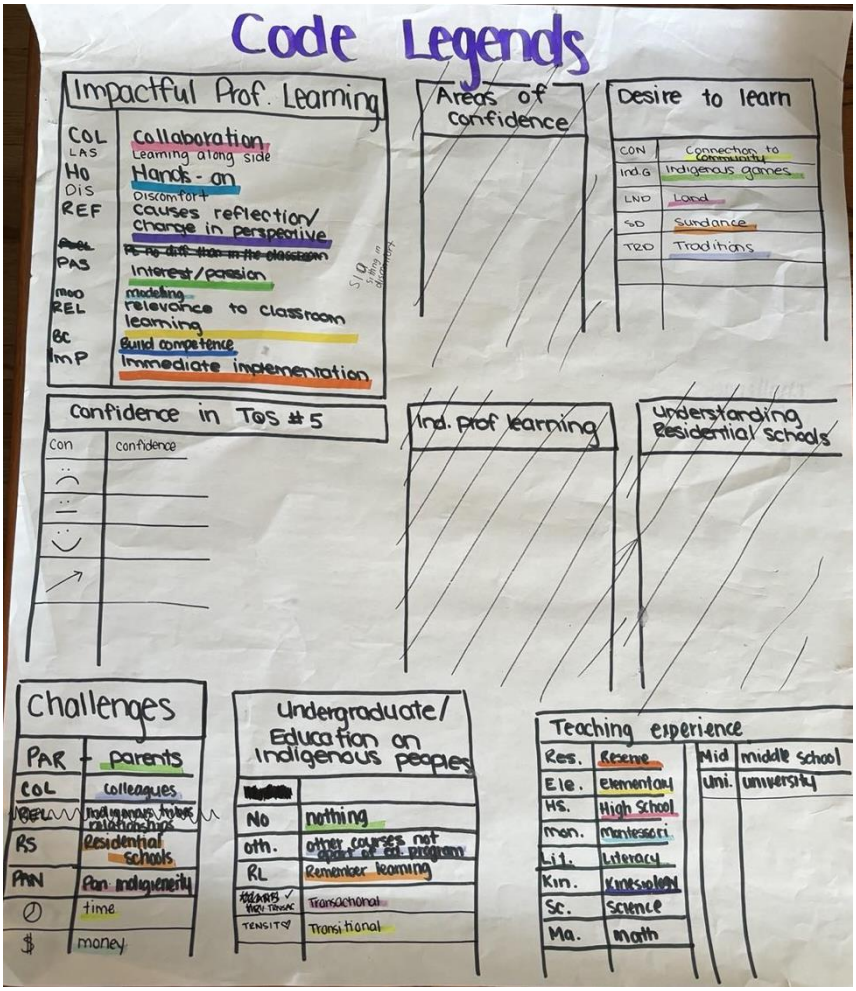
Melanie Morrow

Oki, and welcome to the University of Lethbridge. Our University's Blackfoot name is *Iniskim*, meaning *Sacred Buffalo Stone*. Our Faculty of Education's Black foot name is *Iniiookaksini* meaning *Buffalo Wisdom*. The University is located on traditional Blackfoot Confederacy Territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Aboriginal Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.

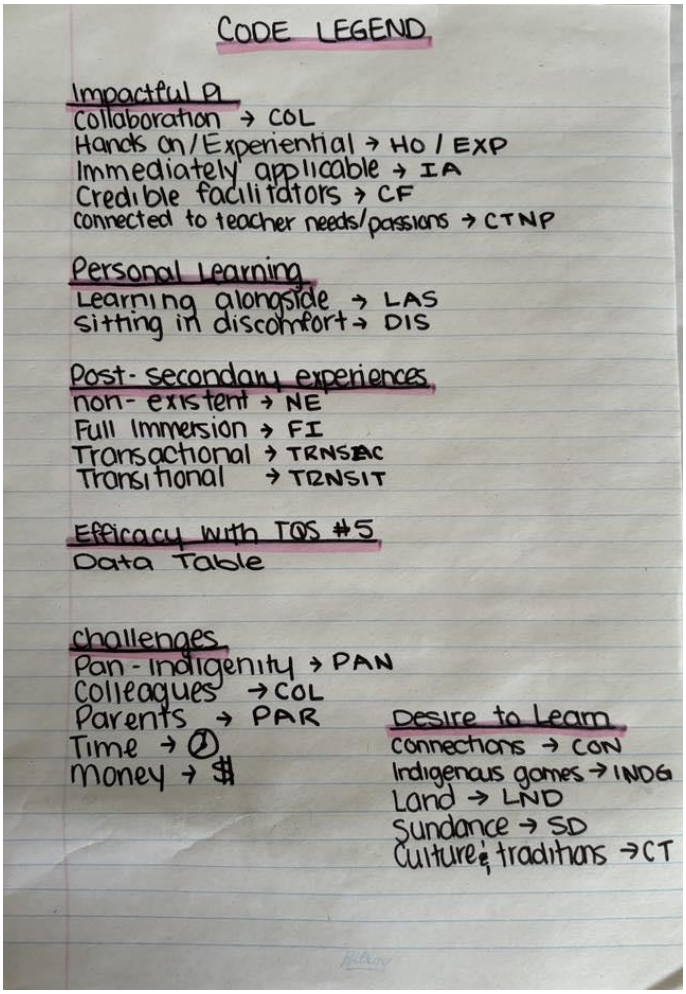
mailto:mk.morrow@uleth.ca

Appendix C

Thematic Analyses Code Legend



Appendix D



CODE LEGEND

Impactful PL
Collaboration → COL
Hands on / Experiential → HO / EXP
Immediately applicable → IA
Credible facilitators → CF
connected to teacher needs/passions → CTNP

Personal Learning
Learning alongside → LAS
sitting in discomfort → DIS

Post-secondary experiences
non-existent → NE
Full Immersion → FI
Transactional → TRNSAC
Transitional → TRNSIT

Efficacy with IQS #5
Data Table

challenges
Pan-Indigenity → PAN
Colleagues → COL
Parents → PAR
Time → ⏱
Money → $

Desire to Learn
connections → CON
Indigenous games → INDG
Land → LND
Sundance → SD
Culture & traditions → CT