CROSSING THE RACIAL HIRING DIVIDE
IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:
FIRST NATION TEACHERS ENCOUNTERS WITH
EMPLOYEE FIT, MERIT, AND WHITE RACIAL INNOCENCE

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education
University of Regina

By

Lori R. Eastmure
Regina, Saskatchewan

September, 2013

Copyright 2013: L. R. Eastmure
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Lori R. Eastmure, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *Crossing the Racial Hiring Divide in Public Education: First Nation Teachers Encounters with Employee Fit, Merit and White Racial Innocence*, in an oral examination held on August 30, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Sherry Peden, University College of the North

Supervisor: Dr. Carol Schick, Curriculum & Instruction

Committee Member: *Dr. Verna St. Denis, Adjunct

Committee Member: Dr. Michael Tymchak, Adjunct

Committee Member: Dr. Eber Hampton, Adjunct

Committee Member: Dr. James McNinch, Curriculum & Instruction

Committee Member: Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Women’s & Gender Studies

Chair of Defense: Dr. Dongyan Blachford, Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research

*participated via teleconference
Not present at defense
ABSTRACT

In the Yukon Territory, significant social, political and legal efforts have been put in place to articulate equality between First Nations and non-First Nations people, not as equality based on good will, but equity as a legal right. These significant accomplishments in the advancement of First Nations rights include recent land claims agreements and self-government agreements, employment equity policy and staffing protocol. In contrast to these statements of legal equality, this study examines the ways in which hiring challenges encountered by First Nations teachers—as racialized individuals in Northern Canada—are made to appear normative and natural. The hiring challenges exist despite a pressing need for teachers of First Nations ancestry.

The key mode of inquiry for this study is critical race theory that recognizes that racism is a systemic, normative, and everyday practice. Critical race theory takes into account the structural and institutionalized nature of racialization as expressed in liberal discourses of racism, racial inequalities and white supremacy. Critical race theory also acknowledges the importance of the legal and political status of Aboriginal people and their right to land claims. As a methodology, this study uses critical discourse analysis and institutional ethnography as interpretative methods to analyze discourses and documents related to hiring teachers in the Yukon Territory. These methods uncover examples of unequal power and hierarchical relations embedded in everyday discourses and reflected in the hiring policies and practices of public schools. The hiring criteria of what constitutes “suitably qualified” candidates was examined from three approaches: the concept of employee “fit”, meritocracy (and employment equity) and white racial innocence. These approaches used as hiring criteria show themselves to be unexamined
“sorting” concepts on the part of white educational professionals who are making hiring decisions for public schools. The long-standing practice of hiring white teachers from the south and failing to hire well-qualified, locally trained First Nations teachers in their own territory suggests a school system deeply rooted in colonial practices. These practices underscore the systemic bias of a white-dominated education system and the unquestioned and long standing teacher identity as a racially superior white person. How can a teacher of First Nations ancestry measure up in this context?

Through this research it became apparent that hiring challenges experienced by these northern First Nations teachers are not based on their training or lack of experience although these are the take-for-granted reasons. The matter of better training or lack of teaching experience are not the real issues for failing to hire First Nations teachers even though these statements are often made. Rather, as increasing numbers of First Nations students take up the challenge of higher education, these are simple and convenient criticisms that mask the investment that white society has in maintaining public education as a white institution.

As this study found, because racial inequality appears as normal and natural and furthermore, benefits white society, there is little incentive to change the structures and processes that perpetuate it. Despite the efforts, abilities and skills of First Nations teachers, they are held to a higher level of scrutiny that belies true equality within a racialized social order, without changing the order itself.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the joys of completion is to look over the journey past and remember all the support, encouragement, and wisdom of those who guided me along this challenging but fulfilling road. My student journey began with a gnawing question; not one well-formed or one I knew how to think about, but none-the-less the question I sent out into the universe. Remarkably, Dr. Carol Schick saw merit in my question, knew its significance to this setting, and sensed its personal importance to me. For especially this I express my heartfelt gratitude. Of all your gifts, Carol, thank you for your inspiration, guidance, challenge, and unwavering patience.

Deepest appreciation is extended to my esteemed, long-standing, committee members, Dr. Michael Tymchak, Dr. Verna St. Denis, and Dr. Eber Hampton who provided wise and constructive feedback. Their integrity and scholarly expertise were ever-present along the way. Special thanks to the generous commitments of Dr. James McNinch and Dr. Darlene Juschka who became recent committee members. And, special thanks to my external reviewer, Dr. Sherry Peden. In addition, I am most grateful for generous contributions of the research participants and I am deeply indebted to the graduates and colleagues of the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program for their participation and support.

With tremendous gratitude I acknowledge scholarships awarded by the office of the Canada Research Chair in Social Justice and Aboriginal Education, University of Regina, as well as, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, CNST Scholarship Program. In addition, I express my appreciation to my employer, Yukon College, for their support in this endeavor. Thank you all for supporting northern research.
DEDICATION

I would not have contemplated nor completed this journey if not for the unfailing support of my family, their belief that this is important work, and for their faith in me to accomplish it. This work is dedicated to my daughters, Noli and Mya, in hopes that their children are born to a world where race neither privileges nor disadvantages.

And last but not least, to Richard (Dick), who throughout all this, kept our dreams alive and evolving.

The rewards of this accomplishment are all the sweeter because of your support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................ iii

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................ iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... viii

LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1
  The Context .................................................................................................................. 2
  The Problem Emerges: Opposition and Early Warning Signs .................................. 3
  Statement of the Problem and Underlying Assumptions ....................................... 4
  The Problem Contextually ....................................................................................... 4
  The Problem Statistically ....................................................................................... 7
  Public School Enrollment ....................................................................................... 7
  Composition of the Yukon Teaching Force ............................................................ 8
  Employment Statistics, YNTEP Graduates ............................................................ 11
  YNTEP Statistics ................................................................................................... 12
  Conceptual Framework ........................................................................................... 13
  Definition of Terms ................................................................................................ 14
  Methodology: Conceptualizing the Problem Critically ........................................... 15
    Critical Race Theory .............................................................................................. 16
    Research Methods ................................................................................................ 19
    Data Collection .................................................................................................... 19
    Methods of Interpretation .................................................................................... 22
    My Personal Investment and Connection ............................................................ 25
  Summary .................................................................................................................. 27
  Final Thoughts ......................................................................................................... 22
  Chapter Summaries ................................................................................................. 28

CHAPTER 2: A REPRESENTATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................. 32
  Critical Race Theory ............................................................................................... 33
    The Conceptualization of Race: Common Sense and Ideology ............................ 37
    Whiteness and White Racial Domination ............................................................. 41
    The Culturalization of Race .................................................................................. 43
    Discourses of Inequality ....................................................................................... 45
    Discourses and/as Identity ................................................................................... 49
    Aboriginal Teachers and Teacher Identity ........................................................... 50
  Concluding Thoughts ............................................................................................... 51
CHAPTER 5: DISCOURSES OF INNOCENCE: MAKING RACIAL INEQUALITY VISIBLE ................................................................. 125
  What Is White Racial Innocence? ........................................... 125
  White Racial Identity .......................................................... 125
  White Innocence: Obscuring Structures of Dominance ............ 127
  Racialized Thinking and Aboriginal Peoples ......................... 128
Constructing and Recreating Innocence: Examples from Study .... 129
  Bourgeois Decorum and Racial Loyalty .................................. 133
  Euphemism ............................................................................ 137
  Passive Voice and Racial Disassociation ............................... 139
  Hyperpoliteness ................................................................... 142
Conclusion ............................................................................... 145

CHAPTER 6: MERITOCRACY: LEGITIMIZING INEQUALITY ............... 147
  Historical Roots of Meritocratic Ideology .............................. 148
  Meritocracy and Education .................................................. 150
  Unearned Advantages ............................................................ 150
    Reproducing Advantage and Disadvantage ......................... 151
Conceptualizing Ideology ......................................................... 153
  Thompson’s Discursive Operational Modes ......................... 154
  Meritocracy and Employment Equity ..................................... 155
  Individuality and Meritocracy .............................................. 158
  Legitimizing: The Burden of Proof ....................................... 159
  Legitimizing and Land Claims: Sharing Power ..................... 163
Conclusion ............................................................................... 168

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .......................................................... 169
  Learning to See—Questioning to Understand ......................... 169
  Summary of the Arguments .................................................. 171
  Learning through Critical race theory .................................... 178
  Future Research Considerations ............................................ 180
  Next Steps: Anti-racist Work—Educating for Partnerships ........ 182
  School Hiring Practices: Recommendations ......................... 184
  Final Thoughts ...................................................................... 186

REFERENCES ........................................................................... 188

APPENDICES ........................................................................... 200
  Appendix A: Ethics Approval .................................................. 201
  Appendix B: Letter of Consent/Form/Discussion Topics ........... 203
  Appendix C: Staffing Protocol ............................................... 210
  Appendix D: Employment Equity Policy, Government of Yukon .. 216
  Appendix E: Chapter 22, Umbrella Final Agreement ............... 218
  Appendix F: Teaching in Yukon Schools ................................. 220
  Appendix G: Application for Teaching in Yukon ...................... 222
  Appendix H: Sample Job Posting ........................................... 227
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Yukon Public School Demographics..............................................................7

Table 2: Yukon Teacher Demographics and Representative Hire.................................9

Table 3: YNTEP Hires: 2009-2010 Data................................................................11

Table 4: YNTEP Statistical Data Representing 19 Graduating Classes, 1993 to 2012 .................................................................................................................................12

Table 5: Hiring Statistics for 2004 ..............................................................................77
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Yukon Department of Education Organizational Chart ..........................65
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study is set in the Yukon, a territory of northern Canada, and pertains to a First Nations focused teacher education program. Specifically, the study is concerned with the challenges experienced by First Nations graduates when they apply for teaching positions in a public schools system predominated by non-First Nations administrators. The study examines white racial dominance as it guides, structures and justifies hiring practices in ways that complicate and/or exclude First Nations applicants from teaching positions based on race. These exclusions occur even in the midst of a pressing need for teachers of First Nations ancestry. Moreover, there are policies, protocols, and pieces of legislation that would support and encourage the hiring of First Nations graduates: recently negotiated Yukon land claims agreements which outline First Nations involvement or sharing of responsibilities; the Yukon Education Act which legislates educational commitments to Yukon First Nations; and employment equity policies and programs are in place to support hiring of First Nations individuals to government positions. In spite of these requirements and supports, teachers of First Nations ancestry, despite meeting academic and professional accreditation, are less likely to be hired for the positions to which they apply. While the hiring experiences of these teachers pertain to a particular setting, the challenges raised in this study are not defined by its geographical location. Rather, these hiring challenges represent a clash of values, social interests and practices within an institution that has changed little in its original, overriding, colonial mission.
The Context

The Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (YNTEP) is a four year Bachelor of Education degree program offered at Yukon College in partnership with the University of Regina and the Department of Education and with significant support from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Teachers’ Association. As it is a University of Regina degree program, graduates qualify for teacher certification in Saskatchewan and the Yukon and are eligible for certification across Canada.

The program was first established in 1989 and during the first sixteen years access was restricted to students of First Nations ancestry and thus it was generally considered an employment equity education program. This focus allowed the program to direct supports to First Nations students and to meet the program’s major goal to address the absence of First Nations educators in Yukon public schools (Taylor, Goulet, Hart, Robottom, & Sykes, 1993). In attempting to meet this goal, the program and graduates endured criticisms common to redressive equity programs (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2003; Orlikow & Young, 1993). These criticisms, as stated briefly and challenged as follows, are noted by other scholars on equity programming and support the experiences of YNTEP graduates. They include:

*restricted access is reverse racism:* As racism is founded on unequal power structures which have historically benefited whites and continues to do so today, reverse racism is not possible where unequal power structures exist (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2003; Vasquez & Jones, 2006);

*equity programs are “special rights”:* The use of the term “special rights” is an attempt to remove racism as the issue in equity programming (Fontaine, 1998; Zambudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgeman, 2011). Addressing racism is not a “special” right; it is a human right;
the coursework in equity education programming is watered down (More, 1980; 1981): This statement is founded on a cultural-differences-as-deficits perspective and assumes that First Nations students are incapable of academic success in a mainstream program and that white dominated programs are best;

employment equity guarantees a job regardless of ability (Participant C): This statement assumes that the credentials awarded are “unearned” and will undermine standards and meritocracy (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2003);

First Nations teachers over-emphasize First Nations cultural content (St. Denis, 2010): This suggests that First Nations teachers lack adequate subject area knowledge. Moreover, it reinforces the knowledge of the colonizer as the only one worth knowing (and perhaps best taught by colonizers).

I intend to show that the above statements are not simply the opinions of certain individuals; rather, they serve as signposts and entry points to revealing ways in which institutions are structured to sustain dominant hegemony.

The Problem Emerges: Opposition and Early Warning Signs

Over the years it has become evident that YNTEP graduates—as fully qualified for teaching positions—encounter difficulties in securing teaching positions. This problem has come to light through some seventeen years of anecdotal information shared among graduates and with program administration; and examined in 2004 by a study undertaken by Yukon College (see Macdonald 2005) on graduate hiring concerns. Current evidence indicates that securing teaching positions continues to be a problem for many YNTEP graduates. While the Department of Education maintains statistics on hiring teachers of First Nations ancestry, there is concern that these statistics do not fully represent the extent of the problem, such as, the number of graduates still attempting to secure positions or those who have given up trying. In 2002, a group of First Nations graduates approached the Yukon Human Rights Commission to raise their concerns of a potential systemic problem underlying the hiring challenges they were experiencing in
Yukon schools. Upon learning what was involved in the process they did not proceed with a formal complaint fearing that this would jeopardize future job-seeking attempts. It was the action of this group and growing concern among YNTEP staff which prompted Yukon College in 2004 to study the problem of hiring challenges encountered by graduates. The parameters of the study were to interview graduates not working in schools at the time. It did not involve interviewing the prospective employer, thus, the researcher was not in a position to consider the employers’ rationales for rejecting First Nations applicants; nor was the hiring context studied such as hiring related documents like: statement of job qualifications, application forms, job interview questions, or hiring policies.

**Statement of the Problem and Underlying Assumptions**

This study is an examination of the ways in which hiring challenges encountered by First Nations teachers—as racialized individuals— are made to appear normative and natural. I claim that these hiring challenges represent racial domination as both structural and ideological processes. Within these parameters I hold the following assumptions:

- The hiring challenges encountered are created by white racial dominance.
- These challenges can be traced in documents and ideologies.
- Racialization occurs whether we choose to participate or not.
- Discourses are key to understanding racialization.

**The Problem Contextually**

Anecdotal comments provided by graduates over a number of years; the Macdonald (2005) study on hiring; and this current research suggest that the concerns graduates raise regarding irregularities and challenges in teacher hiring practices are
common and consistent over time and appear to be systemic and outside of the individual graduates’ ability to change. In contrast, there is generally a clear message by government stating obligations to Yukon First Nations, including, recognition of the need for First Nations teachers. This suggests that there is a contradiction or gap between intent to hire and hiring outcome. This research is concerned with the production and normalization of this gap.

The following is an outline of the conditions that make this topic so compelling.

Each condition will be discussed in more detail throughout the document.

There is an acknowledged gap between school successes for First Nation children in Yukon schools yet an apparent reluctance on the part of schools to hire First Nations teachers.

The Yukon Education Act and Yukon land claim agreements outline a partnership relationship with Yukon First Nations. Both contain a number of references on the inclusion of First Nations cultural content in schools and the need to address academic gaps of First Nations students.

The government of Yukon commonly issues statements on public schools addressing the needs of First Nations communities and partnering with First Nations; yet this same government rarely reports on hiring First Nations teachers or markets positions to First Nations teachers.

Each public school prepares individual growth plans which set out goals for meeting individual school requirements. Currently, staffing needs are not part of these plans. Moreover, targeted programming to address staff diversity or support representative public service commitments—though required elsewhere in government—do not occur in the hiring of teachers.

Graduates who are unsuccessful in job hire most often hear that they are rejected for the position based on lack of teaching experience. The Department of Education Staffing Protocol does not list teaching experience as necessary criteria for new hires under its protocol.

There are two unions in government: The Yukon Employees Union of the Public Service Commission, which is responsible for most positions in government hire; and the Yukon Teachers’ Association, which represents teachers and principals. These two unions operate very differently in regard to hiring obligations related to land claims and employment equity, yet both are a responsibility of the Yukon Public Service Commission.
There are a number of documents, policies and legislation which would support and rationalize hiring First Nations teachers yet these supports, of which some are legislated requirements, are rarely acknowledged in hiring teachers.

These are examples of disturbing contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps which undermine the ability of the Department of Education to meet its legislated obligations to Yukon First Nations as stated in the Yukon Education Act and in meeting educational and employment-related provisions outlined in Yukon land claims agreements.

According to the accounts of the participants of the Macdonald (2005) study, graduates of YNTEP applied numerous times for teaching positions and despite their lack of success continued to try. According to participants’ accounts, the most frequent reason provided by the employer for rejecting an applicant was due to lack of teaching experience. The rationale provided reveals an important employment equity concern, that is, First Nations graduates are denied teaching positions on the basis of unsuitability due to lack of teaching experience. This rationale is considered acceptable despite this as a normal situation for new graduates to be in when applying for a first teaching position and it is a rationale provided to applicants who represent one of three targeted groups under-represented in government hire. When it comes to employment equity concerns, these conditions should signal an examination of the potential for misuse of the rationale—lack of teaching experience—however, no investigation much less corrective action by the Yukon Public Service Commission as the body responsible for employment equity, or, by the Department of Education was undertaken in response to the Macdonald study. Further details on the Macdonald study will be discussed in the next chapter.
The Problem Statistically

The figures which follow in Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide detailed statistical background to support my argument that there are many ways in which government fails to meet educational and employment obligations to First Nations. In contrast, Table 4 represents the educational commitments and successes of YNTEP graduates as potentially significant contributors to public education in the Yukon.

Public School Enrollment

Two things are noteworthy about the statistics in Table 1. First, is the disturbingly low percentage of First Nations high school graduates compared to white high school graduates. Second, the number of First Nations students at the elementary school level is over 50% of the overall student population, twice the 25% general ratio of First Nations to non-First Nations in the overall Yukon population. As previously noted, there are no human resource plans for Yukon schools, including a plan to diversify the teaching workforce to include more teachers of First Nations ancestry, yet the low percentage rate for First Nations high school graduates has been a subject of concern.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total student enrollment (^a)</td>
<td>5102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of First Nations students (all levels) as self-identified (^a)</td>
<td>1566 (30.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Approximate percentage of First Nations students of elementary school age children compared to non-first nations elementary school age children</td>
<td>56 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Yukon five year average high school graduation rates (3rd lowest in Canada) (^b)</td>
<td>63 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Yukon Non-First Nations graduation rate \(^b\) \hspace{1cm} 65%
6. Yukon First Nations graduation rate \(^b\) \hspace{1cm} 40%
7. Canadian high school graduation rate \(^b\) \hspace{1cm} 75%

\(^a\)Yukon Bureau of Statistics- Public School Enrolment 2011.
\(^b\)Report of the Auditor General to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, 2009.

For example, in 2005 Chief Mike Smith of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation (Whitehorse) announced the intended withdrawal of Kwanlin Dun students from Whitehorse schools in protest of the lack of action taken by the Department of Education to address the concerns of this community (CBC News, June 30, 2005). Low graduation rates of First Nations students were also given considerable attention in 2009 with the publication of an auditor general’s report on Yukon education, which is discussed in further detail in the next chapters.

**Composition of the Yukon Teaching Force**

Yukon land claim agreements, known individually as First Nations Final Agreements, all contain provisions calling for a representative government workforce. Statistically, Yukon First Nations represent twenty-five percent of the population in the Yukon (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Aboriginal Data, 2008a). Fifty-four percent of First Nations people live in Whitehorse and its immediate surroundings (determined from Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2008b), yet the prevailing assumption “on the street” is that First Nations people live on traditional First Nations lands in “rural” Yukon, that is, outside of the Whitehorse area (Participant J). With regard to Whitehorse area schools, 25% of the overall student population is First Nations and this percentage will increase in relation to a lower birth rate in the white community (Yukon Department of Education Strategic Plan, n.d.).
The government of Yukon has established its own specific representative workforce benchmark goal based on population data for adults between the ages of 21 to 64. Currently, this represents 21% of First Nations ancestry (Yukon Public Service Commission (2009a) as opposed to the overall population ratio of 25%. The actual number of First Nations individuals employed by the Government of Yukon is 14% (self-reported). As indicated in Table 2, the current number of teachers of First Nations ancestry employed by the Department of Education is 7.9% of the total teaching population, well below the benchmark and almost half of the number employed in government positions.

The difference between the hiring of First Nations as government employees under the Public Service Commission of the Yukon and the number of teachers hired by the Department of Education under the Collective Agreement of the Yukon Teachers’ Association is significant on a number of accounts. YNTEP graduates apply to positions for which they already meet the specified academic credentials and, since 1998, a staffing protocol has been in place to support the hiring of First Nation teachers, albeit, it seems to be ignored. As well, since the late 1990s a pool of available First Nations teachers seeking employment as teachers has expanded while the average annual increase in First Nations teacher hires remains at a mere 0.5%.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics/Representative Hire</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number of teachers (high school and elementary school)</td>
<td>535</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of teachers of First Nations ancestry in Yukon teaching population (41 YNTEP graduates in 2009)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to the efforts of the Department of Education, since 2004 the Public Service Commission through the Workplace Diversity Employment Office (WDEO) has offered employment support, programs, and training to individuals of First Nations ancestry to assist in meeting obligations to the land claims agreements pertaining to a representative public service workforce. Through the efforts of the WDEO recent gains in First Nation hires have been realized. In contrast, the Department of Education with its poorly defined staffing protocol has no clear goals or benchmarks established to increase representation of First Nations within its teacher/principal workforce. On the contrary, YNTEP graduates experience numerous hiring challenges despite possessing the necessary academic credentials and training for the positions to which they apply. Table 3 presents a breakdown of the hiring outcome of YNTEP graduate hires.
Employment Statistics, YNTEP Graduates

The low rate of First Nations teachers hired in Yukon schools presents a disturbing picture. YNTEP teachers graduate with a specific focus on teaching in Yukon schools. Their program includes an apprenticeship of 30 weeks of practica in Yukon schools yet the hiring of these graduates is minimal in comparison to the number of positions filled by non-First Nations teachers who are often hired from outside of the territory.

Table 3

YNTEP Hires 2009-2010 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grad Employment/YNTEP Hires</th>
<th>N^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number of YNTEP graduates of First Nations ancestry (1993 to 2010)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. First Nations graduates currently teaching in Whitehorse (2009) (Just under half are employed in one school).</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of applicants of First Nations ancestry who actively applied for teaching positions in 2009 (this statistic was only available for 2009)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. New teacher hires for 2010 (all temporary and permanent positions)(^b)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of new hires recruited from outside the Yukon (^b)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data from Department of Education for 2010-2011 were unavailable.

\(^a\) Number.

\(^b\)Yukon Department of Education Annual Report, 2009-2010.

In contrast to the number of Yukon First Nations hires, consider the accomplishments reflected in the statistics in Table 4. YNTEP graduates represent the largest group of professionals of Yukon First Nations ancestry with a postsecondary degree in the Yukon. Graduates receive their education in the Yukon and they are mentored by experienced Yukon teachers in Yukon schools.
Almost half of YNTEP students have achieved academic awards from the University of Regina. These successes have been further corroborated by the number of graduate degrees earned by YNTEP graduates. And, moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that the graduate degrees most earned by Yukon First Nations students are predominately in the field of education over all other disciplines. The positive influences of First Nations teachers as role models have long been assumed though these influences are not easily measureable. While it is known how many second generation students exists, that is, the sons and daughters of YNTEP graduates (Table 4, point 9), there is evidence to indicate that First Nations teachers are important role models to many nieces, nephews, cousins, and pupils as noted in applicants’ letters of intent to the program and in applicant reference letters provided by YNTEP graduates. Despite these successes, as
few as forty-two First Nations graduates are currently employed as teachers in Yukon schools. Why so few graduates are hired in public education and how this is rationalized involve complex processes of exclusion requiring in-depth examination on several levels as discussed in the chapters ahead.

**Conceptual Framework**

The underlying theoretical frame for this study is critical race theory (CRT) which identifies race as the centre of a discussion on inequality. Critical race theory recognizes that social relations and identities are constructed through and constituted by hierarchies of power relations (Hall, 1990; Dei, 1996). The tenets of critical race theory on which this study is based are as follows. CRT acknowledges racism as a normal and everyday experience which makes racism difficult to identify and “cure”. CRT recognizes that because racial inequality benefits white society there is little incentive to change the structures and processes that perpetuate it. And, it recognizes that liberal notions of white racial innocence (colour-blindness) assist in maintaining white racial dominance (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Leonardo, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Inherent within these tenets is recognition of the historical roots of colonial Canada which continue to permeate social organizations, knowledge, institutions, and discourse, as commonly accepted beliefs.

This research study was undertaken as a critical ethnography as a companion to critical theory and specifically, critical race theory. Soyini Madison (2005) claims that “critical theory finds its method in critical ethnography. In this sense ethnography represents ‘the doing’ or, performance of critical theory” (p.13). Critical ethnography frames the key mode of inquiry for this study through questioning and examining—
deeply—the stories, discourses of common knowledge and master narratives inherent to
the structuring and ordering of the concept we call “race”.

The study research data were obtained through interviews and from documents
and were analyzed using two interpretation frameworks: critical discourse analysis and
institutional ethnography. Both methods were used to seek out evidence of power and
hierarchical social relations embedded in everyday discourses of race, differences,
institutional texts, and practices. Both methods overlap, enhance, and expand one another
allowing for a deeper inquiry into systemic and imbedded racism. They will be discussed
in further detail ahead.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in specific ways throughout this document.

- *Aboriginal people(s)* is used in this study in reference to First Peoples in Canada
  which includes: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Inherent in the term is
  recognition of their organic political status and cultural entities (Royal Commission
  on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)).

- *Yukon First Nations* references Yukon First Nations recognized as beneficiaries of the
  Yukon land claims agreements (Umbrella Final Agreement, 1993).

- *First Nations people(s)* is used in a more general sense to include Yukon First
  Nations, Métis and other Aboriginal people residing in the Yukon. The Métis
  distinction is not officially used in the Yukon to describe a person of mixed European
  and Yukon First Nations ancestry but is used in the context noted below.
•  *Métis* is defined as a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, and is accepted by the Métis Nation (Métis National Council, 2002).

•  *White culture or whiteness* is a socially formed identity which structures whites and non-whites within a racially defined system. Whiteness represents a position of power and advantage and refers to a specific set of cultural practices which presents this position as unmarked and unnamed (Seidman, 2008).

•  *Racialization* is the social processes through which “others”, as non-whites, are constructed. It refers to a specific set of cultural practices which differentiate, stigmatize, and exclude individuals and groups on the basis of beliefs and assumptions about race. These beliefs include how power and resources are distributed according to racial determination (Tator & Henry, 2010); and usually formed on the basis of physical characteristics.

**Methodology: Conceptualizing the Problem Critically**

Through the theoretical frameworks of critical theory and by extension critical race theory, I examine barriers and challenges experienced by First Nations teachers when they apply for teaching positions in a public school system. My examination assumes that these hiring challenges are, in part, rooted in the embedded contexts of colonialism and the compounding complexity of class. A colonial foundation is still evident in schools today and continues to encompass the prevailing identity of teacher subjectivity as white and middle-class (Schick, 1998). Concepts of hiring teachers according to “best fit” and merit are constructed on racialized norms and thus continue to reproduce and privilege teacher identity as white. Moreover, where unequal relations of
power prevail—feigning white racial innocence of racialization—makes it possible for white employers to appear non-complicit in the application of fit as a hiring criteria. This is further amplified when fit is rationalized by the ideological construct of meritocracy. This study delves into questions of how racialization is embedded in hiring practices. It examines the privileging of racialized norms in hiring; the conceptualization of difference; the denial of a racialized social order that continues today—and examines these questions from an ontological perspective of critical race, whiteness studies and postcolonial theories. In keeping with postcolonial theory recognition must also be given to the continuation of colonialism within government, economic, and educational institutions, and on a deeper level its influence in the imaginations of the oppressor and the oppressed (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998; Fanon, 1963/2004; 1967).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) took root from the early work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, two American legal scholars of colour in the 1960s (Taylor, 2009). It draws from critical theory in the broader sense rather than the more narrowly defined Frankfurt School, as a critical social inquiry into the many dimensions of domination. Critical theory lacks the foregrounding of race which required scholars, particularly those studying the racial issues of the America civil rights movement, to seek other avenues and resulted in a realignment of critical theory as CRT with race as its predominant theme (Yosso, 2005).

Critical race theory recognizes that racism persists and is legitimized in legal structures as well as within society at large (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1996). Interest in CRT grew in the 1970s as a movement of largely American scholars,
lawyers and activists, who focused on the failure of the civil rights movement and the
need to expose the more hidden and structural forms of racism (Delgado & Stefancic,
2001). It soon expanded to include several specific areas of study including a focus on
education; recognizing that schools are key participants in the reproduction of social
inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Weis & Fine, 2001); and,
in the case of tribal critical race theory, recognition of the endemic nature of colonization
as the central experience of oppression in the lives of Native American people (Brayboy,
2005).

The primary tenets of tribal critical race theory (tribalcrit), as described by Bryan
Brayboy (2005), include acknowledgement of government’s imperialistic policies toward
Aboriginal people as rooted in the desire for material gain through land acquisition and
the regulating of Aboriginal identity by government to serve particular ends. It also
recognizes that Aboriginal people occupy a place that is in between a racialized status
and a legal/political status to which white society ignores the legal/political rights of
Aboriginal people and over emphasizes Aboriginality as a racialized status.
Indeed, ignoring legal rights is of concern central to this study as Yukon First Nation
governments fight for recognition of their newly negotiated land claim settlements.
Although the specialized area of tribal critical race theory informs this study, for my
purposes I use the term critical race theory as one which encompasses the tenets of tribal
critical race theory and therefore includes racial oppression rooted in colonialism.

Critical race theory is not a rigidly defined theoretical framework (Delgado &
Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2005). Nor, as Edward Taylor (2009) states, can it be
interpreted as “an abstract set of ideas”; rather, “its scholarship is, however, marked, by a
number of specific insights and observations...” (p.4). As a theoretical foundation, these are important characteristics which allows for currency, a dynamic approach, and therefore the ability to respond to the many manifestations of race and racialization expressed today. CRT is also especially helpful in revealing covert forms of racism such as those couched in liberal discourses or, as Toni Morrison (1992) terms “metaphorical” expressions of racism. CRT does consist of a wide range of mutually agreed upon tenets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Zambudio et al., 2011). These tenets are described more fully in the next chapter. Briefly, for the sake of introduction and specific to the conceptualization of this research problem, these tenets are: racial inequality is normal, pervasive and thus taken for granted (Taylor, 2009); inequality is conceptualized around discourses of differences as deficits (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998); and white supremacy has so profoundly structured our institutions and processes in ways so ubiquitous that it is difficult to identify its resulting effects as abnormal and unjust. As Taylor (2009) asserts, whites are unable to recognize privilege and therefore do not typically acknowledge that the world has been structured in their interests; which may explain the awkwardness with which many whites speak about race. This position alone, however, does not explain the level of investment that white society has in protecting a racialized social order (Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 1998).
Research Methods

This study is focused on hiring challenges as experienced by First Nations graduates and viewed through the perspective of white racial domination as it is structured in education policies and supporting documents (Gillborn 2006) and rationalized by ideology (Thompson 1984a, 1984b). Thus, much of the study research data was found in documents related to hiring and in the discourses and ideologies used to rationalize hiring inequities. To obtain data of this nature required several overlapping research methods: institutional ethnography was used to examine institutional discourse and oppressive hiring practices (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, D., 2005) and critical discourse analysis was used to expose the subtleties of racialized language used to justify inequitable hiring practices (van Dijk, 1993; 2002). Critical ethnography was used to gather the accounts of participants’ experiences of racism and the examples of racism rationalized in liberal discourse.

Data Collection

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval for this study was granted by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board, Regina, Saskatchewan (see Appendix A).

Participants

Fourteen participants were interviewed, including: two individuals with extensive background in land claims; eight individuals involved in some capacity with government hire; and a sampling of four YNTEP graduates with specific issues related to hire. In addition, I examined the comments from numerous YNTEP graduates who participated in the Macdonald (2005) study on YNTEP hiring. Of the government employees
interviewed three were principals or past-principals of Yukon schools. These individuals were selected for their long-standing relationship with YNTEP. I anticipated that these individuals would have insights into any changing perceptions of YNTEP or the graduates over time and would have some knowledge of the land claims. I was interested in their understanding of government responsibilities to land claim agreements and their familiarity with the commitments to First Nations interests outlined in the Yukon Education Act. Of the four YNTEP graduates, three were mature graduates and one was young and recently graduated. This group was varied according to their home First Nation, including Whitehorse, and all were female. In all cases, identification details are deliberately withheld because of the problem of maintaining confidentiality in a small population. Apart from the information gleaned from informants of the Macdonald (2005) study, all of the interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2010.

Potential interviewees were provided with a copy of the letter of invitation and the consent form prior to each interview (see Appendix B). All who were approached agreed to participate. Prior to the interviews, I reviewed the consent form with the participant, obtain two signed forms and gave one to the informant. I explained the thorough level of anonymity I would follow to ensure that each participant or their specific position would not be identifiable given the small population of the study context. Each participant was assigned a letter, as in Participant A, B, C, etc, as their pseudonym. I then provided the informants with a copy of the open-ended topics to consider (also included in Appendix B) at the start of a 1 to 1 ½ hour interview. Interviews were guided by the following discussion topics:

- describe the hiring process for new teachers as you know it
- identify key aspects of the process that you consider are critical to it as a fair process
• identify any potentially biased elements of the process.
• identify any supporting legislation or policies that govern the hiring process
• identify examples of challenges or benefits in the hiring process that may pertain to First Nations applicants
• consider ways to better improve the preparation of new graduates for the hiring process
• consider ways the hiring process might be improved as a more equitable process for First Nations applicants

During the same time period I obtained documents pertaining to teacher hire, including printed documents and information on hiring available on-line and specifically, information targeted to potential applicants. While it should be expected that documents will alter over time, most documents remained unchanged beyond the three year research and writing period with the exception of the application form. After decades of use the original application was replaced by a new, shorter, version just as this study concluded. Due to its late appearance and lack of applicability in the hiring process studied here, the new application form is not discussed in this study. In addition, it is important to note that though the graduates interviewed for this study and the earlier study were different (except for one), there is considerable consistency between the perspectives of the graduates interviewed in 2009-2011 and those interviewed for the Macdonald (2005) study.

The text-based data for this study consist of several kinds of documents which address: policy and program information pertaining to employment equity; programs supporting equity hire; and policy and documents supporting the hiring of teachers. Also examined were two major pieces of legislation: First Nations Final Agreements (FNFA), which includes the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) and contain provisions on representative hire and First Nations interests in education; and the Yukon Education Act,
which includes commitments to Yukon First Nations with regard to public schools. All will be discussed in detail throughout this document.

**Methods of Interpretation**

Two methods were used to interpret the data gathered: critical discourse analysis and institutional ethnography and were necessary because of their different routes into an examination of racialization. Analyzing discourse critically orientates the researcher to the everyday micro discourses of racialization and the ways in which dominant groups speak about racial inequalities and white supremacy. At a macro level, critical discourse analysis examines the discourses of ideological hegemony which rationalize unequal relations of power (McLaren, 2003; Stoddart, 2007). Institutional ethnography provides an analytical process of inquiry for examining relations of power as manifested in institutional practices and policies. This approach treats informants and institutional texts as windows into the working of institutions to reveal the hidden structures of knowledge and hierarchies of power at work in institutions. Dorothy Smith (2008) describes institutional ethnography is a means of “finding power ethnographically”; that is, finding concrete expressions of power (agency) embedded and reflected in documents (personal communication, July 12, 2008). As Smith (1990) posits, within an institutional ethnographically-framed interpretation it is possible for researchers:

> to know more about how things work, how our world is put together, how things happen to us as they do. …and to be able to say, ‘Look, I can show you’. We want to know because we also want to be able to act and in acting to rely on knowledge beyond what is available to us directly. (p. 34)

This can be accomplished by tracing the activities and processes that people in institutions carry out which represent properties of a system; including locating examples of where subjects are active in accomplishing their own invisibility within an institutional
system (Smith, 1990). If agency works through a system by way of the actors (employees) then it must be possible to show how hegemony is reproduced in socially organized ways. Agency may be apparent in formal documents such as legislation that directs practice but it is also apparent in the interpretation of the documents, such as, policies, handbooks, websites, and forms. As Smith states, “the interpretation is the message” (D. Smith, personal communication, July 12, 2008).

Parker (2004) recommends that one of the first considerations in an analysis of discourse (textual or otherwise) is to place the larger historical context in the forefront while the researcher questions how a particular discourse is meant to be heard; who it addresses or ‘hails’ so that we listen to it as a certain type of person. Parker places the historical context in discourse “not [to] be seen as something that pulls the strings of individual actors; rather, it lays out a field of action in which individuals understand themselves and others” (p. 152). We need to question discourse critically according to who benefits, who is left out, who it oppresses, who may not want to recognize it as discourse, and what reality is being distilled in this discourse. In similar ways as Smith (1990) suggests, the active and socially mediated texts of the institution also hails by “activating” the reader to respond in a particular way. According to Harold Garfinkel (1967), it is possible for discourse to elicit a specific response due to a “presupposed underlying pattern”. Garfinkel describes this as a built-in structure that connects the speaker to the responder in a given way, as the following suggests:

Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of “what is known” about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other. (p. 78)
Through critical discourse analysis attention is given to how a discourse governs how it should be responded to, who has agency and authority, and what outcomes are being structured or ignored. Dorothy Smith (2008) refers to this form of governing discourse in texts as a “shell”. A shell requires particular kinds of information to fill it (D. Smith, personal communication, July 12, 2008). Whether it is called a shell, or a presupposed underlying pattern or governing discourse, its purpose is to structure an interpretation in such a way that it would be difficult to see any other possible interpretation. Documents requiring very specific information such as application forms are examples of how institutional documents direct the kind of specific information it wants to consider about an applicant revealing not just what is important to know but what it considers irrelevant about an individual. Forms, despite their brevity, have the potential to disclose, sort, and channel a great deal about an institution, including what the institution values. It should, therefore, be possible to reveal white racial domination in the documents and policies that are produced by institutions. For example, schools are examples of “institutionalized whiteness” which produce and validate the right way of learning (Vanhouwe, 2007 p. 39). Even the hidden curriculum of schools institutionalizes whiteness to such a degree that, according to Zeus Leonardo (2009), “the extent that racial supremacy is taught to white students is ‘pedagogical’” (p. 83).

Critical race theory in conjunction with institutional ethnography provides a critical orientation for examining institutionalized whiteness and how it is reaffirmed and given prominence in the documents, policies, and structures of schools. The privileging of whiteness in a western-based curriculum continues despite challenges to hegemonic
practices by non-whites and regardless of legislation and policy to support such challenges.

In summary, through the research methods of institutional ethnography and critical discourse analysis, I will examine the processes and points of exposure in documents that privilege and guide the hiring of white teachers and examine discourse for how white racial privilege is justified. Methods such as critical discourse analysis and institution ethnography are about the search to reveal racialization at work in our institutions, our everyday discourse, and in the ways we construct meaning.

**My Personal Investment and Connection**

Critical ethnographers provide a scholarly voice to the experiences of racialized peoples and present opportunities for activism and commitments to social justice. Some would suggest that this is a requirement of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000; Yosso, 2005) as a means of ensuring researcher accountability. Madison (2005) claims that as critical ethnographers “we are accountable for our research paradigms, our authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation” (p. 14). This means that critical ethnographers must make their research positions open and transparent; including the formative life experiences that influence these positions—for one could hardly exist without the other. In keeping with this I begin with a declaration of my bias as a researcher of Euro-Canadian ancestry though it is one informed by a life-time of adult experiences working in First Nations political and educational organizations throughout the Yukon including public schools, as well as a sixteen year career in YNTEP as a teacher-educator and program director.
I am deeply influenced personally by an inter-racial, Aboriginal/Euro-Canadian, marriage which ended tragically but also brought joy in the birth of a daughter, who is now a graduate of YNTEP. I too am a graduate of YNTEP which was possible through First Nations status granted to me by marriage, according to the Indian Act regulations prior to 1985. My YNTEP experiences also presented me with personal knowledge of hiring challenges experienced by graduates of this program. These experiences present me with rich, though indirect, appreciation for the profound nature of racial oppression.

I have always appreciated the foresight of the good leaders who saw the possibilities for a First Nations and northern teacher education program in such a sparsely populated northern territory. The decision to embark on this teacher education program took courage and fortitude but as a result much has progressed in First Nations involvement in public schools. This includes at least two schools that have become strong models of what I believe to be a major intent of the education-related provisions of the land claims agreements, which include an authentic and integrated First Nations curriculum and supporting pedagogy. I am also deeply troubled by the extent to which most white Yukoners are simply not interested in what arguably may be the most significant event in Yukon history, a modern land claims process. This disregard was evident in the recent hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held in Whitehorse. A CBC reporter noting one white person in the audience asked her what her interest was in the hearings. Her response included: “because this happened in my community. I can’t understand why this room isn’t full of Yukoners here to learn more about these tragic experiences”. As this witness identifies, the disinterest of the white community on the experiences of Yukon First Nations as victims of residential schools is
troubling and illustrates the extent to which whiteness is detached from its own history; as authors, participants, neighbours and witnesses—and, as Canadian citizens.

There are several ways to interpret the comment expressed by this witness: as either one of distain or perhaps as a statement of despair of the condition of whiteness that has brought us to a place where whites have become so detached from their own history that they/we no longer know how to think about race and racism. This dissertation “work” reflects my own personal discovery with this and my struggle to understand why so little has changed in our ability to move on from racialization as an antiquated and inhuman ideology.

**Summary**

I have outlined several ways in which I will approach this research topic—the hiring challenges experienced by First Nations graduates of YNTEP—to accommodate the complexity of a research topic where racialization is the central focus. I provided some history on the hiring problems experienced by graduates as recorded in an earlier study and noted the limitations of the study as one which focused on graduates (applicants) but not employers. I provided a statistical representation of the problem from the standpoint of representation by population, school demographics, teacher workforce, and hiring of graduates to show the problem expressed in tangible outcomes. I outlined the nature of the research problem as it is conceptualized methodologically through critical theory and critical race theory and described the two key research methods used, critical discourse analysis and institutional ethnography, as supporting methods to the interpretation of the data. Finally, I concluded with a statement declaring my personal investment and connection to this research.
The detailed attention I have given to the study context is intentional and necessary to appreciating the analysis, interpretation, and understanding the research findings and presents the backdrop to reveal that current forms of racism are not as mysterious or illusive as some may chose to think.

Final Thoughts

This study was realized through the generous contributions of many: the graduates and the study participants from various departments throughout government and public schools. Those who participated did so as individuals and volunteered because of their interest and support of YNTEP. The racialized conditions which I critique did not begin and will not end with those who participated, rather it is my hope this work contributes toward a deeper understanding and appreciation for the oppressive forces at play in our community and society at large. Though I expect emotional reactions to this study and perhaps painful realizations—as is my own journey toward understanding—the journey toward acknowledging and learning from past wrongs should be challenging, uncomfortable and ultimately reconciling.

To follow is a chapter by chapter outline of the key points and issues addressed in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two: A Representative Literature Review

Rather than a detailed literature review, this chapter encompasses a representative review of scholarly research on the theories and issues of this study. I will address this body of research in more detail and greater focus in my analysis of the study findings.
presented in chapters four, five and six, on fit, white racial innocence, and meritocracy. This chapter introduces the scholarly background on critical race theory as the guiding theoretical framework for the study and outlines the key tenets of CRT as they pertain to an examination of hiring challenges experienced by teachers of First Nations ancestry.

**Chapter Three: Governing Legislation, Policies, Protocols and Practices**

This chapter is a review of key legislation, policies, resolutions, and programs that outline commitments to Yukon First Nations people to increase employment opportunities and advancement in government hire and obligations to achieve a more culturally inclusive public schools system. The chapter is organized into three main sections: historical background prior to the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement; key positions on education by the Assembly of First Nations and Yukon First Nations, and concerns raised in a national study on Aboriginal teachers and a study of employment concerns raised by Yukon First Nations teachers. The third section addresses employment equity-related policy and supporting programs of the Yukon Public Service Commission and the response of the Department of Education to employment equity. The chapter concludes with the positions of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation and the Yukon Teachers’ Association on equity hire in public schools.

**Chapter Four: The Discourse of Fit**

This chapter, along with chapters five and six, are devoted to a critical race analysis of the study findings by major theme. Chapter four encompasses the conceptualization and application of fit in employee hire from a critical race theoretical perspective and supported by discourse analysis and institutional ethnography. The chapter begins with an overview of how teachers are generally hired within the
profession followed by details of the hiring process of the Department of Education as typical of this process. Within a critical race theoretical framework this chapter answers the following questions: who determines teacher selection; what guides how this decision is made; and what is the outcome.

Chapter Five: Discourses of Innocence: Making Racial Inequality Visible

Chapter five is an examination of the conceptualization and production of white racial knowledge, teacher identity, and the normative privileging of white teachers. I illustrate ways in which white racial innocence masks and denies white racial domination as it plays out in teacher hire and its specific agenda in public schools. Because white privilege and racial innocence is an active discursive practice and particularly well-disguised in current liberal discourses on racialization, this chapter examines how privilege and innocence are produced through particular discursive techniques. The work of scholar Dreama Moon (1999) on the production of good white bourgeois womanhood assists in the analysis of examples of privilege and racial innocence discourse from this study, as they relate to marginalizing First Nations teachers.

Chapter Six: Meritocracy—Legitimizing Inequality

In chapter six I examine meritocracy and how it privileges white western knowledge, white educators; and along with a colonial agenda, structures public schools. I then focus specifically on meritocracy as an ideology used to legitimize and reproduce an unequal social order of racialized advantage and disadvantage. I examine several key ideological conflicts that undermine the concept meritocracy and how success is defined with examples from this study, specially: the significance of individuality and the
production of group racial affiliation; the racist liberal subtext of “racial progress” as illustrated by commentary on the positive effects of land claims and the ever-moving, unreachable, criteria of racial acceptance, as these are imposed on First Nations teachers.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion: Learning to See—Questioning to Understand

In the concluding chapter I reflect on what I have learned from the study participants and, in particular, how I came to understand the study problem within a larger context and through the conceptual framework of critical race theory. I reflect on the value of this framework and the influence of discourse analysis and institutional ethnography to assist in: revealing the structuring of inequality in policy and institutional practices; removing the mystery of racialization; and showing “the how”. I identify a topic that relates to this study, the racialization of space as it pertains to who can go where in a racialized social order, as one which warrants further discussion and study. The chapter concludes with recommendations to improve school hiring practices in ways that will support and foster diversity in teacher hire.
CHAPTER 2: A REPRESENTATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

To follow is a representative rather than a detailed overview of the theories that support the assumptions and issues that are central to this research study. These theories are taken up again in more detail in chapters four, five and six to support the analysis of the discourses of “fit” in the hiring process; discourses of white racial innocence in masking racial inequality; and discourses of meritocracy in legitimizing inequality.

Jim Thomas (1993) cautions that as researchers and as consumers of information we tend to allow ourselves to become “domesticated” by our intellectual leash and accustomed to seeing and thinking in a certain way. We accept certain conditions as normal, isolated from their formative processes, and fail to see how these situations have been shaped. As Thomas, and drawing on the work of Shor, elaborates:

Domestication not only leads to a form of benign ignorance, but also absolves us from certain kinds of social responsibility: Racism and sexism are things other people engage in; crime is a problem for police rather than partly a structural problem; and solutions to problems are the domain of experts and government, not individuals. We have no sense of the big picture that we feel is painted by somebody else’s cultural brush, because we are not taught a “critical consciousness” (Shor, 1980, p.47). We live in a reasonably literate information society, but we lack full awareness of the symbolic sources and processes that shape our daily lives …. (p. 8)

I chose critical race theory as the prime theoretical framework for this study for just the reason Thomas cautions—to counter a "domesticated" examination of racialization, to become uncomfortable in what I think I know about race. I liken the challenge of examining race and racialization to a common metaphor; “don't ask a fish about water”. Critical race theory requires the researcher to engage critically with the conceptualization of race, its pervasiveness, how it continues to influence how we think about difference and the ways in which white western society supports its continuation.
Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) originated as and continues, in part, as a theoretical framework for the study of inequities in the legal system. As the theory matures and as scholars expand their understanding of the hegemonic forces that structure racialization, CRT has gained relevance in a variety of disciplines (Zambudio, et al., 2011). Regardless of the discipline that is critiqued, CRT is founded on several fundamental tenets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Ladson-Billing, 1998; Litowitz, 2009; Zambudio et al.; Taylor, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001): racism is a normal fact of life in society; it is neither rare nor aberrant; white supremacy, as an unnamed global political system, is a structuring force on which all other systems are defined; white privilege has been appropriated from or provided by racialized others; racial equality is accommodated when the interests of racialized others support the interests of powerful whites; storytelling and narrative, as “experiential knowledge”, is legitimate knowledge and critical to understanding racial subordination; the positionality of the CRT researcher must be disclosed in recognition of the profound significance of race in one’s life experiences and in the conceptualization of knowledge.

In education and since the seminal paper by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998), “Just What is Critical Race Theory and What’s It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?,” CRT is challenging the conventional accounts of educational practices and social processes that occur in schools. As a theoretical framework for this study, CRT is important in identifying the structural effects; the processes and the practices of racialization as they continue to permeate through modern representations of colonial institutions, such as public schools. Discourses of race and racialization play a significant
role in framing and ordering how non-white people are thought of within a racialized social order and, in particular, how white people think of themselves. Recognizing the deeply intertwined interplay of both of these forces is foundational to CRT and to interpreting inequality. Though current beliefs about race have lead many to assume otherwise, race continues to have far reaching influences as a ubiquitous force which justifies and legitimizes racial inequality, including the very notion that race no longer matters (Leonardo, 2009; Zambudio et al., 2011). To study race and racialization as it is expressed today, as an ideology of great complexity, permeability and tacitness, requires finding its subtle points of exposure. Toni Morrison’s (1992) description of current manifestations of race as she described twenty years ago is more relevant today than it was when first authored. She depicts race as:

metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological “race” ever was. … It seems that it has a utility far beyond economy, beyond the sequestering of classes from one another, and has assumed a metaphorical life so completely embedded in daily discourse that it is perhaps more necessary and more on display than ever before. (p. 63)

Racial discourse is embedded in all levels of communication: in “everyday” exchanges, professional discourse, texts, policies and legislation, all of which influence and shape our beliefs and practices. Ladson-Billings (1998) states that conceptualizations of race today are more determined than in previous times and are “hidden in ways that are offensive though without identification” (p. 9). As she elaborates, race is embedded in concepts of “school achievement”, “middleclass”, “intelligence”, and “science”, as whiteness; and “welfare recipients” and the “underclass”, as blackness. It is, however, the value and meaning that white people imbue whiteness with that is most salient to the conceptualization of race. Zambudio et al. (2011) describe race as conceived within:
subtle beliefs about racial superiority and inferiority [which] serve to elevate the traditions, art, languages, literature, and ways of being and knowing of some groups while disparaging the contributions of others. We learn to value the Western literary canon and a Eurocentric curriculum as superior to the traditions developed by oppressed groups. We learn to believe a person’s race can offer clues about that individual and his or her behavior…. (pp. 15-16)

Leonardo (2009) describes the conceptualization of race as questionable “folk-knowledge” reflected in a certain set of assumptions and common sense. He asserts that race remains axiomatic particularly in its quasi progressive notion of colour blindness or in the appearance that race is declining in significance. In effect, the less innocuous representations of race today ensure that racialization and inequality will continue as a social practice. Race is ever-present in its apparent absence making CRT an important tool for revealing inequality couched in liberal discourse, notions of colour-blindness, equal opportunity, and “same-ness” (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

It is important to recognize that critical race theory is as much about whiteness as it is about “visible minorities” and some scholars would say it is more about whiteness and power than anything else (Dyer, 1997; Gillborn, 2005; Lipsitz, 1998; Leonardo, 2009; Winant, 1997). The ontological status of whiteness as perceived by CRT is described by Leonardo (2009) as follows:

whiteness is not coterminous with the notion that some people have lighter skin tones than others; rather whiteness, along with race, is the structural valuation of skin color, which invests it with meaning regarding the overall organization of society. In this sense, whiteness conceptually had to be invented and then reorganized in particular historical conditions as part of its upkeep. (p. 92)

This study focuses on the conceptualization of whiteness and the ways in which white supremacy legitimizes policy and practices. The work of John B. Thompson (1984a; 1984b) on legitimizing ideologies is especially important to CRT and accounts for the pervasiveness of racial inequality as legitimate, and indeed, the legitimacy of white racial
domination. For example, ideologies of merit and employee fit (fitting in) legitimate applicant selection in ways that compromise the hiring selection of certain visible minorities, particularly where there is a strong racial identity traditionally associated to a particular profession. Likewise, legitimizing ideologies are present in discourses of common knowledge which privilege, for example, white western knowledge over others. And, legitimizing ideologies can be found within the deep politics of everyday discourse where normative structures continue to influence social relations and reproduce hierarchies (Gitlin, 2005).

David Gillborn (2005) provides a guide to assist in observing ideologies at work which recreate unequal relations of power. In citing his interest in educational policy, he suggests that CRT researchers:

look beyond the superficial rhetoric of policies and practices, in order to focus on the material and ideological work that is done to legitimate and extend race inequity. When judging education policy [and practices], therefore, it is pertinent to ask some deceptively simple questions….These are by no means the only relevant ‘tests’ of equity and policy but they are among the most revealing and fundamental because they go beyond the expressed intent of policy-makers and practitioners to examine how policy works in the real world. First, the question of priorities: who or what is driving education policy? Second, the question of beneficiaries: who wins and who loses as a result of education policy priorities? And finally, the question of outcomes: what are the effects of policy? (p. 492)

This approach outlines a simple but effective approach to a critical examination of the policies and practices used to gate-keep access to valued social resources, such as, policies governing hiring practices or, whose world view has greater value. In chapter one I began with the question of outcomes—the minimal number of First Nations teachers hired in Yukon schools in comparison to new hires and in relationship to the overall teaching force. In CRT inequitable outcomes are the starting point from which the researcher begins to ask the types of questions that Gillborn suggests: Who or what is
driving this outcome? Who wins and who loses as a result of this outcome? What role has policy (and institutional practices) played in serving this outcome?

To this point I have cited representative scholarly literature on critical race theory as a theoretical framework for identifying the structural effects; the processes, practices, and legitimizing of racialization at work in institutions. I have identified the importance of racialized discourses, that is, the relational inter-twining of discourses of racial inequality and white supremacy and I presented some guiding questions as entry points into the difficult challenge of identifying modern and tacit expressions of racialization. I now turn attention to scholarly work on the conceptualization of race from a critical race theoretical perspective. I examine more closely several key tenets of CRT: the conceptualization of race and racial inequality as common sense and endemic, the conceptualization of white racial domination, and liberal expressions of race and cultural differences.

The Conceptualization of Race: Common Sense and Ideology

For Antonio Gramsci (1971/1999), “common sense”, which he also refers to as “good sense” or “folklore”, presents a fragmented “disjointed and episodic” understanding of the world. Awareness based on disjointed and episodic understandings support his premise that in a class ordered society “it is “better to “think”, without having a critical awareness” (p. 626). Ideologies appear to have deep philosophical meanings which stand “distinct from the structure” (p.706) they define. Common sense and ideology are “a product of history and a part of the historical process” (p. 630). Gramsci concludes that ideologies “are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which
must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination exposed ...precisely for reasons of political struggle” (Gramsci 1995, 395).

Hall identifies an important association between Gramsci’s theories on ideology and common sense to race. He concludes that ideology functions on two levels, it acts as a formalizing coherence of thought processes providing a sense of deep philosophical meaning and it influences everyday meaning or common sense. His application of these levels of operation to the conceptualization of race assists us in understanding its persistence today as a concept engrained in the everyday; but also deeply rooted in ideological significance, and in reference to Gramsci’s work, he summarizes as follows:

“Common sense” is not coherent: it is usually “disjointed and episodic,” fragmentary and contradictory. Into it the traces and “stratified deposits” of more coherent philosophical systems have sedimented over time without leaving any clear inventory. It represents itself as the “traditional wisdom or truth of the ages”, but in fact, it is deeply a product of history, “part of the historical process.” Why, then is common sense so important? Because it is the terrain of conceptions and categories on which the practical consciousness of the masses of the people is actually formed. (p. 20)

Common sense is a highly adaptive way of thinking and making sense of the world. As popular thought it has a ubiquitous presence that determines structures and restricts how we think about a topic. Hall describes ideologies-as-popular thought as ideas that are “discovered” though, in reality, they are authored and perpetuated by educational, religious and cultural institutions, the family; all manner of social organizations, political parties and where intellectuals play a leading role in supporting or refuting ideology. Popular thought is highly resistant to change because as part of our common belief systems it becomes associated with the collective knowledge which forms the basis for identity (Hall, 1986). Tension and contradictions become evident in popular thought— with race as a good example of this—where there is a growing misalignment between a
theoretical understanding and reality, often when accepted knowledge is subjected to a growing body of new evidence.

Hall (1986) suggests that Gramsci’s work provides a theoretical basis for reworking current theory on race and the nature of its persistence. For example, changing old, unfounded theories for new ones is not simply an exercise in transposing one for another. Ideologies based on long-since refuted and disjointed understandings continue on as new thinking enters a particular discourse area. Together they form a mixture of new and old in a partially transformed and piecemeal fashion. Considering the conceptualization of race in this way we can see that despite new emerging sensibilities on race we find individuals struggling with blatant contradictions.

It is also possible that what may appear to some as “new” ideas on race may not be new at all but simply a rebranding or slight realignment. This may explain how the notion of cultural differences so easily and somewhat recently replaced the discourse of racial difference. Redirecting reference away from “racial” differences to “cultural” differences as a means of creating a sense of group identity is a response to changing sensibilities but it is not a fundamental re-conceptualizing of race (Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

Ideology is concerned with the production of meaning and meaning permeates all aspects of the material world (Thompson, 1984a). Ideology, as many have theorized, creates frameworks of thought which structure our perceptions in particular and selective ways. As McLaren (2003) claims, ideologies formed from “the intersection of meaning and power in the social world…” are what produce and support hegemony in such powerful ways that “…hegemony could not do its work without the support of ideology”
Because the study of ideology is concerned with meaning and conveyed through discourse we find a thin line between where discourse ends and ideology begins. Stoddart (2007) argues that it is possible to separate them on an analytical basis but where the obviously overlap occurs is in the expression of ideology through discourse and ideology as an effect of discourse. Post-structuralist theories on ideology, such as the work of Thompson, take discourse and ideology considerably further. Thompson (1984a, 1984b) outlines a number of “techniques” in which ideology operates in discursive ways to mask relations of dominance. These discursive techniques conceal, disconnect from historical context, legitimate relations of power, and mobilize meaning in ways that allow some groups to “make a meaning stick” (1984a, p.183). Thus, for Thompson, language operates as both communication and an instrument of power. His theory on the means by which ideology is used to legitimate inequities is elaborated on in chapter 6 on meritocracy.

Former Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Phil Fontaine (1998) describes the qualities of ideologies, such as, racism and prejudice which support hegemony as having particular qualities about them as “founded on seemingly rational, strategic arguments designed to appeal to ‘common sense’ and so-called logical thinking” (p. 3). Historically, the concept of common sense had legitimate status; its legal basis being determined by American courts of law, which debated and ruled on which should have the greater legitimacy in rulings on legal matters: scientific knowledge or common sense. At times the courts ruled them one and the same, at other times common sense was valued over scientific knowledge. Where this legal debate was particularly topical was its application to issues of race in the courts. As recent as the 1920s, common sense was ruled by the
Supreme Court of America to be the legal benchmark in determining issues of race (López, 2006). Given that judges and lawyers were all white men at the time, it was the exclusive prerogative of white men to determine how decision ruled in matters of race with common sense used as a legal benchmark.

The application of meaning founded on common sense is especially problematic in critical race theory because, as Kevin Kumashiro (2004) reminds us, common sense represents the unexamined assumptions of knowledge and how we think about what we know. Since white western culture overwhelming controls knowledge such influential areas as school curricula, the media, (Giroux & Purpel, 1983), or what even counts as common sense is largely constructed on ideas of white superiority, privilege, and relations of domination.

**Whiteness and White Racial Domination**

*White culture or whiteness* is defined by Steven Seidman (2008) as,

not natural but part of a socially formed racial system; Whiteness is said to structure the lives of both Whites and non-Whites. …Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. …“Whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p. 234)

White culture has a long association with power and the right to authority. This authority comes, in part, as Ladson-Billing (1998) suggests, through long-held and assumed claims to own property while other non-whites, who were denied citizenship, could not. The emphasis on the right “to possess” is critical to white racial domination. Taylor (2009) describes whites as having unalienable rights to property and capital which Aboriginal people and other indigenous populations could provide. Aboriginal people provided this in the form of land in North American while African Americans, alienated from their homelands, supplied labour. The residue of this history remains and explains, in part, the
ideological and systemic nature of white racial domination. As Ladson-Billing notes, the reality of who possesses more or perhaps more significantly—the belief that whites should possess more—is likely to produce a sense of loyalty to processes that protect these interests. In contrast, processes which promote equitable possession will appear to compromise these interests. Peggy McIntosh (1989) in her illustration of white privilege through the metaphor of the “invisible knapsack” cautions that for whites to simply give up this position is not a simple matter of the redistribution of benefits. At stake are some of the most foundational ideologies and symbols of identity cherished by North American society, as she describes:

The pressure to avoid it [giving up white privilege] is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own. These perceptions mean also that my moral condition is not what I had been led to believe. The appearance of being a good citizen rather than a troublemaker comes in large part from having all sorts of doors open automatically because of my color. (p.13)

Institutions, such as schools, are rife with the cherished myths and symbols McIntosh attributes to how whites privilege is rationalized, not to mention the support of policies and practices that reinforce hegemony. Schools are prime examples of major contributors to reinforcing hegemony. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (2001) outline a twenty year history of research focused on the ways school reproduce social inequalities. Each study, they note, reveals curriculum, hidden curriculum, standardized testing, teacher practices, and university preparation which sustain social inequalities. They identify an inherent contradiction that “schooling plays a crucial role in offering opportunities for individual social mobility, it does at the same time, serve to perpetuate and indeed legitimize widespread structural inequalities” (p. 497).
In the chapters ahead I will examine the role of schools in perpetuating and legitimizing racial inequities and the misuse of meritocracy in determining who is likely to be hired to teach in public schools.

**The Culturalization of Race**

Fanon (1967) claims that white culture is constructed in two ways: through imagined identification with racialized others and in rejecting racialized others. Martin Nakata (2007) describes this slightly differently as a fascination whites have for expressions of cultural differences which places western culture as opposite to racialized cultures. Both theories suggest Nietzsche’s (1887/2009) concept of “ressentiment” which “requires first an opposing world, a world outside itself. Psychologically speaking, it needs external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is basically reaction” (para. 10); with the formation of white identity emerges from denial of the other (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005). Attributing difference to culture (or race) has always been problematic because of the tendency of “affirming difference as an end in itself” (Giroux, 1981, p. 104). In summarizing Sherene Razack (1998), the cultural diversity model tends to descend difference into a multicultural spiral of essentialized and superficial stereotypes. As she elaborates, differences—based on culture—mask the oppressor-oppressed power relations which in turn protect the central and overriding place of dominant cultural norms. Minimizing difference as culturally-based rather than racially or rights-based has a much larger effect for Aboriginal peoples by de-legitimizing their place as a founding nation(s) of Canada. As Razack claims “when racism and genocide are denied and cultural difference replaces it, the net effect for Aboriginal peoples is a denial of their right to exist as sovereign nations and viable communities” (p.
In the case of First Nations teachers, more interest is given to their cultural contribution to schools as their educational value than to their right to be teachers in society. This presents a troubling paradox. In order for First Nations teachers to be accepted as teachers they must emphasize culture differences in curriculum content and as pedagogy. In doing so they are marginalized in schools as curriculum specialists rather than general classroom teachers. This is not to say that First Nations history and cultural inclusion is not important in school curricula, rather cultural differences becomes a means to a teaching position and this essentializes First Nations teachers as specialists and delegates them (yet again) to the margins of colonial institutions.

In schools, cultural differences are pathologized as both a problem and the solution to school failure, particularly so for Aboriginal students. There is a perceived miss-match between the school and the family and an assumption that Aboriginal children do poorly academically because of an inherent culturally-based learning style (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sleeter, 1993). Likewise, the cultural differences approach of linking learning styles to cultural traits has become a common way of preparing teachers for diversity (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Within the cultural differences model as a rationale for school failure, diversity training has come to mean cultural sensitivity training and this training, as Razack (1998) notes, presents a simple solution easily acquired by anyone. As she elaborates, any teacher, including white teachers, can simply learn the appropriate cultural conventions leaving no need to diversify the teaching population and no reason to be concerned with the structure and content of schools. As Razack explains further:

pluralistic models of inclusion assume that we have long ago banished the stereotypes form our heads. These models suggest that with a little practice and
the right information, we can all be innocent subjects, standing outside hierarchical social relations, who are not accountable for the past or implicated in the present. It is not our ableism, racism, sexism, or heterosexism that gets in the way of communicating across differences, but their disability, their culture, their biology, or their lifestyle. In sum, the cultural differences approach reinforces an important epistemological cornerstone of imperialism; the colonized possess a series of knowable characteristics and can be studied, known, and managed accordingly by the colonizers whose own complicity remains masked. (p. 10)

Attributing the challenges that First Nations students or First Nations teachers face in public education to cultural differences, places fault on First Nations. And, as Schick and St. Denis (2005) note, this allows for the continuation of “the narrative of the nation as raceless, benevolent, and innocent [with] implications for the reproduction of racial privilege” (p. 296). Attributing the solution to cultural sensitivity training also keeps the responsibility for any solution with dominant society (Razack, 1998) and likewise, with white educators. Any contribution that First Nations teachers might bring to this equation is unnecessary and their presence inconsequential.

This next section focuses on the scholarly research which supports the main discursive themes that are foundational to this study: liberal discourses which mask inequality; discourses that shape teacher identity as white; discourses that shape Aboriginal identity. The section concludes with Aboriginal teachers’ experiences of professional marginalization.

**Discourses of Inequality**

A particular group of CRT scholars have taken up the examination of critical race theory through a postmodern and poststructuralist perspective focusing specifically on the interpretation of discourses. These scholars critique discourse which produce identities of subordination as a first step in critical race theoretic work (Zambudio, et al., 2011). For post-structuralisms an understanding of discourse begins with Foucault. Derek Hook
(2001), reading of Foucault, describes how discourses influence on micro and macro levels by means of: discourse as agency; discourse-as-knowledge; and discourse as the instrument of power. Discourse as agency is discourse as “history of systems of thought”. These are thought structures which are historically determined or presented as pre-existing discourse and live independent of the speaker. Discourse-as-knowledge is about whose social, historical, and political conditions are considered truthful. Discourse-as-power is concerned with the micro and macro exercises of power, not just in structures such as legislation, institutions, and ideologies, but in everyday social interactions. Stuart Hall’s (1997) interpretation of Foucault describes evidence of power in a similar way: “Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture” (pp. 55-56); though they may appear to be about the present and historically unrelated.

Colonial discourses operate in this way presenting tensions and contradictions where valued colonial practices and institutions, by white society, are being challenged. This tension suggests that not very far below the surface the colonizing role of schools, though unexamined and apparently forgotten by white educators, continues as an active force. That this is seemingly unapparent until challenged by counter forces, for example enforcing legislation and policy calling for equitable hire of First Nations teachers, can elicit some unmistakably reactionary responses that are remarkably consistent from site to site.

One of the tenets of critical race theory is the acknowledgment that racism is normal in North American society. Taylor (2009) describes this level of acceptable normality as omnipresent and largely unrecognizable to whites and therefore
unremarkable. A discourse which creates this sense of normalcy and thereby masks racial inequality is sophisticated and adaptable. This is discourse that while it may appear innocent in content is, indeed, oppressive in outcome. The discourse of cultural differences is one such example. As previously noted, cultural differences discourse celebrates attributed and essentialized differences by whites for a racialized group, in ways that appear to be not about race at all (Mackey, 2002; Razack, 1998; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The cultural differences-as-deficits model is founded on this discourse and presents racialized or culturalized groups as possessing certain values or characteristics as opposite to the values prized by middle-class white families. The characteristics attributed to certain racialized and classed groups include: “present versus future time orientation, immediate instead of deferred gratification; an emphasis on group cooperation rather than competition”; and, “less value on education and upward mobility” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p.6). These also happen to be characteristics opposite to those valued as essential for economic success, justifying in Marxist critique that the poor deserve to be poor. What begins as an apparent promotion of difference as culturally-based soon becomes justification for poor educational outcome, and ultimately becomes rationalized as justification for a subordinate position in all social economic and political spheres of dominant culture.

Much of the current discourse of race and cultural differences today has shifted to a liberal stance. Such discourses appear to express acceptance, tolerance, and humanitarian concerns for racialized identities (van Dijk, 1993). Discourses of this nature are not immediately offensive (to whites) nor do they necessarily reveal their oppressive agenda. They are powerfully influential in the way they shape an identity of lower class
and racialized others according to “official” and “common” knowledge. Hall (1997) explains such hegemonic structuring of knowledge through discourse as:

governing the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as discourse ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it ‘rules out’, limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it. (p. 44)

Discourses that structure unequal relations are exercises in social power at many levels, in the micro structures of language, such as syntax, and in the macro structures that influence meaning through ideology (van Dijk, 1998); from the “everyday” discourse to the formality of policies and legislation. Social power is also exercised at access points to institutions—where access is determined according to worthiness or suitability. It is also evident when access or service requires the ability to replicate the discourses most valued by the institution so that a standardized message is presented (Smith, 1990). Ultimately, social power is at work in the larger discourses which structure meaning which Foucault calls “regimes of truth” (1980). These are larger truths that influence and organize particular ways of thinking and as Foucault describes, they can be highly intentional.

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; this is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned… the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

Hall (1980) refers to “racially structured social formations” or “societies structured in dominance” (p. 305). Discourses with this intent, through claims of truth and authority, construct a particular account of events which determines, for example, whose knowledge is privileged in schools as “academic” and whose knowledge is relegated to the margins as “cultural” knowledge. Critical race theory recognizes that schools are
It could be said that teachers are the master narrators of white western culture, yet present themselves as “objective disseminators of knowledge” (Zambudio et al., 2011, p. 18). Where students and teachers of First Nations ancestry “fit” in this agenda is an important topic addressed in chapter four, the discourses of fit.

**Discourses and/as Identity**

Discourses shape our identities by providing a framework for how a subject is socially constructed (Hall, 1990, 1991). The framing of an identity creates a coherence of associated characteristics, a type of individual. For example, the idea of teacher or the idea of an Aboriginal person are not based on associations with real individuals but conceptualized and objectified, becoming a stand-in for a particular person. As Foucault (1972/1989) asserts, discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). The composition of teacher subjectivity is one example. “Teacher” is an identity shaped within a particular context and a particular set of accepted performances and norms.

Teacher identity has a long association as a white profession, indeed, as an identifiable profession it is a white western construct. As Schick (1998) points out, that most teachers are white and white women in particular, reinforces this as the norm. And, further, that while it may appear to just happen this way, it is a profession that considers itself to be racially neutral. Thus, there appears to be little need to diversity the profession. Likewise, no specific training other than some basic cross-cultural sensitivity training is necessary to teach to a racialized student population (Razack, 1998; St. Denis, 2011). Rather, good “normal” teaching is the essential quality necessary to be successful in any school setting. What is “normal” according to Dyer (1988) is highly suspect, given
that “white domination is reproduced by the way that white people colonise the definition of normal” (p. 45). When applied to the teaching profession, a ‘normal’ teacher is a white teacher (Schick, 1998)—especially a “good” or “effective” teacher. Good also means that “good” people are essential to the profession and, as a result, the two (good and white) have become inextricably bound with teacher identity (Schick, 1998). The norm in teacher identity as white, female and good is an extension of what Moon (1999) claims is a socially constructed identity of white middle-class womanhood as a gendered identity steeped in the class ideology of the bourgeois. The identity of the good white woman and by extension, white teacher, is also historically steeped in associations of civility, decorum, respectability, and racial solidarity as vital characteristics required of respectable single women venturing out of the home and into employment (Moon, 1999; Schick, 1998). Presenting oneself as a teacher today is an emulation of a historically-determined role, and requires adherence to a well-defined type. As Schick (1998) claims, being a teacher—as a socially constructed identity—may be more about performing teacher identity and conforming to identity type than about real skills and abilities. It is difficult to imagine how teachers of First Nations ancestry navigate this identity but it is clear that how they are judged as emulating or performing this identity will be problematic.

**Aboriginal Teachers and Teacher Identity**

A feeling of being part of the norm in the teaching profession is an experience that teachers of Aboriginal ancestry rarely have. Verna St. Denis (2010) has determined from a Canada-wide study that teachers of Aboriginal ancestry feel excluded and marginalized as professionals. In a summary statement of the study St. Denis reveals an
underlying pattern according to how Aboriginal teachers feel they are regarded by their white colleagues perceiving that:

- their qualifications and capabilities were discounted;
- they were frequently excluded and marginalized;
- that expectations of Aboriginal students were often lowered;
- that Aboriginal content and perspectives were trivialized or ignored;
- and that the effects of colonization and oppression on Aboriginal People were discounted. The participants in this study often responded to what they perceived as racism …. For the most part, participants felt that racism was mostly denied, ignored or trivialized, and that it had become more hidden in recent times. (p. 46)

St. Denis found that as professionals, Aboriginal teachers see themselves in accordance with prevailing views on the qualities of “effective teachers” and “good teaching” according to their philosophy of teaching. St. Denis describes the perceptions of white colleagues toward Aboriginal teachers as a reflection of being treated as “subjects to be civilized” rather than as “civilizing agents” (p.63). For Aboriginal teachers to be judged as objects rather than subjects and recipients of white western culture, would place them clearly on the outside of the profession.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This dissertation project is focused on a particular colonial narrative that is revealed when teachers of First Nations ancestry apply for teaching positions in Yukon schools. This particular version is told discreetly in the hiring of teachers according to “good fit” and “suitably qualified”; in the discourses of white racial innocence and cultural differences and revealed in the policies and practices that protect schools as key socializing institutions of white society. How this occurs is examined within the theoretical framework of critical race theory.

To summarize, in this chapter I have presented on a representative literature review as an introduction to the theories and issues that pertain to this research study. I
noted that these theories are taken up in more detail and greater focus to support the analysis of the research presented in chapters four, five and six, on: fit, white racial innocence and meritocracy.

I began this review of scholarly work with an overview of critical race theory from its early conception to its various applications as an emerging and expanding theory but with fairly consistent tenets, particularly that racialization is an ongoing and everyday experience. I included background specific to critical race theory in education, most notably to theoretical work of David Gillborn, Gloria Ladson-Billings and Zeus Leonardo who examine the far reaching effects of racialization in public schools and in perpetuating white racial domination. I then turned to the importance of critical race theory as it relates to the ideological conceptualization of race and to the work of Stuart Hall and John Thompson on how ideology serves relations of dominance. Through Thompson’s examples of particular discursive techniques we learn how ideology (and discourse) shape how we think and how we speak about race in ways that oppress while masking white racial domination. Next, I outlined some of the theoretical work on white identity formation, notably Gloria Ladson-Billings, Dreama Moon, and Carol Schick, who contribute to understanding the foundations of this identity from its early inception in materialism and the right to possess, to mythologies and symbols of white privilege as good, moral and worthy of the power bestowed to this status. Sherene Razack’s views on de-racializing inequality as cultural differences is a significant addition and also serves as an introduction to an important study by Verna St. Denis on the marginalized experiences of Aboriginal teachers.
In the chapter which follows I provide an overview of the key legislation, policies, resolutions, and programs that outline commitments to Yukon First Nations people in education and employment. This detailed context is central to understanding that in many areas of services and responsibilities, Yukon First Nations operate on a government-to-government relationship with the Government of Yukon forged by the land claims and self-government agreements. While education is the responsibility of the Government of Yukon it is delivered within a partnership model and governed by a Yukon Education Act that outlines a number of important obligations to First Nations in the areas of Aboriginal languages, culture, and parental/community involvement.
CHAPTER 3: GOVERNING LEGISLATION, POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND PRACTICES

The provisions and commitments to Yukon First Nations people outlined in legislation, policy, protocols, resolutions and programs express in varying ways the principles of employment equity and representative hire. This chapter illustrates the considerable effort that has been brought to bear to secure employment rights for First Nations people. It includes evidence of the commitments of the Public Service Commission to the provisions in Chapter 22 of individual First Nations Final Agreements calling for a representative public service, including mechanism for monitoring these efforts. I will outline the Department of Education’s own staffing policy which states no acknowledgement of these obligations and the Department’s silence on the role of First Nations teachers in assisting to meet obligations set out in the Yukon Education Act and in land claim agreements. These omissions and silences present troubling questions which I explore in this study and which underpin my argument that Yukon public education continues as an institution and process still rooted in a colonial agenda—despite laws, policies and programs in place to change this.

This chapter is organized as follows. I begin with a brief overview of the political and educational status of Yukon First Nations prior to a modern land claims process. This background is foundational to appreciating the significance of the provisions and commitments to Yukon First Nations outlined in land claims agreements and the policies and legislation that arise from these provisions. I will identify specific clauses in the Yukon Education Act which outline educational commitments to Yukon First Nations
and note that both pieces of legislation, First Nations Final Agreements (FNFA) and the Yukon Education Act, establish the legal basis for the inclusion of First Nations curricular content and greater participation of Yukon First Nations in public schools. I include reference to two reports that criticize the efforts of the Department of Education in fulfilling these commitments. I also reference key policies and positions of the Assembly of First Nations on Aboriginal education and Aboriginal teacher education and similar positions by Yukon First Nations organizations on First Nations education. Both territorial and national organizations recognize that Aboriginal teachers are central to changing schools in significant ways for Aboriginal students. Related to this are two studies on professional marginalization experienced by Aboriginal teachers in public schools already referenced in this document. The Macdonald (2005) study documents hiring issues experienced by YNTEP graduates in their quest for employment in Yukon schools. The second is a more recent Canada-wide study by St. Denis (2010) commissioned by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation which examines the experiences of Aboriginal teachers as marginalized in public schools. This national study is included to illustrate that the experiences of YNTEP graduates are similar to many Aboriginal teachers across Canada suggesting that the hiring challenges YNTEP graduates face are connected to deeper issues of racialization in Canadian society.

The third section of the chapter focuses on employment equity. I review various documents, programs, and policies pertaining to hiring of First Nations individuals. These include: the government of Yukon Employment Equity Policy (1994); employment equity programming offered by this government; the Representative Public Service Plan, as required of the Yukon Public Service Commission by Chapter 22 of First Nations
Final Agreements (FNFA); and the Yukon Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009). Several of these documents establish policy for First Nations preferential hire in government positions; outline programming to support this; and one speaks directly to teaching positions. I contrast the efforts to support preferential hire evident within the mandate of the Yukon Public Service Commission (PSC) to those of the Department of Education to illustrate that preferential hire is taken up extensively by one major government department but largely ignored in practice by another. I conclude this section with reference to the Yukon Teachers’ Association (YTA) and compare the silence of this association on employment equity and specifically, hiring First Nations teachers, with the position taken by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) which endorses employment equity hiring in public schools—a position which the Department of Education and the Yukon Teachers’ Association (a member of the CTF) fail to emulate.

**Politics and Education**

**Historical Context to the Documents**

A formal land claims process began in 1972 with a delegation of Yukon First Nations leaders to Ottawa to present the petition booklet, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* (Council for Yukon Indians, 1977) to the government of Canada. The date of this presentation followed shortly after the Supreme Court of Canada decision to recognize the legal basis of Nisga’a First Nations land title in common law. Chief Negotiator for the Yukon, Dave Joe, summarizes the argument of Yukon First Nations leaders presented on behalf of Yukon First Nations people.

Two weeks thereafter [the Nisga’a decision] we had taken the Chiefs, along with this petition entitled Together Today for our Children Tomorrow, to Pierre Trudeau and said “look, you stopped the treaty-making process in Canada. In
1921 was the last treaty you entered into. There are unsettled land claims in the rest of Canada, especially in the Yukon Territory. Don't you think that it's time to re-engage in that process? (Joe, 2011)

Dave Joe’s comment illustrates the status of Yukon First Nations in the political and in the legal framework of Canada as ignored or forgotten. Despite over one hundred years of white occupation of the Yukon, with unfettered access to resource extraction and traditional First Nations lands, no treaties with Yukon First Nations had been negotiated. Lands were ceded and developed under federal title. The Yukon Territorial government had no input and no jurisdiction over federal lands and resources (Coates, 1985). Thus at the onset of the land claims process, negotiations were largely a two-party process between the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nations and only later, in 1985, the became a tripartite process of Yukon First Nations, federal and territorial interests (McCormick, 1997).

Prior to recent land claims settlements, Yukon First Nations were regarded by both levels of government as a quasi political force. As a collective entity, Yukon First Nations lacked apparent or distinct political influence and a visible economic base. Moreover, Yukon First Nations were subjected to overt and largely acceptable racist treatment by Yukon “mainstream” society (P. McDonald, personal communication, April 4, 2008). Yukon First Nations remained socially, economically and politically marginalized until the well into the 1990s, when the effects of land claims began to be

---

1 In the early 1980s the conservative government blocked land claim negotiations in order to have their own interests added to the negotiations (Coates, 1985). In 1985, under a newly elected NDP territorial government, a new memorandum of agreement was signed which allowed for individual First Nations to negotiate their own settlements, rather than the collective process on which land claims began. The government of Yukon joined as a third party in the process. The newly structured process was community-based rather than negotiated in Ottawa and followed principled negotiations, a process which focused on interests, not on position (McCormick, 1997).
realized. Until then Yukon First Nations people remained visibly absent in all these sectors, including government employment.

The “Government” of Yukon receives its authority from the government of Canada but as a territorial government it lacks the co-sovereign relationship of a provincial government. It was only as recent as 1979 that the Yukon Territory was awarded responsible government status with a separate head of government (Coates, 1985). The process of responsible government status began as a slow devolution of services from a federal to a territorial government jurisdiction. Responsibility for the public education of Yukon First Nations children was one of the first federal responsibilities to be transferred under the General Tuition Agreement. This transfer occurred as early as 1964, coinciding with the beginning of government closures of residential schools across Canada. The General Tuition Agreement outlines the educational responsibilities provided by the government of Yukon to Yukon First Nations students, as “the same educational opportunities and instruction” offered in public schools throughout the Yukon (Yukon Department of Education, 2007, p. B.4). In 2011, Yukon Grand Chief Ruth Massie presented her concerns on the status of this commitment to the Standing Senate Committee on Education:

Relatively few studies over the years have evaluated whether this objective has been accomplished for Yukon schools. A study was done in 2007 on education reform. The Yukon does not have on-reserve First Nation run schools like other jurisdictions in Canada. Therefore, all Yukon First Nation students attend public schools, with the understanding that culture, language and First Nation morals and values are instilled within the educational programs and school community. (Canada, Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Issue 1 – Evidence, September 28, 2011)

The understandings that Grand Chief Massie intimates with regard to the provision of First Nations cultural content and language programs, among other commitments to the
educational success of Yukon First Nations students, are identified in the Yukon Education Act and they are also contained in each First Nations Final Agreement. Of specific interest to this study is the underlying significance of employing teachers of First Nations ancestry to meet—at the very least—elements of these obligations. The details of these obligations will be discussed further in this chapter.

**Land claims: Process and impacts.**

The passing of the Constitution Act of 1982 affirmed existing Aboriginal treaty rights in accordance with the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and allowed for the initiation of land claims where none had been negotiated in the past. With the exception of one section of Treaty Eleven in southeast Yukon, Aboriginal land title had never been relinquished by Yukon First Nations. A first round of land claim negotiations began in 1983 and ended the following year in an impasse over a federal proposal to extinguish Aboriginal rights in exchange for a modern land claims (Council of Yukon First Nations, n.d.). Negotiations resumed later under a new structure which ensured Aboriginal rights and led to the ratification of the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) in 1993 by all fourteen Yukon First Nations. The UFA serves as the overall template for negotiations by individual First Nations and sets out the framework for the provisions of land, compensation monies, self-government agreements, and mechanisms to ensure the joint management of a number of specific areas. An individual First Nation Final Agreement (FNFA) contains the provisions of the Umbrella Final Agreement plus specific provisions which apply to the individual First Nation (UFA, 1993, 2.1.3). In this way, each of the fourteen Yukon First Nations is able to negotiate a settlement based on principles held in
common to all First Nations as well as address unique areas of interest. The areas of common interest that pertain to this study include: education and training requirements, representative government hire, and First Nations participation and the inclusion of cultural programming in Yukon schools.

The land claims process did more than attend to historical wrongs. It allowed for the political evolution of both levels of government, First Nations governments and the territorial government (McCormick, 1997). The quote which follows describes land claims as a catalyst for the development of both political entities and by extension, direct benefits to Yukoners of First Nations ancestry and white Yukoners.

The Territorial government wanted more, more legal authority, it wanted more financial authority and it wanted control over land and not coincidentally, First Nations wanted the same things. You go back and look at “Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow”, legal authority, more financial resources, control of land. So you had this situation in the 60’s where you had these two groups who wanted to have the same things from the same entity (the federal government). For all kinds of constitutional reasons as well as matters of federal policy the federal government wanted to have the land claims issues resolved before they would look at devolution in, any kind of comprehensive way. I think there was a view on behalf of the territorial representatives that, once the First Nations got what they wanted, then it would be impossible to deny the same things to the rest of the Territory. (Participant H, 2010)

While it would be hoped that Yukoners see common benefits ensuing from developing both levels of government, for Yukon First Nations political legitimacy is symbolized by the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement and for white Yukoners it is represented in the passing of a new Yukon Act in 2003 and the emblematic removal of the reference to “Territory” in the title. For Yukon First Nations people, however, land claims represents far more than political legitimacy. Among other symbols representative of self-

---

2 Eleven of fourteen First Nations claims have been finalized. Three are still in progress (cite).

3 The Yukon did not actually lose its territorial status relationship with the government of Canada.
determination principles, Chief Negotiator Dave Joe describes land claims as a symbolic success on many levels:

It was successful because it's something that people wanted. This was their basic articulation. We need a power base. We need our power back. We need our people back. And we need control over our resource capacities back as well. And I think it's successful because it achieves all of those things. The people are now in charge of their citizens, their land, their resources, and basically it's a partnership as well. It's not a dictation by Canada. It's not a dictation by Canada and Yukon. It's an attempt to rationalise how one shares law-making capacities in the Yukon Territory and how the three parties have rationalised the sharing of the wealth and the power as well. And so I think it's successful because the parties basically said yes, this is something that we should try to do.... (Joe, 2011)

Dave Joe describes the land claims agreements as a means of getting power back to Yukon First Nations through a sharing of power—as in a partnership. His reference to partnership is an important one for appreciating that legislation alone is only a part of the process of self-determination and shared governance. The agreements which outline commitments to public education, training opportunities, and employment of First Nations in government, form a significant part of the partnership. The specifics of these are provided below.

The provisions in relation to education and employment.

The Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) consists of 28 provisions of which several set out specific obligations to Yukon First Nations in the following areas: curriculum content and language programs; the right to establish First Nation-run schools; employment-related training and government employment opportunities and representative hire in government public service (Chapter 22 of the UFA on employment and training obligations is included in Appendix E). The specific provisions which pertain to public schools and outline the need for Yukon First Nations teachers and provisions which address hiring are noted herewith:
Education and Training

Funding and providing:
(a) courses for non-native and native teachers and other instructors to enable them to conduct courses in native culture, language and similar areas;
(c) native studies, culture and language programs for "school age" and adult people;
(f) native language and cultural education teaching and research programs;
(UFA, 1990: 22, Schedule A:6)

Employment-related Training and Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunities
Where public service employment opportunities exist, Government shall assist in facilitating training and professional development of Yukon Indian People so that they will have access to such employment opportunities, with particular emphasis on increasing over a reasonable period of time the number of Yukon Indian People in technical, managerial and professional positions within the public service. (UFA: 22.4.1)

Representative Hire in Public Service
Government shall develop and implement a plan which will include measures designed to attain the goals of: a representative public service located in the Yukon, taking into account the aboriginal/non-aboriginal and gender make-up of the population of the Yukon. (UFA: Schedule A:1.0)

In addition, provisions are set out in individual First Nations Final Agreements which call for representative hire within each traditional territory:

a representative public service located within the First Nations Traditional Territory that reflects the aboriginal/non-aboriginal make-up of the population of the Yukon. (UFA: Schedule A: 1.1: 1.1.1-1.1.2).

These provisions establish the legal basis for three significant conditions in relation to this study:

1. the requirement for First Nations curriculum content and language programming which indirectly identifies the need for teachers of Yukon First Nations ancestry;
2. a public service that is representative of the Yukon First Nations population in Yukon;
3. a public service that is representative within a traditional First Nations territory.
Obligations to condition 1, the inclusion of First Nations culture and language in Yukon schools, are also clearly set out in the Yukon Education Act. Obligations to report on condition 2 were recently met with the publication of the Representative Public Service Plan Annual Report (Yukon Public Service Commission, 2009c). This plan will be addressed in greater detail ahead. Condition 3 is not widely known and has not received attention in regard to public schools located within a traditional territory covered by an individual First Nations Final Agreement.

Before turning to the specifics of the Yukon Education Act which also outlines obligations and provides further parameters to the legislated aspects of the partnership between Yukon First Nations and public schools, it is important to have some understanding of the unique structure of the Department of Education which differs from provincial counterparts, particularly with regard to teacher hire.

**Yukon Public Education and Yukon First Nations**

The Department of Education consists of three branches, Public Schools, Advanced Education, and Education Support Services, which together provide support for educational services from kindergarten to post-secondary (Figure 1). The Education Support Services branch provides human resource and policy support to the Public Schools Branch and Advanced Education. This branch is responsible for offers of hire to teachers and principals under the Collective Agreement of the Yukon Teachers’ Association and, as well, for non-teaching Department of Education personnel hired under the Public Service Commission and the Yukon Employees Union.
Public schools branch.

The Department of Education (DOE) has always operated essentially as a school board and thus has more direct power over education than is typical of a provincial ministry of education (Canada, Office of the Auditor General, 2009). It employs teachers and principals, provides professional development for teachers, program supports, approves policy, and oversees school facilities and the overall financial accounting for public schools in the Yukon. While the Yukon Education Act (2002) includes provisions for school boards in the Yukon (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.43) the Francophone School Board, which administers the French first language and immersion programs, is the first school board under this provision at this time and as a school board is responsible for its own operations, including hiring its own teachers. The Public Schools Branch
oversees 28 schools, including three Roman Catholic schools and provides support and resources to the Francophone school board. Yukon schools follow the British Columbia, Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines with the proviso, as specified in the Yukon Education Act; that up to twenty-percent of the curriculum may be locally determined (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.72-1b).

**Administration of Yukon schools and hiring procedures.**

Individual Yukon schools are under the direct administration of the school principal who reports to an area superintendent. Three superintendents are responsible for all 28 schools in the territory. As prescribed in the Yukon Education Act (2002), a school council participates with the superintendent in the selection of a new principal. Teachers are hired by the school principal—in keeping with a school-based management model—though the hiring of teachers rests ultimately under the authority of the Minister of Education (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.170-1a-c). School-based management (SBM), rather than a centralized management structure, offers a number of advantages such as: providing stakeholders directly involved with a school input into budgets, staffing, curriculum, and supports a closer relationship between student and community needs (Yukon Department of Education, 2007). On the other-hand, school-based management can also mean that policies and the larger system-wide directive potential of a centralized system may be missed or inconsistent among schools. Regardless of which management style is in effect, individual schools and the Department of Education are responsible for the provisions set out in the Yukon Education Act. In the event of a conflict between the Act and a land claims agreement, including the individual First Nation Final Agreement of the traditional territory in which the school is located, the land claim or self-
government agreement prevail (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.49). How well principals in general understand these provisions and the overarching legislated powers they contain is a question of some concern. Interviews with several individuals involved in some way with hiring teachers for this study suggest that there are inconsistent and incorrect interpretations of a number of documents, including the staffing protocol. With regard to hiring teachers, no mention was made of land claims agreements or the government of Yukon employment equity policy, as a consideration in school-based decisions.

Given that the Department of Education tends to ignore its own staffing protocol, employment equity policy or reference to land claims and representative hire would suggest a deeper level of denial. As David Gillborn (2005) has observed in his setting of Great Britain and appears to apply here, “race equity has constantly to fight for legitimacy as a significant topic for education policy-makers. This is a key part of the way in which education policy is implicated in white supremacy” (p. 493).

**Yukon Education Act (1990).**

The Yukon Education Act was first passed in 1990 and revised in 2002. At the time of its assent and for some decades after, the Act was recognized across Canada as progressive legislation as noted in the following textbook on school administration:

> The Yukon, with the passing of the 1990 Education Act, has perhaps gone further than any other jurisdiction to decentralize and democratize its educational system, and to establish a broad base for the local participation in, and control over, schools. (Levin & Young, 2007, p. 50)

The Act followed a territory-wide public review of education which culminated in the Kwiya Report (1987). The public review provided the first opportunity for Yukon First Nations to fully participate in a public discussion on education and to help shape its structure and future direction. The Kwiya review found that the Department of Education
had provided First Nations students with minimal education support; largely equivalent to no more than access:

The policy of equality of access, as practiced in our education system, has led to a great wastage of human and education resources. It is evident that Indian people have paid a significant cost in terms of human capital, for the failure of their education policy. (1987, p.17)

The Yukon Education Act (1990, revised 2002), which followed this review, contains a number of clauses which specifically address Yukon First Nations interests. The recommendations are consistent with similar provisions stated in the land claim agreements and are outlined in the following clauses from the Act:

The Minister shall include in courses of study prescribed for use in schools studies respecting the cultural, linguistic and historical heritage of the Yukon and its aboriginal people, and the Yukon environment. (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.51)

Every school administration, in consultation with the Local Indian Education Authority or, if there is no Local Indian Education Authority, the Yukon First Nation, shall include in the school program, activities relevant to the culture, heritage, traditions, and practices of the Yukon First Nation served by the school. (c.25, s.55)

This next clause sets out the responsibility of principals to support and implement the above commitments.

Duties of the Principal: include in the activities of the school, cultural heritage traditions and practices of members of the community served by the school if the number of members who possess the cultural heritage so warrant. (c.25, s.169)

Though these clauses identify the incorporation of First Nations content they do not name First Nations teachers as a desirable and obvious staffing choice to assist in fulfilling these obligations. The Yukon Education Act is silent on staffing considerations on all respects\(^4\), though there are a number of other documents, such as the government’s

---

\(^4\) As recent as 2011 the Department of Education initiated its first staffing allocation formula, a staffing quota guide for Yukon schools to determine teacher: pupil ratios (Yukon Department of
employment equity policy, the staffing protocol, and various provisions in the land claim documents that speak to increasing First Nations hire in the Yukon public service.

The documents described thus far illustrate that there is adequate guiding policy and legislation to provide curriculum programming and address academic gaps to better serve Yukon First Nations students. The importance of Yukon First Nations teachers to assist in the implementation of these interests should be obvious. Criticisms regarding how well the Department of Education meets its own legislation and policies and those reflected in the land claims documents, documents to which the Government of Yukon is a partner and a signatory, are well-documented. Three of the reports are discussed below, *Education Act Review, Renewing the Partnership* (2001); *Yukon Education Reform Project: Final Report* (2007) and *Report of the Auditor General to the Yukon Legislative Assembly: Public schools and Advanced Education* (2009). These reports criticize the efforts of the Department as falling woefully short in addressing First Nations students and First Nations educational interests.

The Yukon Education Act (2002) is publically reviewed approximately every five years. In 2001, a review of the Act culminated in a number of recommendations as reported in the document “Renewing the Partnership: Draft Recommendation” (Education Act Review, 2001). Several recommendations helped to clarify First Nations interests in education and monitor student success but these did not result in actual amendments to the Act. The review was critical of the current model of governance and its failure to implement a partnership in education through the establishment of school boards and with increased involvement of Yukon First Nations. Several of these,

---

Education, Staffing Entitlement, 2011). Prior to this, staffing allocation was a largely ad hoc determination.
specifically point (a) and (b), were repeated again in the Yukon Education Reform Project: Final Report (Yukon Department of Education, 2007) and included in the following:

(a) “The current governance model does not adequately provide for a true partnership with the people who it affects.” (p. 1.8)
(b) “First Nations people are frustrated because their children are less successful in school than non-First Nations students. They want a part in the decision-making process to make sure that their children will do better. First Nations parents are also not satisfied with the curriculum.” (p. 1.8-1.9)
(c) “The Yukon needs more First Nations teachers and administrators. It is time for a truly representative public schools system that reflects those whom it serves and for the curriculum to reflect the cultures and world views of Yukon Nations people.” (p. 2.9)

The 2007 report is also critical of Part 5 of the Yukon Education Act which outlines the responsibilities of schools toward Yukon First Nations citing that the current legislation does not reflect a self-governing or “nation-to-nation concept suggested by RCAP [Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996]” (p. 1.4). In general, the report criticizes the Department of Education for not taking seriously its commitments to Yukon First Nations and that its own legislation, the Yukon Education Act, has not kept pace with land claims and self-government agreements. Recommendation b) in the above, on the gap between academic achievement of First Nations students and white students, was given prominence in the 2009 audit of Yukon public schools by the Auditor General of Canada. Recommendation c) in the above is particularly salient as it articulates the overarching rationale for this dissertation.

**Staffing and student performance: Auditor general’s report**

The Report of the Auditor General to the Yukon Legislative Assembly (Canada, Office of the Auditor General, 2009) is an audit of public education in the Yukon. The audit report addresses three main areas: the effectiveness of the Department in delivering
education to Yukon children; whether a comprehensive plan is in place for addressing gaps in student performance; and, how the Department allocates teaching-based staff. The audit determined major gaps in all three areas, especially in addressing the academic gaps of First Nations students relative to white students. In regard to School Growth Plans, as required of all individual schools, the audit found the Department fails to provide guidance on the purpose of these plans or how they fit into the Department’s overall strategic planning process. For example, the audit found that as an element of school growth planning, the Department does not have a comprehensive human resource plan in place or staffing-needs profiles identifying the skills and capabilities of teachers required to achieve its goals. Though the audit did not speak to the specifics of human resource plan such as goals for staff diversity or meeting obligations to Yukon First Nations, it would be expected that employment equity concerns should be part of any comprehensive human resource plan and therefore an important inclusion to School Growth Plans.

All of the reports noted in the above highlight a pressing need for a re-examination of public education and the DOE’s current ability to meet the educational interests of First Nations. The 2001 review, *Renewing the Partnership*, calls for administration training opportunities for First Nations teachers as vice-principals. The 2007 *Education Reform Project* report notes that there is a lack of First Nations teachers and administrators. The 2009 auditor general’s report is clear that Department is lacking a comprehensive human resource plan. Combining these recommendations would lead to a comprehensive human resource plan to assist in realizing a number of obligations to First Nations as they pertain to a representative workforce, plus, a more diverse
workforce with skills and potential to assist with the most urgent concerns identified in these reports.

**Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education**

In this next section I outline the national and territorial positions of the Assembly of First Nations on Aboriginal education and, similarly, those of the Council of Yukon First Nations. The positions and resolutions discussed represent a long history of dissatisfaction with public education by Aboriginal Canadians and demands for greater control and involvement in the design and delivery of education to Aboriginal children. This section includes some historical background on Aboriginal teacher education as context for the important and unique role that these programs play in bringing teacher education to Canadian northern regions and to Aboriginal communities across Canada.

**National Aboriginal Interests in Education**

Eber Hampton (1995) states that—“no aspect of a culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education” (p. 7). In recognition of this critical role and the means by which public education plays a significant part in maintaining Euro-Canadian hegemony, Aboriginal leaders have for some time demanded greater control of the public education for Aboriginal children. This demand was articulated by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in its early position paper on public education, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). This document made education a major response to the assimilationist policy articulated in the 1969 federal White Paper on Indian policy. *Indian Control of Indian Education* called for greater control of education,

---

5 At the time it was known as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB),
a need for Aboriginal teachers and revealed to the Canadian public that Aboriginal students are poorly served in Canadian schools. These positions and concerns, among others, were identified in every subsequent AFN position paper on education, including the document, *Tradition and Education: Toward a Vision of Our Future* (Assembly of First Nations, 1998), which repeated the need for Aboriginal teachers, administrators, counselors, and education directors, and the provision of cross-cultural training in all Canadian teacher education programs. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) identified Aboriginal teachers as “the first line of change in the education of Aboriginal children and youth” (p. 490).

**Yukon First Nations Interests in Education**

Yukon First Nations began to formalize their position on public education in the document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* (Council of Yukon Indians, 1977). This document, which presents the core position statements for a modern land claim process, also contains reference to the first education conference called by Yukon First Nations and held at Coudert Residence, Whitehorse, in January 1972. Fourteen recommendations pertaining to ways to improve education for Yukon First Nations children were presented at the conference, including one which addresses teacher training:

> Natives must be encouraged and helped in every possible way to look for and to get employment as teachers, counselors, and possibly teacher’s aides, in the Yukon Educational system…. (Council for Yukon Indians, 1977, p. 66)

Some advances were made following the 1972 conference, including the hiring of Aboriginal people to work as remedial tutors in small community schools. This program was funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs beginning 1977-78 and in
the early years of the program was under the administration of the Yukon Native Brotherhood (Annual Report, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978). As well, great hopes were placed on seven First Nations students who, in 1978, participated in a teacher education program offered in the Yukon through the University of British Columbia (UBC) (Yukon Indian News, 1978, p.6). Unfortunately only one of these students remained with the cohort and completed the program. Some attribute students’ lack of success to the structure of the program, which included lack of personal and academic supports and the requirement to complete two of the four years at UBC in Vancouver. These challenges would become important considerations in the design of YNTEP (B. Aubichon, personal communication, April 8, 2010).

The Kwiya Commission of 1987 was viewed as an important break-through in featuring First Nations interests in education. The Commission was unusual in two ways: two of three commissioners were of First Nations ancestry and targeted meetings were held with individual Yukon First Nations throughout the Yukon. The commissioners were determined to be non-prescriptive and offered general recommendations to support and channel many of the interests identified in the community meetings. Piers McDonald, Minister of Education at the time, describes the importance of this exercise:

A lot of what we learned was from the process rather than the [Kwiya] report. We started to hear things said over and over again in various communities about how to make change. Getting First Nations teachers in the classroom was pretty much a common frame. (P. McDonald, personal communication, April 4, 2008)

The decision to offer a local teacher education program and to target the training to Yukon First Nations students was made in April 1989, two years after tabling the Kwiya Report. The program would focus on northern and First Nations content; educational theory curriculum would be supported by extensive supportive practice; and,
personal and academic supports to students would be provided where needed. Though YNTEP was ground-breaking as a first fully-offered degree program in the Yukon and unique in targeting First Nations students, the concept it was based on was not new. Since the 1960s, several successful Aboriginal teacher training initiatives—commonly referred to as TEPs (teacher education programs)—were already well underway in various locations in Canada.

Many of the teacher education models with a specific focus on Aboriginal education are community-based programs, offered off-campus but in affiliation with a large university. The programs are significant and influential in a number of ways. The early programs were the first post-secondary educational programming catering specifically to Aboriginal students (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). They were the first post-secondary programming of any kind offered in northern communities and their success created opportunities for other community-based educational and training programs to evolve (Tymchak, 2006).

The strength of community-based teacher education lies in the partnerships that are created to support the program and the students (More, 1981). These partnerships include: sponsoring universities, teachers’ associations, local schools and school boards, departments of education, and Aboriginal communities (Lawrence, 1985; More, 1980, 1981; Tymchak, 2006). This collaboration makes it possible to create unique structures and programming to address community needs in education, incorporate local

---

6 These early TEP programs include, for example: The Brandon University Northern Education Program (BUNTEP) established in the early 1970s from several earlier programs in Manitoba. In Saskatchewan: the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) established in 1977; the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) established in 1980; and the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) established in 1972. In British Columbia: the Native Indian Teacher Education (NITEP) established in 1974.
curriculum, host practicum experiences in local community schools and exchange professional development opportunities with sponsoring teachers and local schools (More, 1980, 1981; Nyce, 1990; and Lawrence, 1985). Graduates of these programs became role models in their communities and collaborators and supporters of their programs as co-operating teachers, program instructors, and directors; and curriculum developers and leaders in education (Tymchak, 2006). For many university-based programs, TEPs represent an enviable model of blending macro (provincial and territorial) and meso (local community) interests in public education.

Research in the field of Aboriginal teacher education has received little scholarly attention. What does exist and is now dated research indicates that programs face common challenges such as lack of funding or inconsistent funding and they are subjected to misconceptions about academic rigor (More, 1980, 1981; Nyce, 1990; Lawrence, 1985). A 2008 focused self-study and symposium of TEPs, *Aboriginal Ways of Knowing in Teacher Education*\(^7\), hosted by the University of Regina, determined that the programs have generally kept to their original structure as community-based teacher education and they continue to battle many of the same concerns identified in these early studies (Aboriginal Knowledge Exchange Project- AKEP, 2008). Regrettably, TEPs receive little attention in educational research beyond interest in their challenges as programs which limits our knowledge of these programs and their impacts on Aboriginal education and public education.

---

\(^7\) Ten Aboriginal teacher education programs from across Canada engaged in self-studies. They presented their findings at a symposium held at the University of Regina, May 26-28, 2008. The participating TEPs included: ITEP; NITEP; NTEP; NORTEP; SUNTEP (and several campuses); St. Francis Xavier, FNUniv; and YNTEP.
Challenges Identified

**YNTEP: A study of graduates not teaching**

The Macdonald (2005) study, introduced earlier, was initiated by Yukon College and supported by the Yukon Department of Education. It was undertaken to learn more about the experiences of YNTEP graduates who were not teaching in Yukon schools at the time of study. The study included an inquiry on what graduates were currently doing, their perceptions of the Department of Education’s hiring process and challenges encountered in securing teaching positions. The researcher determined that of the total number of graduates of YNTEP in 2004 (78) over half were without teaching positions. The following is a breakdown of the statistics generated from this study.

Table 5

**Hiring Statistics for 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hiring Statistics</th>
<th>N(^a)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number of YNTEP graduates, 1993-2004</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of graduates without teaching positions in (2004)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of graduates who had left the Yukon (many to seek employment elsewhere)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of graduates without teaching positions who received at least one interview for a position</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of graduates who declined a position offered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of graduates seeking teaching positions in 2004</td>
<td>13(^b)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Number.  
\(^b\) This number is currently much higher.

From the sixteen graduates who participated in the Macdonald study it was determined that thirty-eight percent had applied for positions at a frequency of ten to fifteen times and thirty-one percent applied four to five times. Given the small number of
positions offered in a year, these numbers suggest that failure on the part of the graduates to be successful in hire, cannot easily be attributed to lack of interest.

According to the graduates interviewed, lack of experience was the most frequent reason provided to the applicant when they asked or attended a post-interview review meeting, as the following interview excerpts reveal:

I was told that I didn’t know enough about the grade level … my knowledge of that area just wasn’t enough. They wanted someone with more.

They said that I did not have teaching experience. Of course not being hired, I’ve never, I don’t have teaching experience.

There’s more qualified, more experienced people in the field who applied.

Lack of experience … after … teaching adults, several principals told me I was considered an adult instructor and lacked experience with children. That was really frustrating. I took the [adult education] … job because it was there and I needed work. (Macdonald, 2005)

The parameters of the study took into account the perceptions of the graduates as to why they had not been successful in winning employment competitions. It did not include perceptions of the employer, the Department of Education, or school principals and thus the researcher concluded that hiring challenges were problems for graduates to address. No recognition was given to the racial affiliation of the applicants or of the principals as a potentially contested area. The study concludes with a recommendation that graduates need to be better prepared for the hiring process. This leaves the unfortunate impression to the graduates who participated in this study and others who read this study that graduates are ill-prepared. Moreover, it overlooks that, despite making an average of seven attempts for a teaching position, some twenty applicants would not eventually, at least through experience if not through their training and their own life experiences, develop skills that would eventually lead to a successful outcome.
The researcher’s conclusion, though intended to be helpful, is typical of victim blaming and though the researcher’s advice has merit, and actually good advice in any teacher preparation program, targeting better preparation for hiring should not be the only response to the concerns raised in this study. Allegations of hiring challenges and hiring irregularities in a racialized setting warrant a much deeper examination. In addition, it was shortsighted of the researcher to ignore the paradox that in order to gain access to employment the successful candidate must first have experience. Likewise, the frequency of rejection based on lack of experience is notable. Rejecting candidates of First Nations ancestry to this extent discounts the acknowledged underrepresentation of First Nations teachers in Yukon schools, and, most noteworthy, ignores legislation and policies in place to address inequities in a predominately white workforce. It also discounts the opportunity to address the First Nations cultural base that is acknowledged as missing in Yukon public schools, by hiring teachers of First Nations ancestry. It is distressing and unacceptable that this study did not warrant further examination as a potential employment equity concern.

The Macdonald (2005) study provides an important starting point for this current research study and forms a part of the data. The study which follows provides a broader accounting of the experiences of Aboriginal teachers working in schools across Canada, though with similar experiences of marginalization in the profession.

A study of Aboriginal teachers’ professional knowledge.

A study was commissioned by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation to explore what can be learned from the professional knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal teachers and how to better support and promote Aboriginal education in Canadian schools. The
study, undertaken by St. Denis, involved 49 teachers of Aboriginal ancestry from across Canada. It presents Aboriginal teachers’ perspectives on an array of interests and concerns, including their views on the ethical and moral nature of their profession; their commitment to Aboriginal culture and the ways in which the study participants challenge negative cultural stereotypes. The participants noted the difficult circumstances that Aboriginal students, their families, and their communities face, and they were united by a common goal: to enable Aboriginal students to become as, St. Denis in quoting Butler describes, “bodies that matter” (as cited in St. Denis, 2010, p. 7). The St. Denis (2010) study finds that Aboriginal teachers experience racism as denied, ignored and trivialized in schools and if addressed is usually approached through “the beads and trinket method” as a problem of a lack of Aboriginal cultural awareness. One participant described her experience of racism as feeling patronized and another stated that her experiences of racism were “overpower[ing] without even using words” while others felt that the efforts they put into Aboriginal content inclusion were “regarded as an intrusion” or viewed as “crafts” or “entertainment” (p. 41). In contrast, the study participants reveal that, as teachers, they hold the same beliefs about what constitutes effective and good teaching in keeping with all teachers. These beliefs include: the importance of building relationship with students; fostering respect as a foundation of teaching and learning; caring for and not giving up on students; empowering students as independent learners; and working with a child as a “whole” being. These qualities reflect a deep sense of the responsibilities they hold as teachers and, as is described in next chapter of this study, reflects the qualities (and more) which principals look for in good teaching. Despite sharing common teaching beliefs the participants of the St. Denis study state that they are marginalized in
the profession which they describe as “having to work much harder to prove yourself; … always in the spotlight and you have to perform”, or “not taken seriously because I am Aboriginal” (p. 38). Moreover, they note that to be accepted as an equal in the profession—which requires even extra effort—can never be met. The experiences of marginalization, whether it is questioning their teacher education qualifications or teaching capabilities, leave Aboriginal teachers to conclude that they do not belong in the profession (p. 63). Likewise, the graduates of YNTEP who participated in the Macdonald (2005) study describe similar experiences of marginalization; that they are held to expectations that can never be met and experience a devaluing of the First Nations content they teach in schools. The commonality of the experiences in these two reports suggests an urgent need for a broad examination of the issues raised by these studies. The experiences of the YNTEP graduates in this current research study will contribute further to the data on marginalization experienced by First Nations teachers as they attempt to enter the teaching workforce.

To follow is an overview of the hiring process according to the requirements of Yukon Public Service contrasted with how teachers are hired and where responsibility for employment equity and the programs which support equity hire, lies. This overview will show that within the hiring processes there are striking inconsistencies between hiring requirements for government positions and hiring for teaching positions.

**Hiring, Policies and Employment Equity**

**Hiring in the Yukon**

The Yukon Public Service Commission (PSC) is the central agency responsible for government-wide human resource management services for the Yukon government.
The Yukon PSC has overall responsibility for human resource information systems, staffing, employment equity, employee and organizational development, career and personal counseling (Yukon Public Service Commission, 2009a, p. 15). The Yukon Public Service Staff Relations Act (2002) sets out the framework for staff relations, mechanisms for disputes and is the umbrella legislation for the collective agreement of the Yukon Employees Union. This agreement governs Yukon government employees (p. 23).

Teachers and principals on the other hand, are hired under the collective agreement of the Yukon Teachers’ Association and through the administration of the Education Staff Relations Act (2002). The relationship of the Yukon PSC to hiring teachers is described by a study participant as follows:

> The Public Service Act clearly sets out that the Public Service Commission is responsible for work, the negotiations and the administration of the collective agreements. We are responsible for the main part of the Education Labour Relations Act. We would actually administer it. There’s no one act that sort of trumps the other, it’s just that there’s different-- there’s a mixture of responsibilities. (Participant G).

As this participant describes, hiring teachers and principals is unique in government hire and is conducted at arm’s length from the PSC and under separate legislation. This has bearing for this study particularly given differences between the hiring practices, policies, and programs offered by these two branches. For example, there are various hiring opportunities available and commitments to Yukon First Nations regarding government employment under the PSC. The Department of Education has only one initiative to support hiring First Nations teachers, a staffing protocol, and as it is currently written, the protocol does not apply hiring principals of First Nations ancestry. When asked why the programs of the PSC are not available to support schools in hiring new teachers of First
Nations ancestry I was informed that these programs were not seen as relevant to hiring teachers, though the programs in question assist in supporting the principles of employment equity. Several of these programs are outlined in more detail following the next section on employment equity.

**Yukon: Employment Equity**

The Yukon PSC is responsible for the administration and monitoring of the Government of Yukon, Employment Equity Policy 3.55 adopted in 1994. This policy acknowledges the Yukon Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and recognizes that employment equity programs are requisite to the application of human rights in government workplaces. Section 1.4.2 of the policy notes that “there is ample evidence in all sectors of our society that equal access to employment and all benefits that stem from that employment have been denied to members of certain groups” (Yukon Public Service Commission 2009a). The policy identifies three target groups, women, Aboriginal people, and persons with disabilities and specifies the following:

The Yukon Government, as an employer, is committed to ensuring fairness in access to employment opportunities and to developing a public service which is representative of the Yukon population. The government will make significant progress toward this goal by the year 2000\(^8\).

The stated objectives of this policy are:
(a) To achieve equitable representation of target group members throughout the government's workforce.
(b) To identify and remove barriers to the employment and advancement of target group members.
(c) To implement special measures and support programs to remedy a previous disadvantage where necessary to achieve the policy goal.

---

\(^8\) As of March 30, 2013 this policy, as posted on the government of Yukon website, had not been updated. As far as meeting the goal toward significant progress the PSC continues to far short of this goal.
(d) To contribute to fair and equitable access to employment opportunities and benefits of the Yukon Government. (Section 1.3.1.)

These statements are common to employment equity policies across Canada. The fact that such statements exist, however, does not ensure actuality and as the policy notes, requires programming to support the fruition of these objectives, as well as ongoing assessment. The office of the Workplace Diversity Employment Office (WDEO) of the Yukon PSC provides programs and supports toward meeting these goals. The services available under the First Nation Services branch of the WDEO provide specific supports to individuals who apply for employment and promote the principle of preferential hire among employers in government. That these programs are not available to teachers of First Nations ancestry suggests that supporting First Nations teacher applicants and educating the employer on preferential hire is not a priority of public schools. To follow is a brief overview of the programs of the WDEO to illustrate the intention to bridge known gaps and barriers toward equitable hiring practices for Yukoners of First Nations ancestry as a responsibility of the Yukon Public Service Branch; though these are not extended to support hiring First Nations teachers.

**Workplace Diversity: Programs and Service**

The Workplace Diversity Employment Office (WDEO) was created in 2004 to respond to Chapter 22 of the First Nation Final Agreements and to offer the following:

- Facilitate training and professional development for Yukon First Nation people
- Assist Yukon First Nation citizens in finding and keeping employment within the Yukon public service (Yukon Public Service Commission, WDEO, 2008, p. 1).

The First Nation Services branch of the WDEO offers services in the following areas:
• provides information about the hiring process in relation to Yukon Government employment positions
• promotes hiring processes for positions of preferential hire, direct appointments and temporary assignments
• maintains a data base of resumes of potential job applicants of Aboriginal ancestry
• provides services to support employees to adapt to a Yukon government work environment (Yukon Public Service Commission, WDEO, 2008).

As these services are not available to First Nations teacher applicants there is little in the way of hiring support for First Nations teachers; including no actively promoted database of First Nations teachers and perhaps most importantly, the promotion or provision of education to support equity hire. The fourth bullet in this list is worth expanding on. In interviewing personnel from the WDEO office I learned that when it comes to promoting First Nations hire in government, significant effort is given to educating potential employers to consider hiring First Nations applicants, given the resistance or disinterest in this option in some sectors of government (Participant I).

The WDEO also provides several bridging programs, one to assist new post-secondary graduates who seek employment and another specific to support the advancement of First Nations ancestry to managerial positions. The GradCorps Internship program creates opportunities for new graduates to gain work experience and is open to recent Yukon post-secondary graduates (Yukon Public Service Commission, GradCorps, n.d.). The program offers employment in one-year internships. While this program recognizes the inherent challenge to new graduates lacking work experience as a barrier to hiring, and, despite the Macdonald (2005) study on YNTEP graduates, this program is not available to new, locally trained teachers who lack job experience. When asked about this program, respondents in the Department of Education with responsibility for hiring
teachers stated that they had heard about the program but assumed that it did not apply to newly graduated teachers and that likely it had never been considered a need.

The First Nation Training Corps (FNCT) of the PSC offers a range of training and employment opportunities to Yukon First Nation citizens at a variety of job levels within the public service sector. According to the government’s First Nations Training Corp guidelines the program supports progress towards building a Yukon public service in the following areas:

1. Encourage and promote the external hire and internal promotion of Yukon First Nations people, who lack the full working level qualifications normally required for targeted positions.
2. Provide targeted training opportunities at all levels and occupations.
3. Provide employment and training opportunities that significantly impact on the corporate culture (e.g. impact on decision-making, service-delivery, role-modeling).

(Yukon PSC, First Nations Training Corp Guidelines, 2007, para. B)

Though First Nations graduates of YNTEP meet academic qualifications for employment in public schools as teachers, the intention of this program could apply to making available opportunities and training to First Nations teachers interested in administration positions for which they may lack experience and graduate training. To date there has been no application of this program to this outcome.

**Representative Public Service Plans (RPSP)**

I have referenced throughout this document the obligations of government to Chapter 22 of the land claim agreements toward realizing a representative public service. The overall implementation of this obligation is monitored and reported on through the Representative Public Service Plans (RPSP) of the Yukon Public Service Commission. There are two levels to these plans, a government-wide plan and individual plans for each traditional First Nation territory. According to the Final Agreement Representative Public
The commitments of the government of Yukon to the land claim agreements are described as follows:

Chapter 22 of the Yukon First Nations’ Final Agreements identifies the following tools or actions that can be used in achieving a representative public service: training, workplace support, preferential hiring, targeted recruiting, public information, designated positions, counselling, and data analysis. The treaties do not limit the tools to these; rather, they call for the parties to examine practical and effective ways to attain the goals. They also call for the review of job descriptions and other job requirements to eliminate cultural bias in hiring and promotion and to ensure the employment requirements are reasonable to the job and do not provide barriers to Aboriginal people. (Yukon, Public Service Commission, 2011, para. 3)

The Annual Report of the Representative Public Service Plan of Public Service Commission, 2009-2010 (Yukon PSC, 2009c) outlines the achievement of these actions; including government monitoring and reviewing its commitments to meet Chapter 22.4 of the Umbrella Final Agreement and Chapter 22, Schedule A of individual First Nations Final Agreements. Chapter 22.4 and Chapter 22 Schedule A call for First Nations access to employment opportunities within the public service, including managerial and professional positions, and the development and planning of measures which lead toward a representative public service. The 2009-2010 annual report states that 85 positions were established under the First Nation Training Corp but as previously noted, none of these applied to teacher or principal positions. Of note, the report outlines a number of core strategies it uses to promote the hiring of Yukon First Nations to the public service. These include, “identify, promote and target potential positions for preference or restriction to Yukon First Nations people” (Yukon PSC, 2009c, p. 9). With regard to job postings for teaching positions no such wording is used except for positions pertaining to the hiring of Aboriginal language teachers. Rather, the only language pertaining to First Nations interests is the following commonly noted job qualification, “knowledge of and
sensitivity to the issues, needs, and aspirations of Yukon First Nations” but with no preference noted to the identity of the person with these traits. When it comes to advertising for teachers, no job posting lists preference to teachers of First Nations ancestry. This is not in keeping with the efforts and stated commitments identified by the government of Yukon to increase a representative public service.

The Annual Report of RPSP (2009c) also provides an inventory of initiatives related to the Corporate Representative Public Service Plan which support six core strategies to “encourage the participation of First Nations representatives on Yukon government selection panels” (Yukon PSC, 2009c, p. 31). While this is a simple solution for diversifying the hiring selection committees, YNTEP graduates who participated in this research study note that it is very rare to be interviewed by a panel which includes a First Nations representative or to be interviewed by anyone other than the school principal.

Of particular interest to this study is a reference in the Annual Report of RPSP (2009c) to a First Nations bi-cultural school immersion program offered in partnership with a local First Nation. The report cites this as an example of “activities that support Yukon government RPSP obligations” (Yukon PSC, 2009c, p.20). The report, however, fails to mention that the program also requires bi-cultural teachers. As it happens, an experienced teacher of First Nations ancestry and a member of the partnering First Nations did apply for a teaching position in the bi-cultural program and was not hired. Rather, the position was offered to a white teacher who happened to be working at the school at the time, in a temporary position. Moreover, despite a partnership between the First Nation and the local school supporting the bi-cultural school program, no member
of the First Nation was present at the interview, and the First Nations involved in the program revealed that this representation was not requested (Participant L, 2011). This example breaches numerous commitments Yukon First Nations and to this particular First Nation community: the opportunity to hire a teacher of First Nations ancestry and a member of this First Nation; violation of recently negotiated Representative Public Service Accord with this First Nation; obligations to Chapter 22 of the Umbrella Final Agreement; commitments to Chapter 22, Schedule A involving hiring within a traditional territory as specified in the First Nations Final Agreement; and the Department of Education’s staffing protocol. On all these accounts the policies and commitments in place to support hiring a First Nations person were ignored. It appears that even where there is an obvious opportunity to identify preferential hire, especially where bi-cultural programming is offered and contributes to the Representative Public Service Plan initiatives, the hiring of teachers is outside of these initiatives.

The question as to why this occurred in this example and noted in other similar accounts of First Nations teachers indicates that this is not a question of inadequate means and structures in place to promote and realize representative hire. Nor, do I suggest that this is a problem of ill-informed individuals in positions capable of thwarting these means. I argue that the persistence of racial barriers today as they pertain specifically to public school education lies in the continuing and unexamined function of public education as a colonizing institution.

**Department of Education: Staffing Protocol**

A staffing protocol has been in place in the Yukon Department of Education since the mid-1990s and has been subject to several minor revisions. The Yukon Department of
Education, Staffing Protocol (2009) outlines the posting and filling of positions according to hiring policies determined by the Department of Education for two main areas of teacher hire, it establishes the placement or transfer of indeterminate teachers and the protocols for new hires. For the purposes of this study I will focus on the protocols in place for new hires.

Though not specifically stated in the document, the Staffing Protocol is considered the Department of Education’s answer to employment equity and is intended to support preferential hire of First Nations teachers (Participant C, 2009; Participant G, 2010). It outlines preferential consideration in hiring First Nations teachers for new positions and gives highest consideration to Yukon First Nations teachers who apply to positions in their traditional territory. How preferential consideration is defined and the levels of priority that are assigned to this are quoted from the document as follows:

Candidates who are suitably qualified for the position advertised will be considered in this order:
(a) First Nations candidates who apply to their traditional territory as defined in their Land Claims Final Agreement;
(b) First Nations candidates;
(c) Indeterminate Education Assistants, Remedial Tutors and Aboriginal Language Teachers in good standing with three or more years of continuous service in the same school;
(d) Temporary teachers;
(e) All other applicants.
(Yukon Department of Education, 2009 p. 2; see Appendix C for the entire document)

Candidates under consideration for criteria (a) include First Nations who are recognized as members or are beneficiaries of a First Nations Final Agreement. All Yukon public schools are located within a traditional First Nation territory, including Whitehorse which has the highest concentration of public schools. This means that technically, all schools may have First Nations teachers who apply for positions under criteria (a). Where
traditional territories overlap, schools in these areas could have applicants from several First Nations applying under criteria (a) and (b). Candidates considered for criteria (b) are First Nations teachers from other areas, that is, a First Nation teacher who applies to a position in a school other than their traditional territory. The interpretation of criteria (b) and its actual application to First Nations teachers is discussed in some detail in a subsequent chapter.

The Staffing Protocol also establishes recruitment procedures for teaching positions and the position to which this responsibility is assigned. Procedures pertinent to this study are summarized below:

Superintendents are responsible for reviewing the staffing plan with principals.

The Teacher Recruitment Coordinator (TRC) [responsible for recruitment and hiring for the Department of Education] ensures that the hire is within hiring targets\(^9\).

School principals, in consultation with the TRC, are responsible for short-listing and interviewing candidates.

Principals are responsible for checking the two required references and that mandatory questions are asked.

Superintendents, principals or the TRC can make offers of employment. (Yukon Department of Education, 2009, p. 1)

These conditions have relevance to this study in several ways. For example, recruiting and short-listing teachers for interviews is a shared, consultative, process between the Department of Education personnel and the principal of individual schools which should provide for the opportunity to establish a common understanding of the Staffing Protocol. There are, however, no guidelines as to how resumes are reviewed to meet the conditions

---

\(^9\) Hiring targets refer to a staffing formula that is applied to each school to determine the number of staffing positions warranted by a school and primarily determined on school enrolment.
laid out in the Protocol or how interviews are conducted, by hiring committee or otherwise. No statement is provided which explains the intent of the Protocol, its relation to School Growth Plans, or any directives by the Department of Education as to how this Protocol contributes to the educational interests of Yukon First Nations. No mention is made of the legislated requirements of Chapter 22 of the UFA or Chapter 22 Schedule A of First Nation Final Agreements or meeting the government of Yukon employment equity policy or Representative Public Service Plan (RPSP). Given that the RPSP specifies the inclusion of First Nations representation where positions are being filled within a traditional Yukon First Nations territory, the lack of guidelines to support representative hiring practices in public schools within traditional territories disregards the government’s own recommendations. In comparison to the efforts and monitoring in place with regard to hiring for non-educational government positions, the Department of Education—though it has very specific obligations to the educational interests of Yukon First Nations students—offers very little support in hiring Yukon First Nations teachers. There is but one hint of the intent of the Protocol on page one of the document which states: “This Protocol reflects the Department’s commitment to ensuring that First Nations teachers are given priority in hiring decision” (Yukon Department of Education, 2009, p.1). In lacking a human resource plan the Department of Education fails to set out staffing needs profiles to meet land claim obligations or to advance representative hire. The Staffing Protocol is an ineffective commitment lacking context, intention, and established goals.
Yukon Teachers’ Association

The Yukon Teachers’ Association (YTA) represents the collective interests of currently employed teachers and principals in the Yukon, including hiring and employment conditions. The Association was first formed October 4, 1955 with sixty members, though the right to form as a professional association was granted in 1902 (Rankin, 2006). This means that for almost fifty years the Department of Education had sweeping powers over teachers, including the right to dismiss a teacher without cause. As Rankin notes, it was this ability and the firing of prominent superintendent Jack Hulland in 1954 that sparked the forming of the Yukon Teachers’ Association. In 1960 the Association won a significant right to negotiate members’ salaries with the Yukon Territorial Government (Yukon Teachers’ Association, 2010, p. 5) and since then the YTA has increased its profile including holding joint consultation meetings with the Department of Education. In 1990, with the signing of a new Yukon Education Act and the passing of the Teaching Professional Act, many rights for teachers were established including development of professional rights and the ability to negotiate working conditions.

The collective agreement between the Government of Yukon and Yukon Teachers’ Association, 2009-2012 (2009) is a completely revised document from its earlier versions and no longer contains reference to the educational interests of Yukon First Nations as in previous agreements. As a professional organization with a particular interest in hiring conditions and despite a close relationship with YNTEP, as a member of the YNTEP Advisory Committee, participated in applicant selection and encourages its members to provide student placements, the YTA has never acknowledged government
of Yukon’s Employment Equity Policy (1994) in its collective agreement or the Yukon Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009); nor has it taken a public position on the educational obligations to Yukon First Nations as set out in the Yukon Education Act; and land claims agreements.

**Employment Equity and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF)**

In contrast to the YTA, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) does declare its support to the federal Employment Equity Act (1995) and has obligations to monitor its practice in light of this act. This declaration was made in 2006 in a CTF submission to a review of the Employment Equity Act in which the following was stated:

> Although a majority of Canadian public school teachers are not directly governed by the *Employment Equity Act* (the Act), federal legislation sets the standards by which all employers ought to be measured and consequently, that standard should be above reproach. (Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), 2006, p. 2)

As a part of this submission the CTF provided the following data in reference to the teaching profession and employment equity hire. These statistics reflect the latest data available at the time of the report in 2006 and references the most recent census (2001) available at the time with data specific to Aboriginal people. They note that:

- Teachers are the largest professional group in the labour force in Canada
- Women account for 65% of the full-time teaching force but occupy 45% of principal positions in elementary schools and 54% of vice-principal positions. In high schools they occupy 27% of the principal positions and 35% of vice principal positions.
- The 2001 National census indicates that English was the most over represented ethnic origin of teachers relative to the school population of 15 years and under; this over-representation was highest in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.
- The 2001 census indicates that 2.1% of teachers claim aboriginal identity; the aboriginal student population (age 5 to 19) is 5.2%
- Statistics Canada projections for 2017 show considerable increases of aboriginal children age 0 – 14 years and significant increases in visible minority students of this age. (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2006)
The Federation concluded with this statement: “this information clearly illustrates, employment equity remains elusive in the education sector and the Act serves as a tangible, highly relevant and powerful balancing tool to achieve this aim” (CTF, 2006, p. 4). In comparison, the Yukon Teachers’ Association has never generated or issued a public report outlining the demographic make-up of its teaching complement or obligations to the government of Yukon Employment Equity Policy or to the Department of Education Staffing Protocol. The statistics provided by the CTF support the concerns raised in this study, that there is a problem in hiring teachers of First Nation ancestry that needs to be addressed.

**Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter I provided an overview of the unique political context of the Yukon, its educational structure, and the significance of the land claims in relation to public education. I drew on the accounts of Aboriginal teachers in public schools across Canada to illustrate the barriers and resistance these teachers face as educators are strikingly similar to the experiences of graduates of YNTEP. These accounts exemplify the continuation of system-wide marginalization and racism in educational institutions.

I examined the major documents and policies related to employment equity and representative hire and the unique hiring of teachers that occurs largely outside of these influences. I presented examples of government programs which support employment equity and the programs of the Public Service Commission aimed to develop a representative public service specifically to meet the legal obligations of the land claim agreements and noted that these are not attended to or considered necessary when hiring teachers. I examined the Staffing Protocol intended to assist in the hiring of First Nations
teachers and found it to be a weak and ill-defined document. With regard to the over-all commitment of government to First Nations educational interests I listed numerous commitments set out in the Yukon Education Act to show that while there are considerable legislated obligations in the Act specific to First Nations, the ability to address these through the hiring of First Nations teachers is placed on a poorly supported and ineffective Staffing Protocol. I have argued that the Department of Education appears to be in violation of the requirements of its own hiring agency, the Public Service Commission, equitable hiring principles, and obligations to Yukon land claim agreements.

This evidence illustrates the irrefutable legislated obligations contained in the Umbrella Final Agreement, individual First Nations Final Agreements and the Yukon Education Act which support, in a myriad of ways, the education of Yukon First Nations people. That these obligations are not met or not considered judiciously in the hiring of First Nations teachers is not due to a lack of legislation, policies or examples of programs to support this outcome but a lack of intent or disinclination on the part of the Department of Education to take up equitable hiring practices.

In the chapters ahead I examine the discourses through which legislated and policy commitments can be ignored. This disinclination is explored in the next three chapters through the themes of discourses of fit; meritocracy in relation to employment equity principles; and ways in which white racial innocence keeps institutions such as public schools dominated by white western interests.
CHAPTER 4: THE DISCOURSE OF FIT

*Whites are the subjects of Whiteness, whereas people of color are its objects* (Leonardo, 2009).

The examination of teacher hiring practices in Canadian schools is notably under-theorized, and the literature that does exist is largely based on hiring in business applications (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle & Thompson, 2010). Specifically, little is known about the selection tools that are most effective in determining the *best* teacher candidate or what *best* means. Considerably less is known about effective teaching practices for diverse classrooms and for twenty-first century learners. In the rare case where effective teaching practices are examined, this data is linked to student test scores which fail to take into account the complex role that teachers play in the lives of the children they teach (Gates Foundation, 2010). The selection process and criteria applied to hiring teachers is so poorly understood and generally unstructured that this may account for why much of the responsibility for teacher selection criteria is left to individual principals to determine. Individuals involved in hiring in this study insist that they are only interested in hiring the best candidates and some add the qualifier “someone I’d trust my own children with” (Participant F; Participant D; Participant C). It is an imperative of the best of intentions, but, what are these best intentions and whom, ultimately, do they serve?

To follow is an examination of what can be learned about the institution of Yukon schools and the interests of the Department of Education according the documents and discourse related to hiring teachers. I am particularly interested in what “best intentions” may mean, not in the sense of what “best” means in teaching, but rather, who defines this ideal candidate and who defines the hiring process that is intended to fairly determine
this. I will argue that since candidate selection in each Yukon school is largely the responsibility of one individual, this leaves unchecked potential for teacher selection to be based on a single perspective on school and social needs, and, generally creates an opportunity for subjective interpretation of a candidate’s suitability and qualifications. As this study examines the discourses around hiring of First Nations teachers, I outline the importance of the recruitment and hiring messages if schools are intentional about changing who they hire and how these messages support diversifying a staff demographic. I will argue that the current recruitment and hiring process and prevailing concept of hiring according to “fit” privileges white teachers over First Nations teachers, keeping schools as institutions of western enculturation and the teaching profession white.

**The Hiring Process**

Current research on hiring determines that it is a process consisting of four main phases: recruitment, screening, selection and job offer (Harris et al., 2010; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Broadley & Broadley, 2004). Teachers are hired on two main criteria: a candidate’s professional expertise and personal qualities. Professional expertise includes: teaching experience, subject content knowledge, and academic background. Personal suitability encompasses such qualities as enthusiasm for teaching, caring for children, warmth, interpersonal skills such as good communication, and work ethic (Harris et al.; Mason & Schroeder; Broadley & Broadley). Specific academic credentials required for teaching are generally screened for at the central/district level; though school principals generally determine the selection process including the composition of an interview panel, if there is one, and the number of applicants interviewed. Harris et al. (2010) note
little influence of any central/district policies and practices on a principal’s preferences for teacher selection, which indicates that principals have considerable autonomy in teacher selection practices.

**The Interview**

Of all hiring tools used in determining teacher selection, principals regard the interview as the most critical (Kersten, 2008; Broadley & Broadley, 2004; Harris et al., 2010; Mason & Schroeder, 2008). In particular, open-ended interview questions are favoured largely for their potential to reveal significant information on a candidate’s personal qualities. Principals value personal qualities over professional expertise; therefore less attention is given the candidate’s teaching philosophy or whether this philosophy aligns with that of the school (Harris et al.).

**Hiring Criteria: Hiring According to Fit**

Mason and Schroeder (2010) find that principals have remarkably consistent hiring practices across the profession regardless of their gender, years in the profession, or school size. While research supports that principals are consistent in the selection criteria used to hire teachers, Broadley and Broadley (2004) determine that when it comes to reviewing new teacher profiles, principals seldom agree on which candidate best meets this criteria; that is, the criteria may be consistent but how individual candidates match the criteria is not. They conclude that principals are most likely to select new teachers on the basis of compatibility. Broadley and Broadley (2004) indicate that principals tend to select candidate compatibility on the basis of a disposition, the principal’s disposition, that is, “to prefer candidates with a biographical similarity to themselves, a personal liking for the candidate, and a general rather than specific prototype of the person.
required to fill the position” (p. 261). The authors’ conclusions are related to earlier research on hiring bias by Anderson and Shackleton (1990) who examined the influences of three non-verbal compatibility factors in hiring outcome across many occupations; and identified as: similar-to-me effect, personal liking bias and prototype (occupation stereotype) bias (p. 64). Anderson and Shackleton determined that perceived personal similarity based on these non-verbal factors were highly influential toward a positive hiring outcome. In essence, they suggest that interviewers were “recruiting in their own image” which they term “clone syndrome” (p. 74). These practices are supported by similarity-attraction theory suggesting that when it comes to connecting with and judging others, we are highly influenced by a perceived sense of similarity (Byrne, London & Reeves, 1968). This is further corroborated by person-organization fit theory which purports that perceptions of compatibility are the most important decision making predictors in hiring (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Cable and Judge, 1997). From a critical race theory perspective, however, what is meant by “fit” in organizations is significantly under-examined and leaves a major gap in organizational theory in providing an important racial analysis of fit in relation to employment equity hiring. Organization fit theory is excessively concerned with the application of fit as a psychological relationship between individuals and organizations but without regard for the significant effects of racialization and unequal power relations within these dynamics.

According to general hiring practices, “fit” is a catch-all concept reflecting selection according to multiple criteria. It is used in hiring teachers to determine which candidate possesses the right combination of personal, professional attributes, or alignment with a particular school ethos. While fit is commonly used and recognized as a
significant teacher selection determinate in this study site, none-the-less, it is an ambiguous and unreliable term, yet often assumed to have common meaning. Principals who select candidates according to an ill-defined or assumed concept of fit leave themselves open to selecting candidates according to an overall personal impression and one that similarity-attraction theory indicates, is highly influenced by personal demographics.

**Hiring Relationships: Two-Way Exchanges**

While research in hiring selection process is concentrated on the perspective of the employers’ perception of fit, more recent interest is given to the applicant’s perception of fit with some evidence to show that a good job fit for the applicant influences teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and job retention (Liu & Johnson, 2006).

“Feeling a fit” from the perspective of the employer and the applicant is especially important given the significance of establishing rapport in an interview. The degree of rapport can seriously influence the feel of the interview, the interviewer/applicant connection, and ultimately the decision outcome. According to implicit racial bias theory, establishing rapport in an interview can be particularly difficult in a mixed race interview. Malcolm Gladwell (2005) elaborates:

> if you have a strongly pro-white pattern of association, for example, there is evidence that that will affect the way you behave in the presence of a black person. It’s not going to affect what you’ll choose to say or feel or do. In all likelihood, you won’t be aware you’re behaving any differently than you would around a white person. … Suppose the conversation is a job interview. And suppose the applicant is a black man. He’s going to pick up on that uncertainty and distance, and that may well make him a little less certain of himself, a little less confident, and a little less friendly. And what will you think then? You may well get a gut feeling that the applicant doesn’t really have what it takes, or maybe
that he’s a bit standoffish, or maybe that he doesn’t really want the job. (pp. 85-86)

The result is that both applicant and interviewer fail to connect; but rather than recognize this as a problem of the inability to bridge racial divides both are left with a poor impression of any potential this individual may have to be successful in this position (Gladwell). While the previous example focuses on the resulting impression of employer, note the experiences of two prospective First Nations teachers from this study describing their experience in an interview with a white principal:

I could tell from the very beginning of the interview, how the questions were asked and the general lack of interest in my answers that someone else was already selected for the position. I felt shut down and the whole thing felt flat and very different from other interviews I have been successful at. The principal was just going through the motions and it seemed that no matter what I said, it just didn’t hit the mark. I couldn’t “own” the job in this interview no matter how hard I tried. I found out later that they hired a white teacher who has been a temporary teacher in the school. Even though I am from the [First Nations] community, and the position was for a position in the First Nation’s cultural program, it wasn’t going to be my job. That interview felt almost like a set-up for failure. I’ve never had that experience before. (Participant L)

This next applicant expresses similar problems in establishing rapport in an interview but unlike the applicant in the above who is able to compare a poor interview experience to other positive ones, this person takes responsibility for failed interview as exclusively her own.

I’m probably not qualified enough. It just feels that way. It [the interview] just didn’t feel right. Don’t know why. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 20)

Even though it was her first interview for a teaching position, the candidate surmises that there was something not quite right about the interview. Without the experience of the previous candidate, she doesn’t have the language to explain what went wrong and puts the blame on herself.
Liu and Johnson (2006) determine that interviews are critical two-way exchanges of information between applicant and employer with the potential to provide an opportunity to form more in-depth perceptions of one another. According to the authors, hiring offers made on the spot tend to be based on first impressions leaving little opportunity for information exchange between applicant and employer. Moreover, hiring decisions made under these conditions are more likely based on a “feel right” decision at the time but result in a poor hiring match in the long-run. All the same, brief interviews and quick hiring decisions are the norm in teacher hire. Note the experience described by this study participant while recruiting teachers from southern Canada for Yukon schools.

I knew within a minute that I was going to hire her. Just everything came through, the enthusiasm, what she had done with this class and this class. It was just instant. You get that sense I am going to hire you. But you know she gets out the portfolio and you have to look at everything and on and on. Finally she paused for a breath and I said well okay, we are certainly very interested in you. But in any interview I have done you are looking for that connection with that person. (Participant C)

As this account describes, a decision to hire was made even before taking up the applicant’s professional background to ascertain whether her experience was right for the position. The interviewer’s disregard for the applicant’s attempt to provide evidence of her suitability suggests that determining professional credentials and experience were not important in the “fit” criteria for this particular teaching context; rather, personal qualities—especially the performance of enthusiasm—and likability were paramount in this hiring decision.

**The Recruitment Message**

The recruitment phase of the hiring process is gaining attention as an element that influences a better applicant-to-position determination. Current research recognizes that
from the perspective of the applicants, recruiting messages significantly influence their perceptions of the job, their sense of connection (fit), and their desirability for the position. Selections made with this in mind have a great potential to become a long-term hire (Young & Delli, 2002). This research also considered the influence of the implicit content in recruitment messages in determining the outcome. For example, when employers target a particular applicant audience, matching the demographics of the recruiter to this audience positively influences the outcome (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury & Baits, 1997). What we learn from Young et al. is that hiring for a diverse workforce requires intention and targeted marketing. The additional care taken to “set the stage” for hiring non-white teachers is supported by research on teacher identity which asserts, that the teaching profession is normalized on white teacher identity (Schick, 1998; Lawrence & Tatum n.d.). Disrupting norms requires a critical view to power dynamics and racialized assumptions about the teaching professional, as well as, intentional efforts.

**Hiring Teachers for Yukon Schools**

The hiring process in the Yukon follows a common model of shared responsibilities involving a central body responsible for human resources, in this case, the Education Support Services Branch (ESSB) of the Department of Education and individual schools. Currently there is only one school board in the Territory, the Francophone School Board, with responsibility for hiring teachers on behalf of several schools. Other than this example, the Department of Education, as the employer, acts in a similar fashion to a school board when hiring teachers. The ESSB is responsible for job postings, recruitment, initial screening of application packages and presenting the formal job offer. The principal collaborates with the ESSB on job postings but determines
shortlists, decides whether to form a hiring committee, interviews candidates and recommends the successful hire (Participant A; Participant B, Participant E). Hiring of teachers is largely the prerogative of a single individual who may or may not take into account the staffing protocol described in the previous chapter.

**Fit and Suitably Qualified**

All recruiting information and applicant forms for teaching positions in the Yukon are available on the Department of Education website, including a link to the Yukon Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009). Also published on the website is a statement on the criteria for teacher selection including a definition of “suitably qualified” and brief reference to “fit”, and noted as follows:

Suitably qualified refers to two sets of candidate attributes which will be considered in the selection process: credentials (formal academic qualifications and previous experience) and fit (personal qualities). (Yukon Department of Education, Teacher Qualifications, n.d)

One study participant (Participant A) who is actively involved with teacher hire provided this comment on the significance of “fit” as a selection criterion:

There is greater acceptance of that [fit] because of the idea that everybody has to be considered. There’s an expectation that everybody that comes to the table has met a certain standard in order to get there in the first place. And so now we’re concerned with fit. There’s a lot more acceptance of the notion of fit in the education world, than there is with the PSC Government Employee’s Union and the Teachers’ Association is much more accepting of the notion—that you have to analyze the fit, whereas other unions would say, we can’t analyze the fit of an employee. I'm making a management judgment about my candidate. (Participant A)

Participant A indicates that candidate selection determined on the basis of fit is unique to teacher hire, noting that teachers fall under a separate union, governed by the Collective Agreement of the Yukon Teachers’ Association. There are, as previous noted, significant differences in how candidates are selected for positions between the two unions. As the
speaker implies, hiring according to “fit” is one example and is problematic for the Yukon Public Service Commission due to, as stated, “we can’t analyze fit”. This suggests a level of accountability and transparency that is not required in the selection process for teachers. Though not stated by Participant A, it should also be noted that hiring under the PSC requires a hiring committee; furthermore, the PSC is directly responsible for the Employment Equity Policy and programs which support this policy (Participant G).

One study participant with responsibility for hiring teachers did recognize that a hiring decision based on fit has the potential for misuse.

The point is, if you, as an administrator, are really convinced that the YNTEP program wasn’t credible, wasn’t a strong program, then you would use the fit idea to not hire YNTEPs. And that was [my colleague’s] point, she says, you get a graduate who’s really strong, from YNTEP and you have another one who’s equally strong but from somewhere else, you use the fit theory to pick the other one. And I saw her point, and I’m sure this is one of the barriers, one of the--- it wouldn’t even be a barrier, but one of the ways to keep the barrier up was through the application of fit. (Participant F)

The perception of Participant F is notable in the comment referencing fit as “one of the ways to keep the barrier up” suggesting that barriers are inherent and that keeping them up is normal in the hiring process.

Who Determines “Fit”? 

Much of the responsibility for how “fit” is defined is left to the principal to determine as the following quote confirms:

If you look at the definition of a suitably qualified candidate …it’s on our website and there’s two parts to it where you’ve got to have your B. Ed. and you've got to have some background training in relevant areas and then you have to fit. And this is the part where it’s really up to the principal to determine if this person is a fit. (Participant B)

This level of autonomy gives significant hiring responsibility to the principal in all aspects of hire including determining the criteria for hire, conducting and setting the
parameters of the interview, determining the short list, choosing the candidate and
further, interpreting the Yukon Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009), all
without apparent transparency and accountability.

Such autonomy may be in keeping with a site-based management (SBM) style, however, Yukon schools are not organized as true SBM models which involve formal
school-level consultative bodies to represent the various educational interests of the
community the school serves. SMB model schools recognize that those most affected by
decisions should be significantly involved in making them (Yukon Department
Education, 2007). In the case of the Yukon schools, however, the informal version of
school-based management gives principals considerable autonomy in various capacities
over the affairs that pertain to their schools; but not necessarily with community
consultation or consideration. Principals do report directly to superintendents and they are
accountable to school councils—but these elected parent-bodies have limited powers,
including no formal responsibility for hiring teachers. They do, however, participate in
principal hires. Several study participants commented on the considerable autonomy
granted to Yukon principals. One participant reflected on this in light of the responsibility
society places on principals.

Principals have wide and sweeping powers. It’s absolutely remarkable the powers
that you have as a principal. I could ban anybody at any time from the school
grounds without cause. I’d like to see that challenged. I’m kind of curious to see
what would happen if that was challenged. But as far as I know, the School
Trespass Act has no appeal and it’s never been challenged. And really it’s because
principals are-- because they’re in locum parentis …, they’re rooted in common
law, they’re supported by legislation, they have wide and sweeping powers, but
that doesn’t mean you can be arbitrary. (Participant D)

Another study participant involved with hiring provided this description of the decision-
making parameters of principal as they relate to teacher hire:
I think they [principals] are quite autonomous, [though there is a need] to make sure that they're applying the protocol…, that what they ask for in their ads is relevant to the assignment and then there's the fit … That just is where they do have a lot of flexibility, and if a principal goes through the process and looks fairly at the candidates, interviews a candidate, checks their references … and says "This person is not going to fit." … that really is their call, so who they hire is up to them but it’s not, you know, just picking a name off a list. …And then the principal has his gut, and yeah, they’re usually right. They know their business and so they do have a lot of say in who they hire and who comes into their school. (Participant B)

These quotes acknowledge the autonomous role of the principal in teacher selection indicating that hiring decisions are made within minimal externally-determined parameters except for a terse acknowledgement that a staffing protocol exists. As the process is described by the study participants, there is no hint of community or other staff member involvement in teacher hire; or reference to any centralized or locally determined human resource/staffing plans.

This latter point was raised in the Report of the Auditor General (Canada, Office of the Auditor General, 2009) which found that Yukon schools lack comprehensive human resource plans and staffing needs profile as would be reported in the Department of Education strategic plans and a normal part of individual school growth plans. Staffing decisions are described in ways by these study participants to suggest that such decisions occur at the school level independent of any formal planning processes at the school or at the central level or to meet identified school goals. This suggests that teacher hire may simply occur in response to immediate and obvious staffing requirements related to teacher vacancies, yearly school budgets, student numbers and according to upholding the status quo.
The Importance of Documents

If hiring according to fit is a valid criterion for teacher selection, evidence of what defines fit should be reflected in the documents related to recruiting and hiring teachers. These documents, all available on the government of Yukon website, include: the application form, information supporting the hiring process, and general information on teaching in the Yukon. Dorothy Smith (2002) contends that on a day-to-day basis worksite documents, especially forms, are powerful organizers of people’s work and because they are so easily replicable and transferrable, standardize a message across work sites. Further, such texts provide clues to understanding how an institution operates; its social organization, practices, relations and power structures, and how individuals take up the worksite documents in their actions (Smith, 2002; Turner, 2006; Hall, 1997). Data collection forms such as applications also structure information and, in the case of applications for employment, structure what can be learned about the applicant or ignored (D. Smith, personal communication, July 12, 2008). Smith’s research method, institutional ethnography, provides important insights into the study of primary and widely accessible sources of information related to applying for teaching positions in the Yukon. Applying critical discourse analysis to this examination also aids in mapping specific types of discourse that describe and also reproduce a hierarchical social order by indicating to whom a document is speaking and to whom it is not addressing. The following is an examination of what can be learned about the institution of Yukon schools and the key interests of the Department of Education as embedded in the documents and discourse related to hiring teachers.
The Application Form

The Department of Education application form is a single document used for all teaching positions and any grade level. It is also used in the hiring of Aboriginal language teachers and principals. In many respects the application (included in Appendix E) is comprehensive not-withstanding the obvious omissions in references to the educational interests of Yukon First Nations, except for the following two statements:

- **Information for Applicants:** “Certification for a teaching position in the Yukon will require coursework relating to Northern Studies and Yukon First Nations”.
- **Personal Information:** “Are you a First Nations candidate. If yes, what is your traditional territory?”

The first statement refers to a dated condition requiring newcomers to the Yukon to undertake additional coursework to meet northern and First Nations content required for Yukon teacher certification. This condition no longer applies indicating that the application form has not been updated in a number of years. The second statement is a request of First Nations applicants to provide their First Nation affiliation. Although the reference to First Nations identity and traditional territory implies a connection to the staffing protocol, no reference is made to this document on the application form; therefore applicants may not be aware of protocol hiring conditions. The form contains a detailed list of possible teaching assignments such as grade level, curriculum content, and specific subject areas. Applicants are required to select their area of teaching expertise and interests from this list.

The application reveals significant information about the Department of Education curricular interests. It lists, for example, French as a first and second language content area on both elementary and secondary subject lists but Yukon First Nations
languages are not listed, though these languages are taught in most Yukon schools.

Moreover, Yukon First Nations languages are mandated in the Yukon Education Act and a provision in the land claims agreements as required content areas. At the secondary level, thirty subject-specific courses are listed including band, business, and catechetics/religious education (a Roman Catholic school requirement) however First Nations Studies is not listed though it is a grade twelve subject and part of the British Columbia school curriculum which Yukon follows. As a content area there is no reference to First Nations curriculum, as a subject of study or as a language, despite the inclusion of many aspects of this content in Yukon schools. Moreover, the provision for locally determined content is granted in the Yukon Education Act (2002) with a suggested twenty percent of the curriculum open to local Yukon content. According to the Act, Yukon First Nations content is mandated for all students as follows, “courses of study prescribed for use in schools studies respecting the cultural, linguistic and historical heritage of the Yukon and its aboriginal people, and the Yukon environment” (Yukon Education Act, part 5 (51) p. 38). Despite this, no listing of these courses of study—as an area of teacher expertise—is included in the application; therefore applicants have no way to signal their qualifications and expertise in these areas. This omission suggests that there is no expectation of new hires to have this content knowledge. In consideration of hiring teachers according to “fit” and “suitably qualified”, First Nations content expertise would not be represented in any hiring criteria, according to the application form. What the application form presents is a curriculum exclusively based on white western content. This sends a strong message of what is important to Yukon schools and what is
insignificant according to curriculum areas and teaching expertise, indirectly suggesting that Yukon schools are clearly serving a white western model of education.

**Marketing for “Best Fit”**

The Department of Education website provides general background information on teaching in the Yukon. Like the application form, this site reveals important insights into what the Department of Education and Yukon schools believe to be their educational purpose as indicated by the description of the teaching context and to whom this context is marketed. Below, I have chosen only those passages that describe the teaching context and omitted the standard information that would apply to any teaching environment. The entire recruitment website document, “Teaching in Yukon Schools”, is included in Appendix F but the significant passages are noted in the following:

[Paragraph 1:] We are seeking experienced and enthusiastic teachers who wish to live in the unparalleled beauty of Canada's northwest and who desire to work in a progressive jurisdiction. …

[Paragraph 2:] Teachers who wish to apply to teach in one of the Yukon's 29 schools must hold or be eligible for certification in a Canadian province and be eligible for Yukon certification.

[Paragraph 3:] Preference for interviews will be given to those candidates with appropriate credentials who are interested in teaching in a rural setting. …

[Paragraph 4:] Yukon schools are modern and well-equipped and our classrooms are among the most 'connected' in North America. Most Yukon schools have multi-site, high speed internet access.

[Paragraph 5:] Yukon schools are set in a spectacular setting of mountains, forests and lakes. It is a place for the adventurous. Take a look inside. If you think you have the background and experience to meet the challenge of teaching in a rural setting, we hope you will contact us for a Teacher Recruitment Package and application.

[Paragraph 6:] The Yukon provides a generous subsidy to assist successful applicants in moving to the territory. (Yukon Department of Education, Teaching in Yukon Schools, n.d.)
This overview excludes any mention of Yukon First Nations people or First Nations communities. While it does state in paragraphs 3 and 5 that openings for teaching positions are in predominately rural communities, there is no mention that these communities are located within the traditional territories of fourteen Yukon First Nations, eleven of which are also self-governing nations, or that these schools serve mainly First Nations students. The term “rural” is a stand-in for a First Nation community (with the exception of one community school that was once a mining town). As in the application form, First Nations-related educational interests are simply not mentioned. Furthermore, it is obvious from the descriptions provided that the website “Teaching in Yukon Schools” is meant to appeal to applicants from outside of the Territory. Paragraphs 1, 5 and 6, for example, speak to applicants who might locate to the Yukon as in: “teachers who wish to live in the unparalleled beauty of Canada's northwest”; “a place for the adventurous” and “to assist successful applicants in moving to the territory” (Yukon Department of Education, Teaching in Yukon Schools, n.d.) and this suggests an expectation that teachers are hired from elsewhere. This is reminiscent of long-held colonial practices in northern Canada to import teachers who are white, southern educated and, historically at least, were hired specifically to indoctrinate Yukon First Nations children to a white western worldview (Coates, 1993). Within this entire website there is no marketing to teachers who are from the Yukon or who receive their training in the Yukon. This teaching demographic appears to not exist.

The three omissions identified to this point include: no reference to First Nations as worthy of mention in the context of Yukon schools or population of the territory; a marketing message to non-Yukon applicants; and, no marketing to locally trained
teachers presents, again, absence of Yukon First Nations as context that is insignificant. Who best fits the context that is stated could be anyone. This is reminiscent of the notion of colour-blindness in critical race theory. Colour-blindness is defined as an approach to race that is intended to ignore issues of race, racial inequality, and white western domination (Frankenberg (1993); Leonardo, 2009; Taylor, 2009;). It is clear that Yukon schools provide a western model of education and by excluding First Nations from the context, that a western model is a perfectly acceptable norm. Colour-blindness also represents a desire for whites to be seen as non-racist by ignoring all reference to race, including systemic racism. Ignoring race by attempting to make it invisible—including the very existence of Yukon First Nations as this example illustrates—reinforces white privilege (Leonardo, 2004). The use of the term “rural” to refer to Yukon communities without indication that these are predominately First Nation traditional communities is a similar exercise, in that it essentially white-washes traditional First Nations lands. Rural is not a term used by Yukon First Nations in reference to traditional lands, rather it is an inappropriate use of a white-settler term referencing agrarian land. When it comes to recruiting teachers, “rural” is not a term that suggests that teachers will be working and living among First Nations families. Moreover, rural is a foreign term to teachers of Yukon First Nations ancestry who intend to teach in their traditional territory. The term “rural”, though in appearance non-descript, is a white western term. It is a term which would “fit” the demographic of the white applicant and it presents “rural” schools as white.

This is not about poor word choice or an innocent passive omission in the documents used for recruiting and hiring teachers; it reflects a desire to “white-wash” and
privilege white interests in public education by decontextualizing First Nations from the context. The missing information is not an act of innocence or ignorance; it is an active negation. As Shoshana Felman (1987) explains:

Ignorance is thus no longer simply opposed to knowledge: it is itself a racial condition, an integral part of the very structure of knowledge…. not to admit to knowledge. Ignorance, in other words, is not a passive state of absence, a simple lack of information: it is an active dynamic of negation, an active refusal of information. (p.79)

It is nothing less than a “willingness to ignore” and by doing so remove any suggestion of commitment to Yukon First Nations.

Absent information directs how documents are interpreted. By excluding Yukon First Nations educational interests in hiring-related information it can be assumed that there is no need to pay serious attention to hiring teachers either representing or familiar with these interests. By omitting reference to First Nations traditional communities there is no need to honor the staffing protocol. And, without reference to land claim agreements there is an absence of legal obligations to Yukon First Nations. These absences suggest that marketing for and hiring First Nations teachers is insignificant. One may be led to conclude therefore—that according to these documents and recruiting messages—the teacher who is suitably qualified is likely any (white) teacher.

As far as reference to Yukon First Nations or any specifics that relate to the context of teaching in the Yukon, there are two only references noted in the information available to applicants on the website and in related hiring/recruiting documents. The website includes an unexplained reference to the staffing protocol in the applicant information as previously noted and there is typically a single statement on job postings under hiring qualifications which calls for “knowledge of and sensitivity to” First Nations
students. Neither of these references includes contextual information in regard to their meaning or significance or reference to any governing legislation or policy, leaving their purpose unknown to the applicant and up to the principal to interpret. By their lack of substance and context both examples represent a hollow attempt at symbolic gesture. A job posting which merely states “knowledge” of Yukon First Nations (despite this as required curricular content according to the Yukon Education Act is meaningless if evidence of this expertise is not required.

**The Staffing Protocol Revisited- Selective Interpretation**

Those with some familiarly with the Yukon Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009) tend to ignore the prefatorial statement, “this Protocol reflects the Department’s commitment to ensuring that First Nations teachers are given priority in hiring decisions” (Yukon Department of Education, 2009, p.1). Rather, focus is given to the following statement provided on page two of the document, “candidates who are suitably qualified for the position advertised will be considered in this order…” (p. 2). It is the latter statement that is most often quoted when employers are asked to explain the significance of the protocol. One YNTEP graduate explained it this way: “It just means that the principal looks at my application” (Participant M). Another graduate was told, “It just means that I might get an interview” (Participant L). Similar responses were noted in the Macdonald (2005) study. For the employer to give the impression that the meaning of the protocol is so arbitrary trivializes its intent. There is no reference in the staffing protocol to a definition of “suitably qualified”, nor, on-the other-hand is there reference to meeting any obligations to First Nations or to equitable hiring principles.
How Does Fit Apply to Hiring Principals of First Nations Ancestry?

The practice of hiring according to “fit” is particularly challenging for First Nations educators who apply for positions as school principals. While recent studies indicate that white women have broken through the gender barrier in educational administration positions, this is not so for non-whites. As Tooms, Lugg and Bogotch (2010) suggest, this is due, in part, to how leadership is constructed which has typically been, white, male and heterosexual. The following is an account by an observer of an attempt made by an experienced First Nations teacher who applied for a temporary principal position. Note that in this case the school council responsible for recommending the successful candidate consists of a majority of members of the First Nation.

The outside candidate was a wonderful man, decades of experience in schools. His interview went well, but from what I’m told, Kellie’s interview was also very impressive. [It became a question of] look, ‘you have a choice between a fine teacher who’s a local candidate. How often has a First Nation’s woman applied to be principal here? Never …. The other fellow is good but he’s been in the profession for decades. How long is he going to stay? Besides, how much longer do you want old white men to come in here and tell you what to do?’ Well, the school council majority were citizens of the First Nation, who decided that they wanted old white men to tell them what to do for a few more years. When do you think Kellie will stick her neck out again? (Participant D)

As the observer notes, there is a surprising twist in this example illustrating the extent to which school council representatives (female) including those of First Nations ancestry may also hold unexamined views of the standard principal identity: white, male, and heterosexual. This example presents an employment equity concern on two accounts—gender and race—yet the Yukon Education Staffing Protocol applies only to teaching positions and educational assistants and not to principal positions, even though principals are represented by the same collective agreement. Given the challenges faced by racialized individuals in overcoming the glass ceiling in administration and the double
barriers faced by racialized women, such an important omission in the protocol suggests two possible interpretations: that the staffing protocol is limited to positions of lesser power and influence; and furthermore, it was not anticipated that Yukon First Nations would apply for positions as principals. Here again is another example of a key omission in the documents important to employment equity hire and land claim agreements.

**Critical Race Theory on Fit and Teacher Identity**

Critical race theory recognizes that race permeates our lives in every aspect, from our beliefs, ideologies, our social lives; where we choose to live and shop and where our children attend school. It is embedded in our institutions and what we learn to value (Zambudio, et al., 2011). What we come to accept and internalize as normal, if not influenced by white racial dominance, is defined by the effects of racialization (Kumashiro, 2004). We associate what is normal (racially) to particular identities—including the identity of teacher. This is an identity that we all know well; an identity dominated by an image of white women with a mission to enculturize others to the “advances” of white culture.

Carol Schick (1998) outlines a history of the construction of white female teacher identity as critical in the colonizing function of public schools in Canada. She describes white teachers as embodying all the right characteristics to be effective agents of colonization in socializing others to the norms of white values. Formal education was a quick means of ensuring conformity to Anglo ways and loyalty to the Crown with white women particularly well-suited to this task, as nurturers and the embodiment of civilization. Schick describes white female teachers’ performance of the image of “Lady Bountiful” who in imperial times represented the ideal in white womanhood as self-less,
devoted to others, had all the “right” answers, and was superior in class and race. Lady Bountiful teachers do not see themselves as active colonizers but as helpers. Theirs is a responsibility of educating others for the purpose of self-actualization but that includes, educating for conformity to particular values, worldview and citizenship responsibilities. The quote which follows suggests that there is as much protection for this identity today as ever, as this participant describes:

Teachers, particularly elementary, particularly primary teachers are the toughest critics. If they think somebody is good you are admitted to the brotherhood, let’s face it is a sisterhood, but they watch… When [Jane] figures out that she [a First Nations teacher] is not only good enough to be with the kids but wants her in the quilting circle I thought those were interesting moments in the development of teacher careers, that kind of level of acceptance. (Participant C)

As Participant C intimates, not just anyone can be a teacher, or at least, a real one; unless it is quite evident that they fit a particular mold and the “teacher” mold can be quite prescriptive.

The Canada-wide study by St. Denis (2010) of Aboriginal teachers confirms that Aboriginal teachers often encounter racist assumptions about their identity as teachers and their skills and abilities. When Aboriginal teachers perceive, or are led to believe, that they do not measure up professionally to their white counterparts, their desire to engage fully and confidently in the profession is stifled. This places them on margin of the profession and illustrates how rigidly teacher identity is defined and how easily racialized teachers come to be viewed as outsiders to this identity.

According to discourse analysis, “fit” is an example of a condensation symbol. A condensation symbol is a term frequently used though not easily defined. Its meaning lies more in its symbolic orientation than in factual communication (Tooms et al., 2010). In reality, fit has multi-dimensional meaning. It is embedded with assumed and also
unstated meaning. Fit and similar condensation symbols such as “professionalism”, “appropriate”, “suitable” and other examples of educational parlance are relational terms, in which the meaning is constructed relative to particular norms. Normative values as Tooms et al. reminds us are established by dominant canon and often juxtaposed to values and norms that marginalize others. From the perspective of critical race theory, fit needs to be challenged in its application to hiring teachers as far more than a harmless notion of gut feelings but as an “amalgam of many contextual intersections of role, identity, and relationships” and in relation to a larger social and political context (p. 101). These intersections of influence include the everyday as well as the meta-messages of what is normal in a social order overwhelmed by hegemonic influences. Racial domination is founded on the assumed right to define and to determine what is normal; who fits and who does not. It is a guarded process that operates independent of external influences, as described by this YNTEP graduate in regard to her offer of hire, “the principal told me that in spite of coming highly recommended, that I’d have to prove myself” (Participant K). This statement implies that it is inconsequential to this principal that others recommend this teacher—as only he knows how this person should be judged. This is a highly subjective statement and one imbued with power and privilege.

**Implicit Racial Bias Theory**

This study is about racial interface between teachers of First Nations ancestry and educational institutions at the hiring process stage. Understanding the complexities of this interaction requires a critical race examination of the concepts and processes which determine access and the potential for implicit racial bias. Current research on implicit racial bias can reveal surprising contradictions between what we believe about ourselves
as egalitarian individuals and what we practice (Devos & Banaji, 2005). In a study on defining American citizenship it was noted that when respondents respond to questions that require conscious and controlled thought processing they choose a racially inclusive view of citizenship. When they respond to questions about citizenship that require implicit responses, involving less conscious or automatic processing, attitudes toward citizenship show the reverse (p. 448). Devos and Banaji conclude from this that American citizenship is defined on whiteness; even some racialized groups displayed a white bias toward how citizenship is defined. I suggest that if the teaching profession was put to a similar test it would show a similar bias. Intentionally we may choose an inclusive view of teacher identity but our implicit responses would indicate otherwise. What the surveys on implicit racial bias suggest is the possibility that the egalitarian principles we desire and on which we define ourselves are just that—ideals—and not easily translated into action. Whom we marry, befriend, or where we choose to live suggests that our actions are inconsistent with our principles. One YNTEP graduate describes what appears as an ideological contradiction of a similar nature, that is, how the hiring of First Nations teachers may be regarded in principle but not necessarily supported by action.

I hear the spiel about what a wonderful career it is, how important it is to have native teachers, but I don’t see the commitment in action and I don’t understand why. This person is the best investment; they’re not leaving the Yukon. This is their home. It’s not parachuting people in and out. I know it makes a difference to all kids in the school. It opens doors that other teachers can’t open. It changes things for staff, too. It changes the school. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 29)

The conflict and contradiction between the principled ideals of equality and outcomes would suggest that we are deeply socialized by our histories and thus behave in racially
determined ways. These are processes that shape how we think and understand and they leave residue that is not easily reversed, despite our considered intentions otherwise.

**Conclusion**

My purpose in this chapter has been three-fold. Firstly, I examined the concept of fit as vague and unclear criteria as subjectively interpreted by principals. Through a CRT lens I exposed its use as one which frames the selection of teacher applicants in a particular way that is both historically and racially influenced. Discourses of “fit” are rooted in white teacher identity and colonialism. Secondly, I examined documents which pertain to recruiting and hiring teachers and found several important omissions with regard to teaching context and teaching expertise, all suggesting that First Nations interests are not a consideration in teacher hire. I suggest that the staffing protocol in place to support the hiring of First Nations teachers is undermined by this and that all of these considerations play into or are indicative of a lack of sincere interest in hiring teachers of First Nations ancestry. The public display of these institutional artifacts indicates that, indeed, the lack of interest may be flouted with impunity. Thirdly, in my examination of the process of hiring I determined that the interpretation of which candidate is the best fit or most suitably qualified to teach in Yukon schools is largely the responsibility of one individual, the school principal. That such a critical decision occurs at the discretion of the school principal alone is problematic given the practice of hiring teachers on an ill-defined subjective notion of “fit” and “suitably qualified”. Because of their position of trust, principals are granted status and entrusted with authority to best represent the interests of many and to represent these interests fairly, objectively, and free of personal preference. Under this position of authority (founded on white male
authority), fit is free to be defined as it needs to be when in the hands of a trusted, impartial leader. This suggests that the image of authority granted to the institutional position of principal is more important than the actual person or the decisions that he makes. Yet, as Tooms et al. (2010) caution, as positions of authority, principals are an amalgam of social constructionism, hegemony, and an identity which we fail to interrogate. For schools, the institutional context is enormous—representing country, family, community and moral purpose; yet schools also operate within fairly defined parameters. As Tooms et al. claim, “schools have been operating under the ideology of a one best system with models of leadership [and teacher identity] that themselves have been reduced to stereotypes” (p. 119). The application of fit in reproducing a particular teacher identity is not limited to the hiring process or the assumptions we have about schools. Fit is influenced by the everyday messages and experiences that shape how concepts are socially constructed. Reducing fit to a particular standard and rationalizing this standard as the norm is a means of protecting the status quo.

First Nations graduates in this study and those who participated in the Macdonald (2005) study, YNTEP: A Study of Those Graduates Not Teaching in the Yukon, describe challenges they face in securing teaching positions as a betrayal of hope and of the very purpose of the program of study they have successfully completed, that is, to fill a critical need for teachers of First Nations ancestry in Yukon schools. This hope, or what some may call an expectation, is not just a personal one; it is reflected in land claim agreements; it is a desire expressed by government officials and for decades a request of Yukon First Nations. The importance of First Nations teachers to public education is not the only issue raised by Yukon First Nations. The academic gap evident in First Nations
student outcomes is a far more serious concern but the two are linked. The creation of YNTEP in 1989 was considered a significant step forward as the most concrete action taken in First Nations education since the creation of the Aboriginal language program. It was anticipated that graduates of YNTEP would be role models to First Nations students, impart missing Yukon First Nations epistemology, history and cultural content, bridge gaps between schools and First Nations parents and counter teacher turn-over in outlying community schools (Taylor, Goulet, Hart, Robottom, Sykes, 1993). Some felt that success would be measured by the number of First Nations teachers employed in Yukon schools, with success signaled by proportional representation of First Nations to non-First Nations teachers. Others hoped for much more, that schools would help bridge racial divides (P. McDonald, personal communication, April 4, 2008). To fulfill all these needs in any significant way proved to be more difficult than anticipated and well beyond the hiring of locally-trained First Nations teachers.

In the next chapter, I examine discourses and ideological assumptions which support white racial innocence and masks particular forms of racism, disassociates race from oppression, and justifies inequality.
CHAPTER 5: DISCOURSES OF INNOCENCE:
MAKING RACIAL INEQUALITY VISIBLE

In this chapter I examine discourses of colour-blindness and racial innocence as they relate to this study. I analyze in greater detail teacher identity as based on white cultural norms and the particular ways this identity is shaped. I suggest that the construction of First Nations cultural identity—as women and as teachers—is considered outside of the norm. The chapter begins with an overview of white racial identity and the construction of racial innocence as a means of defending and protecting white privilege.

What Is White Racial Innocence?

White racial innocence is a deceptive paradox that manifests to the extent that—without apparent recognition or intent—caring, sympathetic and even defenders of social justice will continue to oppress. The paradox as Christine Sleeter (1993) describes it is that we cannot deny seeing what we actually do not see. It is the denial of racism where racism thrives, absent of any racists (Bonvilla-Silva, 2003). Expanding on this further, it can be observed that those who do recognize inequality do not necessarily challenge inequities, or wish to acknowledge that their own white racial privilege comes at a cost—through the oppression of others. I will explore what makes this paradox and these contradictions of racism-without-racists possible.

White Racial Identity

Whites do not have to think about their place in society because they exist in a world that tells them who they are from day one. They do not experience the self-doubts about identity that many people of color go through in the search for belonging. Growing up White in American has its own challenges, but it is a development rarely bound up with the question, “What does it mean to be White?” because to be White is to belong. (Leonardo, 2009, p. 234)
White racial identity is complex and ill-defined. Many see it as a non-identity, defined in relation to other racialized identities (Fine, 1997). That it lacks meaning allows it to appear innocuous; though Frankenberg (1993) contends that white racial identity is far from innocuous in its ability to wield power. Its power and authority as Sleeter (1993) suggests, “generates norms, ways of understanding history, ways of thinking about self and others and even ways of thinking about the notion of culture itself” (p. 231). This power of agency has resulted in the privileging of western epistemology as knowledge—founded on (scientific) truths—and the discrediting of indigenous epistemology as culture—relegated to (unscientific) folklore.

The privileging of white knowledge allows whites to have an inherent sense of belonging in society. Whites do not question the fact that most things taught in schools feature the history, language, politics and social norms that verify their place in the world (Leonardo, 2009). In that this knowledge is held up as worth teaching and knowing, whites will be able to assume that their knowledge—in which their interests are featured—verifies their superiority as a people. This racial self-understanding generates a sense of insider and outsider status and a racial order that ensures the place of white culture as insider status to which all whites belong (Leonardo, 2009). As a result, whites, though they may experience themselves as individuals, have powerful group affiliation from which they derive a sense of belonging in almost any place they find themselves. They see themselves as the “owners”, the “community”, and the “we” and “us” and the “our” of our political and social institutions. The fact that this status goes unremarked means that whiteness appears to be, “everywhere and nowhere” (Dyer, 1997).
While whiteness is “everywhere and nowhere” it is not necessarily present to whites themselves. It is an identity without definition capable of naming others without naming itself (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Weis, Proweller & Centrie, 1997). Who is asked where they are really from? Anglo-whites can claim full and single identity nationality as simply “Canadian” where all others require hyphenated identifies—even after multiple generations of Canadian citizenship (Mackey, 2002). Whites know where and how to occupy any social landscape. They know how the world works racially (Leonardo, 2009). They can speak of multiculturalism, ethnic minorities groups, the racial mix of Canadian society, “rural” or “urban” schools and “good” schools, in ways that mention race in polite and ostensibly colour-blind ways. They can claim innocence of racial distinctions and, unlike racialized individuals, simply decide that race does not matter. Regardless of intention, whites hold a privileged position with the ability to dominate others, benevolently or otherwise, and to do so with unstated authority.

White Racial Innocence: Obscuring Structures of Dominance

Schick and St. Denis (2005) claim that goodness and racial innocence are two “talismans” of white superiority and serve as countenances to whites that their good intentions are not discriminatory. Veiled in this way, “good” white people view acts of racial discrimination as uncommon and unrelated acts. Racism perceived in this way releases white individuals from any sense of responsibility for racism while attributing it to the acts of racists—crude individuals (Alfred, 2011; McIntosh, 1989). Attributing racism to this form ignores it as an institutionalized and largely unspoken organizing process responsible for a racialized/unequal social order. Limiting racism to the independent acts of individuals would be akin to calling a fever an illness rather than a
symptom of an underlying condition. Race is not the underlying condition of oppression. Ann Stoler (1995) claims that “racisms” have never been just about race, rather, “racisms have been a part of the consolidation of bourgeois projects, the forming of nation states and the uncertain cultivation of identities forged around… ‘structures of dominance’” (p. 204). Sidney Willhelm (1998) explains that racism is rooted in imperialism and can adjust to economic demands.

Throughout its history, White America adjusts its expression of racism to accord with its economic imperatives and modifies its myths of racism to take into account the shifting economic circumstances. That is to say, racism remains a persistent value expression depending upon economic opportunities. White American generates a new ideology to sanction any fundamental alteration in race relations growing out of basic economic modification. (pp. 154-155)

These perspectives depict whiteness and white privilege as a structuring principle, that is, a systematic and institutional phenomenon found in all institutions, including political, economic, social, and national organizations; but because of the ubiquity of white racial domination, white privilege remains largely unacknowledged within institutional processes. White racial knowledge is integral to the maintenance of white racial domination (Leonardo, 2009) and it is so integral that it is difficult to identify how and where it begins and ends.

**Racialized Thinking and Aboriginal Peoples**

Racialized thinking and institutional racism have a long history in Canada dating to the founding of Canada and the creation of the Indian Act in 1876 (Cannon & Sunseri, 2011). The Indian Act is not simply a means of dispossessing indigenous lands or absenting indigenous sovereignty. It constructs a single category, Indian, which associates all Aboriginal peoples of Canada as one identity. This constructed identity entrenches the Indian/white dichotomy of the settler (pioneer)-colonial relationship as
both different and inferior (Cannon & Sunseri, 2011). This dichotomy, though once based on ideologies of racial differences, has been de-racialized in the discourse of multiculturalism as difference that is rooted in culture (Razack, 1998). Discourses of cultural difference provide all the same underlying meanings of race and racial inequality while removing any association to race. Moreover, this constructed culture is no longer associated with lived experiences of indigenous people (St. Denis, 2011) but with difference as in an old photograph negative, an opposing mirroring. Each constructed culture is defined in relation to the other; and in this opposing relationship white culture cannot exist without the other (Fanon, 1967).

**Constructing and Recreating Innocence: Examples from Study**

Many liberal whites are deeply concerned about racial inequality yet naive to dominant power structures and white racial privilege (McIntosh, 1989). They are observers who do not recognize their participation in inequality and consequently do not act on it. Fostering an awareness of white racial privilege is not, as Leonardo (2009) describes, a simple process of exposing whites to the individual and group benefits they receive from white racial domination or a case of revealing the degree to which whites fully participate in race relations. White racial awareness requires understanding the enduring resiliency of white domination; questioning why there are so few breakthroughs in race relations today; and examining one’s own personal limitations as a starting point. For example, in my own understanding of racialization I have come to understand that it does not matter how sincere my desire may be to disassociate from white racial privilege because the benefits of my racial identity continue regardless, because I am white. In some ways knowing this is liberating because it allows me to
refocus energy from denial and disassociation when confronted with racist acts and now
to speak up, to act, as I am attempting to do here. One of the ways to challenge current
manifestations of race is to expose the couched messages of liberal discourses. “Best
intention” is one example. This discourse is about “good” people who cannot see or
chose not to see that socially constructed white racial domination is at the heart of racial
inequality; that they participate in and benefit from this, regardless of their intention.

To follow is an analysis of discourses of white racial innocence supported by
Moon’s (1999) work on the identity of “good” white women. I see Moon’s work on the
identity construction of good white bourgeois women as seminal to understanding how
racial innocence is currently expressed in liberal discourses and in understanding the
archetype of teacher identity. Moon illustrates examples of discursive forms as
expressions of white racial innocence that promote race evasion and thereby re/produce
white racial domination. As it relates to this research, I am interested in the apparent
contraction between white evasion of race as a disconnection from issues of race, racism,
and racialization; and white solipsism, which configures the world as white. Moon’s
work helps to explain the apparent contradictions within liberal discourses as expressed
by several study participants as they explain current race relations in Yukon today.

Moon claims that the first site responsible for producing whiteness is the home.
She notes that the home is a particularly conflicting and contradictory site for white
women because it presents tension between racial enculturation (racial solidarity) and
resistance to dominant patriarchal ideology. Public schools are in some ways similar sites
of gendered and racial tension. Schools are also the second most influential site of racial
enculturation and generate their own contradictions. For example, schools are stalwarts of
egalitarian values but oppress non-white values and beliefs. I suggest that it is this ideological tension that makes schools particularly resistant to change. Schools are models of western culture and knowledge by design and play a central role in racial enculturation, including reproducing white racial innocence. Indeed, schools have the potential to educate for social justice while also re/producing a racialized social order in contradiction to this potential.

White racial innocence is expressed through an image of respectability. According to Moon “white respectability” and as hooks’ (1994) terms, “racial decorum” or “bourgeois decorum”, requires that if there must be dissention it should be made without conflict, or held in private—preferably without witnesses. Knowing how to act in white dominated institutions in “racially acceptable ways” is an important part of everyday white enculturation (Leonardo, 2009). Moon describes a number of discursive ways in which whites reveal direct awareness of race and racialization yet speak of it indirectly. These discursives include: racial disassociation, bourgeois decorum, euphemism, passive voice, disembodied subjects, and hyperpoliteness; which operate as innocent facades which veil racial knowledge.

I will trace examples of these discursive practices as they apply to the discussions on recruiting and hiring of teachers. Using comments from participants of this study—who are well-meaning individuals in their support of YNTEP—I intend to show the everyday discourses of white racial innocence in situations where racial awareness does matter. It matters for some very specific reasons because these discourses make it appear reasonable: to discount a staffing protocol, to discount employment equity policy, and to ignore legal obligations in place to protect and promote the interests of Yukon First
Nations; yet these policies, legislation and special rights are all about race, racism, and redress.

Understanding the purpose and uses of white racial innocence begins with how whites perceive themselves. Discourses which disassociate whites from possessing racial identity are important in conceptualizing white racial innocence. To be discursively absent as a race allows whites to reap social and institutional benefits that appear to have nothing to do with race or the superior status of being white (Bush, 2004). This occurs through the use of coded, innocuous, language that presents racial inequality as though it exists naturally. Disassociation can also be what is not said about race, for example, when a white parent in attempting to hide the truth about sending her child to a school with a large First Nations population states, “my child is not being challenged in this school” (Participant F). Such statements are not uncommon in white, middle-class discourses when parents accuse public schools of failing to provide the level of education that their children are entitled to, particularly when these schools are populated by poor, immigrant, or supposedly high-needs children (Brantlinger, Majd-Jabbari & Guskin, 1996). In the following quote, a study-participant recounts a number of conversations he has had with white parents regarding requests to enroll their children in another school outside of the school catchment area on the basis that the school under discussion—in attending to the needs of First Nations students—is providing a lesser standard of education.

For so many years, parents in this area, not all by any means, but some parents very openly try to sidestep sending their kids here. And I understand there are a lot of reasons and some of them were legitimate reasons [for choosing other schools]. I would try to talk to them when they came in to tell me their kid wouldn’t be in this school. The Department would insist they come and talk to the principal first. So these are very painful interviews for both of us because my
feeling was they already had the story cooked up—very sophisticated, but I realized that people were speaking in code and the code when you finally cracked it, you realize what they’re saying is, ‘I really don’t want my kid to go to school with a lot of Native kids. Not that I don’t appreciate the cultural side but so many of them have so many problems, FAS [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome], and they would say that, my kids won’t get fair treatment in your school. And so thank you very much but we’re taking him out and going to another one. And then to have a lot of First Nations teachers, would just reinforce that feeling, this is not a quality school, it can’t be.’ (Participant F)

Racial stereotypes are well-hidden in the educational discourse used by these parents. They know how to use class as a stand-in for race and cite popular educational theory such as the deficits of “lower class” families to justify their need to withdraw their children from this school. While this justification as presented may not be morally acceptable and even though in this example the principal was clearly aware of the attempted deception, the school authority was trumped by the performance of white knowledge and white supremacy. This example demonstrates the unstated and powerful investments whites have in preserving certain racial and class privileges. It illustrates a sophisticated display of power and skill in rhetoric available to white middle-class parents; to which schools are significant contributors and, in this circumstance, helpless to counter.

**Bourgeois Decorum and Racial Loyalty**

According to Moon (1999), bourgeois decorum is embedded with racial, class values and moral narratives. It is used to support and reinforce class and racial loyalty and to suppress dissenting voices (hooks, 1994; Moon, 1999). Though it appears to be about preserving respectability and good manners, the underlying intent is to maintain control over dissention. Consider the following example of professional and racial loyalty. The speaker, a person with responsibility for hiring teachers, attempts to protect
the authority of a school principal, to disregard the staffing protocol, and to justify the hiring of a white applicant:

Principals either don't understand the hiring protocol or they may not honour it. You know human nature just kicks in all over the place in these types of things right, but when you see a list of candidates and you happen to know somebody on that list and they've been in your school and you'd really love to have them on your staff, it's hard then to go back and pretend that person is not on the list and only look at the others. (Participant B)

The speaker’s sympathetic response to the hiring predicament—that the principal happens to know and like someone on the applicant list—suggests that misunderstanding or dismissing the protocol under these circumstances is simply an innocent and “everyday” example of human nature. The argument, to be sympathetic to the influence of “human nature”, is a compelling one but it overlooks the reasons why the staffing protocol exists. This example illustrates how the rules can be named (there is protocol in place) though justifiably ignored because of the mitigating forces of human nature.

In this next example the speaker quickly acquiesces to the principal’s rejection of inexperienced applicants presented for consideration for a teaching position, regardless that these applicants are First Nations and qualify for consideration of hire according to the staffing protocol.

Principals sometimes come back and say ‘Why are you showing me these resumes? None of these people have any experience, or none of these people have done this.’ And I say, ‘that's no problem, if they're not suitably qualified, you know, as long as you've reviewed them, looked at their skills compared to what you advertised for and you’ve determined they’re not qualified, that's fine.’ (Participant B)

The principal’s rationale for rejecting First Nations applicants is severe given that schools commonly hire new graduates without teaching experience because they bring fresh ideas and energy to school staffs. Hiring according to the staffing protocol does not list
experience as a hiring criteria. Experience is difficult for new graduates to obtain and adds criteria that is not used on a consistent basis to screen out other applicants. For a new graduate of any teacher education program teaching experience will be lacking. The principal’s question: “why are you showing me these resumes?” followed by the declaration: “none of these people have any experience” indicates that he sees being required to review certain applications as a challenge to his authority. However, the response given to this principal: “that's no problem… as long as you've reviewed them, looked at their skills compared to what you advertised for” shows no consideration of the staffing protocol and its intention, by either party. The advice given to the principal that “as long as you have reviewed them” suggests that the exercise is more about doing the process of employment equity, that is, ensuring the applications have been reviewed rather than considering and honoring the protocol and employment equity policy. The speaker does not challenge the principal’s interpretation of the protocol suggesting that he is free to reject these applicants at the outset of the selection process on the basis of lack of teaching experience. This suggests some form of professional loyalty to the authority of the principal, possibly because this authority cannot be questioned. The speaker goes on to justify the principal’s response to the staffing protocol:

Like I was saying about human nature kicking in, people do have assumptions or, you know, a past perception of what that means and what they're being forced to do as opposed to how this will help them, yeah that's not their automatic reaction. (Participant B)

The speaker implies that the principal’s attitude toward the staffing protocol represents enforcement rather than redress, as “how this will help them”. Yet the speaker allows the principal’s position to stand and does not address the intent of the policy but does ensure that at least one of the employment equity considerations was followed—the applications
were reviewed. This example illustrates what Sarah Ahmed (2007) contends is more about compliance to employment equity processes and procedures than responding with “a spirit of understanding what the legislation is really there for” (p. 595). Missed by either party in this example is any recognition that employment equity policies and legislation enables “moving to good practice” in places where there is known resistance. This example reflects the actions of equity legislation *compliance* in its most superficial form—the ticking off as a task-completed exercise; more an act of “doing the document, than doing the doing” (Ahmed, p. 595). As Ahmed cautions, more energy goes into compliance to policy rather than fulfilling its fundamental intent to change institutional practice. Delgado and Stefancic (2000) see equal opportunity legislation or policy as useful only in the case of the most extreme forms of injustices that are obviously shocking. They note that employment equity has little to no effect on the kind of everyday acts of oppression that profoundly affect racialized people, like the teachers in the St. Denis study who, overtime, see themselves as outsiders in their profession.

What is particularly significant in the above example is that the principal has acted in a racially acceptable way. He has not mentioned the racial identity of the applicants, just their lack of experience. He has justified his rejection as lack of experience which makes the decision appear to be “safely” outside of the realm of race. Despite all the obvious flaws in this particular hiring example bourgeois decorum has been maintained. No reference to racial identity was revealed, no new graduate of YNTEP was considered, even as underrepresented racialized applicant, and none were given the opportunity to even compete for a position at the onset.
Ahmed’s (2007) work is important here in understanding the ways in which documents such as employment equity policies are written, spoken about, and ultimately how they are put into action. The Department of Education Staffing Protocol (2009) is a document that represents employment equity policy but contains only one reference to its function. It is short on context, leaving it easily open to individual interpretation. How a document is viewed by an individual, whether it is seen as a threat or a support, is obviously critical to its interpretation. A threat is dismissed; a support is used. Some may view a protocol as interference, a questioning of professional autonomy. For the speaker in the above quote, protecting the principal’s authority may have been more important than ensuring that the staffing protocol was given serious consideration.

**Euphemism**

_Euphemism_ is coded language in place of less offensive terms. In the construction of white innocence, it is not merely about substituting for less offensive words but to do so for the purpose of upholding privilege by “politely” discrediting racialized and classed “others” and while also maintaining decorum. This discourse is so commonly used today that we hardly question its use or recognize its purposes. Euphemism is common in situations where there is an ideological clash, particularly those perceived as challenging the status quo (Moon, 1999). These include: employment equity/affirmative action programs, welfare reform, stereotypes of lower-class family values, and discourse pertaining to immigration. Euphemism can minimize, normalize, or sensationalize situations and events—and this is not done innocently. It is a means of dismissing poverty, the effects of racialization and ignoring oppression (Moon, p. 188). For example, when a large-scale dismissal of a workforce is referred to as “downsizing”, the use of the
term downsizing is in defence of the employer. The reference suggests that the workforce, rather than being fired and now unemployed, voluntarily decide to leave.

The statement of qualifications posted for Yukon teaching positions contains an example of euphemism, a single reference to Yukon First Nations interests in education and often phrased as: “knowledge of and sensitivity to the issues, needs and aspirations of First Nations students” (see Appendix F, Sample Job Posting). This example downplays or neutralizes any notion of specific educational commitments to Yukon First Nations. As a vague statement that is passive, and possibly negative—particularly in the use of the word “issues”, it presents nothing that can be committed to or screened for in hiring. If this statement were actually taken seriously in screening applicants, its vagueness would make it difficult to compare the merits of one applicant over another in relation to it. This statement—“knowledge of and sensitivity to the issues, needs and aspirations of First Nations students”—is a trivial qualification which can easily warrant a trivial response (oh yes, I’m sensitive) and justifies the criticism that a number of YNTEP graduates claim, that their cultural (lived) experiences and academic knowledge as teachers are undervalued in comparison to their southern counterparts.

A second example of euphemism from this study is the use of—lack of teaching experience—when used to reject an applicant from a teaching position. The statement is meant to be a concrete and also a non-racialized way of dismissing as applicant as a serious contender for a teaching position. Inexperience is normal for new graduates though it appears to mean something different as this next quote suggests:

They [principal and others involved in hiring] said that the person from [a major southern city] had more experience. She was a young woman, non-native [and now] working in a predominately native community, so, I don’t know what they mean by experience. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 19)
This graduate questions how experience is defined; that teaching experience is a requirement but teaching experience in a First Nation community is not. As a euphemism it may be a polite form of rejection, however, it also circumvents a very real problem that First Nations applicants face in a successful hiring outcome; that lack of teaching experience is a serious barrier to employment, especially where there are few opportunities to gain this experience. Ensuring access to employment to gain experience is an employment equity concern and a staffing protocol is one means of supporting this.

**Passive Voice and Racial Disassociation**

One way employers have of distancing themselves from taking employment equity programs seriously is to detach current forms of racism (covert) from their historical roots (overt). Racial disassociation is so common today that it is considered one of the tenets of critical race theory (Taylor, 2009). Referencing racism as an historical event allows a white person to be sympathetic to this history without acknowledging the currency of racism today (Moon, 1999). To speak of inequities, racism, and other forms of oppression only in the past tense, when constantly repeated, becomes very significant in formulating a “truth”—that racism no longer occurs or racist acts are rare exceptions. The following quote illustrates this point:

> I think that there are changes in thinking that is actually in favour of the First Nations’ candidates because it’s now becoming more—it’s all part of the changing things that Department of Education has had in the last six or seven years, where once upon a time, the idea of having First Nations teachers, no one thought that was important at all. Then it was recognized as being important. Now First Nations are becoming real partners within the school catchment areas. (Participant A)

This statement presents a naïve sense of history. The expression “once upon at time” places racism in a very obscure past in which there is no historical context or agency
identified. It suggests a past that is almost mythical. The people responsible for this racialized past are equally non-descript. The reference to “no one thought that [hiring First Nations teachers] was important at all” in reality refers to specific individuals in responsible positions. These individuals represent positions with responsibility, not only for hiring teachers, but with responsibilities for the educational interests of all Yukon children. Presenting these individuals as unnamed and as an indiscrete group in reference to a vague time period in the past allows for disassociation from an obscure history and association with positive, present-day change. In reality the above quote is about fairly recent change evolving over the last decade and the “change” the speaker notes but does not specify is attributed to the recent signing of land claims agreements.

The use of passive voice and associating racism to events in the past creates the illusion that whites are outsiders to racialization. This presents an interesting paradox. While on the one hand, racialized people today are held imprisoned by a racialized past; whites, however, are free to disconnect from it with impunity. This contradiction will be taken up in more detail in the following discursive form, the disembodied subject.

The disembodied subject is the so-called outspoken, ignorant, and unidentified individuals who promote racist stereotypes and “make life difficult for the rest of us good white people” (Moon, 1999, p. 191). These unidentified and bodiless individuals represent the “they” —a particular group of individuals—who are essentialized as overtly racist. Characterizing others to an extreme degree allows “us” (those more tolerant in comparison) to be non-racists. This form of inverse comparison contributes to the endurance of “not me” racism. Why question one’s own beliefs and actions when the racist model or norm is so dissimilar by comparison. The following quote references a
group of people, a “block of people”, who prevent others who “want to change it”. Who this group is or what change is referenced is unclear and will require further elaboration.

You’ve got people-- you know 35 years, and a lot of them have moved up the ranks, moved from teacher to administrator and they take their beliefs with them. So, if you’ve got that block of people that are in there, and you want to change it, you’re going to have to change those people’s thoughts, and that’s hard to do. It can take years, and some people don’t [change]. Some people, you know, unfortunately, you have to wait for them to leave and then bring new people in that can change it. (Participant G)

The problem, racists, is not named by the speaker but implied by the expression “set in their ways”. This particular “block of people” which keeps schools from changing must be fairly influential to have such power, but this is only implied. Attributing racism to a disembodied and unnamed “they” is an example of what Moon terms “whitespeak”. It is not an acknowledgement of oppression that requires action because that would require names and details. This level of racial awareness allows the speaker to remain racially innocent. The speaker can refer to racist behaviour even without using the term but declare that the only available solution to this problem is “to wait for them [the racists] to leave”. By approaching the problem passively without action and waiting it out the speaker does not breach white racial solidarity while also leaving themselves—the rest of us good and innocent whites—not held accountable.

Leonardo claims that whites know very well how the world works racially but profess innocence of this (2009). Racial innocence is necessary in a racialized society because to acknowledge oppression and actively challenge it is a violation of racial solidarity, not to mention violating the power structures that have served this solidarity so well. Whitespeak is a way of speaking about oppression and privilege without threatening the status quo.
Hyperpoliteness

Discourses of hyper-politeness are grand, symbolic, statements imbued with superficial meaning. Their primary purpose is impact and whether actually acted on, or not, is inconsequential to their effect. These may be discourses stated for effect that an audience may hope to hear or what the speaker may hope to be true, regardless of evidence to the contrary. Hyperpoliteness is an excessive concern with courteous forms of language (Moon, 1999). An example of this is the use of term colour-blindness to signify racial tolerance and liberalism. Colour-blindness is based on a mistaken premise that acknowledging racial differences generates racism. As Ruth Frankenberg (1993), Zeus Leonardo (2009) and others have determined, the outcome of colour-blindness is just the opposite. Ignoring racial difference or more specifically—selective engagement with difference (Frankenberg)—is racist. People who profess to be colour-blind are hiding negative associations they have with racialized people (Sleeter, 1993). The renaming of racial differences as cultural differences is another example of hyperpolite discourse. Softening the language of racial difference as cultural differences is just a more refined way of obscuring unequal power relations (Razack, 1998).

In regard to this study “cross-cultural awareness” is often used in place of direct reference to First Nations. Cross-cultural awareness is a polite yet indirect reference to academic and social challenges First Nations students experience in Yukon schools. It implies that culture is both the problem and the solution (St. Denis, 2011). The following quote illustrates this. Note that the language used by the speaker is heavily coded making it difficult to decipher:
We’ve had some changes and different people have come into the organization and they know right from the time we do our interviews, we talk about cross-culture, the importance of it and it’s stressed. And so they know coming into the organization that’s what the organization wants. (Participant G)

Cross-cultural awareness appears to mean something specific to the speaker and to the institution this person represents, and it is spoken about as having some commonly agreed to meaning. The passage suggests that something symbolic and important is being done for First Nations students. As St. Denis (2011) notes, many of the references to cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural awareness are one-sided explanations of presumed cultural traits that white individuals feel they are expected to know about First Nations people. Cross-cultural awareness frames the experiences of First Nations people to a cultural interpretation, ignoring other forms of inequality. For example, the effects of multi-generational impacts of racism and colonization are disregarded when educators attribute academic failure of First Nations students to cultural differences. The student is viewed as failing because there is miss-match between a culturally-related learning style and that of the pedagogy or curriculum. Culture has become the new sociopolitical concept for race in a shift that reflects a more polite expression of difference though it serves the same outcome, attributing racial/cultural identity as the rationale for inequality.

Hyperpolite discourse can also be found in tribute speeches politicians and government representatives commonly give at public functions. These are statements made for the benefit of the audiences and whether the speaker actually believes the comment is not the point. For example, several YNTEP graduates note statements made by white speakers at public functions about the importance of First Nations teachers in education. Comments of this nature appear to represent a sincere expression of valuing First Nations teachers, particularly as role models, and when said to YNTEP students
suggest an open invitation to employment in Yukon schools. It is only on applying for

teaching positions when graduates learn that their desired status as a First Nations teacher
is a token gesture.

One YNTEP graduate recounts:

I hear the spiel about what a wonderful career it is, how important it is to have
native teachers, but I don’t see the commitment in action and I don’t understand
why. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 32)

Another graduate put it this way:

I almost felt like we were falsely led to believe that we’d get a job when we
graduated, so I was just shocked when I didn’t. I wish they’d be more honest and
go through the whole hiring process with people. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 37)

Hyperpolite statements are not necessarily expressions of personal belief. They serve
other purposes. For example, it is not uncommon for white individuals in mixed race
settings to feel compelled to express sentiments to appear non-racist (in the YNTEP
example, reference to the actual hiring outcome is irrelevant). The speaker of such
statements may be aware of the challenges graduates face in securing teaching positions
but considers these challenges a problem of particular undeserving individuals. Or, the
speaker may genuinely believe the sentiment in the particular setting it is made but in
another setting—an actual school— the standard of teacher identity and schools as white
institutions prevails. Put to an actual test at the time of hire many non-standard forms of
teacher-identity—teachers with dreadlocks, teachers with visible body piercings, tattoos,
teachers with accents, teachers who are openly gay, teachers who are “visible minorities”,
for example—will fail to meet this standard10.

10 For an interesting account of current legal actions in the U.S. over body art work (piercing and
tattoos) as the newest contention in employer-determined dress code, following more traditional
legal actions pertaining to "gender attire, hair and beard lengths, and religious garb" see Ponte, L. M.
& Gillian, J. L. (2007). Gender performance over job performance: Body art work rules and the
Hyperpolite statements allow individuals to profess heartfelt support to YNTEP graduates yet allow systemic barriers to remain unexamined and unchallenged, with this well-meaning individual as an active participant.

**Conclusion**

Moon’s work exposes examples of discursive forms of bourgeois decorum, racial politeness, euphemism, passive voice and hyperpoliteness which obscure the effects of white racialized dominance. With examples from this study I have applied this same scrutiny to the discursive production and interrelatedness of white racial innocence, good intentions and racial domination. These combine to protect and perpetuate white domination while keeping whites immune from identification and incrimination as suggested by the term, white innocence. Moreover, white educators do not question the underlying racist notions of this enculturation process or their loyalty to it. It is simply what a “good” education is supposed to be. White enculturation centres on discourses of racial innocence particularly where inequality and white superiority intersect. These discourses operate in ways that circumvent policies and agreements intended to redress marginalization such as employment equity policy, the staffing protocol, and in relation to this site, obligations to land claims.

In summary, I have examined examples of discursive practices which reinforce the enculturation process of white racial innocence. I began with the paradox of colour-blindness as an illogical concept in white racial awareness as an example of the not-so-continuous subordination of the feminine. *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy, 14*(319), 319-368. As to gender distinction, the authors find that courts side with employer demands for dressing attire which indicates "proper gender roles, with gender performance now trumping job performance in the workplace (p. 324)". The authors posit that "people whose actions reflect and reaffirm dominant views of beauty and conformity to social roles are rewarded with public approval along with better jobs and pay scales in the workplace (p. 323)."
innocent ways whites disassociate from race and racialization. Using examples of
discursive forms described by Moon in the enculturation of good white women, I
examined the enculturation of good white educators who see themselves as enlightened
observers but innocent bystanders in a racialized social order. I have been concerned with
a particular level of racial awareness expressed through liberal discourses of good will
and best of intentions. This role allows liberal whites to imagine themselves as mere
observers of racialization leaving no sense of compulsion to act against it, and innocent to
the processes and structures of racialization from which they benefit. While the discourse
of racialization may suggest a less oppressive and more egalitarian society, all that has
really changed is the discourse.
CHAPTER 6: MERITOCRACY—LEGITMIZING INEQUALITY

Meritocracy is an idealized notion held in liberal democracies for the purpose of distributing scarce and valued societal resources. The concept is founded on assumptions of egalitarian principles and based on individual merit, whereby individuals are attributed with unlimited opportunity to realize their potential through their own ability and effort. Regardless of privilege or inherited status, gender, race, or class, such distinctions can be broken down by these conditions (Delgado, 1995). It assumes that people achieve what they deserve and presumes that deservingness is free of bias and privilege.

It is widely believed that a meritocracy creates the conditions for fair practices in a competitive selection processes and that there are mechanisms for how this can be accounted for. Fairness is paramount in a meritocracy and includes notions of justice, equality, goodness, ethical, or moral practice. Fairness is a complex concept associated with reciprocity. Game theory and a simple child’s exercise on fairness help to illustrate this. The sharing of a cupcake illustrates the conditions for fair division—let one child cut a cupcake while the other child chooses which piece to take first. Invariably the cutter attempts to make the two sides equal. The exercise illustrates two principles: fairness is driven in part by self-interest and a common human need to be seen as fair. Fairness, or at least the appearance of fairness, is critical in any dominant role (in this case the cutter); regardless of the lack of reciprocity available to a subordinate. In a dominant social order—where the rules are made and enforced by a dominant group—there is a great need to be seen as fair and good.

The conceptualizing of meritocracy as just and fair for all is important in considering the ideological conflict between meritorious principles and employment
equity hiring programs. I will examine the discourses used to rationalize this conflict in light of the challenges YNTEP graduates experience when applying for teaching positions. This examination will consider how the hiring process is justified as fair regardless of the hiring outcome for First Nations applicants. I will argue that a major ontology of white supremacy is the belief that as a dominant group “we” are fair. Moreover, the fact that we are also in positions of power is evidence that we are justified to make the rules and to judge others’ abilities to measure up to the rules—with little recognition that these are systems of power premised on notions of white supremacy.

This chapter begins with an historical accounting of the evolution of meritocracy as an ideological standard of fairness in western society and its particular role in education.

**Historical Roots of Meritocratic Ideology**

The term *meritocracy* was coined over fifty years ago by British politician and sociologist Michael Young (1958/1994) in his satirical essay *The Rise of Meritocracy*. Stephen McNamee and Robert Miller (2004) trace the genesis of the concept of meritocracy to an extreme version of Protestantism of the early Protestant Reformation, known as the Puritan movement (p.4). Puritans practiced frugality, self-denial, diligence and an individual relationship with God. They believed they were instruments of God’s will on earth, destined to transform the world and remake it in God’s image (Weber, 2002). This belief would become reinforced and expanded on as major driving force within colonialism.

The ideology behind the early Protestant and Puritan movement is a conflation of individualism, egalitarianism, self-sufficiency, and freedom of choice. This particular
North American version of “democratic” ideology is entrenched in the early founding documents of colonial America (Leonardo, 2004; McNamee & Miller, 2004). Eventually becoming less associated with religious practice and more affiliated with work, this ideology emerged as the protestant work ethic and connected diligence to economic productivity (McNamee & Miller). While it can be argued as McNamee and Miller have, that meritocracy has some significance to Puritanism; the genesis of ideas associated with meritocracy and indeed, meritocracy as an ideal, had varied support at the time.

Colonial America was proclaimed a place where individuals were free to achieve based on individual merit—not birthright—creating what Thomas Jefferson termed an “aristocracy of talent” (McNamee & Miller). The founding rights and freedoms on which colonial North America was defined were not, however, extended to all. Speaking about the United States, Leonardo (2009) describes, when:

‘founding fathers’, who drafted the Constitution, they proclaimed that people were created equal. Of course, slavery, patriarchy, and industrial capitalism were inscribing forces surrounding their discourse of freedom. In short, ‘humanity’ meant male, white, and propertied. For this reason, any of their claims to universal humanity were betrayed by the inhumanity and violation of the ‘inalienable rights’ of people of color, women, and the working class. (p. 77)

Despite these obvious omissions and limitations, meritocratic ideology became encapsulated in the mythological narratives of the American dream (McNamee & Miller) and Canadian settler identity. Those who apply the principles of a meritocracy as fair and just for all, or those who have been lead to believe this, do so by ignoring the disadvantaging effects of race and class, and denial of the hidden benefits to those with white privilege. Regardless of inequitable outcomes, champions of meritocracy participate in discourses that Leonardo (2004) calls “dressed up as universals” which, in effect, represent the interests of white people as generalizations about their own
experiences; while nonetheless speaking for all others (Leonardo, p. 139), even those for whom these generalizations will not apply.

**Meritocracy and Education**

As an ideology, meritocracy represents a fixed or limited approach to the sharing of resources. As a product of western epistemology it is highly influenced by paternalism, capitalism, and colonialism—all of which defines limits to these resources based on inequitable systemic-wide outcomes. As Leonardo (2004) states, exclusionary and dominating processes are not isolated events, they represent long-standing relationships:

> Domination is a relation of power that subjects enter into and is forged in the historical process. It does not form out of random acts of hatred, although these are condemnable, but rather out of a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups. Ultimately, it is secured through a series of actions, the ontological meaning of which is not always transparent to its subjects and objects. (p.139)

From a critical race perspective, meritocratic standards are forged in relations of power and therefore, rather than neutral or fair measures, merit criteria itself is biased. For racialized people this presents a double edged challenge: the measurement instruments are inherently biased but also they face the assumption that success in meeting traditional meritocratic standards is only possible by lowering standards.

**Unearned Advantages**

For a meritocracy to be considered fair requires, at a minimum, equal access. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) theorizes that there are many factors which contribute to success apart from abilities. Advantages come in many forms to those with access to powerful racial and class-based connections which makes the notion of equal access, merit, and fairness as simplistic and largely unexamined.
Pierre Bourdieu terms the complex and often hidden nature of non-meritorious advantages as cultural and social capital. Briefly, cultural capital is the accumulated history of dominant knowledge and social capital represents valued structures and networks that are available to an individual. Bourdieu theorizes that there is more at play in achieving educational success than natural aptitude. The ability to perform representations of dominant hegemony and form relationships within this social network influences individual success. Acquiring cultural capital is a lengthy apprenticeship with families largely responsible for its transmission. The degree to which this knowledge becomes “unconscious”, that is natural behaviour, depends on the extent to which a family has access to this knowledge.

An individual acquires social capital by active participation in groups or networks of connections. The potency of social capital is achieving recognition as a member and establishing the backing of a collective. To maintain social capital requires on-going solidarity, continuous reinforcement, and reproduction of membership to sustain. Together these produce an enduring social network that members can access in the short-term or bank for later support. For racialized people the social and cultural capital that is valued in a white western dominated society is, for the most part, inaccessible to those who are not white.

**Reproducing Advantage and Disadvantage**

As Bourdieu (1986) theorizes cultural and social capital is closely aligned to dominant power structures and institutions and therefore, he concludes, there are no simple games of chance in who has access to these benefits. For example, a study by Brantlinger et al. (1996) found that as schools are closely aligned to the social and
cultural capital of the middle-class, middle-class parents tend to exert considerable influence over how schools serve their children. The study found that liberal-minded middle-class mothers may appear to support models of school inclusion but actually assist in the reproduction of separate and class-conscious school structures. This presents a contradiction in principle which these mothers rationalize through ideology which allows them to maintain their liberal image. The use of ideology to rationalize conflicting principles or to rationalize contradictions between practice and principles is discussed further in the chapter.

Disadvantage is also (re)produced through social closure, a shutting off of opportunities to those considered less able to benefit from additional support. Social closure is based on the assumption that middle-class parents support their school age children to a greater extent than parents of lower class families; therefore academic supports provided by schools benefit middle-class students to a greater extent and therefore middle-class students as more worthy of assistance (Kennedy & Power, 2010). Social closure justifies the provision of additional support to middle-class students; while providing rationale for tracking students of lower socio-economic status into modified programs (Parkin, 2003). There is an appearance of logic to social closure in a meritocratic system which ties both outcome and access to effort, or at least when it is presumed to be about effort. Little consideration is given to the hidden boosts provided by schools and other sources that enhance effort along the way. These examples illustrate ways in which schools support and justify the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage based on class and race.
In this next section I draw on the work of Thompson (1984a; 1984b) to outline how ideology supports and reinforces relations of power. Using examples from this study and excerpts from the Macdonald (2005) study I will identify discourses of fairness that mask inequality. I will argue that preferential hire of white teachers is legitimizet by discourses of meritocratic ideology, while the achievements of First Nations teachers are rendered suspect and delegitimizet, as is their education and other programs in place to overcome systemic racism. In addition, I include excerpts from interviews from the St. Denis (2010) study of Aboriginal teachers from across Canada to show the commonality of these experiences as an indication of the magnitude of the concerns raised here.

**Conceptualizing Ideology**

Ideologies are powerfully symbolic. They guide and inspire how we think and pass judgement. Brantlinger et al. (1996) define ideologies as “constructed of a complex of narratives that are intertextually composed of other texts (e.g. religious, scientific) so that they seem familiar and are respected” (p. 573). Thompson (1984a) describes the qualities of ideology as creating a sense of ubiquitous and un-authored authority that mediates peoples’ understanding of the world in a way that suggests common sense. In examining Thompson’s work more closely we can learn how ideologies operate as “moral prescriptions about what is right and good” (p. 78). As he elaborates, ideologies are far more than a passive and neutral guiding compass, they are permeated with profound intent that establish and sustain “relations of domination” (p. 67). Seliger (1976) summarizes this potential as follows:

[Ideology] is designed to serve on a relatively permanent basis a group of people to justify in reliance on moral norms and a modicum of factual evidence and self-consciously rational coherence the legitimacy of the implements and technical
prescriptions which are to ensure concerted action for the preservation, reform, destruction or reconstitution of a given order. (pp. 119-120)

As I will illustrate in this chapter, an appropriate theoretical framework for examining this premise is critical race theory which considers the potential of ideology to legitimize relations of domination. This includes meritocracy, which mediates access to influential social institutions under the appearance of principles of fairness and equality.

Thompson (1984a; 1984b) is especially interested in ideological contradictions and the use of legitimizing myths to rationalize conflicting ideals. An example of some significance to this study is the adage that public education is a powerful route to overcoming inequities; yet public education is where inequities are reproduced. Another is the example of the apparent contradiction between employment equity and meritocracy which is conflicted by the overarching principle that anyone can succeed with effort and the right attitude. Rather than question meritocracy for possible flaws, the programs and policies that are directed at redressing inequities are found at fault as undermining the determination of best qualified. Alvin Gouldner (1979) asserts that the real concern is not about notions of fairness in a meritocracy; it is the fear of losing highly desired professions of the middle-class such as managers, social workers, psychiatrists, and teachers to “professionals” with lower-class ranking.

**Thompson’s Discursive Operational Modes**

In this chapter I examine Thompson’s work on ideological conflicts and the ways in which ideologies support, reinforce and legitimate relations of power. Particular discursive strategies mediate within certain liberal ideologies which obscure or deny racial domination while leaving intact an image of liberalism (Brantlinger et al.), in the same way that meritocracy, as an ideology, creates an enduring image of fair distribution
of resources while masking structural inequities. Using examples from this study, I will illustrate how these discursive, couched in liberal ideology, are applied to employment equity programming in the Yukon.

**Meritocracy and Employment Equity**

The early days of the land claim process which began in 1973 signaled a time of uncertainty for all, especially many white Yukoners. They feared that the benefits that would flow from the land claim agreements to Yukoners of First Nations ancestry would be at the expense of the benefits that non-First Nations Yukoners enjoyed. As the following observer describes, employment equity programs were regarded as an additional threat to the existing state of affairs:

> It was fascinating because I went around when we did the employment equity policy; we had sessions ...and the anger from a lot of people, even the women. It was unbelievable. What’s going to happen to my children? My children are not First Nations, they’re not going to-- you know, well they might as well just leave the territory and never come back. They won’t have any work. There was fear, there was anger, and we talked through it and talked about what was going on, talked about what had happened to some people in the past and what they had to go through and trying to establish-- why we had land claims agreements. You could calm people down a little bit but you knew that that’s all you had done, that all those feelings were still under the surface. (Participant G)

In 1989, YNTEP became the first employment equity education program (herein referred to as equity educational program) of its kind offered in the Yukon. As Elder Elijah Smith had emphasized at a press release announcing the program, it was not a “special” program but a fully recognized Bachelor of Education (Taylor, et al., 1993, p. 2). The program credentials were authorized by the University of Regina which provided the curriculum; approved any program changes; provided and monitored evaluation standards; approved the credentials of the instructors, and in the early years supplied several instructors. At the time the program began in 1989 there was only one teacher of
First Nation ancestry teaching in Yukon schools. Keeping this in mind, this next speaker explains her early experiences as an administrator in the north and describes the challenges teachers of First Nations ancestry faced to be recognized as bona fide teachers.

I had one woman [of First Nations ancestry] in Little Town who ended up subbing in our school who was from, I think Saskatchewan or Manitoba, and that [her presence] was considered to be quite remarkable. This was Little Town where a high percent of the kids were First Nations. So I’ve been around long enough to know that if we had continued the way we were going, we’d be sitting here today with very few First Nations teachers in our schools so somebody had to have the nerve to jump ahead, try to bring them in.

I think some of the resistance [to YNTEP] was based on the idea that it’s a local program; it can’t measure up to UBC, and so on. But I’ve always felt that there was a certain racist element to the way people looked at the YNTEP program. And that racism is rooted in this-- I don’t know where it comes from, but the idea that First Nations people can’t possibly measure up in areas like education and law and medicine or whatever their professions. (Participant F)

This speaker outlines three significant challenges presented to teachers of First Nations ancestry. First, that to be a teacher of First Nations ancestry is outside of the norm. Second, that little will change in hiring First Nations teachers without a deliberate effort to address this gap. Third, that teacher education provided off-campus and perceived to be outside of mainstream university programming is assumed to be of lesser quality.

Inherent in this discourse are the following conditions: teachers are predominantly white; white administrators control access to positions in schools, and quality teacher education is only possible when delivered within the ivory tower of universities. These are biases that invalidate meritocratic ideology, yet they remain unchallenged. Graduates of YNTEP recount examples where their credentials were discredited while complaints were made that teaching positions went undeservedly to First Nations graduates at the expense of white applicants. Expectations of deservingness, as Norman Daniels (1978) asserts, reveal that:
People who claim a right to a given job on the basis of their better qualifications are doing so because they have been led to form specific expectations about how society distributes social goods, such as desirable positions. (p. 215)

Protection of this superior status manifests in the common accusation that employment equity programming lacks academic rigor.

In the following, two graduates describe how they feel their abilities and the quality of their training is perceived in light of equity education programming:

The thing for me is and I went up against a lot of, because you’re native and you went through this program. People think you went the easy way to get a degree, and it’s not like that. … On my practicum I felt ostracized … that they’re thinking that because I went through this I am getting a free meal or a free ticket. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 38)

Another graduate had this to say:

The program has a lot of potential, but until all the stakeholders buy into that program with some amount of earnest, it will always be looked at as an affirmative action program rather than a program that produces first class teachers. Students are always carrying that monkey on their back, that it’s an affirmative action program and not that they hold an elementary teaching degree. And the system still doesn’t look at the graduates of that program as qualified teachers. (Macdonald, 2005, p. 38)

Similarly, a white participant acknowledged similar perceptions:

To go back to the YNTEP program, I think it fought against its reputation about the quality. There were certain assumptions made by people about what was going to be the quality of the people coming out of the program, and so that was hard for the graduates. (Participant G)

As these comments reveal, First Nations teachers are marked and marginalized in two ways, by racial identity and by their academic background. The perceptions as noted include: First Nations students require an easier program in order to be academically successful; a “free meal ticket” is provided which can mean that this education is free (it is unearned) or that jobs are guaranteed to graduates (also unearned); and educational programming associated with redressing systemic racism lacks academic rigor. By
implied comparison, the education of (white) southern-trained teachers is academically rigorous; teachers “earn” their credentials and “compete” for teaching positions. White teachers are meritorious and First Nations teachers are granted accommodation. Focusing credit/discredit on training and academic institutions is an attempt at depersonalizing racism. By attributing “the problem of inferior teaching ability” to the academic institution presents the problem as a structural one. This has far-reaching effect because it implicates any individual associated with equity education programming, in the past, present or future, as inadequately prepared.

**Individuality and Meritocracy**

To associate an individual’s ability with group affiliation contradicts a central principle of a meritocracy, that the individual is responsible for his or her success. Thompson (1984a) refers to this dismissive means of domination as “unification”, to compose individuals as a racial collective. Teachers of First Nations ancestry are composed by race as a collective and in the case of YNTEP graduates; their “special” training imposes on them yet another collective identity. The individuality of YNTEP graduates is compromised—and seriously compromised—by these two imposed identities: race and “special” training. Individuality and individual merit are the ideological foundations of a meritocracy, yet for racialized persons individual merit is difficult if not impossible to earn when their identity is bound to a collective, and where the collective is conceived as inferior. When a racialized individual is meritous dominant groups rationalize this as exceptional behaviour and take the individual for a racial outlier. Whites who defend a meritocracy as fair on these conditions must do so by
undermining one its tenets—the right to individual success—by denying individuality to racialized people in order to maintain group (racialized) affiliation.

**Legitimizing: The Burden of Proof**

Various studies on Aboriginal teacher education reveal that Aboriginal teachers feel an enormous burden of having to prove their ability beyond the normal expectations of other teachers (Macdonald, 2005; Nyce, 1990; St. Denis, 2011). The example which follows illustrates the extent to which one graduate felt responsible to prove her abilities as a teacher; and was also was required to do so. She describes her experience with white parents in her first teaching assignment in her home community. Even though one of the parents knew her as a classmate and a successful student, she felt that her abilities as a teacher were highly suspect prior to starting the position:

This mom and dad were willing to pull their kid out and I had gone to school with this father. They were willing to pull out their daughter and home-school because I was a YNTEP grad. But for some reason they gave me a chance and I taught their daughter. She never read at all in her life and I turned her onto reading and then the grandma came to the school and the grandma said it was my fault that they had to buy her books all the time, she was addicted to reading. I said, well I did my job then. And then they liked me, I proved to them. (Participant K)

The second speaker is a white participant who notes similar and widely held assumptions.

We heard it all. Was it just a Mickey Mouse program? Was it just a sop? We heard about it from the very start. The question of standards, questions about qualifications, if I had to get these grades to get into UBC, SFU ..... . How can they take people who are essentially untutored who do not have the same level of skills that I had to have to get into a program? We heard all that. What changed fairly dramatically was when graduates began to really prove themselves to be very solid teachers. (Participant C)

And further,

So the more YNTEP folks you get in there who are successful and integrate with the staff and become part of that school fabric, the greater the acceptability. The more the principals are willing to not only hire graduates but in fact seek them
out—we have actually got to that point now where we actually have principals who actively seek out YNTEP grads. (Participant C)

What is clear from the sampling on this topic is the requirement that teachers of First Nations ancestry must prove their worth and that the burden of proof lies with the individual, in keeping with meritorious principles. Whereas, white teachers are already considered legitimate through association with their dominant status racialized teachers come with discredited or suspect status and must earn legitimacy. Legitimacy is, in effect, not an endorsement that can be earned; rather it is granted by the authority of whites in keeping with their elevated status. Because of this status, whites as agents of domination, make the rules and set the standard for success in accordance with the status quo (Thompson, 1984a). As the next speaker suggests, professional representatives with the authority to “grant” legitimacy have recognizable credentials which represent specialized knowledge and acknowledged network endorsements, that is to say, the acquisition of key cultural and social capital. Though the first part of this next quote speaks to how new teachers in general are judged; it is followed by related commentary with specific reference to teachers of First Nations ancestry:

Teachers, particularly elementary, particularly primarily teachers are the toughest critics. If they think somebody is good you are admitted to the brotherhood, let’s face it is a sisterhood, but they watch. They watch and if you are not one of the ones that pulls your weight. You not only have your kids under control and they are learning and they come into the next grade and their skills are not up there that teacher is not considered to be particularly sterling but if you are teach whose kids are well managed they are hitting the academic marks you are also willing to schlep the books down to the book fair and be out on the play ground and help organize the field day. There is that kind of “well they are okay” but elementary teachers can be brutal on each other, just savage. (Participant C)

I think when experienced teachers began to take in YNTEP student teachers, particularly people like [name removed]. They took a young student teacher, like we all were once, struggling, not knowing what to do, and saying to the student, “let’s work on this”. Gradually those older [white] teachers began to say, “this kid
is going to be okay”. It was this familiarity because one thing I noticed when you look at the statistics of the people who were mentoring teachers, they were never just one-offs. … Some of these teachers took on this responsibility frequently and I think what happened was they saw that it was working out and then they took on someone else …. I think the familiarity of people, the comfort level, particularly from older teachers who were working with these young people—that kind of confidence—and it moved out to other schools. I think it created a greater sense of being willing to take on YNTEP students. (Participant C)

The speaker illustrates two very important roles of mentor teachers, their generous commitment as guides in the apprenticeship of student teachers and, in addition, the importance of their endorsement of “non-standard” teachers. What the speaker asserts is the requirement that additional endorsement of white teaching professionals was critical at the onset.

One First Nations study participant spoke to an important legitimizing event for YNTEP when, in 2006, a decision was made to declare a limited number (six) of seats in the program available to non-First Nations students. This participant welcomed this decision on the basis that “it gives credibility to my degree to be graduating with white students” (Participant N). Legitimization was also on the mind of Elder Elijah Smith at a press conference to announce the program start-up. He spoke about the anticipated challenges YNTEP graduates would face without recognizably equivalent credentials. His thoughts were captured by a participant at the press conference and later recalled:

[Elder Elijah Smith] admonished everyone present by stating that he did not want some easy second-rate program for his people. Referring to the RCMP Special Constable program, he stated, “I don’t want these teachers to have an easy program. I don’t want them to have to go back to university for extra training after they are teachers. I want a first class professional training for them. Make it hard but make it good. (Taylor et al, 1993, p.2)

The granting of legitimacy by whites relates specifically to an underlying doubt of ability that First Nations teachers experience from the beginning of their training through to
graduation and beyond. They must prove themselves because their abilities; their potential and their merit, are racially marked. What Elder Smith may not have realized at the time is that despite efforts to ensure a legitimate teacher education program equal to programs offered in southern universities, neither success nor quality is determined according to the program or the ability of the graduates but by the endorsement of the colonizer. To earn endorsement is an extensive and never-ending process for racialized people. Derrick Bell (1980) theorizes that when it comes to gaining racial equality, the process and the rate of advancement comes only when the interests of the racialized group converges with the interests of dominant whites. Concessions made are invariably cost-free to dominant whites, given incrementally, and without social disruption, much like the situation described in the above quotes. For example, as reported in chapter one of this study, the actual growth rate of First Nations teachers hired on average in Yukon schools since the first graduating class of 1996, is approximately is 0.5 percent. One may conclude from this that the hiring of a few First Nations teachers now and then is inconsequential—a cost-free concession—to the overall look and function of Yukon schools.

This next quote suggests a deeper level of legitimization, the extension of social acceptance, which is less often extended by whites within a professional relationship. This endorsement, as this next speaker suggests, is rare:

There was a moment when [Angie- YNTEP graduate] was at [school name removed]. [Tina- a veteran teacher] called out and said “Angie, are you coming to the quilting circle this afternoon”, and Angie said yes. When Tina figures out that Angie is not only good enough to be with the kids but wants her in the quilting circle I thought those were interesting moments in the development of teacher careers, that kind of level of acceptance. (Participant C)
The speaker recognizes this as a significant and humanizing form of acknowledgement and though it could be recognized as a critical development in race relations, it is still, however, acceptance on white terms. It is an example of “safe space”, which Leonardo and Porter (2010) describe as a mixed racial encounter that it is typically safe for whites and often a one-sided exchange or, in this case, a one-sided invitation from a dominant white individual to subordinate one. The more significant indication of racial acceptance would be if an invitation from Angie to Tina to a gathering of cultural importance would be reciprocated. Given that the reverse happens far less often, that is whites seldom engage in activities and events of importance to First Nations, indicates that these are not necessarily indications of a break-through in mutually beneficial social exchanges. Invitations are seldom reciprocal in mixed-race encounters as it is the privilege of the dominant to include the non-dominant, not the reverse. Rather, while acknowledging a more humanizing relationship with First Nations peoples, the fact of racialization suggests theirs is not a humanity that is equal to that which characterizes the dominant white population.

**Legitimizing and Land Claims: Sharing Power**

A number of white study participants believe that there is a recent positive trend in the hiring of YNTEP graduates as indication of a growing acceptance and interest in First Nations teachers. Though hiring statistics indicate otherwise, three influences fuel this belief. These beliefs are based on the assumptions that First Nations teachers have proven their worth; there is now a critical mass of YNTEP graduates teaching in Yukon schools which indicates evidence of this; and recently negotiated land claim agreements
have positively influenced First Nations interests in general. The following quote is representative of this perspective:

I think the big change came about when we began to get some the principals deliberately pursuing YNTEP graduates - that critical threshold of the number of graduates who are in the system working well. So, success breeds success. The more YNTEP folks you get in there who are successful and integrate with the staff and become part of that school fabric, the greater the acceptability.

I think particularly, and the two things go hand in hand, the greater visibility of First Nations people in the larger community which I think has come about as a result of land claims and economic development and so on and the greater presence of first Nations people in government and business and so on. I think that changes, so that First Nations teachers, though they are not as common as what they should be, there is a greater visibility and presence and just part of the overall fabric.

And,

What changed fairly dramatically were those who really proved themselves to be very solid teachers. (Participant C)

On first glance these observations appear to represent positive race relations discourse. There is acknowledgment of a shift toward hiring First Nations teachers and an appreciation for an increase in the political and economic involvement of First Nations in the larger community, resulting from recent land claim negotiations. It is, at the very least, a rare example of a liberal view seldom heard in the Yukon to which most, including First Nations, would recognize as racially conciliatory. Though this discourse may appear as tolerant and non-racist; as a tribute to the accomplishments of First Nations—this commentary includes a racial subtext. First, there is a need to normalize racial difference within an institution dominated by whites as described at the beginning of the excerpt: “I think the big change came about was when we began to get some the principals deliberately pursuing YNTEP graduates - that critical threshold of the number of graduates who are in the system working well.” Second, First Nations have gained
legitimacy by their visibility in dominant interests, that is, in political and economic realms. One might think that the presence of First Nations people was somehow a new phenomenon, implied by one speaker: “the greater visibility of First Nations people in the larger community… as a result of land claims and economic development”. Thirdly, whites are not responsible for the barriers of the past nor that it is a racist past rather “the big change” refers to what First Nations are currently engaged in. According to this commentary to be visible requires the acknowledgement of the larger (read: white) community. Greater participation in dominant economic/political structures depends on how close First Nations’ participation represents and engages in dominant interests. Finally, there is racist subtext in the statement: “What changed fairly dramatically were those who really proved themselves to be very solid teachers”. This discourse is deceptively commonplace as the commentary of an insightful sympathetic observer noting the progress of racialized others, yet the idea of race progress is handed out as, “not equal just yet”. Viewed from a critical race perspective “race progress” denies the conditions requiring this “progress” in the first place, namely, the exploitive colonial and racialized processes that are the genesis of marginalization. The very idea that whites see a need for racialized people to overcome, to progress, or to evolve, is a direct result of this history.

Leonardo (2004) claims that, “building a case for acceptance”, is perhaps the ultimate in white solipsism. Dominant whites create the rules for acceptance and do so in ways that are nebulous, conflicting, and unfair. Acceptance can never be met under colonial (unequal) conditions. To be fully acceptable, or to be equal as Fanon (1967) suggests is, ultimately, about being white. Thus, any successes on the part of Aboriginal
people toward acceptance will always be framed as evolutionary progress on the part of the under-developed. The colonizer will applaud with benevolence the “progress” that could no longer be ignored while still permitting the self-recognition as good whites. This progress toward mutuality will be controlled through the discourses of the colonizer, according to where and when, and the degree of legitimacy the colonizer bestows. These are not the conditions by which a just and fair society can operate, yet we are continuously exposed to, believe in, and repeat discourses of fairness as if it were so.

What makes meritocracy endure as a representation of fairness is its ideological roots in equitable principles. We are attracted by the myth of equitable principles even though these principles fail to materialize in practice. Regardless, the equitable principles which underwrite and legitimize a meritocracy still endure (Reyna, Henry, Korfmacher & Tucker, 2005). The fact that they apply, more or less, to dominant individuals over others is a biased endorsement. Equitable principles within a hierarchical social order cannot co-exist. We have learned from Bourdieu’s theory of cultural and social capital, from Brantlinger et al.’s work on middle-class mothers, and the theory of social closure; that those who have access to the greatest benefits of dominant status have a network of supports, specialized knowledge, and extra boosts along the way—well beyond the efforts and talents of the individual and beyond detection. The advantages that come to dominant individuals are hidden by well-honed legitimizing myths which veil unearned rewards while creating a false sense of fairness. On the other hand, extra support provided to bridge inequities, such as employment equity education programs targeting First Nations for example, receives detailed public scrutiny. These programs are
considered an extra boost which not only compromises merit but is provided at a cost to whites.

North Americans in general continue to believe in meritocracy as fair practice despite overt acts of discrimination which invalidate it (McNamee & Miller, 2004). This faith is due, in part, to what people want to believe to be true when they experience success; that achievement is earned “fair and square”. It is a compelling assumption yet can only exist along-side intentional historical amnesia which removes colonialism, capitalism, and paternalism from the context.

Thompson’s (1984a, 1984b) work on ideology and legitimization illustrates how ideologies operate to maintain relations of power. He describes the general conception of ideology as representing pure universal norms and values that are above a socio-historical context. As he suggests, it is as though what is legitimized as ideology could be perceived as independent of the processes which sustain relations of power.

The presentation of ideology as narrative is one means of constructing norms and values. The more powerful the “stories” of hopes, desires, and enterprise capturing the imagination, the more potent is the legitimacy. North Americans are raised on grand narratives—anyone can achieve what they set out to do—with supporting stories of nationhood and “true” citizenship. We are taught that meritocracy protects and guides the conditions for fair practices and that those who deserve the recognition of merit have earned it. These stories, as symbols of freedom and individuality, overwhelm the many realities that others experience and for whom they do not apply. As Thompson states, “stories are told which justify the exercise of power by those who possess it, situating these individuals within a tissue of tales that recapitulate the past and anticipate the
future” (p. 11). On-the-other hand, storytelling is also a central tenet to critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2009) and has numerous purposes including: countering master narratives and providing an authentic voice to racialized peoples. Storytelling is necessary in CRT because as Taylor (2009) claims, whites do not experience racialized oppression and therefore do not understand the realities of racialized people. Stories, such as those told here, may help bridge this gap.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have examined discourses and processes that attempt to justify meritocratic ideology as fair within a racialized social order. The need to be seen as fair is a central tenet of white racial domination. It allows white society to use ideology and master narratives imbued with potent “stories” of fairness, merit, effort and enterprise to serve in masking systems of power premised on white supremacy. These are narratives that many racialized groups have little access to. No matter how much apparent power, expertise or worthiness a racialized group may have –while a racialized order persists—white society will always have the trump card. This card is the right to define notions of legitimacy and dominance.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION
Learning to See—Questioning to Understand

This research is both personal and professional and somewhat auto-ethnographic. It contains a subtext that would reveal my own humbling and deeper understanding of white racial privilege and innocence of this privilege. More importantly, this work has revealed the ways in which racial innocence compromises my ability to recognize the underlying causes of racialization and inequality. Learning “to see” through a veil of naiveté requires training “critically”, learning what to look for. It reminds me of harvesting mossberries—a favourite late-summer pastime. Mossberries, also known as crowberry and by their Latin name, empetrum nigrum, are very small evergreen plants with dark indigo berries found in mossy, northern locations. They are difficult to see, especially when you are not attentive or when distracted by the much showier low-bush cranberries. To be successful at seeing mossberries requires getting close to the ground and allowing the eyes to adjust, as first the berries and then the plant come into the foreground of the forest floor. At times it seems to be more a process of the berries “showing themselves” than finding them. To locate these illusive plants in unfamiliar places requires locating the larger eco-system that supports them and then taking a closer look. I am always amazed at how obviously visible the berry patch is once found, yet how difficult it is to see before it registers in my vision. On a dedicated berry picking outing one might assume that the ability to locate good patches would improve with experience. This is not the necessarily the case.

I, like most white people, fail to see my own privilege, though I may catch a glimpse of it from time to time; this is an admission that would not surprise Peggy
McIntosh (1989) or Zeus Leonardo (2009) who remind us that whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege and therefore do not “see” what others on the receiving end of racism have not been able to avoid. Michael Kimmel (2003) recounts an exchange between two women: one white and one black to illustrate the invisibility/visibility of race as an everyday day experience. It is an exchange that grounds the challenges we must all face to gain understanding.

The black woman asked,

“When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, what do you see?”

“I see a woman,” replied the white woman.

“That’s precisely the problem,” responded the black woman. “I see a black woman. To me, race is visible every day, because race is how I am not privileged in our culture. Race is invisible to you, because it’s how you are privileged.”

Then, Michael Kimmel who was part of the group where this exchange took place, added:

“Well”, I said, “When I look in the mirror, I see a human being. I’m universally generalizable. As a middle-class man, I have no class, no race, and no gender. I’m the generic person!” (p. 3)

For most of my life I have believed in the adage that formal education is the great equalizer in society providing opportunities for advancement for anyone with ability regardless of class, race and gender; that formal education makes up for any questions. I, like so many others, want this to be true—that we are, as much as humanly possible, masters of our own destiny. It is easy for me to arrive at such a conclusion given the opportunities I have had to fulfill my dreams while still factoring in the usual disappointments that come to us and those of my own making. These disappointments often end up to be more like speed bumps than barriers. Yet the longer I observe the experiences of First Nations students and graduates of YNTEP in their interaction with
public schools—as an endless road of speed bumps—the clearer it has become: this is a different road and these challenges are too often not of this person's own making. Newly graduated First Nations teachers and new non-First Nations teachers present their potential to the profession under two opposing hiring conditions: First Nations teachers, more often than not, are taxed by a long list of unearned assumptions about their abilities, and white teachers are aided by a list of unearned assumptions. In keeping with one of the conclusions of St. Denis and Hampton (2002) from their review of the literature on *Racism and the Effects on Aboriginal Education*, this dissertation stands as further evidence to their determination that, “racism is not limited to a particular position in society but affects all Aboriginal and American Indian people involved in educational institutions… regardless of their academic success and/or social competence” (p. 18). The advantages of having the right cultural or social capital to success, as Bourdieu (1986) has theorized, becomes a far more complex consideration where racialization is concerned.

**Summary of the Arguments**

This study was undertaken on the theoretical assumptions and framework of critical race theory which recognizes that racism is a systemic, normal, and everyday experience and therefore difficult to identify and “cure”. And, as this study suggests, this system appears to resist the significant successes and efforts of racialized peoples.

Because racial inequality benefits white society, there is little incentive to change the structures and processes that perpetuate it. Moreover, the hierarchical structures and ideological processes of meritocracy that mask inequities as “lack of effort” or liberalist attempts to justify inequities as “cultural differences” are highly resistant to exposure. As
I have attempted to argue, such practices are embedded in hiring practices and evident in determining applicant selection according to the criteria of “best fit” and “suitably qualified”. I have suggested that these are unexamined “sorting” concepts and used at the discretion of a very select group of white professionals hiring for an institution still deeply rooted in colonialism and founded on the dissemination of western education.

The key mode of inquiry for this study is critical ethnography with a specific focus on critical race theory. The interviews and documents related to hiring teachers were analyzed using two interpretative frameworks: critical discourse analysis and institutional ethnography. These methods uncovered examples of power and hierarchical relations embedded in everyday discourses and reflected in the hiring policies and practices of Yukon schools.

Through this research it became apparent that hiring challenges experienced by YNTEP graduates, which calls into question their training or lack of experience—if true—are concerns that are not curable simply by better training or opportunities for teaching experience. These are not the real issues, but rather simple and convenient criticisms which mask a deep rooted structural rejection of First Nations teachers, as rejection “by design”, that is, according to a social order that is overwhelmed with ideologies, structures, and beliefs, that uphold racial superiority. It seems unlikely that racial inequality can be overcome within a hierarchical social order of this complexity without changing the order itself. As this study suggests, regardless of the potential formal education affords, the racialized other is positioned, at the very least, one step below. Without examining systems of oppression and ideologies of power evasion which serve white racial domination, remedies such as Indigenizing curriculum content or
cultural sensitivity training, will have little effect (Schick, 1998; St. Denis, 2011) in
creating the conditions that will take First Nations teachers to their rightful place, as
equals. Nor, as Jeannie Ludlow (2008) in reference to Audre Lorde’s commentary, The
Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, states:

> When we use the Master's tools (i.e., the tools of patriarchy [or colonialism]), we
> are reifying his authority, his ability to determine which tools are effective. Therefore, each act of “dismantling” also rebuilds his power. (September 24, 2008)

For Aboriginal peoples, formal education—a master's tool—though useful and necessary
to participate in most aspects of public education has its limitations for addressing
systemic change.

Dara Culhane (1998) reminds us that colonization has engendered enormous
costs, not only loss of identity, but loss of Indigenous rights requiring Aboriginal
Canadians to prove their right to exist as an identity and as self-determining nations in a
court of law. Fortunately the fight to regain these rights, at least in principle, was
eventually won by Yukon First Nations thirty years ago. Yet, despite a landmark land
claims process, Yukon First Nations are only just beginning to be recognized as
influential political entities in the Yukon. When it comes to social gains and shared
jurisdictions, public schools for example, are more likely to treat Yukon First Nations as
an unequal “partner”, a service recipient rather than a partner and participant in its design
and delivery. The position of service recipient is a subordinate one and reminiscent of
colonial practices. It maintains western knowledge in its esteemed position and, by
default, white educators as its authority. “Recipient” is also a subordinate position that
reconfirms the superiority of white educators as helpers of those who are less advanced
(Razack, 1998). First Nations teachers are caught in this lesser relationship and de-
legitimized as “real” teachers; relegated—at best—to the margins of their profession, as specialists in First Nations content or as role models to First Nations children. Teachers of First Nations ancestry, as non-standard examples of teachers, disrupt (perhaps merely by their presence) the identity of teacher as benefactor in a civilizer/native relationship thereby calling into question the formerly unquestioned identity of teacher as a racially superior white person.

A key tenet of critical race theory is the examination of institutions as systems embedded with inequalities. This was evident in data presented in chapter four of this document in the professional marginalization of First Nations teachers by their lack of presence in documents related to the recruiting, hiring and marketing of teachers. Yukon First Nations are visibly absent as teachers to be recruited or even desired. The one small exception to this general silence is the meaningless phrase sometimes included in a job related statement of qualifications: "knowledge of and sensitivity to the issues, needs and aspirations of Yukon First Nations". This non-descript, de-racialized, phrase removes any suggestion that Yukon schools should reflect the communities they serve. As Razack (1998) claims “if white teachers can learn the cultural rules we need not hire Black [First Nations] teachers, and we need not address racism” (p. 10). This is representative of colour-blind and denial thinking which continues to privilege white teachers; and in which, as a white western model of education rooted in a colonial enterprise, public education has not yielded lightly to non-dominant influences.

Participation in this study included a number of YNTEP graduates some with positive employment outcomes but not necessarily a positive experience of the hiring process. Although the parameters of this study did not replicate the Macdonald (2005)
study, it became clear that the hiring challenges and negative outcomes raised in this study have continued, though on a more complex level. This suggests that the nature of the challenges or likelihood of First Nations applicants encountering these challenges have not decreased significantly since the start of the program in 1989. In some cases, even where the teaching position emphasizes First Nations interests and knowledge, the position may still go to a white applicant.

In this study, the participation of white participants familiar with YNTEP and with a long standing involvement with public schools and to hiring teachers was invaluable. I anticipated that these study participants would have the most liberal views on the program and possibly have an anti-racist stance on hiring YNTEP graduates. I hoped that, given their long-standing involvement with public schools, they would have insights into possible changing attitudes towards teachers of First Nations ancestry. In addition, I expected to get some candid impressions of how First Nations teachers are viewed within the institution of schools. On several of these accounts I was not disappointed. My analysis of the viewpoints expressed by study participants is by no means a personal reflection on any individual. Rather each perspective reflects as I would expect—a racialized social order as normative, and as seen through the eyes of a privileged white educator, working and living in a racially mixed northern community. I recognized in our discussions my own struggles with seeing current and enduring manifestations colonization, seeing my own white privilege in these manifestations, and struggling with inadequate concepts and language that influence and also limit how I think about others.
Though I have long rejected the idea of biological differences based on race, I struggled throughout this project between two different expressions of cultural differences, one which is a deep manifestation of First Nations identity as expressed by individuals and part of an active cultural community, in which I, too, engage in from time to time. The other is a purposely constructed racialized construction fabricated to support white interests and from which I benefit. Engaging in this research provided me with opportunity to consider these as two very different expressions and with very different outcomes. The latter representing the deeply debilitating effects of racialization, and in particular the arrogance of white racial domination—as an exercise in de-humanizing everyone involved.

The hypothesis on which I began this research focused on the possibility that I might see actual evidence of how modern racialization operates; that its mystery is really just a veil—not all that hidden in actuality. Utilizing institutional ethnography, I looked for evidence of how racialization works in our systems, processes, and institutions. At a micro level, I examined racialization in daily social practices and everyday discourses and, on a macro scale, in ideology. It was not the characterization of racism as "racist" that I found, but the taken-for-granted daily expressions of inequality, racism as indifference, as denial, and—racism as best intentions. In these expressions of racialization, I have only just begun to recognize the patterns of knowing that constrain meaning, shape interpretation, and produce identities of difference in ways that structure inequality. Like many of life’s lessons I have learned with some humility that while such forces may be easier to recognize in others, we are most resistant to recognizing that which shapes us personally.
I began this study with the question of how is it possible that caring, encouraging and even supportive white educators continue to perpetuate racial inequities and white superiority without apparent recognition or intent. A key question I explored with study participants is: “What are the barriers that complicate the hiring of teachers of First Nations ancestry?” I was prepared to learn how these participants understand race, cultural differences, and the role of public education in perpetuating oppression, but I was not prepared to learn about my own racial “innocence” and the extent of my own colonized thinking. I could easily spot, as Leslie Roman (1997) describes, the benevolent white redeemer in others but I could not easily recognize it in me.

What of the racializing forces that are beyond the personal and the individual? If we consider racialization as having an historical purpose that changes according to the needs and context of the time, and following Winant’s (1997) concept of “racial projects”, we can see that processes of racialization develop over time in complexity and adaptability. For example, race was once crudely framed and expressed biologically, as naturally occurring; then later expressed as racialized regimes disguised as class or cultural differences. In many circles today race and racialization is denied through notions of de-racialization and colour-blindness. In its most current manifestation, racialization is expressed through neo-liberal discourse which challenges racism but not white supremacy. This current expression is misleading. It creates a false sense of racial awareness and because it appears as though there is, at last, acknowledgement of racial inequality we are distracted from the underlying issue of structural racism. Neo-liberal racism may appear more humanitarian; as a break-through in racial awareness—that may easily placate—should we think of racialization as simply a poorly thought-out ideology
no longer appropriate today. But, if we consider that racial projects are determined to address particular needs of the time, what appears as the more humanistic manifestation today requires a deeper, more critical examination. A critical examination recognizes the enduring construction of a hierarchical social order as one of inherent and embedded superiority with racial, gender and class formations created as supports. Winant (1997) claims that “the construction of whiteness was, and remains, for the development and maintenance of capitalist class rule” (p. 47). Protecting this interest allows privileged, liberally-minded whites to acknowledge racialization without necessarily exposing how white superiority is constructed.

Learning Through Critical Race Theory

As any storyteller would advise, it is important to connect the end of your story to its start. I begin by recalling the purpose of this research as:

*an examination in the ways in which hiring challenges encountered by First Nations teachers represent racial domination, as structural, and ideological processes.*

This study is about how inequality occurs; how it manifests in the policies and practices of institutions and at sites of access, such as in the hiring process. In addition, this study is about how policies and programs that are intended to redress inequality are easily discredited and dismissed in unequal power relations. My examination of this topic has led me *from* a study, intent on finding systemic traces of racial *inequalities* in policies, processes, and discourses, *to* finding systemic traces of racial *superiority*. This is a closely related but different paradigm revealing ways in which hiring teachers is structured, overtly intentional or not, to perpetuate the hiring of the status quo. It is also
about the subtle discourses of white racial innocence which rationalize and protect this bias.

As I entered into this research I was convinced of the importance of conducting research into public institutions from a critical race theoretical framework. I was particularly interested in institutions, such as schools, which present two conflicting purposes, as an institution which provides access to valued resources which support empowerment and as sites that reproduce racial injustices. Contradictions of this nature and magnitude became an important first point of entry into my inquiry and led me to the three major study themes on which this work is organized: fit, merit and racial innocence. As I began this work I found little that is, on first glance, overtly identifiable as deliberate racially biased practices. What was irrefutable, however, was the gap between stated intent and identified need and outcome. For example, I found ample legislation and policy to support equity hire but little in the way of realized outcome.

From this study and the Macdonald (2005) study, I found a long-standing practice of rejecting First Nations applicants on the basis of lack of teaching experience. This rationale reveals an obvious structural bias in the staffing protocol which invariably gives preference to non-Yukon applicants who have opportunity to gain teaching experience elsewhere, prior to applying to this area. First Nations applicants—who reside in the north, receive their training in the north, apply to teaching positions in the north and some to positions in their home community—are often denied an interview or denied consideration for an offer of hire due to lack of teaching experience. This indicates that teaching experience gained in southern Canada or a temporary teaching assignment in the Yukon trumps the staffing protocol, government employment equity policy and land
claims legislation, all of which contain provisions to support the hiring of First Nations in government positions and address under-representation. The frequency with which non-descript justifications are made based on lack of “fit”, or not “suitably qualified”, or lack of teaching experience to dismiss First Nations applicants, are all indications of processes which uphold the status quo.

In distilling my analysis of the three identified themes to their essence, I arrived at three fundamental conclusions:

- “fit” is a fundamentally flawed concept on which to base hiring because it privileges white teachers in relation to the hiring context—a western model of education;
- meritocracy (founded on unexamined notions of fairness) is an ideology that supports and rationalizes white racial domination. Hiring according to meritocratic principles conflicts ideologically with employment equity and undermines equitable hiring practices;
- a hierarchical social order based on race is reproduced by the norms of white racial dominance and in the assumptions that white educators are racially innocent. Innocence is a denial of this social order.

**Further Research Considerations**

This research study was limited in scope to new YNTEP applicants to teaching positions in Yukon schools and specifically to challenges experienced by new hires. It did not address the experiences of currently employed teachers of First Nations ancestry or the challenges they face in employment mobility (position transfer) in transferring between schools. Mobility was a concern noted in the Macdonald study particularly in the case of First Nations teachers who, after a number of years teaching in schools away from...
their families and having attempted numerous requests to transfer schools, felt compelled to resign from a permanent position to take a temporary position to be near their families.

The problem of employment mobility experienced by First Nations educators relates, I believe, to a second area of interest that emerged from this study, the racialization of space. There is limited but rich research on the geography of race; that is, a socially organized relation to space—locations where Aboriginal people belong in the eyes of dominant whites and geographies of exclusion; where they are considered outsiders. It is not uncommon to hear reference to Aboriginal people as at home in nature (bush environments) and out of their element in cities. The significance of First Nations space as it relates to the hiring of First Nations teachers was briefly noted in this study in relation to the staffing protocol. In the hiring of teachers, the general interpretation of this document places Yukon First Nations teachers in First Nations communities, that is, outside the urban centre of Whitehorse. The racialization of space, both physically and metaphorically, situates Yukon First Nations in “rural” locations (hinterlands). This is not unlike the placement of First Nations people at the margins of institutions and white power structures.

The discursive confining of Aboriginal people to non-urban space is a reenactment of what Razack (2002) describes as claiming urban centres as lands “transformed” by white settlers. The process of transforming these lands required displacement of Aboriginal people. As Razack describes,

In the national mythologies of such [colonial] societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land…. Europeans settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. (pp.1-2)
As she elaborates, this re-enactment and protection of white ownership creates space that is structured according to a racial hierarchy. So much about the racialization of Aboriginal people is about a metaphorically and geographically determined place at the margins of Canadian society, not unlike the way that First Nations teachers are marginalized in public schools or in the way that some principals assume that the staffing protocol does not apply to Whitehorse schools or to schools where the majority student population is white. Yet, this occurs despite the location of Whitehorse on traditional lands; despite the majority population of First Nations living in the Whitehorse and immediate surrounding areas; and despite a land claims process which identifies areas of shared jurisdiction. An overall purpose of the land claims settlement is to reverse the ghettoizing and isolation of First Nations space and First Nations interests by breaking down the segregation created by the Indian Act. This is a larger topic worthy of further discussion.

**Next Steps: Anti-racist Work—Educating for Partnerships**

We have learned through the efforts of many that anti-racist work requires courage. It is contentious, disturbing; it requires humility and trust, and it often fails to achieve its desired ends. Anti-racist work begins with an uncomfortable look at self-interest even though it is hard to believe that for many whites a lifetime and generations of benefits derived from racial privilege is impossible to not know on some level. Likewise, it is also hard to imagine that many racialized individuals fail to recognize race as a socially constructed concept, lacking biological evidence or recognize that their current successes, though substantial, will fall short of any true mark of equality. Do realizations of privilege and oppression encourage a new conversation to begin? I suggest
that this is not enough and that what is required is an historical accounting of oppressive regimes and especially those which relate to current postcolonial contexts; along with an accounting of the ways in which racialized individuals and supporters have actively worked to oppose racial oppression. Both histories are necessary to counter the oppressor/victim dichotomy and especially, as Leslie Roman (1997) cautions, the potential for dominant participants to employ a redemptive approach toward victims of oppression.

With regard to white privilege and racialization in the Yukon, attention is needed toward generating a deeper understanding of the negative effects of the Indian Act and in counter to this, significances of the Yukon First Nations land claims agreements for Yukon First Nations and for all Yukoners. Included in this is the need to generate understandings of the contribution of the land claims process to the overall political evolution of the Yukon as an important exercise in creating a new and shared narrative of Yukon’s political and economic future. In the case of those responsible for hiring teachers for Yukon schools, these understandings should precede the very recently implemented requirement of the Department of Education that principals provide written accounts justifying the rejection of a First Nations applicant.

Considering the current slogan of the Department of Education, “partnerships in education”, I propose that efforts be taken to construct a shared narrative for public schools called “Educating for Partnerships” as an exercise in anti-racist work. Partnerships do not happen without ongoing effort and they will not happen in an egalitarian sense without each party contributing to how this partnership is best shared.
School Hiring Practices: Recommendations from this Study

Authentic participation of Yukon First Nations interests in public education cannot happen without First Nations educators; there simply is no substitute. To this end I propose the following:

Recommendation #1

Yukon schools, regardless of their religious affiliation, language of instruction, or school demographics must make a committed and transparent effort to hire more Yukon First Nations teachers.

- School Growth Plans must include concrete and measureable commitments to the hiring First Nations teachers; including, addressing Yukon First Nations interests in education;

- The criteria for new teacher hires to move from probationary to permanent status must include active involvement in First Nations activities outside of school and demonstrated knowledge of Yukon land claims and self government agreements.

Recommendation #2

Hiring teachers must be by hiring committee and include First Nations representation; hiring cannot be the decision of one individual.

- Committee members receive training in equitable hiring practices
Recommendation #3

A condition of hire for principals includes knowledge of Yukon First Nations land claims and self-government agreements; anti-racist training, or at least Aboriginal studies, as part of their resume.

- Moving from a probationary position to permanency must include letters of community/First Nations support and examples of active involvement in First Nations activities outside of school.
- New and currently employed principals attend orientation sessions on employment equity sponsored by the Yukon Public Service Commission.

Recommendation #4

A hiring review committee consisting of representatives of the Yukon Public Service Commission, Department of Education, Yukon Teachers’ Association, Yukon Human Rights Commission and Council of Yukon First Nations must examine the hiring and recruiting processes for potential barriers and structural bias that undermine hiring First Nations teachers and principals.

- The Collective Agreement of the Yukon Teachers’ Association includes recognition and adherence to employment equity practices and recognize obligations to Yukon land claim agreements, particularly in regard to a representative public service.
Recommendation #5

The Department of Education report on hiring First Nations teachers in Report of the Representative Public Service Plans of the Public Service Commission, as required elsewhere in government; and as an obligation to Yukon land claims agreements.

Recommendation #6

The Government of Yukon establish an external tribunal to investigate complaints pertaining to violation of employment equity hiring principles in public schools.

Final Thoughts

My intent in this research is to bring to light the challenges that First Nations face in securing teaching positions in Yukon schools as a problem of some immediacy and urgency and to consider these challenges in light of a macro context of a racialized social order. This study required the theoretic lens of critical race theory to uncover and to name these challenges as a systemic problem of race and white supremacy. This aspect of the study—finding evidence of racialization—was sometimes challenging, not because it was necessarily hidden but due, in part, to the difficulty any researcher might face in working within as Leslie Roman (1997) reminds us, racist systems of knowing.

Ultimately, the upholding of racist systems and white racial dominance in public education undermines the ability of schools to engage the interests Yukon First Nations as fully legitimate partners. It compromises the intent of the land claims process with regard to education and representative hire and it limits First Nations engagement to superficial involvement. Authentic engagement, along with community involvement,
requires the everyday and ongoing contributions of teachers and administrators of First Nations ancestry.

We can look to history for examples of events and processes which aid in breaking down long-standing relations of power. One non-violent example is the truth and reconciliation process which promotes change through truth, forgiveness, and rebuilding together. Participants in this study recognize the land claims process is an important catalyst in a change process—one that should lead to greater involvement of First Nations in the political and economic fabric of the Yukon and working toward an inclusive social arena. As political and economic change are currently unfolding, I see government focus its efforts on making adjustments to their institutions and processes to “accommodate” Yukon First Nations interests rather than take the opportunity to reconstruct institutions together through a shared rebuilding process. This is how institutions and processes become inclusive by how they are designed—though a visible, tangible and shared change process. The concept of inclusivity is, however, not one limited to “cultural inclusivity” but reflects equitable principles of shared rights.

Well beyond the scope of this research—but inspired by it—I arrive at these concluding thoughts. All of us as Canadians need to examine the very core of public education and its potential to serve a diverse student body in an uncertain future. As we consider what we want for our children and the generations to follow, we must establish public education as an exploration in the diversity of knowledge for humanitarian purpose, rather than merely the reproduction of hegemony.


Annual Report Indian and Northern Affairs. (1978). Ottawa, Canada: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.


Byrne D., London, O., & Reeves, K. (1968). The effects of physical attractiveness, sex, and attitude similarity on interpersonal attraction. *Journal of Personality, 36*(2), 259-271. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.ep8935352


Tymchak, M. (2006). Innovation, determination, impact: The impact of NORTEP/PAC after 30 years. Saskatchewan, Canada: Centre for Northern Research & Graduate Studies Education.


Yukon Department of Education. (2007). *Yukon education reform project: Final report*. Whitehorse, Canada: Author


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Ethics Approval
DATE: July 7, 2009

TO: Lori Patterson Eastmure
    Box 10062
    Whithorse, Yukon Y1A 7A1

FROM: Dr. Bruce Proufe
      Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Examining Barriers and Challenges in Hiring of Aboriginal Teachers (7950809)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F) ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Proufe

cc: Dr. Carol Schrick – Faculty of Education

**supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 696-4775
Fax: (306) 696-4692
www.uregina.ca/research
APPENDIX B

Letter of Invitation
Letter of Consent
Letter of Invitation

Re: Ph. D. Research Study:
Examining Barriers and Challenges in Hiring of Aboriginal Teachers

Dear ............

I would like to invite you to participate in an ethnographic study of possible challenges or barriers in hiring faced by First Nations’ graduates of an aboriginal teacher education program. My purpose is to better understand challenges to hiring and improve the preparation of First Nations’ graduates for teaching positions. I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral research under the supervision of Dr. Carol Schick at the University of Regina (306) 585-5147. This research study has also received approval by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina.

Procedure

I plan to interview approximately fifteen people from several areas of interest to provide a broad view of hiring new teachers. These will include a number of graduates of the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, directors responsible for hiring for the Department of Education including several school principals and superintendents. I will also interview members of the Yukon Teachers’ Association. Interviews will take approximately 1 hour and will be recorded for review purposes only. Based on your preference the interviews can take place in your office or mine. You may also be asked to partake in a 1.5 hour focus group at a later date for the purpose of a group discussion on this topic. The suggested location for this gathering will be a meeting room at the Whitehorse Public Library.

Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Every effort will be made to conceal your identity. This will include the use pseudonyms rather than reference to employment positions and only the general location of the study will identified as in “northern Canada”. All information provided will be confidential and for the purposes of this research study only. Interview tapes, copies, and transcriptions will be destroyed after the required three year period.

Risks and Benefits
There are no known risks involved in this study, rather it is the intent of this study to better understand challenges to hiring and improve the preparation of First Nations' graduates for teaching positions. You may withdraw your participation at any time.

If you have any further questions regarding your participation, the results, or this study in general, please feel free to contact me. Please also confirm your willingness to participate in this study by telephone or by email by June 5, 2009. Your support is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lori Eastmure, Ph.D. Candidate
University of Regina
867.668.7795 (home)
leastmure@gmail.com
Consent Form

Possible Barriers and Challenges in the Hiring of Aboriginal Teachers

I am doing an ethnographic study examining possible challenges or barriers faced by First Nations’ graduates of an aboriginal teacher education program. This study forms part of my doctoral research.

Procedure

I plan to interview approximately fifteen people from several areas of interest to provide a broad view of hiring new teachers. These will include a number of graduates, directors responsible for hiring for the Department of Education including several school principals and superintendents. I will also interview members of the Yukon Teachers’ Association. I will interview you for approximately 1 hour and it can take place at your office or school or a location that you prefer. The interview will be recorded for my review only. You may also be asked to partake in a 1.5 hour focus group discussion on this topic.

Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Every effort will be made to conceal your identity. This will include the use pseudonyms rather than reference to employment positions and only the general location of the study will identified as in “northern Canada”. All information provided will be deemed confidential and for the purposes of this research study only. Interview tapes, copies, and transcriptions will be destroyed after the required three year period. This consent form will be stored separately from any interview documentation.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks involved in this study, rather it is the intent of this study to better understand challenges to hiring and improve the preparation of First Nations’ graduates for teaching positions.
If you have any further questions regarding your participation, the results, or this study in general, please feel free to contact me:

Lori Eastmure, Ph.D. Candidate
University of Regina
867.668.7795
leastmure@gmail.com

You may also contact:
Dr. Carol Schick, Ph.D. supervisor
(306) 585-5147.
Acknowledgement

I understand that:

by signing this consent form I have given Lori Eastmure permission to interview me on this topic according to the conditions outlined in the above.

I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as participants, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

I acknowledge that:

I have received a copy of this agreement.

________________________________  __________
Participant’ Name (please print)       Date

________________________________
Participant’s Signature

________________________________  __________
Researcher                          Date

________________________________
Researcher’s Signature
Discussion Topics for Participants

Interviewees will be asked to:

- describe the hiring process for new teachers as they know it
- identify key aspects of the process that they consider are critical to it as a fair process
- identify any potentially biased elements of the process.
- identify supporting legislation or policies that govern the hiring process (new teachers will not be asked this question).
- identify examples of challenges or benefits in the process for aboriginal applicants
- consider ways to better improve the preparation of new graduates for the hiring process
- consider ways the hiring process might be improved as a more equitable process for aboriginal applicants
APPENDIX C

Staffing Protocol
In anticipation of vacancies occurring in public schools, the following procedures will apply to posting and filling of those positions established by the Superintendent pursuant to the Education Act.

This Protocol reflects the Department's commitment to ensuring that First Nations teachers are given priority in hiring decisions.

TEACHERS:

Guidelines

Placement and Transfer of Indeterminate Teachers

1. First priority for placement is assigned to teachers being moved from schools being adjusted in size for reasons of enrollment, teachers returning from leave, teachers returning from assignments to the Department of Education and employer initiated transfers.

2. Notwithstanding the priorities stated in clause one above, transfer applications from:
   a) First Nations teachers who are in good standing with three or more years of continuous service in the same school who request a transfer to their traditional territory as defined in their First Nation Land Claims Final Agreement; and
   b) teachers in good standing with three or more years of continuous service in the same school;

are to be given preference over new hires, in the order listed in a) and b) above, where those transfer applicants are suitably qualified.

3. Indeterminate teachers may not apply for transfer into temporary positions unless there are circumstances which, at the discretion of the Superintendent, justify the reason for the transfer. It is the responsibility of the hiring Superintendent to determine which positions are to be designated temporary and advertised as such.
If no suitably qualified transfer candidate can be identified from existing indeterminate teaching staff members, the recruitment process for a new hire shall commence.

**Recruitment of Teachers (New Hires)**

4. Candidates who are suitably qualified for the position advertised will be considered in this order:
   a. First Nations candidates who apply to their traditional territory as defined in their Land Claims Final Agreement;
   b. First Nations candidates;
   c. Indeterminate Education Assistants, Remedial Tutors and Aboriginal Language Teachers in good standing with three or more years of continuous service in the same school;
   d. Temporary teachers;
   e. All other applicants.

**Recruitment Procedures**

1. The Superintendent shall review the staffing plan with the Principal.

2. The Teacher Recruitment Coordinator will ensure that the hire is within agreed to targets before advertising.

3. The hiring Principal, in consultation with the Teacher Recruitment Coordinator, is responsible for short-listing and interviewing teaching candidates.

4. A minimum of two reference checks must be conducted on every new teacher candidate being considered for a teaching position. It is the responsibility of the hiring Principal to ensure reference checks are completed and that the mandatory questions are asked.

5. Offers of Employment may be made by the Superintendent, Principal, or Teacher Recruitment Coordinator. The Coordinator is also responsible for completing the School-based Staff Appointment Form immediately upon receiving verbal acceptance of the offer.

6. The Teacher Recruitment Coordinator is responsible for advising successful candidates of:
   - the requirement to complete a Security Check with the RCMP;
   - the requirement for a Yukon Teaching Certificate and the possibility of additional required coursework to obtain a permanent Yukon Teaching Certificate;
   - the requirement to participate in an orientation seminar; and
   - staff housing availability.
7. The Principal shall provide the successful candidate general information concerning
details of the teaching assignment, local amenities in the communities, and other
pertinent information about the community and the teaching assignment.

**Advertising**

8. All postings will be open for a minimum of 48 hours.

9. Postings may be advertised locally, in which case, interviewing and relocation
expenses will not be available to applicants.

10. Postings may be advertised locally and nationally in which case interviewing and
relocation expenses will be available to applicants.

**PARAPROFESSIONALS**

**Guidelines**

*Remedial Tutors and Educational Assistants*

1. First priority on placement is assigned to permanent employees being moved from
schools for reasons of school support needs, enrollment, employees returning from
leave, and employer initiated transfers.

2. Candidates for indeterminate appointment as Education Assistants must be
graduates of the Educational Assistant Certificate Program, sponsored by the
Department of Education, or its equivalent.

**Procedures**

1. The Principal is responsible for short-listing and interviewing paraprofessional
candidates.

2. A minimum of two reference checks must be conducted on every new candidate
being considered for a paraprofessional position. It is the responsibility of the
Principal to ensure reference checks are completed and that the mandatory
questions are asked.

3. Offers of Employment are to be made by the Principal upon receiving approval from
the Teacher Recruitment Coordinator, who is also responsible for ensuring that the
hire is within agreed to targets before an offer is made. The Coordinator is also
responsible for completing the school-based staff appointment form immediately
upon receiving verbal acceptance of the offer.
4. The Principal is responsible for advising successful candidates of the requirement to complete a Security Check with the RCMP.

5. The Principal shall provide the successful candidate general information concerning details of the assignment and other pertinent information.

**Advertising for Remedial Tutor Positions**

6. All postings will be open for a minimum of 48 hours.

7. Remedial Tutor postings for positions in rural schools will be advertised in the local community with First Nations and Yukon Government offices, the post office, or any available local employment office.

**Advertising for Educational Assistants**

8. A general advertisement will be run twice annually to establish inventories of suitable candidates.

9. The applicant inventory will be maintained by the Special Programs division and will be made available to Principals as required.

10. Educational Assistant postings for positions in rural schools will be advertised in the local community in First Nations and Yukon Government offices, the post office, or any available local employment office.

**ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

**Guidelines**

Candidates must have an acceptable proficiency in the First Nation language of the traditional territory or the specific language offered in the school program.

Candidates for recruitment will be considered in the following order:
- a. Candidates who are employed in an Aboriginal language training position.
- b. Candidates who are enrolled with the Yukon Native Language Training Centre and are being trained in the First Nation language of the traditional territory or the specific language offered in the school program.
- c. All other candidates.

**Procedures**

1. The Principal is responsible for short-listing and interviewing of Aboriginal Language Teacher candidates. An Aboriginal Language Consultant and the local First Nation may be invited to participate in the selection process.
2. A minimum of two reference checks must be conducted on every new candidate being considered for an Aboriginal Language Teacher position. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure reference checks are completed and that the mandatory questions are asked.

3. Offers of employment are to be made by the Principal. The Teacher Recruitment Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the hire is within agreed to targets before an offer is made, and will complete the school-based staff appointment form immediately upon receiving verbal acceptance of the offer.

4. The Principal is responsible for advising successful candidates of the requirement to complete a Security Check with the RCMP.

5. The Principal is responsible for advising successful candidates that additional course work and training may be required.

6. The Principal shall provide the successful candidate general information concerning details of the assignment: local amenities in the communities, housing, and other pertinent information about the community and teaching assignment.

**Advertising**

7. All postings will be posted for a minimum of 48 hours.

8. Aboriginal Language Teacher positions may be advertised in the local community including First Nations, Yukon Government, the post office, and any available local employment office.
APPENDIX D

Employment Equity Policy, Government of Yukon
Overview
6. Employment Equity

OVERVIEW

The Yukon government is committed to developing a public service representative of the population it serves. Representation is defined not only by the number of people but also by their distribution at all levels of government, employment categories and occupational groups.

The Yukon government identifies four designated employment equity groups: women, persons of aboriginal ancestry, persons of Yukon First Nations ancestry, and people with disabilities.

Chapter 22.4 of the Umbrella Final Agreement also states that 'Where public service employment opportunities exist, Government shall assist in facilitating training and professional development of Yukon Indian People so that they will have access to such employment opportunities, with particular emphasis on increasing over a reasonable period of time the number of Yukon Indian People in technical, managerial and professional positions within the public service.'

Note ... Many of the following initiatives have been developed through the Representative Public Service Plan to honour our obligations under Land Claims and/or our Employment Equity policy.

DETAILS

The Workplace Diversity Employment Office (WDEO) was created to support efforts to make the Yukon public service representative of the people it serves. The Workplace
APPENDIX E

Chapter 22, Umbrella Final Agreement (1993)
CHAPTER 22 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEASURES

22.1.0 Objectives

22.1.1 The objectives of this chapter are as follows:

22.1.1.1 to provide Yukon Indian People with opportunities to participate in the Yukon economy;

22.1.1.2 to develop economic self-reliance for Yukon Indian People; and

22.1.1.3 to ensure that Yukon Indian People obtain economic benefits that flow directly from the Settlement Agreements.

22.4.0 Employment Opportunities

22.4.1 Where public service employment opportunities exist, Government shall assist in facilitating training and professional development of Yukon Indian People so that they will have access to such employment opportunities, with particular emphasis on increasing over a reasonable period of time the number of Yukon Indian People in technical, managerial and professional positions within the public service.

22.4.2 The Yukon and Yukon First Nations jointly shall explore ways to make apprenticeship programs more flexible, and to promote greater participation by Yukon Indian People in such programs, and shall examine other means of providing training for employment.

22.9.0 Implementation

22.9.1 A full and complete review of the effectiveness of the provisions of this chapter shall be carried out in the year 2010 by Government and the Yukon First Nations. If, after the review, the parties to the Umbrella Final Agreement agree that the objectives of this chapter have been met, the obligations of Government under this chapter shall cease commencing January 1, 2011. So long as these obligations remain in effect, a like review shall be carried out every five years thereafter.
APPENDIX F

Teaching in Yukon Schools
Teaching in Yukon Schools

The Yukon Department of Education is always interested in good teachers. We are seeking experienced and enthusiastic teachers who wish to live in the unparalleled beauty of Canada's northwest and who desire to work in a progressive jurisdiction. We want to hear from teachers with expertise in a variety of subject areas and from all Grade levels, K through 12.

Teachers who wish to apply to teach in one of the Yukon's 29 schools must hold or be eligible for certification in a Canadian province and be eligible for Yukon certification.

Yukon schools are modern and well-equipped and our classrooms are among the most 'connected' in North America. Most Yukon schools have multi-site, high speed internet access.

Yukon schools are set in a spectacular setting of mountains, forests and lakes. It is a place for the adventurous. Take a look inside. If you think you have the background and experience to meet the challenge of teaching in a rural setting, we invite you to apply.

Yukon provides a generous subsidy to assist successful applicants in moving to the territory.

Contact - Teacher Recruitment

Teacher Recruitment
Human Resources
Department of Education
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Canada Y1A 2C

Tel: (867) 667-8658
Toll Free (in Yukon): 1-800-661-0408, ask for 667-8658
APPENDIX G

Application Form
APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Please indicate how you wish to be addressed in any correspondence.

☐ Mr.  ☐ Ms.  ☐ Mrs.  ☐ Miss  ☐ Other __________________________

Name ___________________________________________________________ surname, first name, middle name

Mailing address __________________________ City ____________________

Territory/province __________________________ Postal code ____________

Home telephone __________________________ Work telephone ____________

E-mail __________________________________________ Summer telephone number ________________________________________

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

1. An applicant for a teaching position in the Yukon must:
   
   a) be eligible to obtain a valid teacher’s certificate from a provincial Department of Education;
   
   b) have the legal right to remain and work in Canada

2. Attach copies of:
   
   a) a current valid teaching certificate;
   
   b) complete transcripts of your university career;
   
   c) copies of current teacher evaluations or, in the case of beginning teachers, copies of teaching practicum evaluations

3. Certification for a teaching position in the Yukon will require completion of coursework relating to Northern Studies and Yukon First Nations.

4. Successful applicants will be required to undergo a security check.

5. For more information, or to submit your completed application form along with supporting documents, please contact:

   Teacher Recruitment Officer
   Department of Education
   Government of the Yukon
   Box 2703
   Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

   teacherrecruitment@gov.yk.ca  (867)667-8658  (867)667-5435 (fax)

On peut obtenir la version française sur demande.
TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Teacher certificate held: Province/Territory ___________________________ Type ___________________________

Interim [ ] (valid until) ___________________________ Permanent [ ] Number ___________________________

Please attach a copy of the certificate to this application.

EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diploma, degree or certificate</th>
<th>Date earned</th>
<th>Post-secondary institutions attended</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Please list your employment history as a teacher. Do not include teacher practica, internship or supply teaching.

Total years teaching experience ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teaching Assignment</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFEREES

Provide names, addresses and phone numbers of at least three referees. (Include most recent superintendents, principals or other relevant references).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Area code, telephone number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ASSIGNMENT PREFERENCES

Program Area: can you teach in the following areas:

1. English Program  
2. French immersion Program  
3. French First Language Program

Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Yes [ ] No [ ]

## TEACHING ASSIGNMENT

From the elementary and secondary teaching assignments listed below please indicate your choices in order of preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Teaching Assignment (One only for each choice)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Elementary Teaching Assignments, K-7

- Principal, K-7
- Vice Principal K-7
- Kindergarten
- Primary Core Subjects, 1-3
- Art, K-7
- Catechetical/Religious Education, K-7
- Counselling, K-7
- Early Intermediate Core Subjects, 4-7
- French first language, K-7
- French second language, K-7
- Library, K-7
- Music, K-7
- Physical education, K-7
- Reading Recovery™
- Special education, K-7

### Secondary Teaching Assignments, 8-12

- Principal, 8-12
- Vice Principal, 8-12
- Art, 8-12
- Automobile Mechanics, 8-12
- Band, 8-12
- Biology, 11-12
- Business, 8-12
- Career and Personal Planning, 8-12
- Catechetical/Religious Education, 8-12
- Chemistry, 11-12
- Computer Assisted Design, 8-12
- Counselling, 8-12
- Drama, 8-12
- English, 8-12
- English/Social Studies Core, 8-12
- Experiential education, 8-12
- French first language, 8-12
- French second language, 8-12
- General science, 8-12
- Home economics, 8-12
- Industrial arts, 8-12
- Information technology, 8-12
- Library, 8-12
- Mathematics, 8-12
- Math/Science Core, 8-9
- Mechanics, 8-12
- Music, 8-12
- Outdoor education, 8-12
- Physical education, 8-12
- Physics, 11-12
- Science, 8-12
- Social studies, 8-12
- Special education, 8-12

## LOCATION PREFERENCES

[ ] Rural only

[ ] Whitehorse only

[ ] No preference (either Whitehorse or rural)

Preference of rural community (optional)
PERSONAL

1. Have you the legal right to remain and work in Canada?  
   Yes □ No □

2. Have you ever been dismissed from employment? (If yes, provide details on a separate sheet).  
   Yes □ No □

3. Are you a First Nations candidate?  
   Yes □ No □
   If yes, what is your traditional territory? __________________________

ROMAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

To teach in the Catholic Schools of Whitehorse, candidates should be practicing Catholics with a commitment to excellence in Catholic education. A current Roman Catholic pastoral reference form and a Teacher Faith Letter form must be included with your application.

1. Are you prepared to teach the religious education program of the school?  
   Yes □ No □

2. Have you had any coursework in Catechetics?  
   Yes □ No □

DECLARATION

I certify that the contents of this application are accurate in every respect. I acknowledge that misrepresentation may lead to rejection of my application or cancellation of an appointment to the Public Service, or prosecution under the Canada Evidence Act.

____________________________________  __________________________
SIGNATURE  DATE

This information is being collected under the authority of the Education Act for the purpose of selection of candidates for employment. For further information about the collection of personal information, contact Director of Policy, Communications and Legislative Support, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6 or phone (867) 667-5605 or toll free 1-(800) 661-0408

Print Form  Clear Form
APPENDIX H

Sample Job Posting
The Yukon Department of Education invites applications for the following position:

Position:  Teacher
School:  Grey Mountain Primary School, Whitehorse
Assignment:  Counsellor and Teacher Librarian

FTE: .50

Start Date:  2010 08 30  End Date:  2011 06 17

Experience and Qualifications:
- Bachelor of Education or equivalent degree, with focus in primary/elementary education and post graduate coursework in Special Education;
- proven record of successful classroom teaching at the primary level, demonstrating opportunities to maximize student potential in an extensive range of classroom and/or special education teaching experiences;
- ability to develop, implement and evaluate appropriate Individual Education Plans and experience working collaboratively with staff in the implementation of individual Education Plans;
- experience (and/or training) in an elementary school library setting is an asset;
- training and/or experience in the delivery of literacy program initiatives is required;
- ability to apply a project-based approach to learning;
- experience in adapting curriculum to meet a range of learning abilities and styles;
- must be capable of teaching a very differentiated group of learners;
- a history of successful communication with students, parents, staff members and consultants;
- ability to work as a member of a team and willingness to participate in the total school program;
- knowledge of and sensitivity to the issues, needs and aspirations of Yukon First Nations.

Note: This is a temporary half-time position for the 2010/11 school year.

Applications and current resumes should be sent to:
Teacher Recruitment Officer
Department of Education
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Fax: (867) 667-6435
Email: TeacherRecruitment@gov.yk.ca