AN UNSETTLING JOURNEY: WHITE SETTLER WOMEN TEACHING TREATY IN SASKATCHEWAN

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Tamara Dawn Marie Smith, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *An Unsettling Journey: White Settler Women Teaching Treaty in Saskatchewan*, in an oral examination held on November 5, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

In 2008, Treaty education was mandated in every grade and every subject in Saskatchewan; this was done in an effort to increase understanding of the significance of the numbered treaties and honouring the promises made. Despite this mandate, many teachers remain ignorant to the monumental role that treaties played in the foundation of Canada and the importance of treaty education. Using Indigenous and narrative methodologies as a theoretical framework for my research, I conducted a multiple case study, including myself as a participant, which explores the experiences of white settler women who are engaged with learning and teaching about treaties.

I frame my research using the question, how have white settler women in Saskatchewan engaged with teaching treaties at the high school level and what may others learn from their experiences? I explore ignorance as an epistemological stance and the ways it functions in perpetuating myths about Canadian settlement, the foundation of Canada, and maintaining settlers' false sense of innocence in the oppression of Indigenous peoples. Through reflection on the experiences of my participants and myself, I seek to share my journey of learning to view myself as a white settler treaty person. It is my hope that other white settlers can learn from the experiences that I present and that a deeper understanding of treaties can help all Canadians work towards the familial, respectful relationships that were promised through the numbered treaties.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

At the school where I teach, there is a book of photography that sits seemingly innocently on a table in the staff room. The book is called *It’s Just Prairie Too* (Richardson, 2000) and the pages are filled with familiar images of the Canadian prairies—stunning sunsets, wildlife, wheat fields, and grain elevators. Near the front of the book, there is a dedication which reads “To the Prairie Pioneers: We appreciate the many trials and hardships they endured” (p.vii). There was a time, not so long ago, that I would have read this sentiment, looked at the beautiful photographs, and thought fondly and thankfully of my beautiful home and pioneer ancestors. Like many white settlers on the Canadian prairies, I grew up immersed in stories of pioneer strength, hard work, and determination (Sterzuk, 2011). I was indoctrinated in a settler-centric version of Canadian history, in a version of history that, like the images and words in this book, ignores the contributions and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. For too long, I believed that it was to the credit of the strength and resilience of pioneer settlers that I am now afforded a comfortable life of power and privilege, as a white-settler Canadian.

Today, I read the book with discerning eyes. I find myself questioning exactly who is the “we” that it refers to, and what about the “trials and hardships” of Indigenous peoples that were caused by the invasion of white settlers? I question why there is not even a single image in the book that acknowledges the presence of Indigenous peoples.

Over the past few years, I have embarked on a journey of both learning and unlearning. Through revisiting and re-reading Canadian history of settlement and the numbered treaties (agreements signed between First Nations and the British Crown), reflecting on my own experiences as a student and a teacher, and engaging with other
white settler women who are engaged in treaty education in Saskatchewan, I have come
to understand the significance of treaty education. Throughout my journey, I have
learned about the numbered treaties, a shared history of white settlers and Indigenous
peoples. I have learned a version of history that is neither widely known among white
settlers in Canada, nor widely taught in Canadian schools. I have also had to unlearn
many myths upheld and perpetuated by white-settler Canadians. Throughout my thesis, I
share the details of my journey—my experiences, the shared experiences of my
participants, and the insights that have helped me to reach a new understanding of what it
means to be a white settler treaty person on the Canadian prairies.

It is worth acknowledging that I consider my thesis to be settler-centric. I am
writing about white settler teachers and, for the most part, I hope to appeal to other white
settlers. I admit, I am cautious to confess my settler-centric stance, for fear that I will be
viewed as yet another white settler seeking to assuage my guilt without creating any real
change (Tuck and Yang, 2012). I acknowledge that my stance is contentious, but I will
show that it is also critical. I am confident that I have chosen a good path for me to
explore the complexities of a white settler teacher teaching treaty in Saskatchewan. I say
this with confidence because I consider the lack of teachers implementing treaty
education in Saskatchewan to be a settler problem (Epp 2008; Regan 2010). Roger Epp
(2008) argues for:

...rethinking the relationship, so that instead of posing the question about
reconciliation as a matter of what ‘they’ want—recognition, compensation,
land—and what ‘we’ can live with, the subject under closest scrutiny becomes
‘ourselves.’ In other words, the subject is not the ‘Indian problem,’ but the ‘settler problem.’ (p.126)

I believe that treaty education is a crucial element of Epp’s argument.

Settler Canadians can begin to understand their place and interests in the history of treaties and, consequently, begin to reconceptualise their understanding of Canada—past and present. Treaty education offers a counter-narrative that engages learners in seeing history and the present differently, seeing it in a way that presents an opportunity to think critically. Paulette Regan (2010) is cautiously hopeful, too:

To those who say that we cannot change the past, I say we can learn from it. We can better understand how a problematic mentality of benevolent paternalism became a rationale and justification for acquiring Indigenous lands and resources, and drove the creation of prescriptive education policies that ran counter to the treaty relationship. Equally important, we can explore how this mentality continues to influence Indigenous-settler relations today. Failing to do so will ensure that…Canada will create equally destructive policies and practices into the future. (p.4)

I agree with Regan and I believe that knowing our shared history can help Canadians be informed about our current realities. Treaty education helps Canadians to gain a historical context for contemporary realities and can play a significant role in helping us re-learn, or think differently, about our history. It creates a space for knowledges that challenge white settler Canadians to rethink the relationships between settlers and Indigenous
peoples. We can begin to solve ‘the settler problem’ by engaging settlers in thinking about the significance of treaties and of being a treaty person.

In this chapter, I provide working definitions of terms I consider essential to understanding the central argument of my thesis; situate myself as a qualitative researcher; introduce the research question and objectives; and finally, situate my research in the context of the place where I work and live. To begin, the terms I have chosen to define have multiple meanings, depending on context, so to avoid inadvertent misunderstanding I will clarify what I mean by pertinent terms in use.

Definition of Terms

For the benefit of readers, I wish to provide clarification of several terms that I use throughout my thesis. They appear below in order of relative significance. I use the terms intentionally and acquiring a basic understanding of these terms is foundational for comprehending my thesis.

*Treaty education:* Treaty education is defined according to the categories of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner’s treaty essential learnings—the treaties; the treaty relationship; the historical context of treaties; worldviews; symbolism in treaty-making; and contemporary treaty education (2008, p.8)—and the Ministry’s Treaty Education Outcomes (2013). Treaty education requires re-telling the history of Canada from a First Nations’ perspective and deliberately disrupts the colonial myths and dominant, white settler narratives about Canada past and present. Treaty education is not merely teaching facts and dates.
OTC: The Office of the Treaty Commissioner “was created by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Government of Canada to facilitate treaty discussions between the Government of Canada and the First Nations” (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008, p.64). The OTC education staff also work with educators to help implement the treaty education mandate, through resources and training.

Treaty/Treaties: In Compact, Contract, and Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada (2009), J.R. Miller provides an extensive account of treaties in Canada. Broadly speaking, treaties in Canada include more than the numbered treaties. However, for the purpose of my research, reference to treaties or signing treaty will be made specifically to the numbered treaties in Canada. The numbered treaties were “signed between 1871 and 1921, each numbered 1 to 11, throughout the North and West. All contained some rights conferred on Indians, such as reserves and annuities, and in return the First Nations agreed to share vast tracts of land” (OTC, 2008, p.64). I will also use the term treaty, as does the OTC, to mean “solemn agreements between two or more nations that create mutually binding obligations” (p.66).

White settler: As defined by Hartwell Moore (ed.) in the Encyclopaedia of Race and Racism (2008), “The term white settler society refers to a group of societies that sprang up as a result of the great European expansion into other regions of the globe from the late fifteenth century onward.” Relating to treaty education, Jennifer Tupper & Michael Cappello (2008); Tupper (2011, 2012) and Epp (2008) write about the problematic and oppressive practices associated with maintaining white settler identities and the potential of treaty education to disrupt these dominant discourses. Specifically, Tupper asserts “rather than understanding the history of European settlement as one of
invasion of the land, made possible by the signing of the numbered treaties in the first place, students come to read the ‘foundational’ story of Canada as the resilience and strength of the pioneer homesteader [or settler] in the face of adversity” (2011, p.5).

Recognizing that not all settlers are white, my use of the term refers to people that are not Indigenous to the lands known as Canada and who identify themselves as white.

**Aboriginal:** The term refers to “The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America...[the] three groups of Aboriginal people — Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and OTC, 2008, p.60).

**Indigenous:** Primarily, the term is used in reference to research methodology; however, the OTC defines indigenous people as “all inhabitants indigenous to their lands and territories, and their descendants; native or belonging naturally to a place; of, pertaining to, or concerned with the aboriginal inhabitants of a region” (2008, p.63). I intentionally use the word indigenous when I emphasize the fact the Indigenous peoples were the original inhabitants of these lands, and when the terms Aboriginal or First Nations do not accurately capture what I intend to convey.

**First Nations:** The OTC defines First Nations as “a collective term used to refer to the original peoples of North America” but states that “it is important to note that there are many different First Nations, each with their own culture, language and territory” (2008, p.60). I use this term to identify status and non-status Indian peoples, which are
groups distinct from Métis and Inuit. In the resources developed and distributed by the OTC the term First Nations is used.

*Discourse:* I use the term to mean more than just the language we use. I look to Foucault to inform my understanding and define discourse as

…ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Foucault in Weedon, 1987, p. 108).

*Colonial blind:* Borrowed from Dolores Calderón (2011), “Colonial-blind is a play on the concept colorblind…” (p.110). She argues that it differs from the concept of colorblindness because the discourses of colonial blindness are even more deeply ingrained in settler ideology than those of colorblindness:

colonial blind discourses have a much longer history of institutionalization...

[which] can be traced back to the colonial origins of European expansion and the nation-building process…it is harder for many to ‘see’ or acknowledge that they are engaging in these types of discourses as they have been normalized for so long…(p.110).

The concept of colorblindness does not reflect a critical anti-racist stance.

Colorblindness is a concept used to falsely claim anti-racism. People will proclaim that they do not see color and, because they do not see colour, they cannot be racist and they
treat everyone the same. This concept has many negative affects because it silences the fact that color exists and that it does, unfortunately, have an influence on how one experiences the world. Colonial blindness represents settlers’ refusal to see colonial discourses and recognize the advantages which accrue to them as a result. I also wish to trouble the use of the term ‘blind’ in the discourses described above. Using the term ‘blind’ in this way reflect ablest language and discourses. In no way do I intend to perpetuate ablest discourse. However, the terms are recognizable and I use them to point to the discourses that the terms colour blind and colonial blind describe.

*Reserve:* In Saskatchewan, the term First Nation is sometimes used interchangeably with the word reserve. A reserve is “a tract of land, the legal title of which is held by the Crown, set apart for use and benefit of an Indian band” and “some Indian peoples have also adopted the term ‘First Nation’ to replace the word ‘band’ in the name of their community” (Regina Public Schools, 2010, p. 6-7).

Although I have briefly introduced the terms at this point for the purpose of clarity, in the literature review I explain the significance of the ideas represented by these terms in greater detail.

**Situating Myself**

Neal McLeod (2007) writes that Cree narratives often start by stating “‘namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân’ (‘I do not know very much’)” (p.16). These words are an acknowledgement that one person cannot be all-knowing and furthermore, can only know and understand the world from their perspective. I wish to begin my thesis, the sharing of my personal story, by stating that I am not all knowing. I do not consider myself an
expert in teaching treaties. Despite having completed this research, I am not even sure what expertise in this area is or whether it is attainable. Rather, in regard to treaties and treaty education, I wish to position myself as informed, always eager to learn more, and keenly interested in encouraging others around me including friends, family, colleagues, and students, to think deeply about what it means to be a treaty person in Canada. Throughout the process of working on my thesis, I have come to think of learning about treaties and treaty education as a learning journey. As I understand, it is a journey that I will continue on for the rest of my life and one that I started on many years ago.

In 2007, I began my teaching career with an appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives and content in the field of education; this developed into a keen interest in deconstructing the Eurocentric curriculum and content which is predominantly presented in the schools that I have worked in. The origin of my interest can be traced to high schools where, as a student, I opted to take Native Studies instead of social studies. My interest became a passion during my post-secondary studies. In my undergraduate education program at the University of Regina, as a social studies minor, I chose courses centred on Indigenous histories and knowledges as electives and consequently, developed what I thought was a foundation of understanding related to the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In an English Postcolonial Literature class, I chose to analyze two popular social studies text books that at the time were commonly in use at the high school level in Regina. As I suspected, the representation of Aboriginal and First Nations people and history was minimal and did not provide a just representation of these peoples in the landscape of official Canadian history.
In Saskatchewan, where I was born and raised, there is a high population of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples. Given my context of Saskatchewan, it seemed natural to me to privilege Aboriginal content and perspectives. In the 2006 census, Saskatchewan had the second highest percentage of people identified as Aboriginal in the country (14.88 percent) and the largest age group among them were youth (47.02 percent were aged zero to nineteen) (Statistics Canada). Many of the students that I teach are Aboriginal and First Nations. Regardless of the numbers of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples in my province or students in my class, it is my belief that all people benefit from learning multiple perspectives and knowledges because in so doing, our understanding of and respect for each other increase. In relation to treaty education specifically, Saskatchewan is “...a province that was entirely ceded through treaties [and] it seems logical, even common sense, to expect students to leave school with knowledge of the historical and contemporary importance of treaties” (Tupper & Cappello, 2008, p.560). Despite the understandings and awareness that I brought into my teaching career, I now see that my journey in learning about treaties and their importance, specifically in education, truly began in earnest when I decided to mentor an intern teacher from the University of Regina for the first time, in the fall of 2011.

At the completion of internship (a five month intern teacher practicum), the teacher must complete a comprehensive evaluation form called the Internship Placement Profile (IPP). One of the criteria for evaluation on the IPP specifies the implementation of treaty education. In the section on instructional competence, the third criterion is “provides treaty education” (University of Regina, 2011, p.135). Specifically, in the supporting document, the descriptor for the criteria under the ‘outstanding’ rating states
“Knows Treaty Education is a requirement and demonstrates an understanding of why it is a curriculum requirement. Consistently integrates Treaty Education content across all instructional competencies” (p.135). Initially, I was critical of the item on the IPP and I questioned why the focus was only on treaty peoples. Due to my exposure to critical theory in graduate studies, at first I thought that a focus on treaty peoples necessarily excluded non-status or Métis content and perspectives. Despite having been trained to look for ‘what is not there,’ I recognized through that troubling that I was unaware of the reason for the inclusion of the criteria. I was curious and started to investigate.

It was only then that I learned that treaty education was mandated by the Saskatchewan government in 2008 and that “Under the new agreement, every student in the province [would] be educated about the true meaning of the treaties and what it means to be treaty people” (“Sask. Launches,” 2008). I was surprised that I did not know about this, particularly considering my eagerness to privilege Aboriginal and First Nations’ content. As well, both the school division where I teach and the city where I have spent my entire life are located in Treaty Four territory. Prior to beginning my investigation of the IPP treaty education item, I had no idea that I was living in Treaty Four territory or what that meant for me, as a white settler or as a teacher. Also, at this point in my life, I did not refer to or think of myself as a white settler. (I will discuss how I came to think of myself as a white settler in greater detail in chapter five.) To make my situation even more ironic, in my first year of teaching, the year that treaty education was mandated, I had a large role in a professional learning community centred on the inclusion of Aboriginal and First Nations’ content. All schools where I have taught have had high populations of Aboriginal peoples. How was it that I did not know about the
2008 treaty education mandate? I felt ignorant. I was ignorant. It was difficult for me to understand how something so monumental as to be mandated by the government—something that I consider important to me, my students, and the way I teach—was unknown to me. From that point forward, I became immersed in discovering what this meant for me as a classroom teacher and as a treaty person.

One might argue that my early interests and curiosities naturally led me to select treaty education as the topic for my thesis research work; however, I am able to isolate a particular moment at which I resolved that treaty education had to be my thesis topic. It happened when I overheard a comment made by a colleague of mine when discussing treaty education: “we gave them the right to their land.” I was surprised and infuriated. The colonial discourses evident in that statement further ignited my interest in learning about treaty education. I did not agree that settlers were in any position to give rights to land that had been inhabited by Indigenous peoples long before we invaded. What authority gave settlers that power? How were settlers being positioned if treaties were taught using this language? I wondered if treaties were being taught using colonial, Eurocentric discourses. I looked to my context, a large, urban high school and saw that I was far from alone in my ignorance of treaties and treaty education. My school, in particular, had no treaty catalyst teacher (a term describing a level of professional development/training, as defined and offered by the OTC) because she was on leave and it seemed my principal did not appoint a replacement. I hunted for my school treaty kit (ironically, a big white box filled with resources provided by the OTC) which I found abandoned in a dusty corner of the library’s professional resources section. It is well known amongst teachers that we are pressured to develop professionally in multiple
ways, often in response to pressures from within and without the organization. There is a long list of initiatives that teachers are required to take up, which are issued by several authorities including the Ministry of Education, the school divisions, and each school’s internal leadership. I began to wonder why it seemed that treaty education was languishing. As a teacher who had become engaged in treaty education, I also started to question what it meant and what it would look like for me to meaningfully implement the mandate and teach treaties. This has led me to engage in an exploration of other high school teachers’ experiences with engaging in treaty education.

Research Question and Purpose

Initially, my thoughts around developing a research question were focused on what I saw as failures, such as why teachers had not taken up treaty education and how those who had were not being effective. To uncover failed attempts at treaty education would not have been a challenging, much less edifying, research experience. But, the more I thought about it and discussed it with my supervisor, the more I started to focus on the successes, such as teachers who are engaged in treaty education, who were possibly following a path similar to my own journey. Not only is the focus on successes more ethical, when it comes to representing my colleagues and research participants, I also believe that it has more potential to influence other teachers in a good way. I sincerely believe that most teachers who have failed to implement treaty education are not consciously and intentionally ignorant, but this does not mean that they are innocent. Intentions are not enough to support innocence. The ‘good intentions’ of white settlers have caused many wrongs in the past. I believe that, regardless of intentions, not engaging in treaty education is strategically ignorant and not at all innocent. I will
explain my reasoning in greater detail in the coming chapters. The words of postcolonial theorist Edward Said, “…when one belongs to the more powerful side in the imperial and colonial encounter, it is quite possible to overlook, forget, or ignore the unpleasant aspects of what went on ‘out there’” (1993, p. 130) accounts to some extent for the reluctance that I have perceived. Through my research, I have come to see that a part of their reluctance and resistance is related to epistemologies of ignorance, a theory that explains how ignorance is produced and maintained (which I explore in detail later in this chapter). Specifically, I have come to understand that the concept of colonial blindness plays a substantial role in the production and maintenance of white settler ignorance. Calderón (2011) describes it as a “configuration of interest” (p.4) and asserts that “These configurations of interest more than promote miseducation, they promote a gap in knowledge, a blind-spot, and are more suitably identified as colonial blind discourses…” (p.112). White settlers maintain and produce the discourses of colonial blindness, and the reluctance to meaningfully engage in treaty education is impacted by this blindness.

The experiences that I present later in this research are not meant to be exemplars or models for ‘how to’ implement treaty education. Rather, I present them as examples of experiences, or cases, which have the potential to help others learn and reflect on their own teaching practices. I present them as cases because "those who write about the ability of cases to foster reflection argue that cases stimulate learning from experience—whether it is from their own experience or the experiences of others" (Lundeberg, Levin, & Harrington, 1999, p.xiii). My research findings present experiences of white settler women implementing treaty education and I hope that they can help others learn from the experiences presented.
After much discussion with my committee, I narrowed my question to “How have white-settler women in Saskatchewan engaged with teaching treaties at the high school level and what may others learn from their experiences?” The purpose of this study is to gain insights into a selected group of Saskatchewan high school teachers’ experiences with implementing the 2008 mandated of treaty education.

Situating the Research

In qualitative research it is important to situate not only myself as a researcher, but also the research itself. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), argue that "context is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing" (p.32). To make sense of how my participants and I experience teaching and learning about treaties, it is necessary to understand both the educational and political contexts in which this research occurred.

Let me begin by describing the current model of education in the public school division, in Regina, Saskatchewan. Although education is constantly evolving and much has changed in recent years, my experiences teaching in the Regina Public School Division have taught me that the educational environment in this division is often not one in which treaty education is understood, or valued. I will discuss the lack of treaty knowledge or understanding in detail in my literature review in chapter two, as well as in chapter four where I discuss my findings. For now, I will point out that Saskatchewan is generally stuck in a celebratory multicultural model of education. Verna St. Denis (2011) argues that “…multiculturalism is a form of colonialism and works to distract from the recognition or redress of Indigenous rights” (p.308). In other words, “multiculturalism
diminishes the importance and need for Aboriginal content and perspectives” (p.313). Discourses of multicultural education construct “public education as a neutral multicultural space” (p.306). These discourses are used as rationale for discrediting Aboriginal peoples’ unique perspectives and positioning in Canada. I have heard multiculturalism used as rationale for the rejection of including Aboriginal content in schools, “but what about the many other cultures we have in Canada?”; or, as St. Denis quotes a participant involved in a provincial discussion of social studies curriculum, “Aboriginal people are not the only people here” (p.306). This reliance on multicultural discourses ignores the fact that Indigenous peoples have unique rights and a unique position in Canada (St. Denis, 2011; Epp, 2008; Miller 2009; Mackey 2002). Similarly, Calderón (2011) refers to this model of education as normative multicultural education (p.115) and argues that it “…is informed by colonial blind discourses” and “…promotes epistemologies of ignorance” (p.116). Treaty education presents curriculum that transcends multiculturalism and colonial blind discourses.

At the time that my research question was developing, a momentous political movement began in Canada which affected the political climate, with regard to treaties, in which my research took place. Idle No More emerged as a grassroots Indigenous political movement in the winter of 2012 which I believe resulted in a drastic increase in the talk of treaty and treaty rights. One indicator of the increased interest can be gauged by the use of the Twitter hashtag #idlenomore. I do not intend to go into great detail about the genesis and influence of the movement, as this topic is sufficient to warrant an entire thesis in itself. Wab Kinew, who delivered the James Minifie Memorial lecture, March 19, 2013, at the University of Regina, asserted that “…Indigenous people from
coast to coast were standing up for the environment, for treaties and for their children” (p.9) and many non-Indigenous peoples—myself included—stood in unity with them. Again in the words of Kinew, “The ideological underpinning of this movement challenges many of the assumptions that we make about Canada: that this country is free of institutional racism; that Indigenous people gave up their lands; that natural resources belong to the provinces” (p.14). The movement opened up space for people to talk about treaties and to question the myths and assumptions that Canada is founded upon. It opened a dialogue about honouring treaty promises and, during the winter of 2012, many Canadians were talking and thinking about Idle No More. In my own school, for instance, a teacher Kim Sadowsky helped organize a class to sign a petition urging the School Board to have the Treaty Four flag raised outside the Regina Public Schools board office. The students collected signatures and a few months later, at a board meeting, the motion was unanimously passed. On October 15, 2013 a group of board members, Elders, and students officially raised the flag and “The Treaty Four flag now flies beside the Canadian flag at the School Division office” (Treaty Four Flag http://www.rbe.sk.ca/news/2013/10/treaty-four-flag-flies-school-division-office). I was in the middle of data collection during the winter that Idle No More ignited which truly gave me a sense that the work I was doing was important and impeccably well timed.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

My research question, “How have white-settler women in Saskatchewan engaged with teaching treaties at the high school level and what may others learn from their experiences?” developed out of my interest in my own ignorance and my aspiration to learn and engage in teaching treaty. Several main ideas and concepts inform my research question. Despite the 2008 mandate, treaty education has been largely erased and ignored in narratives of Canadian history and how that history is—or is not—taught in schools. I urge teachers to journey towards criticality, if they hope to change this. Using critical pedagogy as a foundation for my analysis, I explore how ignorance as an epistemological position, and colonial blindness play a role in why the mandate for treaty education has not been meaningfully enacted by all teachers in Saskatchewan.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a brief overview of the history of the numbered treaties in Canada. Then, I discuss critical pedagogy, epistemologies of ignorance, and the role of colonial blindness. It was important for me to gain an understanding of the history of the numbered treaties. Although treaty education involves much more than a historical recount of the numbered treaties, this part of treaty history is necessary to understand the historical context of treaty making and the relationships that settlers and Indigenous people were developing during that time. I then explain the ways that critical pedagogy informs my approach to and understanding of treaty education, as well as the ways that I have taken it up teaching treaties in my classroom. I conclude the chapter with an exploration of epistemologies of ignorance and of colonial blindness in the production and maintenance of ignorance in settler contexts. My initial research interest in treaty education was sparked by the humbling astonishment...
at my own ignorance. As I mentioned earlier, I struggled to understand how I could be so ignorant of treaties and how my ignorance was constructed. My study of epistemologies of ignorance has enhanced my understanding of why treaty education appears to be largely dismissed or resisted by white settler teachers in Saskatchewan, despite the 2008 mandate to teach it at all grade levels and in all subject areas.

**Beginning my Journey: Learning Treaty Education**

I began my personal engagement with treaty education by learning from and about the OTC. The OTC is important to explore as a part of my thesis for several reasons. I studied and engaged with the OTC as part of my preparation for my research. It is the foundation of the Ministry of Education’s mandate and the source of most widely used resources to implement treaty education in Saskatchewan schools. The OTC is a catalyst for many teachers who engage in treaty education. It was also essential to me in my preparation for my research. Many sources have guided me in my quest to better understand treaties, but one of the most poignant was my experience at a summer workshop offered by the OTC and the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, in August 2012. It helped me understand the important role of the OTC and begin to understand the history of treaties. A part of the mission statement on their website states that “The OTC is committed to engaging in public information and public awareness programming to educate and advance good relations among all the peoples of Saskatchewan on Treaty issues” (OTC, http://www.otc.ca/About_Us/). Attending this workshop not only helped me understand the treaties, but also the aims of the OTC and how the OTC is leading the implementation of teaching treaties in education, even on a national level. Saskatchewan is the only province, so far, to mandate treaty education. In addition, I learned about the
Treaty Essential Learnings (TELs), including the treaties; the treaty relationship; the historical context of treaties; worldviews; symbolism in treaty making; contemporary treaty issues (OTC, 2008, p.8). All of which helped expand my understanding of treaty education, to realize that it is so much more than facts.

Before I began this journey, my knowledge of treaties was extremely limited. I conceptualized treaties only as dates, names, and facts associated with dry legal documents. Since then, I have come to understand that learning and teaching about treaties involves an understanding of many complex concepts, including the historical relationships between settlers and Aboriginal peoples; the European and Aboriginal worldviews, as well as perspectives of, motives for, and interpretations of treaties; and how the treaty promises were (or were not) implemented. What I offer here is a brief summary of what I have learned. Entire books have been written about each topic so I offer a summary to establish the context of the research. It is a long and complex history. However, coming to appreciate each of these histories can help white settlers begin to develop an understanding of treaties.

The historical relationships between Aboriginals and settlers that were established prior to signing treaties had an impact on how the two peoples interacted during the treaty process. Although Eva Mackey (2002) was referencing the development of a nation in particular, her comments below apply to the entire history of the relationships; the treatment of Aboriginal people changed depending on the needs of the colonizer. As she aptly states, “as the context of nation-building changed, so did representations of Aboriginal people, and the policies created to manage populations” (2002, p.27). When the Europeans first invaded, the relationship between them and the Aboriginal peoples
was basically good and mutually respectful. Sharon Venne (2007) points out that “…Indigenous peoples outnumbered the non-indigenous; only a few non-indigenous people were scattered throughout the territories, and they did not have the military might to conquer us…” (p.4). The fact that Aboriginal peoples far outnumbered the settlers, in part, dictated that the settlers were respectful. Consequently, at first the settlers relied on the sharing and generosity of Indigenous people for survival. Epp (2008) argues that “Canada is founded on an act of sharing that is almost unimaginable in its generosity—not only land but food, agricultural techniques, practical knowledge and trade routes (p.133). The Aboriginal peoples had years of knowledge and experience that the Europeans lacked, and they helped the newcomers to live in these lands (Miller, 2009). Later, they became partners in the fur trade and allies in war, particularly in defense of the territory (Miller, 2009; McLeod, 2007). McLeod notes that “…the British had a long tradition of negotiating with Indian people with regard to both economic and political activity” (2007, p.37). During the many peace and commercial treaties that were signed prior to the territorial treaties, the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the European settlers was generally mutually respectful.

It is important to note that there are several influential government documents that had significant implications for treaty making. One important document was The Royal Proclamation of 1763; it “…became the single most important document in the history of treaty-making in Canada” (Miller, 2009, p.66) because it “…established guidelines for treaty-making concerning First Nations’ lands. Only the Crown could enter into treaties…and the treaty-making process had to be held with First Nations representatives in public forums” (OTC, 2008, p. 32). The Royal Proclamation “established a long-
lasting regime for negotiating land concessions that shaped the third phase of treaty making with consequences still felt in Canada in the twenty-first century” (Miller, 2009, p.66). Although they were not always followed, the guidelines for the process were set out for establishing future treaties. Another important contribution of the Royal proclamation, McLeod (2007) points out, is that it “…also affirmed Indigenous ownership of traditional territories” (p.37). Similarly, the British North American Act 1867 influenced treaty making. It is “…significant to First Nations peoples because it gave the federal government the constitutional responsibility and jurisdiction over ‘Indians, and lands reserved for Indians’” (OTC, 2008, p.21). Although there were many other significant influences on treaty making, these two documents both had major historical implications for Indigenous peoples, settlers, and for treaty making in Canada.

As time went on, the power dynamics and relationships established in the early contact period eventually changed. The settler numbers increased and the Aboriginal numbers declined, in large part because of disease, starvation, and a loss of traditional ways of life (Miller, 2009; Daschuk, 2013). As a result of over-hunting, greed, and wastefulness on the part of the white settlers, the number of buffalo was rapidly declining (Savage, 2013). The relationship began to deteriorate with the eradication of the buffalo and the Crown’s increased interest in land title (McLeod, 2007, p.38). By the time that the numbered treaties were officially in the making, beginning in 1871 and lasting to 1921 (OTC, 2008, p.11), the motives and perspective of Europeans and First Nations peoples had become quite contentious spaces, fraught with complexity. To understand the treaties, it is essential to recognize the historical context of Aboriginal-Settler relationships and what each hoped to gain from signing treaties.
The European desire for numbered treaties was basically predicated on the need for the “peaceful” settlement of the West (Miller, 2009, p.156). As Venne (2007) phrases it, “…treaty making was a necessity” (p.4). After experiencing many troubles with settlers and being excluded from negotiations regarding the lands, many First Nations “…made it clear that the territories in which they resided were theirs, and that the Crown had to take action to secure their agreement before strangers could use their resources” (Miller, 2009, p.153). Additionally, the First Nations were also motivated by survival of their people and culture: “First Nations peoples living on the prairies, weakened by the loss of the buffalo and new diseases, believed that the treaties would ensure their physical, cultural and spiritual survival, and sought guarantees to enable them to continue to hunt, fish and govern themselves” (OTC, 2008, p.11). McLeod (2007), states that their understanding was "As the Great Spirit had supplied plenty of Buffalo before the white man came ... the government ought to take the Great Spirit's place and provide the people with some other means of living" (p.45). Each group approached the creation of treaty not only with different motivations, different expectations but, most significantly, through different worldviews.

**Developing a Deeper Understanding: Worldviews and Treaty History**

One of the most essential understandings that I have gained about treaties is the different world views of the two signing parties and the impact these had on their respective understandings of treaty. A part of the OTC workshop that was especially enlightening for me was when Lyndon J. Linklater, a member of the OTC’s speaker’s bureau, engaged participants in a treaty simulation. It was an oral activity that encouraged participants to assume the position of the First Nations and view the treaties
from their perspectives. It helped me understand treaties from a First Nations’ worldview, and McLeod (2007) asserts that “Comprehension of Cree philosophy and worldview is necessary for understanding Cree historical experiences” (p.9). The Aboriginal relationship to and view of the land is of great import.

In the treaty simulation Lyndon asked me if I would sell my mother (August, 2012). When I, of course, responded with “not for anything,” he explained that in First Nations’ worldview they consider the land to be their mother. Many Indigenous scholars write of the First Nations’ view of land as Mother and as deeply connected to their worldview and spirituality (Smith, 1999; Johnson, 2007, McLeod, 2007). This differs remarkably from the European worldviews of land as an entity to be dominated and exploited. As Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) explain,

Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand, in this article). Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption if Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. (p.5)

Additionally, “the English colonial fiction that all natives were hunters because hunting did not entitle them as individuals to legal ownership” of land (Seed, 2007, p.19) influenced the way that settlers thought about land, settlement, and of potential
Indigenous ownership of the land. The importance of the land and how it functions within settler colonialism and treaty making cannot be over emphasized.

Another significant idea that I gained from Lyndon’s simulation and from the OTC workshop in general was the notion that, from a First Nations’ perspective, treaties were a covenant. Miller re-affirms this notion:

…the protocol, including the pipe ceremony, converted the product of the talks into a covenant to which the Great Spirit was also a party, that the heart of the treaty was the kin-like relationship it created, and that everything spoken was as much a part of treaty as whatever government scribes recorded. Many of the differences of interpretation that later caused so much difficulty were rooted in that contrast. (p.295)

Unfortunately, the Europeans chose to remain ignorant of or dismissive of the protocol or First Nations’ worldview. They approached treaties from a different worldview. In contrast, they viewed treaties as contracts, which has serious and lasting implications for their interpretation of the treaties. One of the main implications was the differing understandings of oral and written record of treaties.

The OTC’s resource “Treaty Essential Learnings: We are All Treaty People” (2008) discusses the importance of the oral tradition: “First Nations people are reliant upon oral tradition to pass on their traditions and knowledge...Newcomers were reliant on the written word and also had their own belief system. Therefore, interpretations of the treaties vary due to the differing worldviews” (p.26). From a First Nations’ perspective, “...everything that was said in negotiations was part of the treaty, not just what
government scribes choose to write down” (Miller, 2009, p.191). This has, understandably, led to significantly different interpretations. Specifically, “many Cree Elders have pointed out the inequities in how the treaties have been understood” (McLeod, 2007, p.37). Harold Johnson (2007) explains that the writing meant nothing to the First Nations peoples: “…my family did not adopt a piece of paper; they adopted you. The paper at treaty was ancillary to ceremony. My ancestors recognized your paper as your ceremony and participated so as not to offend” (p.90). This point leads to another problem with the differing worldviews and approach to treaties.

It was not only the written versus oral interpretations that were muddled by the disparate worldviews. The perceptions and understandings of treaty and the relationship established by them were also significantly dissimilar. The First Nations considered the treaty relationship to be one of equality and kinship. The OTC asserts that “First Nations peoples saw the treaty arrangement as a partnership in which the two parties would live together as brothers, side by side” (2008, p.15). Johnson’s account of the treaty relationship, in Two Families: Treaties and Government (2007), explains “In Cree law, the treaties were adoptions of one nation by another” (p.13). In his book, he writes directly to non-Aboriginal people. He repeatedly refers to the readers as “Kiciwamanawak” and says that “My Elders advise that I should call you my cousin, Kiciwamanawak, and respect your right to be here” (p.13). On the other hand, the government interpretation of the relationship was one of paternalism. This was evident in their referral to the British queen as ‘mother’ in the treaty negotiations and documents (Miller, 2009). The government’s paternal view of their relationship with Aboriginal people continued to impact policy even after treaties (Furniss, 1999) and absolutely
informed the Indian Act of 1876. The implications for these differing understandings of the nature of the relationship are many and the impact on Canadian history and Canada’s treatment of Aboriginal peoples is profound.

Another understanding that I consider essential to comprehending treaties are the difficulties caused by the government not fulfilling the written treaty promises. Dwayne Donald’s (2004) telling of the history of the Papaschase Cree is one example that illustrates the government’s failure to fulfill treaty promises in a timely manner. Many of the First Nations that signed treaties did so, in part, out of desperation for survival (McLeod, 2007; Miller, 2009). Often, the treaty promises included items that would aid in survival, such as a medicine chest, food, money, and farm implements. The government’s failure to implement treaty promises in a timely manner often resulted in First Nations people relinquishing their treaty status. Therefore, they did not receive what was promised to them, even though many First Nations peoples needed those items as matter of necessity for survival. Miller (2009) also notes many problems in implementing the treaty promises (p. 187-191). This lack of fulfilment of promises on the part of the government is noteworthy because, as John Ralston Saul (2008) points out, “Treaty promises were part of the foundation of Canada, and keeping those promises is a challenge to the honour and legitimacy of Canada” (p.25). Despite their importance in the foundation of Canada, treaties and their significance to all Canadians has essentially been erased from the dominant narrative of Canadian history. Instead, the narrative is dominated by images of pioneers and stories of peaceful settlement.
Critical Importance of Treaty Education: Disrupting Myths

As Tupper and Cappello (2008) demonstrate, treaty education presents an “(un)usual narrative” (p.570) of the past and the present, which disrupts dominant narratives that function in maintaining systems of oppression and privilege. Donald (2004) uses the concept of pentimento, from the discipline of visual art, to present a unique description of including Aboriginal peoples in the master narratives of Canada. He asserts that “The history of Aboriginal people before and after contact with Europeans has been ‘painted over’ by mainstream interpretations of official history” (p.23) and that pentimento involves “… a desire to scrape away layers that have obscured or altered our perceptions of an artifact or memory as a way to intimately examine the character of those layers” (p.23). Scraping away those layers is a part of Indigenizing our teaching. Shauneen Pete (2013) asserts that Indigenizing our teaching requires “resistance to the colonizing tendency to erase First Nations peoples” (p. 103). There are many layers that need to be deconstructed or scraped away in order to understand treaties in Canada.

Colonial discourses have dominated the construction and propagation of Canadian history. For the most part, treaties have not been included in the dominant narratives of Canada. Elizabeth Furniss (1999) points out that

... official histories of Canada, funded, produced, and sanctioned by the state, provide comfortable, noncontroversial accounts of the past and encourage students to accept the legitimacy of state authority, the myths of conquest, and theories of Aboriginal inferiority that rationalize colonialism. (p.60)
Although Donald (2004) was writing specifically about the history of Edmonton and the Papaschase Cree, the concept applies to the majority of Canada and Canadian history. He asserts that Aboriginal people “have been written out of the official history of that place” (p.23). Furthermore, he links this historical erasure to colonialism: “The tendency to separate the stories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is one symptom of the legacies of colonialism and paternalism that have, both subtly and plainly, characterized Canadian society” (p.23). Colonial discourses have been the basis for several myths that are deeply entrenched in the stories we tell about Canadian history.

Myths are powerful influences that act as the foundation for misunderstandings of our history and the present day. Regan (2010) acknowledges that “Myths are a powerful yet unacknowledged influence on how we make sense of the world; they shape our individual and collective identity as well as our relationships within our own groups and with others...” (p.67). She argues that "The conflicts we face today have deep historical roots that can be traced in the stories that we as settlers tell and retell ourselves about our 'non-violent past', invoking the myth of benevolent peacemaking" (p.68). These myths divert the attention away from the settler problem, allowing settlers to live comfortably in their ignorance:

...Canadian society subscribes to the peacemaker myth as we cast ourselves as heroes on a mythical quest to save Indians. In this way, we deflect attention away from the settler problem. To do otherwise would engender our own collective identity crisis and expose us to the trauma of admitting uncomfortable truths. (p.34)
In addition to the myth of the benevolent peacemaker, the myths of the frontier (Furniss, 1999) and terra nullius also influence settler Canadian identities and consciousness.

**White Settler Narratives**

The myths of the frontier and terra nullius are part of how settlers imagine their history. As Andrea Sterzuk (2011) points out “Like many settler children, I grew up with stories of how my grandparents ‘came over’ and ‘homesteaded the land’. It is striking to me now that these pioneer tales I so enjoyed as a child are actually stories of invasion, settlement and displacement” (p.64). I, too, grew up celebrating those stories and they are a part of the reason that the history of treaties is not included in ‘official’ history. Specifically, “[Aboriginal] interpretations of history do not easily conform to teleological versions of the settlement of Canada” (Donald, 2004, p.47). The teleological versions of history to which Donald refers are basically synonymous with the frontier myth. As defined by Furniss (1999),

“The frontier myth is a historical epistemology consisting of a set of narratives, themes, metaphors, and symbols that has emerged within the context of North American colonization, that continues to define the dominant modes of historical consciousness among the general public, and that various individuals draw upon to construct understandings of the past and present, of contemporary identities, and of relationships with Aboriginal peoples. (p.54)

The frontier myth acts as a foundational pillar in the construction of most Canadians’ understanding of Canada and seriously impairs the understanding of treaties.

Specifically, “Frontier history is evoked by negating Aboriginal title and by affirming the
legitimacy of European ‘conquest.’…This rhetoric erases the fundamental historical fact that the lands of Canada were appropriated from Aboriginal peoples through coercion and force” (p.144). In the context of Saskatchewan, “frontier myths constitute the collective story of the past imagined and produced primarily through the foundational story of the pioneer, rather than through the story of treaties” (Tupper, 2011, p.13-14). In schools, the result is such that “rather than understanding the history of European settlement as one of invasion of the land, made possible by the signing of the numbered treaties in the first place, students come to read the ‘foundational’ story of Canada as the resilience and strength of the pioneer homesteader in the face of adversity” (Tupper, 2011, p.5). One of the possible outcomes of treaty education is the potential to contribute to the deconstruction of the frontier myth.

Central to the construction of the frontier myth is the concept, rather the myth, of terra nullius. Although it has been refuted in international law (Johnson, 2007, p.24), the myth of terra nullius, that these lands belonged to no one prior to European contact, continues to live on in the narrative of Canadian history. David Johnston’s 2013 Governor General Speech from the Throne demonstrates this rhetoric, as it stated

“…we draw inspiration from our founders, leaders of courage and audacity. Nearly 150 years ago, they looked beyond narrow self-interest. They faced down incredible challenges—geographic, military, and economic. They were undaunted. They dared to seize the moment that history offered. Pioneers, then few in number, reached across a vast continent. They forged an independent country where none would have otherwise existed.” (p.2)
Notably, it lives on in other countries with colonized Aboriginal populations, such as Australia, too (Lindqvist, 2005). As Epp (2008) explains, in believing this myth “Canadians can live more comfortably, forgetfully, with the dirty little secret that treaties were a one-time land swindle than with the possibility that they might mean something perpetually” (p.133). Many non-Aboriginal Canadians are resistant to or simply do not want to know the history of treaties, including the pre-contact history of Aboriginal peoples. White settler Canadians have a vested interest in not knowing because it allows them to maintain their innocence and their position of power and privilege. Many are willfully ignorant because knowing the history implicates them, forcing them to “…recognize their own attachment to and implication in knowledge of the history of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadians” (Dion, 2007, p.331). As Regan (2010) phrases it,

For Indigenous people, the past is a painful chronicle of broken treaties, stolen lands, Indian residential schools, and the Indian Act. For non-Indigenous people, the past is a celebratory story of settling new lands, nation building, and helping unfortunate 'Indians' to adjust to a new way of life. (p.20)

It is time that settlers begin to let go of their pioneer fantasies and recognize their implication in and unearned privilege attained through the oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Specifically in the context of schools, treaty education presents substantial potential to interrupt ignorance and deconstruct the dominant myths and narratives that pervade curricula and have distorted Canadian history. Tupper asserts that “treaty
education has the potential to challenge and even disrupt white normativity through the
counter stories of the past and present it offers” (Tupper, 2011, p.14). Despite the 2008
mandate of treaty education, the white settler ignorance and habits that Tupper notes
above continue to permeate education. The counter story that treaty education presents

...is largely absent in the narrative of the past that students learn in schools as part
of officially sanctioned curriculum. Thus, schools and curriculum are implicated
in ‘forgetting’ certain aspects of Canada’s past as they function to socialize young
people into dominant knowledge systems (p.2).

What is taught—or not taught—in schools, as well as how it is taught continues to
present and privilege a colonial, settler version of Canadian history, one centred on the
frontier myth and the resilience of settlers. In her study of pre-service teachers, Tupper
found that they did not see the relevance of teaching treaties (p.10). In my experience,
the lack of understanding the relevance of treaties also applies to the majority of teachers,
as well. Like most Canadians, teachers do not know much about treaties (Miller, 2009;
Tupper 2011; Dion 2007). Ultimately, they do not understand the treaties enough to
realize their relevance and, therefore, do not understand the power and importance of
teaching them.

The OTC’s message “we are all treaty people” may sound simple enough. But,
since most white settler Canadians are ignorant when it comes to treaties, the full
significance or resonance of this statement is often lost. I have heard many people refer
to treaties as “First Nations” treaties. I draw again on Tupper’s (2011) study with pre-
service teachers to illuminate misconceptions and missing understandings. She found
that many of the University of Regina education students she surveyed believed “that First Nations people are the greater beneficiaries of treaties...” (p.9). This articulation is a clear indication that the students are not aware of the benefits that both signing parties received from treaties. Instead, they focus on what the First Nations peoples received. As Miller (2009) notes, most settlers are “...not receptive to treaty related complaints and protests...The explanation for the relatively harsh public attitude would appear to be that governments and interest groups have won the public relations battle by portraying Aboriginal claims as extreme, grasping, and unjustified” (p.304). This is a reality all too familiar to me as a resident of Saskatchewan.

I have often heard this belief is presented in the form of a complaint that ‘they’ get things for ‘free’ or complaints about the special rights that First Nations peoples have. I have even had conversations where people have told me that they do not believe in treaties because they do not believe in giving special rights to a group of people. My experience was affirmed by recent research. In addition to Tupper’s research with education students (2011), the results from a 2012 survey done by the Social Science Research Laboratories, called Taking the Pulse, “demonstrated that while Saskatchewan residents are optimistic about the future of Aboriginal peoples, they are less likely to agree with the extension of special rights...for Aboriginal peoples” (p.1). It is clear that Saskatchewan residents are lacking understanding of treaties and the rights that First Nations peoples negotiated for when they agreed to share the land. During the treaty simulation at the OTC workshop that I attended, I was engaged in thinking more critically about contemporary non-Aboriginal perspectives of treaties and land claims. Lyndon J. Linklater, a member of the OTC’s speaker’s bureau and the man who
facilitated the simulation, dealt with the notion that non-Aboriginal people think that Aboriginal people get things for ‘free’ (August, 2012). He explained that an understanding of treaties would help people see that the rights they receive are far from free; they have already been, and continue to be, paid for through the signing of treaties.

Again, what many people fail to recognize is that settlers benefit immensely from treaties. As Epp (2008) points out, “In a very real way, most Canadians exercise a treaty right simply by living where they do. On the prairies we are all treaty people” (p.133). Johnson (2007) also asserts that “…the only right [non-Aboriginals] have to occupy this territory must come from treaty” (p.25). When one considers treaties without acknowledging the enormous benefit that settlers received—the right to live on these lands, to live in Canada—it is easy to see how the perception that First Nations peoples received greater benefits from treaty is maintained. Beyond the right to live here, as though that is not enough, settler Canadians also fail “…to consider how their ongoing social and economic privileges as white settlers are directly tied to the signing of the numbered treaties’ (Tupper, 2011, p.10). Johnson (2007) aptly summarizes the imperative that non-Aboriginal Canadians begin to understand:

The treaties are the foundation of your family’s occupation of this territory. Without the treaties, your family has no valid justification for its use of the territory. It can only be your treaty right that you have the wealth you enjoy, the standard of living you enjoy. Your acknowledgement of the treaties as first documents will begin to put us back in balance. When your family accepts that this country’s founding families are yours and mine, then we can begin to search for other truths (pp.84-85).
Johnson also alludes to the future possibilities that can be created through settler Canadians’ understanding of treaties. It is easy for me to feel despair when I think about the settler ignorance that often surrounds me. However, the potential to “put us back in balance” that Johnson references above gives me glimmers of hope for our future.

Saul (2008) presents a thought-provoking take on the importance of understanding post-contact history. He asserts that failing to acknowledge the history of Aboriginal peoples and their influence on Canada has led white settlers to ignore a large part of who we are as a nation. He asserts that Canada is “…a Métis civilization” (p.3), but that “we don’t think of ourselves that way simply because the myth-makers of the late nineteenth century were busy writing out Canada’s past and writing in the glory of the British Empire and the British” (p.12). He presents an extensive and compelling argument. His notion that ‘we are a Métis civilization’ is especially important, in relation to treaty education because, as he asserts:

… how you think of things will shape much of what you do or what you want to do or how you understand what you shouldn’t do. The single greatest failure of the Canadian experiment, so far, has been our inability to normalize—that is, to internalize consciously—the First Nations as the senior founding pillar of our civilization (p.21).

Treaty education is essentially about just that; it is about recognizing the importance of histories, acknowledging that First Nations peoples played an enormous role in the foundation of Canada, and letting go of the myths that many settlers hold so dearly. Dismantling the myths that sustain a hegemonic, Eurocentric, ‘official’ version of history
and bringing the historical contributions of Aboriginal peoples into the master narratives of Canadian history—is an essential part of the process of decolonization.

**Decolonization**

Linda Tuhawai Smith (1999) asserts that “the negation of Indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology…” (p.29). I agree with her premise, but further argue that this assertion of colonial ideology continues, and it is enacted and defended largely through the ways schools do or do not take up Indigenous views of histories, such as Treaties. It also follows that a critical part of decolonization and dismantling colonial ideology involves Indigenization—privileging and valuing Indigenous ways of knowing and views of history. Pete (2013) affirms that “Indigenizing works hand in hand with decolonizing” (p.103). Historical knowledge, such as that gained through treaty education, presents substantial power and potential:

Coming to know the past has been a critical part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. (Smith, 1999, p.34)

Most significantly, it has implications for the present: “…indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present” (p.30). I am keenly interested in the potential of treaty education to influence the present and to contribute to the decolonization and Indigenization of our schools and our minds.

As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, decolonization must go beyond our minds and curriculum. In their piece “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” they caution that “the
absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler,
disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of
complicity, of having harmed others just be being one’s self” (p.9). I believe that treaty
education is a start in the journey to decolonization, but as Tuck and Yang warn, settlers
must not stop there:

We agree that curricula, literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in
learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology,
and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination
and exploitation ... the front-loading of critical consciousness building can waylay
decolonization, even though the experience of teaching and learning to be critical
of settler colonialism can be so powerful it can feel like it is indeed making
change. Until stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate
into action that disrupts settler colonialism. (p.19)

Learning to recognize manifestations of settler colonialism is a good place to start, but
settlers must continue on that journey, if they are to truly decolonize beyond their selves
and their minds. As a society, we must move far beyond simply thinking differently.
Critical consciousness alone will not purge society of the problems caused by colonial
ideologies and practices. The process of decolonization must ultimately involve white
settlers relinquishing the stolen land, power, and privilege. It is worth noting that I do not
use the term decolonization lightly. I understand that decolonization “… is recognized as
a long-term process, involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological
divesting of colonial power” (Smith, 1999, p.98). However, I do see treaty education and
the critical consciousness of settler colonialism that it helps to develop as an important
step in the journey towards decolonization. Smith also acknowledges “…that history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization” (p.30). I believe that education can play a substantial role in the journey of reclaiming history and, ultimately, of working towards decolonization.

The Power of Education

Education is political and powerful. Elizabeth Minnich (1990) argues that “It is in and through education that a culture and polity, not only tries to perpetuate but enacts the kind of thinking it welcomes, and discards or discredits the kind it fears” (p.5). Similarly, Susan Dion (2007) “[recognizes] public school classrooms as significant sites for the production and reproduction of dominant ways of knowing…” (p.330). Furniss, too, describes the power and potential of education:

As institutions of the state, public schools play a powerful role towards the socialization of young people into the dominant beliefs, values, and identities of Canadian society and in the inculcation of selective understandings of history that promote Canadian nationalism. At the same time, public schools are also sites of resistance and struggle over the structure of the educational system, teaching methods, and the content of the curriculum. In the last two decades, an important focus of debate has been the teaching of Canadian history.(p.56)
The scholars noted above explain the potential and power of education. Unfortunately, in Canada and other similarly colonized nations, education has a history of being used as a tool in the oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Marie Battiste and James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson (2000) assert that “…no force has been more effective in oppressing Indigenous knowledge and heritage than the education system” (p.86). The education of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is a gruesome history of genocide and oppression (Littlejohn, 2006). Especially in recent years—in large part due to the truth and reconciliation commission and their work (Regan, 2010)—the reality of the cultural genocide that was residential schools has come into sharper focus. Education has been used as a major avenue for the colonization of Aboriginal peoples: “For many indigenous peoples the major agency for imposing...positional superiority over knowledge, language and culture was colonial education” (p.64). This has considerable implications for the way Aboriginal peoples view and experience education, even today. Although privileging Indigenous knowledges and including those perspectives of history in schooling have great promise for creating more positive educational experiences for Aboriginal peoples, all students (including non-Aboriginals) will benefit from treaty education.

The Teacher’s Role in Treaty Education: Critical Pedagogy

As with any initiative in education and curriculum renewal, teachers need to be engaged in personally and professionally developing. Teachers also need to have access to substantial personal and professional growth opportunities to be able to teach treaties in a way that honours First Nations peoples and the history of the treaties. These growth
opportunities need to involve “…teachers in a process of deconstructing existing practices, acquiring new theory in the form of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values, and constructing alternative ways of doing, seeing and understanding. This process involves realignment and remaking of subjectivity and identity” (Halse, 2010, p. 31). Dion (2007) asserts that “Teachers, like most Canadians, require increased opportunities to learn about and to ‘learn from’ the history of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadians” (p.340) because “…the majority of teachers, like the majority of Canadians, have a very limited understanding of Aboriginal people, history, and culture” (p.330). She argues that “…until teachers have an opportunity to investigate and transform their understandings of Aboriginal people and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada dominant discourses will continue to be reproduced…” (p.330). If Saskatchewan school divisions fail to provide this opportunity for teachers, in meaningful, sustained ways over time, or if teachers do not meaningfully engage in personal development of this disposition, the implementation of treaty education will likely never truly happen, or it will be in a haphazard way. Through her research with teachers, Dion (2007) has found “…that teachers are able to recognize their implication in reproducing dominant discourses. This recognition presents the possibility for teachers to take up alternative ways of knowing, to imagine new relationships, and to think about how they might want to work toward transforming their practice” (p.330). Her findings support the notion that teachers can begin to improve their teaching practice and meaningfully engage in treaty education.

Part of the required transformation in practice involves a process of decolonizing our minds, of becoming aware of our blindness towards settler colonialism. It is essential
that teachers are critical of the discourses that they employ when teaching treaties and take care to use decolonizing discourses, instead of the dominant Eurocentric, colonial discourses that permeate education. Sterzuk (2011) asserts that “Learning to deconstruct colonial discourses about identities, nations, languages and literacy is a necessary step in moving towards equitable practices in schools” (p.48). If teachers are not cognizant of this, there is a great potential for teachers to “...unsuspectingly rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to teaching without recognizing the inadequacy or questioning the effects of those discourses” (Dion, 2007, p.332). If the discourses employed are not decolonizing, but rather colonial, then the legacy of colonialism is perpetuated: “Teaching about Aboriginal people in ways that continue to reflect a Eurocentric ideology positions descendants of European settlers as superior to the inferior Aboriginal other” (Dion, 2009, p.65). The versions of Canadian history that position settlers as superior to Indigenous peoples have dominated Canadian schools and consciousness for far too long. To engage in meaningful enactment of the treaty education mandate, teachers will need to be aware of dominant colonial discourses, be aware of how these discourses are at work in institutions and in themselves, and also work to present a critical, decolonized teaching of history.

My approach to and understanding of treaty education is rooted in critical pedagogy. Dion (2007) explains that critical pedagogy makes clear the need for an investigation of the extent to which belief systems have become internalized to the point that many teachers unsuspectingly rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to
teaching without recognizing the inadequacy or questioning the effects of those discourses. (p.332)

A significant part of treaty education, which I will discuss further in the following section, involves teachers and the need for them to question the discourses that inform their understanding and teaching of history. Joe Kincheloe (2008) points out that critical pedagogy, or critical teachers, “...seek out individuals, voices, texts, and perspectives that [have] been previously excluded” (p.24). Treaty education is very much about privileging the voices and perspectives of First Nations peoples. Andrea Sterzuk (2011) states that “...critical awareness of how colonial discourses continue to shape the lived experience of teachers and students is an important first step” (p.111). As I understand it, critical awareness and critical pedagogy are foundational components of treaty education. Treaty education helps teachers and students take that critical first step that Sterzuk advocates.

**Settler Identity and Learning Criticality**

To begin learning criticality, white settler teachers can reflect deeply on their own personal identities, their experiences and beliefs about knowledge and the world. I do not believe that white settler teachers can engage in treaty education in a professional capacity without interrogating their personal identity. To teach treaties in a way that honours First Nations peoples, the spirit and intent of treaties, and moves white settlers beyond ignorance, white settler teachers and students alike need to interrogate themselves—their ignorance, their colonial blindness and, ultimately, their identities. In the foreword of *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Regan, 2010), Taiaiake Alfred states that "...non-Natives must struggle to confront their own colonial mentality, moral
indifference, and historical ignorance as a part of massive truth telling about Canada's past and present relationship with the original inhabitants of this land." Regan (2010) proclaims that

...we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status-quo. The significant challenge that lies before us is to turn the mirror back upon ourselves and to answer the provocative question posed by historian Roger Epp regarding reconciliation in Canada: How do we solve the settler problem. (p.11)

To be sure, this is no easy task, nevertheless it is necessary. Settlers must learn to unsettle. I agree with Regan that "...without this unsettling, little will change" (p.19). Specifically, in reference to treaty education and learning about our colonial past, she thinks of “history not simply as the intellectual study of the past—the facts and interpretations through which we gain knowledge about our social world—but as a critical learning practice, an experiential strategy that invites us to learn how to listen differently to the testimonies of Indigenous people...undertaking such a task can be emotionally disturbing for settlers" (Regan p.50). Many scholars of critical discourses have recognized and reflected on the emotional aspect of developing criticality.

For example, in the foreword of Rocking Your World: the Emotional Journey into Critical Discourses (2008), editor Andrew Churchill writes:

understanding these discourses was hard, and I was increasingly uncomfortable...I came to the realization that it wasn't so much because of the intellectual challenge, but the emotional one. The more I read, the more ill at ease I became...I
could understand what it was the authors were telling me, but it often contradicted my understanding of the world and my place within it. These ideas were in conflict with the way I had been assembling the world, and this was emotionally disconcerting. Deconstructing hegemonic discourses was forcing me to explore the ways in which the world operates that people don't normally talk about.

(p.12)

This notion is especially applicable to settlers in the Canadian prairies. In the same text as noted above, Sterzuk reflects, "I did not grow up understanding or thinking about colonialism, the power relations at play in the Canadian prairies, and the privileged position afforded to me as a white settler" (p.28). She notes that her personal experiences with "changing my ways of viewing history, education, and social justice have taken time, personal investment, a reshaping of my own identity, and has affected my personal relationships and connections to my home province" (p.28). Although Saskatchewan has mandated treaty education, the mandate itself is nothing more than words if it is not understood, enacted, and supported. This demands, among other things, that the white settlers of this prairie province journey through the uncomfortable work of coming to understand critical discourses, a small discomfort when compared to the discomforts that have been forced upon Indigenous peoples in our country.

The emotional element of the journey may certainly be a significant part of the reason that many white settler teachers have not taken up treaty education. As Clandinin and Connelly (1999) understand, schools are
... a landscape of interacting stories that bear directly on teacher identity... school change is the creation of new stories to live by ... the often cited resistance of teachers to school change is, in our terms, a question of teacher identity and the conditions under which stories to live by are sustained and new stories to live by are composed. In our terms, teacher resistance is the maintenance of a story to live by in the face of school change. (p.100-101)

As I have pointed out, the stories that settlers have been living by are myths. Accepting that and learning to see beyond colonial blindness involves serious reflection and action by all citizens—not only teachers. Settlers must reflect on what it means to be a treaty person, what it means to acknowledge the truth about Canada’s history, and about the stolen place of power and privilege that they have been occupying for so long.

**Ignorance**

The concept of ignorance and how it is utilized as an epistemological position is also valuable in understanding why treaties were and, despite the efforts and support of the OTC and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education in implementing mandatory treaty education in 2008, continue to be largely absent from the narrative of Canadian history taught in schools. It is noteworthy that the root word of ignorance is ignore, which Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines as “to refuse to show that you hear or see (something or someone)” and “to do nothing about or in response to (something or someone)” (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ignore). Many teachers in Saskatchewan are ignoring treaty education. Calderón (2011) argues that “…epistemologies of ignorance are commonplace, indeed normalized ways of knowing and not knowing” (p.107). Tupper (2011), explored this concept as it relates to pre-
service teachers and found that “...many of the pre-service teachers who participated in [her] research employ a form of strategic ignorance (Bailey, 2007) as they seek to divest themselves of the responsibility for meaningfully enacting the mandate in their own classrooms” (p.4). Furthermore, she attests that

Students’ claims of not knowing ‘how’ to implement treaty education, or the fear of making a mistake, suggests that ignorance is used as an epistemological position to protect their settler identities and to divest themselves of the responsibility to meaningfully engage with treaties and the treaty relationship.

(p.13)

Regan (2010) posits that "Claiming ignorance is a colonial strategy—a way of proclaiming our ignorance because 'we did not know'" (p. 41). Although I have not formally researched my colleagues, in my experience, the excuse of not knowing is also dominant amongst teachers. I believe this is, in part, because it allows them to maintain a false sense of innocence. Dion (2004) argues that “the refusal to know is comforting…It creates a barrier allowing Canadians to resist confronting the country’s racist past and the extent to which that past lives inside its present deep in the national psyche” (p.58). This false sense of innocence allows white settlers to live comfortably in their ignorance.

Linda Martin Alcoff (2007) has also written about epistemologies of ignorance. Her arguments illuminate a pervasive attitude amongst Canadians in relation to treaties. She presents three types of ignorance:

the first, drawn mainly out of Loraine Code’s work, is an argument that ignorance flows from the general fact of our situatedness as knowers. The second argument,
drawn mainly from Sandra Harding’s work, relates ignorance to specific aspects of group identities. The third argument, drawn from Charles Mills’s work, develops a structural analysis of the ways in which oppressive systems produce ignorance as one of their effects. (p.40)

Each one seems to overlap and work together in creating and understanding teachers’ ignorance of treaties and treaty education, including my own. The first types relate to Indigenous epistemology in the sense that “…any given individual who is called upon to make a judgement call will rely on his or her own specific experiences” (p.42). The difference is Indigenous epistemologies commonly approach this type of ignorance with humility which, ironically, is often dismissed as too subjective. The knower is aware of this and acknowledges that one cannot know anything other than their experiences; knowledge is always limited (Kovach, 2009). The limited experience of a knower’s situatedness is, however, a problem in dominant Western epistemologies that position knowledge as objective and true. It is through a Western epistemological lens that history has been written and the teaching of history often continues to follow this path. In order to become less ignorant in regard to Canadian history, and the treaties in particular, learners (teachers, students, scholars, researchers etc.) would be well served to adopt an Indigenous epistemology and acknowledge their situatedness as knowers.

The second argument, that “…relates ignorance to specific aspects of group identities” (p. 42) is a main concept explored by Mackey (2002) in The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada. Martin Alcoff (2007) argues that “…ignorance is contextual, but there are patterns of ignorance associated with social and
group identities” (p.47), specifically, “groups of knowers who share a social location” (p.43). Congruent with Martin Alcoff’s argument, Mackey (2002) explains that “...versions of national identity mobilise internal differences and similarities (either through erasure, inclusion, or appropriation) in order to differentiate from external others...They all reinforce British or white settler hegemony and construct a settler (usually British) identity” (p.49). The construction of a settler-centred Canadian identity (which is currently referred to by most settlers as simply ‘Canadian’) that is based largely on and maintained by the stories we tell (or do not tell) about Canada’s history exemplifies this form of ignorance. Specifically in relation to understanding treaties, especially in terms of contemporary conceptions, this helps explain why many white settler Canadians are resistant. Mackey explains that “…in some groups a given justified claim will encounter more obstacles than in others, depending on the social identity of the individuals involved” (p.44). In the context of treaty education, it is the non-dominant group (the First Nations and their allies) that face obstacles in the assertion of the historical significance of treaties being justified.

Martin Alcoff’s third argument, which is “a structural analysis of the ways in which oppressive systems produce ignorance as one of their effects” (p.41) is also pertinent to understanding the current situation with treaty education in Saskatchewan. Alcoff paraphrases Mills and contends that “…whites have a positive interest in ‘seeing the world wrongly’ (p.47). That interest lies in maintaining their cultural supremacy and their innocence in the many historical wrongs perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples. Martin Alcoff also draws on the work of Max Horkheimer, positing that “If we accept the idea that both the object perceived and the perceiving organ are socially and politically
performed, then we might begin to think of ignorance as the result of a historically specific mode of knowing and perceiving” (p.51). The historically specific modes of knowing and perceiving that influence the ignorance of treaty history are the Western epistemologies, worldviews, and settler colonial myths discussed earlier. Finally, the cognitive norms that produce ignorance as an effect of substantive epistemic practice are those that naturalize and dehistoricize both the process and product of knowing, such that no political reflexivity or sociological analysis is thought to be required or even allowable. (p.56)

The naturalization of colonial discourses and the tendency to dehistoricize current Canadian realities, especially in terms of issues relating to Aboriginal peoples, are both huge contributors to the lack of understanding of the significance of the treaties.

**Colonial Blindness**

My conception of this lack of understanding has also been informed by the concepts of colonial blindness and dysconsciousness. Calderón (2011) states that epistemologies of ignorance offer educators a strong pedagogical opportunity to explore, for instance, historical narratives. We cannot continue to rely on the typical methods offered by [multicultural education] as this simply adds content onto an educational paradigm that relies on ignorance, indeed colonial blind discourses. (p.123-124)
I believe that is precisely what is happening in regard to the lack of treaty education implementation; settlers are continuing to rely on ignorance, specifically in the form of colonial blindness. Calderón argues:

While similar to contemporary colorblind ideologies, colonial blind discourses have a much longer history of institutionalization. This institutionalization can be traced back to the colonial origins of European expansion and the nation-building process…In this regard, it is harder for many to ‘see’ or acknowledge that they are engaging in these types of discourses as they have been normalized for so long… (p.110)

It is more than time that influences colonial blindness, however; “When paired with epistemologies of ignorance this concept reveals that the gap in knowledge I identify as colonial blind discourse is much more than a gap” (Calderón, 2011, p.113). Instead, as Nancy Tuana (2004) asserts:

Ignorance should not be theorized as a simple omission or gap but is, in many cases, an active production. Ignorance is frequently constructed and actively preserved and is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing, and uncertainty. (p.195)

Ignorance is an epistemological stance. Britzman (1998) refers to this stance as a passion for ignorance: “Such passion is made when the knowledge offered provokes a crisis within the self and when the knowledge is felt as interference or as a critique of the self’s coherence or view of itself in the world” (p.118). Settlers actively maintain their passion for ignorance or colonial blindness because understanding the reality of Canada’s history
colonialism is a direct challenge to how white settlers view Canada and their place within it. This has great influence on settlers’ lack of acceptance of treaty education. Also, Joyce King (1991) presents the concept of dysconsciousness, which is helpful. In opposition to critical consciousness, “Dysconsciousness is an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p.135). I argue that settlers have a disconscious perception of history as well as the current reality in Canada; they perceive both through colonial blindness.

**Being Allies**

I believe that white-settler treaty people are morally compelled to build familial, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships with our treaty partners—Indigenous peoples—as we promised when the treaties were signed. As I have shown, there is much work to do in our journey towards reconciliation and decolonization. St. Denis (2007) argues

Colonization and racialization are also what tie Aboriginal people to non-Aboriginal…By acknowledging a common experience of colonization and racism educators can enact solidarity and join together to challenge racism and racialization. Coalition and alliances can be made within and across the diversity within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples lives through a common understanding and commitment to anti-racist education. (p. 1087)

To further my understanding of allyship, I turned to Lynn Gehl’s Ally Bill of Responsibilities. Much of what she suggests is similar to what I have experienced and
what I have discussed throughout my literature review. She suggests, among other things, that responsible allies “are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them,” “reflect on and embrace their ignorance of the group’s oppression,” “strive to remain critical thinkers,” and “accept the responsibility of learning and reading more about their role as effective allies” (http://www.lynngehl.com/my-ally-bill-of-responsibilities.html). Being an ally is not simplistic; it involves many roles.

Susan Lang’s (2010) thesis, Being Allies: Exploring Indigeneity and Difference in Decolonized Anti-oppressive Spaces, was helpful for expanding my understanding of what it means to be an ally to Indigenous peoples. To summarize her findings, there are six roles, supports, and strategies for allies. The first is to know or decolonize yourself:

We discussed the need to recognize internal mental and emotional processes—to be honest with what your mind is processing—and only through truthful recognition of those internal conversations can you begin to change your thinking from the inside out. We saw this personal change as being a starting place to building authentic alliances. (p.102)

Her second finding validates the importance of knowing the “Other”, which she describes as “the need to learn from and with one another” (p.107). The importance of building positive relationships is another of her findings: “Both of the Indigenous leaders brought to the group a sense of urgency in shedding the negative colonial relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, as well as the need to work harder to bring tribal groups together” (p.111). She also discussed the idea that allies must reframe experiences. Reframing experience is the process of “…finding the opportunity to
support change, in any given situation, rather than being part of the negativity. It involves the ability to shed the common reaction of being offended, or being judgmental, towards someone else’s ignorance or cultural inappropriateness” (p.114). Another important finding is the concept of planting the seed. Her findings show that one of the most important things allies do is “…educating Others. For us, allies had strategic roles to play not only in supporting Other groups and individuals, but a role to play in advocating for change within the mainstream population” (p.118). Last, she found that allies must heal themselves and inspire others. As she asserts, “…keeping oneself mentally, emotionally, and physically energized is one of the greatest supports to the work of allies” (p.121). In conclusion,

…the strategies, roles, constraints, and supports involved in working with/being allies are complex. Allies have roles to play both in supporting Other members and groups, but also a role to play in educating dominant group members. At the same time, allies must be continuously engaged in their own learning about self, about Others, and be in sync to their own emotional, physical, and psychological needs. (p.124)

Becoming an ally is a complex process, but is an important part of treaty education.

Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that learning the history of treaties has important implications for understanding Canada’s past and for understanding contemporary Canadian realities. Treaty history challenges the dominant, settler-centric narratives about Canadian settlement. Instead of telling narratives of pioneer resilience, we must be
critical and begin to learn a more complete historical context of Canada’s foundation, including treaties. I have also explored the ways that ignorance, as an epistemological position, influences white-settler Canadians’ lack of knowledge of treaty history and their resistance to learning histories that challenge their beliefs and identity. In order to initiate the process of decolonizing our minds and schools, it is important that white settlers overcome their ignorance and their colonial blindness, and that they strive to be allies to Indigenous peoples. Treaty education must play an important role in this process because education is powerful and political. In turn, treaty education has the potential to support the urgent work of reconciliation. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed description of my research processes and methodologies.
Chapter 3: Research Design

This is a qualitative study, which utilizes a multiple-case study method and is informed by Indigenous and Narrative Inquiry research methodologies. I analyze four cases, and include myself and my experiences as one of the cases. My focus participants are teachers who—like myself—are white-settler women engaged in teaching treaties at the high school level. Semi-structured interviews were used to discover what my participants’ experiences have been with implementing treaty education. In preparation for the interviews, each participant responded in writing to specific questions in the form of a questionnaire prior to our conversations. From the questionnaire, I learned about the participants’ formal education, their experiences of professional development related to treaty education, the personal and professional supports upon which they have relied; and their individual teaching contexts. The data gathered has narrative characteristics since the teachers were invited to share stories of their successes and challenges in regard to teaching treaties at the high school level. I also framed my chapter four findings with stories that I wrote about meetings with the participant women.

I chose case study as a methodology because of the flexibility it allows researchers. Multiple case study design allowed me to focus on the experiences of several individuals and include myself as one of the cases. Furthermore, I wanted to be able to collect several different types of data, ranging from a questionnaire to data with narrative qualities. As Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) notes, “case studies often contain a substantial element of narrative” (p.237). My interest in Narrative inquiry and Indigenous epistemologies were not only compatible with my research methodology, but form the theoretical framework for my thesis. Both are founded on the notion that...
individual experiences and stories are a valued source of knowledge and consequently, also influenced my interpretation and understanding of the data.

Case Study

Using case study methodology for my research, I explored three teachers’ decision to engage in treaty education and their experiences regarding that decision. My own experiences became a counter-point to their experiences. Since I was interested in learning from the experiences of several teachers, I choose a multiple-case design. Robert Yin (2009) affirmed my decision: multiple-case designs are commonly utilized in the “…study of school innovations (such as the use of new curricula...)” (p.53). Although treaty education is not brand new, the fact remains that it is new to teachers when they first decide to take it up. Case study methodology also allowed me to collect different types of data because “…good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence” (http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/41407_1.pdf, p.10). My decision to choose cases “…that will most likely illuminate my research question” (Yin, 2009, p.26) is also informed by case study methodology. When selecting cases in multiple case study research, “…the primary criterion is opportunity to learn” (Stake, 2005, p.452). This criterion is in harmony with the goal of my research—to learn from other teachers’ experiences. Also, Yves-Chantal Gagnon (2010) points out that “The investigator must acquire a sound knowledge of the working of the environment in which the cases are to be recruited” (p.52). Although my positioning as a teacher-researcher is such that I already have an understanding of classroom teaching and treaty education, I see my research as an opportunity to learn, for myself and for others.
My understanding of qualitative research methodology was enhanced by the adoption of an ideographic approach to my research, which is one that “attempts to understand a phenomenon in context...” (Gagnon, 2010, p.14). Ideographic case studies help increase understanding of a specific phenomenon, as opposed to offering generalizations (Gagnon, 2010, p.14). Generalization is not my goal. I wish to increase my understanding of the phenomena of treaty education and the experiences of my research participants with regard to the phenomena. I do not aim to generalize my results to other situations or teachers. Robert Stake (2005) asserts that “experiential descriptions and assertions are relatively easily assimilated by readers into memory and use. When the researcher’s narrative provides opportunity for vicarious experience, readers extend their perceptions of happenings” (p.454). Stake (1978) also argues that the case study “...method has been tried and found to be a direct and satisfying way of adding to experience and improving understanding” (p.25). It is my hope that the cases in my thesis will help readers learn from the experiences that are shared, and that these experiences will improve their understanding of treaty education. To that end, Stake (1978) argues that case study is perfectly suited: “Its best use appears to me to be for adding to existing experience” (p.25).

Theoretical Framework: Indigenous and Narrative Methodologies

In positioning myself as a qualitative researcher, it is important to identify the philosophical foundations of my work; “Philosophy is what makes a set of methods a methodology” (Birks, 2014, p.24). Case study methodology has a very long history (Stewart, 2014), but not quite so long as Indigenous epistemology, or of narrative in human experience. Indigenous and narrative epistemologies provide a theoretical
framework for my research. Although I am not an Indigenous person, my research is centred on treaty education, and attempts to represent an Indigenous perspective of Canadian histories. It is important to me to complete my research in a way that privileges and honours Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. I looked to Margaret Kovach (2009) and Smith (1999), to develop my understanding. Serious consideration of research “methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of methods and instruments to be employed and shapes the analyses” (Smith, 1999, p.143). Kovach (2009) provided me with an understanding of an important Cree concept “miyo,” which means good, well, beautiful, valuable (p.147). It is important to me that my research is miyo, as described by Indigenous methodologies. Truth and what counts as truth is determined by research methodology. Defining and representing truth, within a particular methodology, is a large part of determining what constitutes good research. Within Indigenous methodologies, "...truth is found in the subjective” (p.149) because "...tribal knowledge systems value the interpretive and subjective" (p.131). It was, therefore, appropriate that I choose a qualitative approach to my research, with an emphasis on Indigenous methodologies.

My research is also informed by my understanding of narrative inquiry. By asking teachers to share their experiences of successes and challenges with treaty education, narrative elements were introduced in data collection, but also aligned with my intention to honour stories and personal experience, which is as I understand it, faithful to Indigenous and narrative epistemologies. The inclusion of stories fits well with case study and Indigenous methodologies as “case study research frequently includes collecting and interpreting stories individuals tell about their lives ...” (Woodside, 2010,
Robert Bullough (2008) states that "when well conceived and told, narratives speak directly to human experience and invite a reconsideration of ways of being and acting within specific situations" (p.13). He also argues that “... narrative studies open the possibility for ... illuminating the poorly understood” (p.13). I believe that treaty education is poorly understood by teachers and students, and that narratives of teachers who are engaged in treaty education, and whom in my estimation are doing well with treaty education, can serve to help others reconsider how and what they teach. In this approach, it is my hope that my readers, as well as myself, can learn something from these stories of engaging in treaty education.

Including my own narrative as part of my research is also fitting, as "narrative inquiry characteristically begins with the researcher's autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the research..." (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.41). Since my research question originated with a personal experience, and part of my goal is to personally learn from the experiences of others, I cannot conceptualize how I could possibly write this thesis without including my personal experiences. As well, narrative inquirer, Chris Liska Carger (2005) asserts

I look not only outward at the inquiry landscape I study but also inward as I look at my place as the researcher in inquiry. Inevitably, when doing narrative research, my own autobiography, like a persistent song playing in my mind, surfaces repeatedly. This is a dimension that narrative research beckons, the revealing of self...I have learned not to evade emotion in my inquiry, but to embrace it, to describe it richly. It is part in parcel of the art of the narrative inquiry. (p.240)
Therefore, I have interwoven references to my own stories, excerpts from the interview conversations, and experiences alongside those of my participants.

Narrative methodology also connects well with Indigenous methodologies. Kovach (2009) relates that "stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system" (p.108). Knowledges are rooted in story: "One of the dominant contemporary themes across a number of specialty areas is that human knowledge is storied—that is, much of what we know and understand is embedded in stories" (Lundeberg, Levin, and Harrington, 1999, p.171). I choose story or narrative inquiry to frame my research because the premise of my research is deeply rooted in the notion that what we 'know' is embedded in stories. I believe that treaty education is about revising and re-telling the stories that settler teachers and settler Canadians tell and believe about our past; it is about decolonizing Canadian’s understanding of the past and present. I believe that my approach to the research, a case study with a focus on narrative and Indigenous mythologies, represents a holistic approach and is well suited to my desire to learn from the narratives and experiences of others.

**Context and Participants**

All of the participants teach in high school settings in Saskatchewan, but their contexts vary greatly. Their teaching experience ranges from large, urban contexts to small, rural centres. I intentionally chose participants from several different contexts with the intention of gaining a wider view of treaty education in Saskatchewan. The duration of their teaching experience also varies from six to almost twenty years.
Pseudonyms are used for participant names and the schools where they teach, to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality. As well, after I received REB approval, each participant signed a consent form which advised that they were free to withdraw, without penalty, at any time during the research (see appendix B and C).

Just as all social positionings have an impact on how individuals view and experience the world, the social positionings of white settler and woman have considerable impact on the participants’ experiences. Settlers benefit from the myths that dominate Canadian history—terra nullius, peacemaking and benevolence, and the frontier myth; settlers have an interest in and benefit from not knowing, from ignoring the history and significance of treaties. Settler worldview is founded on colonial blindness. As such, settlers will take up treaty education from a unique social positioning. I was also interested in engaging with white-settler women because, as I mentioned in my introduction, I believe that the lack of implementation of the treaty education mandate is a settler problem.

Participants for the study are women teaching high school in Saskatchewan who identify as white-settlers and who are engaged in treaty education. As previously noted, I chose cases or participants who met specific criteria. I am interested in the experiences of teachers like myself because the social positionings of my participants and me influence the way that we understand and engage with treaty education. My perception is that more elementary than secondary teachers engaged in treaty education because for some years the Ministry mandated large-scale assessment of treaty knowledge at the grade seven level. While not advocating for standardized testing, I recognize that some good can come from flawed practices. I qualify my statement because I think that
teaching treaties, even in preparation for a standardized test, is better than not teaching treaties at all. The teaching context of high school is significant on another level, as well. Sometimes the lines between disciplines in high schools are hard drawn, especially in large urban schools. Often, teachers believe that teaching certain things is the responsibility of other teachers, in other disciplines. For example, there are common misconceptions that reading and literacy are only taught in English Language Arts or that history is only taught in the social sciences. These misconceptions may influence how high school teachers choose to engage in treaty education.

Since I had specific criteria, I was specific in my selection of participants. I met one of them during a breakout session at the 2012 SAFE conference, when I presented my research plans as part of a panel of University of Regina researchers. Another was recommended to me because she is recognized as a leader in treaty education. The third participant is a woman I came to know through my studies at the University of Regina, who was also recommended by a member of my thesis committee. I contacted each of them via email to obtain their consent to participate in my research. This process of participant selection is consistent with narrative inquiry methodology.

**Data Collection Methods: Advanced Questionnaire and Semi-structured Interviews**

Once participants consented to being a part of the study, I sent them electronic questionnaires. I choose questionnaires because they are an effective method to gain knowledge of my participant’s experiences and backgrounds. I asked that that they complete and return them prior to the interviews so I could use the data they provided to help me gain an understanding of their experience and context prior to the interviews.
Essentially, the questionnaire helped me learn about my participants because “Every question and every questionnaire can be viewed as a learning device” (Peterson, 2000, p.7). Since I had only met one of my participants prior to the research, I used the questionnaire as a way to get to know each participant better, prior to conducting the interview. It helped me to learn more about their teaching and educational backgrounds, and to discover how they became engaged in treaty education. Most importantly, the process helped me formulate my questions for the interviews. As Corrine Glesne (1999) suggests, in an interview “the questions you ask must be anchored in the cultural reality of your respondents: the questions must be drawn from the respondents’ lives” (p.70). The questionnaire helped develop my understanding of the participants’ lives and assisted with the development of specific questions, tailored to the participant’s experiences and context.

I interviewed each participant for approximately forty minutes and all interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews took place in locations that were relaxed, comfortable and convenient for each participant. The relaxed setting was important to me because, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, “the conditions under which the interview takes place also shape the interview” (p.110). The relational is a key element of narrative inquiry, as is place (Lewis & Adeney, 2014). I wanted the interviews to allow participants a chance to talk openly about their experiences, in settings that were inviting and casual. I wanted the interviews to be like a collegial dialogue. The natural, comfortable setting is also a part of case study methods: “…by emphasizing the study of a phenomenon within its real-world context, the case study method favours the collection of data in natural settings” (p.5). Two took place in a
coffee shop and one was in a participant’s classroom. Parts of the interview were based on the questions formulated after I read their questionnaire responses. As I mentioned above, the questionnaires helped me gain an understanding of my participants’ experiences and backgrounds, and I was able to better formulate my interview questions as a result. I also asked the teachers to share stories of successes they have had and challenges they have faced or overcome, in relation to treaty education.

I chose the method of an interview because it allows participants to tell their stories and “telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning” (Mishler, 1986, p. 67). Interviews “can allow access to past events, and they can allow access to situations at which the researcher is not able to be present” (Scott & Usher, 2011, p.120). Specifically, I chose the semi-structured interview because “in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks precise questions, somewhat reducing the amount of freedom enjoyed by the respondents but still allowing them considerable leeway” (Gagnon, 2010, p.61). As well, in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer “is involved in the negotiation of place, purpose and agenda at initial stages, and…ask questions, prompts answers and elicits reformulations of responses” (Scott & Usher, 2011, p.116). This allowed me to tease out information regarding my specific research interests, while still allowing participants the freedom to discuss other ideas and stories that they deemed pertinent. The interviews had a conversational flow and both the participants and I engaged in sidelines, digressions, and reflections on our experiences.
Data Analysis Techniques

I analyzed the data following a general qualitative approach, as outlined by John Creswell (2009). I started by reviewing the questionnaires and interview transcripts to “...obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning” (p.185). Next, I coded or “[organized] the material into chunks or segments of text” (p.186), specifically looking for emerging themes and recurring topics. I drew on Glesne (1999) to inform my coding process: “Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data…that are applicable to your research purpose” (p.135). Gagnon similarly describes coding as “[identifying] information units that relate directly to the phenomena of interest” (2010, p.72). Since my particular research purpose or phenomena of interest was to learn from the data, I coded the data into themes that reflected my thinking and learning.

Finally, I interpreted the data, aiming to articulate ideas that I had learned from the data. Creswell (2009) encourages the researcher to reflect on what lessons can be learned from the data and he asserts that “the lessons could be the researcher’s personal interpretation, couched in the understanding that the inquirer brings to the study from a personal culture, history, and experiences” (p.189). This analysis procedure that Creswell describes was particularly well suited to my desire to learn from the experiences of participants. To assist with qualitative validity, I used “… rich, thick description to convey the findings. This description may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences...This procedure can add to the validity of the findings” (Creswell, 2009, p.192). I realize that the goal of qualitative research, such as a case study, is not to generalize or produce findings that can be applied in multiple
contexts. As Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (2000) say, “if there is a ‘true’
generalization, it is that there can be no generalization” (p.39). Instead, in my case, I
consider validity to be found in the accuracy of representations of my participant’s
experiences. It is important that I am factual in my representations of what participants
said, that I am “…not making up or distorting things that I saw and heard” (Maxwell,
1992, p.285). Joseph Maxwell calls it descriptive validity; for my research, accurately
representing my participants and their words was of utmost importance. I am confident
that my position and my questions did not influence their responses. In my consent form,
I was transparent with my stance towards treaty education. My participants were aware
of my passion and belief in the importance of treaty education, as I was aware that the
participants that I chose had also demonstrated a passion for treaty education.

When it came to representing the words of the participants, I decided to integrate
the voices by theme, as opposed to by participant. It made sense to me to organize it by
theme because a large part of my goal as a researcher was to learn from the participants’
experiences and for readers to potentially learn from them, as well. I organized them by
theme because I believe that it makes the ideas more accessible, easy to understand and
learn from. Other than my occasional reference to the process or events of the interview,
I chose not to make any distinction in how I represented the participants’ words from
their questionnaires, as compared to the interviews. I saw no reason to make the
distinction, as I do not believe that it helps to clarify the information for the reader. As a
researcher, my ultimate goals in representing the participants’ words were to ensure that I
was accurately representing what was said and that the ideas were easily comprehensible
for my readers.
Summary

Using Indigenous and Narrative methodologies as the theoretical framework for my research, I carried out a multiple-case study. My participants included me and three other white-settler women engaged in teaching treaty at the high school level. I collected data through semi-structured interview and questionnaires, which were collected prior to the interviews. The information gained through the questionnaires helped me formulate questions for the interviews. I analyzed the data using coding, looking for themes and similarities in the participant’s responses. What follows in the next chapter is a detailed description of my findings. I begin with a brief description of each participant. Then, I present my findings, organized thematically, and interweave them with stories that I wrote about the interviews and my experiences collecting the data.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I begin by briefly introducing my participants, who are identified using pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. After introducing each of my participants, I describe the themes that emerged from the data, including: the influence of colleagues; the participants viewing themselves as learners and their positioning as white settlers; the need for support; the influence of place; racism in Saskatchewan; the role of ignorance; the influence of Idle No More; the students, moving towards meaningful integration; and the fact that all of the participants teach English (referred to as English Language Arts in the Saskatchewan curriculum).

Situating the Participants

Just as I began the thesis by situating myself, I begin this chapter by situating each of my participants. It is important to establish a sense of each participant, including their teaching context, teaching experience, and what they believe it means to be meaningfully engaged in treaty education. Although each of us has unique experiences, there are several things that we have in common. We are all white-settler women who are engaged in treaty education. We do not think of ourselves as treaty experts, but we are working to learn and teach the significance of treaty. As well, we all teach in the Southern half of Saskatchewan. Last, we all aspire to be allies to Indigenous peoples.

Nora.

Nora has spent her whole life living in the Saskatchewan prairies and attended high school in a rural community with many First Nations peoples. Currently, she is working on graduate studies in education. She and I had several classes together during our post-secondary studies, so I knew her prior to the research. My advisor and
committee recommended her as an excellent potential participant. For the interview, Nora and I met at a coffee shop across the street from the University of Regina. The mood was relaxed and conversational. During the year the research took place, she was also a vice principal and she was in her seventh year of teaching.

Nora teaches a variety of classes, including English language arts and social sciences, such as social studies or native studies. Though all of her teaching experience has taken place on Treaty Four lands, she describes her teaching experience as varied and diverse, and has spent time teaching in three communities. Although the schools are all within the same rural school division, each has offered significant differences in their understanding of treaties and treaty education. Nora’s personal beliefs about treaty education stem from her upbringing. Attending cultural programs and interacting with Elders and First Nations community members was a regular part of her childhood. She believes that being meaningfully engaged in treaty education is

...infusing treaty education and Indigenous worldview into all aspects of my teaching, not simply one particular unit in Indigenous Studies 10...or because it is mandated by the Ministry. It means believing in the teaching of Wetaskawin and treaties, it means honouring the treaties, it means continuing to grow and learn myself, it means a lot to me I guess! I think it means so much to me because I believe in the teachings of honouring and sharing the land. (Nora, 2013)

Nora’s beliefs about and experience in treaty education made her an excellent candidate for participation in my research and I learned a lot from what she shared.
Sandy.

Sandy completed her under-graduate and graduate studies at the University of Regina. She has been teaching in Saskatchewan for almost twenty years. She has spent time teaching in several different places in Saskatchewan, including Northern communities. Most recently, she has been teaching in a high school in a rural area in the heart of Treaty Four territories. Her community is close to several First Nations (also known as reserves; see the definition of terms for further clarification) and has a very high population of First Nations peoples. She teaches mostly English Language Arts, but no social studies or native studies classes. She believes that being meaningfully engaged in treaty education is “...teaching treaty as a learner myself, trying to take kids along on my ‘walk’ as I am learning things about treaty and grappling with the shifts in philosophy, paradigm, and relationships when looking from either side of the treaty handshake” (Sandy, 2013). My advisor recommended that I invite her to be a participant in my research because Sandy is recognized as a leader in treaty education in her school division, if not beyond. I have developed a deep sense of respect and admiration for her as a colleague and a mentor.

I travelled to her community, to meet in her classroom for the interview. As I entered her classroom on the blustery winter day, I walked into an Idle No More webinar glowing on her projector screen. Though I missed some of it due to the drive there, she and I shared our first experience of participating in a webinar. It was all about Idle No More and teaching about the movement in the high school classroom. After the interview, she took me on a driving tour of her community. It was the dead of winter so walking was not really an option. Otherwise, she would have taken me on what she calls
a ‘treaty walk.’ That day, a treaty drive would have to do. She pointed me to several historical land marks and monuments that represent the history of Treaty Four. We stopped outside of each one, as she explained its significance. At this point in my learning journey, I had been thinking deeply about treaty for just over a year. I can sincerely say that the learning I experienced while on that drive with her was my most powerful, altering experience with treaty. Reading about treaty and attending workshops was helpful, but being there and experiencing the places in person left an impact that will not be forgotten. Upon reflection, I understand more deeply the emphasis that Narrative Inquiry invests in place.

Ellie.

Ellie is currently teaching in Saskatoon, a large urban centre in Treaty Six territory, in the central part of the province. She teaches a variety of classes, including English Language Arts, but not including social studies or native studies. The high school she teaches at is culturally and racially diverse and with many new Canadian students. Ellie was born, educated, and has spent her entire career teaching in Saskatoon. Initially, she became engaged in treaty education through a summer professional development opportunity offered by Saskatoon Public Schools.

In response to the question “what does it mean to you to be meaningfully engaged in treaty education?” she responded that “...it means leading by example: educating myself about treaty and the treaty relationship. I think it means working with students to navigate what the treaty relationship is, especially with current events (Bill C-45, Idle No More)” (Ellie, 2013). We first met during a SAFE conference in Saskatoon, at which I
was part of a panel presentation where I had an opportunity to talk about my research plans. We exchanged emails and I later requested her participation in my research.

**What I have learned from their experiences?**

As I noted earlier, the purpose of this qualitative research is not to garner generalizations or to discover ‘how to’ engage in treaty education. Rather, I endeavored to learn from the stories and experiences of participants, to gain some ideas of how their experiences might help me (and potentially others) to learn about treaty education. I believe that "story can transport us…not only to experiences we have not had but to insights that cannot be expressed in conventional discourse" (Lundeberg, Levin, and Harrington, 1999, p.170). Ultimately, it is my hope that I can share my learning and our stories with others to help them better understand treaty education. Several salient ideas emerged through my data analysis and I describe each as themes below. These themes emerged through data analysis techniques described in chapter three; ideas that were repeated and discussed by each participant emerged as themes, including: the influence of colleagues; approaching teaching as learners; self-identification and positioning as a white settler; the need to feel supported; the influence of place; Saskatchewan racism; the role of ignorance; idle no more; students’ willingness; moving towards meaningful integration; and the fact that we all teach English Language Arts.

**Influence of colleagues.**

I began the interviews by asking each participant to talk about their successes or challenges with treaty education. It was clear that colleagues presented a challenge to
the participants, as each of them talked about having difficult and challenging conversations with colleagues. One theme that surfaced about each of their challenges is related to the concept of reluctance to engage in treaty education, or a need to ‘convince’ people that treaty education is important. As Sandy said, "that's part of the challenge. The overwhelmingness, the distance that we still have to go" (Sandy, 2013). She recognizes that there is still much progress to be made and she finds many ways to work to close the gap between where we are as a society and where we could be:

For me, that's really challenging because I, um, and that's one of the reasons I started my blog is I was looking for a gentler way to bring these issues up and not have to convince people in, you know, the thirty seconds that they're willing to listen to you, um, that our society is broken, that we've, you know, hurt this, you know, these cultures have been just tromped on for generations, you know. Because what people, as soon as you start bringing up topics like that [treaty education], people, um, I would say, I used to say white, middle class people, now, I'm learning to say newcomers or settlers—Idle No More movement's using that terminology quite a bit—um, so really struggling with how to talk about it in a good way, in a way that people don't go to a defensive place and think you're calling them racist because you bring up white privilege. (Sandy, 2013)

That ‘defensive place’ that she references stems directly from ignorance, or not knowing. Settlers are often defensive when confronting issues related to First Nations peoples because they cling to the myths that sustain their illusion of themselves as peacemaking, benevolent pioneers. Settlers are often colonial blind (Calderón, 2011) and refuse to see
or accept their lack of knowing, their ignorance. I take up this notion in greater detail later, in the section on ignorance.

However, when we discussed the concept of ignorance, each participant indicated that they have found colleagues say they are willing to engage in treaty education, but express a lack of knowing where or how to start. It is worthy to note that this idea of ‘not knowing where to start’ would not be considered justification if the subject matter were something else. For example, as my advisor once explained, if a teacher were assigned a drama or math class, he or she would be expected to take steps to gain the knowledge required; they would be expected to seek help from knowledgeable colleagues and to spend time learning the material and content knowledge as well as understanding the appropriate pedagogical approaches. Yet, this seems to serve as justification for not engaging in treaty education. All of the participants’ comments were remarkably similar. Sandy stated that she has “really struggled with how to be a colleague because I like to have fun but I'm so intense all the time, you know...So I think the support is there. It's just that people don't know how to take those first steps, you know” (Sandy, 2013). Nora said "They have no idea where to start” (Nora, 2013). Nora also shared that I find that, like, really a lot of good teachers are trying and that's, like, that's an important step. But a lot of them don't have any background and they have no knowledge about it...this hasn't been their lived reality. They are those kids that grew up in that isolated rural, homogenous, white community. And so, and then they went to university and they took classes that, you know, just perpetuated white hegemony. (Nora, 2013)
Ellie expressed that she feels “...as though, right now, um, there’s an understanding that treaty education is important, but there’s a general, ah, discomfort” (Ellie, 2013).

Although there are always exceptions, I too have found that colleagues are generally not openly, overtly resistant to the idea of treaty education. Just as my participants indicated, I have found that there is a discomfort about treaty education among my peers. I have observed my colleagues’ hesitancy to teach a subject on which they proclaim they know very little and their articulation of a fear of doing things the wrong way because of this lack of knowledge. I believe that this discomfort is directly related to challenging the power and privilege of white settlers, and to epistemologies of ignorance. It became evident to me that each participant had previous opportunities to interrogate their ignorance and to consider their privileged place in Canadian history and society.

Learners, not just teachers.

Another theme that surfaced in the interview data, which aligns with Indigenous and narrative ways of knowing, was that the participants and I approach treaty education as learners, not just as teachers. For Nora, the very notion of being a learner is embedded in her beliefs about treaty education. She said, among other things, that treaty education “...means continuing to grow and learn myself” (Nora, 2013). In my interview with Nora, I shared my philosophy: “I always refer to it as like a journey and I mean you're still on it, I'm still on it. I don't think there is an end point necessarily” (Tamara, 2013). Sandy has spent a lot of time reflecting on her learning and has used a blog as a means to communicate her learning with others:
...I've tried to model and in my own little conversations is that to go into it as a learner yourself. And that's how I've approached that I'm not trying to teach anybody anything. I'm trying to learn this as I go. So my every blog post is I'm trying to "I've just figured this out" you know, and want to share it as I go.

(Sandy, 2013)

I believe the stance she describes, as learners, helps us to be humble and accepting each time we discover something new or discomforting. Since traditional Western models of education position teachers as all knowing, this stance of teacher as a learner is a substantial epistemological and pedagogical shift. It is a shift that leans more towards Indigenous epistemologies. I believe that this paradigmatic shift that displaces the teacher as expert is part of why so many teachers seem to struggle with engaging in treaty education. Positioning ourselves as learners and being open to learning and expanding our understanding is essential for engaging in treaty education.

I find it notable that my participants and I all discussed the impact that our university education had on us as individuals and as teachers. As Nora said,

We're lucky that we're in secondary education and went through the programs we did. A lot of [my colleagues] are, like, elementary teachers that literally didn't take any Indigenous studies classes or take the same [education] foundations classes that we did...so these are conversations that they don't have. And so, they are trying, but they are hesitant and they're fearful, you know. (Nora, 2013)

Sandy referenced her post-secondary education in influencing the way she understands race and privilege: "It was a missing puzzle piece...it just resonated with what I had
learned...about white privilege and thinking about my, you know, the classes. Every class that I took, I was really called to anti-racism” (Sandy, 2013). Ellie firmly noted that her university education impacted her and stated “in university, I really started thinking about my privilege...” (Ellie, 2013). I responded to her and discussed the importance of developing an understanding of our settler identities and privilege before engaging in treaty education:

I mean, you and I had those classes where we had the opportunity to examine our privilege in a situation that we were supported and there were other people doing the same things, but I feel like a lot of people feel almost like it’s an attack, sometimes, if they’re not taking that journey on their own. And, I don’t think that you can talk about treaty education until you are willing to interrogate yourself…” (Tamara, 2013)

My participants and I all had opportunities to develop an understanding of our white settler privilege. Scholars have pointed out that developing this consciousness is not easy and can be very emotional (Churchill, 2008). I believe that much of the reluctance that teachers have towards engaging in treaty education is potentially related to the discomfort that comes with developing critical consciousness. Developing these understandings has helped my participants and me to recognize the importance of explicitly positioning ourselves as white settlers and being aware of our privilege when we engage in treaty education.
Privileged positions: identification and positioning as a white settler.

Understanding our privilege helped teach us the importance of positioning ourselves and being cognizant of our social positioning, especially in our powerful role as teachers. In *White Teachers, Native Students* (2005), Mary Hermes argues "the teachers discussed in this research were successful because they were aware of the history, culture, and current circumstances of their students. Most important, they were aware of and comfortable with their own identity as white teachers" (p.111). In my research, Ellie expressed apprehension about teaching treaties from the position of a white-settler woman. She stated, “I’m concerned about, sort of like the packing I come in...like, I know I’m this white lady” (Ellie, 2013). Nora similarly commented: "So, that's a good start. You know, to talk about, like, coming from positions of privilege and whiteness..." (Nora, 2013). I, too, related that I am “...always being careful with positioning, like this is where I am and this is who I am and I can’t talk about anything other than my own perspective on things...” (Tamara, 2013). Of course, my perspective has been influenced by what I have learned throughout my education and life experience, but I cannot speak from another person’s perspective. We can and do learn from other peoples’ experiences, too. After all, that is the goal of my research. Still, no matter what we learn, we are only able to know and teach it from the perspective of our individual, identities. Our understanding of the world is centred on our white settler identities.

Although my participants and I have learned to see our white settler privilege, seeing does not eradicate its existence or influence. Nora explained that the very existence of a *decision* to engage in treaty education is a privilege in itself:
So, it's like, I don't want to paint myself as somebody that's, um, that, you know is like on this righteous path to treaty education. Because it's not like that. The reality is that, you know, I at any time can retreat to that position of privilege and, ah, so I only have to go as far as I'm willing to go. You know and that's really, that's so privileged in itself... (Nora, 2013)

Nora said, as settlers, "As a person of privilege, how easy would it be to just walk away from that?" (Nora, 2013). The idea that, as privileged settlers, we have a choice to engage in treaty education is troubling. The notion that white people always have the option to fall back into a position of privilege and comfort is founded in anti-racist pedagogy. In their article “Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race,” Glenn Singleton and Cyndie Hays (2008) state that “the more personal and thus risky topics get, the more difficult it is for participants to stay committed and engaged” (p.19). I argue that engaging in treaty education can be very personal and troubling for settlers. In the words of Audrey Thompson (2008), “because antiracist work requires that whites relinquish many of our claims to innocence and unquestioned competence, white teachers who humbly address their racial privilege and ignorance are likely to feel extraordinarily vulnerable” (p.331). Because treaty education challenges our identity as white settler Canadians, our privilege, and our ignorance, it is often difficult for settlers to commit and engage in treaty education. Curiously, Ellie stated, “I guess I never really thought about choosing to engage in treaty education because I feel that it is not optional” (Ellie, 2013). Even though engaging in treaty education may not always be viewed as a choice, as Nora pointed to in her quotation above, settlers still have the option to go only as far as they feel comfortable. The opportunity to rely on dominant discourses still exists.
Through treaty education, my participants and I intend to disrupt dominant discourses about Canada, settlers, and First Nations people. We aim to dispel the myths of terra nullius, the frontier, and white settler Canadians as benevolent peacemakers. We strive to engage in treaty education in ways that honour Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Acknowledging our privilege and explicitly stating our position is aligned with Indigenous epistemologies. It is a part of Indigenous epistemology to openly recognize that individuals can only know things from their own experience and perspective (Kovach, 2009). Despite what I have learned about treaties, history, or Indigenous epistemology, I can never truly step outside of my identity and privilege. It is clear, then, that it is important for settlers to be able to recognize and acknowledge their privilege when they engage in treaty education. This is not to say that treaty education should be all about settlers; rather, that settlers must be cognizant of their positioning.

Our positioning as white settler women is also significant because, as I have pointed out, there is a long history of mistreatment and oppression of Indigenous peoples by white settlers. Settlers have provided Indigenous peoples far too many reasons to question their morality and trustworthiness—from stealing lands, to residential schools, all the way to contemporary issues with land claims, violence and poverty, missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and failing to honour the treaty promises. It is not at all surprising that many Indigenous people question the ‘good intentions’ of white settlers. Our ugly past is filled with many examples of the ‘good intentions’ of white settlers. Ellie and I discussed our caution and uncertainties as white settler women engaging in this work. She said, “sometimes I feel, like, I can come off as kind of naive maybe or I don’t know” (Ellie, 2013). I echoed her concerns: “or people make assumptions...and I
feel like I am always trying to prove that I am not [naive] and I’m trying to do this in a respectful way” (Tamara, 2013). It is important that we are aware of the history and distrust, of our positioning within the discourses of ‘good intentions’ and white privilege, and that we are always striving to do things in a good way.

When it comes to white settlers engaging with Indigenous issues and positioning themselves as allies—as my participants and I seek to do—part of doing things in a good way includes forming relationships with Indigenous peoples, being allies (Lang 2010, St. Denis 2007). For far too long, settlers have done what they felt was best, instead of working alongside Indigenous peoples. Each one of the participants discussed the importance of cultivating these relationships. When I asked participants to discuss teaching resources that have been helpful, Nora talked about relationships with Indigenous peoples:

So I think it's, they need to make those relationships, too, and they need those resources. And they have the treaty kit, which is way above their students’ level and half the time above their level. So, while it's a resource, it can't be the sole resource and they don't know where to look and they have no relationships with people. So it's like they don't know any Elders, they don't know any community members. (Nora, 2013)

For me, listening to Elders speak have been some of the most powerful, impactful learning experiences in my journey. It is important for all involved that settlers and Indigenous peoples work together to mend the broken trust and relationships. This is important not because it assuages settler guilt. But, more importantly, it is essential that
we learn to respect each other and live together because that is what we promised to do when we signed treaties. Also, from a population standpoint, the Indigenous populations are growing in numbers and settlers are not going anywhere. Creating relationships and cultivating understanding are both large parts of treaty education, and both will go far to creating a Canada that reflects the spirit and intent of treaties.

Isolation.

From my own experiences as well as those of the participants, it has become clear to me that both support from colleagues and the lack of support from colleagues have a significant impact on teachers engaging in treaty education. While we have found that there is a general sense of willingness, as previously noted, all participants expressed having experienced feelings of isolation. Sandy acknowledged that she knew she was not alone, but had experienced feeling that way: "Not that it just was ever me, but it felt sometimes like quite alone." (Sandy, 2013). Ellie expressed that she has “…really been feeling like [she] was sort of way out on an island, like, trying to do this little thing and nobody was getting it…” (Ellie, 2013). For each of us, even the experience of the interview was affirming. We all expressed a feeling that it was comforting to have someone to talk to, someone who believes in and is experiencing similar things in engaging in treaty education. The research process was a very affirming experience for me, to know that others were experiencing similar feelings.

Nora also expressed feelings of isolation but hers were tied directly to her teaching context. As I mentioned, she has taught in three different communities over the
last seven years. When I asked her to talk about the importance of supportive colleagues or allies, she responded

It's really isolating...because you go from being in a community where, like, um, Aboriginal worldviews and, like, history is like, it's part of your life. It’s part of your everyday experience. It's part of the things you see every day. And then you go to, like, a community where all of a sudden that just doesn't exist. I can't imagine how First Nations students would feel going into that environment...

(Nora, 2013)

Her point is especially significant because she also illuminates part of the reason that treaty education is so important. I believe that treaty education can help transform schools to be more like the first community that she describes—a place where Aboriginal worldviews and history are a large part of the school curricula and culture, a part of everyday experience. Most schools, in my experience, are more like the latter place that she describes—a place where Aboriginal history and worldviews almost do not exist. As a white settler, I cannot imagine what it would feel like to go to school or to work in a building where my culture is not the foundation of the curricula and school culture. Despite our feelings of isolation, the fact remains that we were always surrounded by other white settlers and immersed in an education system that values and affirms our white settler ideologies and histories. Although the participants and I express having felt a sense of isolation, our experience is but a trivial glimpse into the everyday lived reality for many Aboriginal and First Nations peoples.
Nora expanded on her point and described one particular day that she went out of her way to seek a supportive colleague:

It's so important to have people that you feel are supportive because like where I am now, I don't feel like I have anybody that's like supportive of that, at all. So I have to keep going outside of my school to people to, like, get that. And, like, sometimes I just feel a need to, like, be around it, like I, we had like a [professional development] day and I went and sat in on [a professional development session] and [the presenter] was like 'oh how come you're here [Nora]?' Like, you've already heard me talk about this, like ten times. And I'm like 'I just need to be here today' and I was almost in tears... (Nora, 2013)

Her experience was unique among my participants. She went from an environment that she describes as supportive, one where First Nations’ history and ways of knowing were very visible and present, to one where it is barely acknowledged and she often feels isolated in this new community. From the stories she shared, I gained a real sense of the importance of supportive colleagues, or allies.

Although participants discussed feelings of isolation, all participants also referenced the positive influence of supportive colleagues. During our interview, Ellie expressed the affirmation that she received from hearing about and participating in my research: “...The more we talk about these things, little things do happen...I feel re-affirmed that you’re doing this, like I think that’s really wonderful, you going to that [SAFE] conference...” (Ellie, 2013). As I mentioned earlier, she had been experiencing
feelings of isolation or, as she put it, feeling like she is “...way out on an island” (Ellie, 2013). Nora said that she fears not having supportive colleagues:

And that frightens me, as well, because I think that without having your colleagues, I think that there's the potential there for you to get sucked up in the, ah, cycle of dominance, right. So it's good too, you have to have those colleagues to maintain that dialogue and to kind of keep you committed. (Nora, 2013)

I related to her comment and reiterated:

Yeah, and keep each other, bringing each other along. Even simple things, like little things you would do in your classroom. You know, like that I find I have a couple people in my building who I can go to for those kinds of conversations and I find for me that helps so, so much. Otherwise, like you said, you feel like you're just battling all the time. (Tamara, 2013)

Nora even went as far to say "It's been huge because I wouldn't be who I am...if it wasn't for the people I have met in my life or the people that had opened their doors and homes to me” (Nora, 2013). In Sandy’s case, she spoke very highly of her principal: "My principal is so supportive and is an activist herself and a community leader" and “…she's been a huge support” (Sandy, 2013). Based on my participants’ and my experiences, it is clear that supportive colleagues—or the lack of supportive colleagues—has a large influence on our teaching of treaties and our well-being. Supportive colleagues help each other and keep each other motivated when times get tough, and we know they often do. Lacking that support can leave us feeling isolated and frustrated.
The influence of place: different teaching contexts.

Another theme that I discovered that had an impact on the participants’ experiences with treaty education was the contexts, the places in Saskatchewan where they work. Given that all of my teaching experience has been in the same school division, I was a bit surprised by this finding. I had never thought about how divisions in different parts of the province have different initiatives and priorities. As a member of the dominant group, I did not have to wonder what other divisions were doing. As a white settler, I had the ability to remain oblivious, to remain ignorant. Again, Nora’s experience of having taught in three different schools in the last seven years lent much insight into the significance of place:

I think it really depends where you are, right. Um, you know the schools I was at before it was, like in [my last school] it was just everywhere. We all knew that treaty education was mandated...we have [a woman] working in our school division, our First Nations and Métis consultant, who's very good at her job, um, and communicates that information, like, very well. Um,...at [my last school], we made a huge effort to send as many staff members as possible to the Treaty Four education conference, so that, that information was passed down there, as well. (Nora, 2013)

She went on to describe the difference between the last two schools she has been at:
...that school was a really good environment for that. Like, we had an Elders program. There were lots of things that were really visible. We made sure that we had a Treaty Four flag and Métis flag in our school, beside our Canadian flag and,
um, so our students felt like their own lives were represented within our building, which was a big difference to where I am now, where there are like two students that self-identify as First Nations and no Métis students. So it's a big change.

(Nora, 2013)

I was grateful to have an opportunity to learn from Nora’s diverse experiences. She helped me expand my own thinking and understanding about the significance of place.

Ellie’s experience in a large, urban school division also helped me extend my understanding of what school divisions are doing to implement treaty education. Though we teach in similar contexts (large urban schools), her experience was different from mine. She described a First Nations and Métis Education unit that her division employs. She referenced them several times throughout her interview and talked about how helpful it was to her. I had never heard of a unit like this; to the best of my knowledge, my school division did not have one. I am aware that there are a few talented, dedicated people working in this area in my school division. But I was intrigued that Saskatoon has a whole unit of people working on First Nations and Métis education. It was exciting for me to hear about different divisions. Specifically, I learned a lot about the ways that other school divisions are engaging in treaty education. The differences surprised me, as I had never felt compelled to think critically beyond my division before.

Another idea that surprised me was a division initiative that two of my participants—Nora and Sandy—referred repeatedly throughout their interviews. They teach in the same rural school division and both of them talked about a Saskatchewan Ministry of Education initiative called A Time for Significant Leadership. As it states on
the Ministry First Nations and Métis Education Branch’s PowerPoint, A Time for
Significant Leadership (ATFSL) is “a capacity building strategy to support school
divisions as they develop First Nations and Métis education plans.” Nora referenced it
and described how it potentially contributed to a lot of teachers in her division engaging
in treaty education:

See part of the reason, maybe, potentially, then that [my school division] is doing-
-um, or at least staff in [the division] are more aware of it--is because of the 'A
Time for Significant Leadership', um, initiative that was started. And I think that
played a really big role a big role on it because it started, everyone in the division
was talking about white privilege. (Nora, 2013)

She told me that "everyone in the division was talking about treaty education, you know,
and, uh, we were running audits with staff to see where they thought they were..." (Nora,
2013). Sandy, too, referenced A Time for Significant Leadership when I asked her how
she came to be so engaged in treaty education:

... maybe it's important for you to think about, um, what went before people were
thinking about treaty education and our school division had this thing called A
Time for Significant [Leadership]...that was almost like treaty education, is that
people were trying to dispel myths. (Sandy, 2013)

Just as I was when I learned of treaty education, I was astonished that the initiative was
put forward while I was a fulltime teacher and, still, I had not heard about it.
Learning about this initiative sparked my interest for several reasons. One, I was very curious why it seemed to me that my school division had not taken up the initiative. It was clear to me that it had a significant impact on teachers, or at least the ones participating in my research. As Sandy stated, it was good for me to think about what came before treaty education. The initiative is directly linked to treaty education. As it states in the Ministry document, *A Time for Significant Leadership: A Strategy for Implementing First Nations and Métis Education Goals* (2010), “We all have a role to play, and as citizens of Saskatchewan and beneficiaries of our unique Treaty relationship, we have a responsibility to contribute; this is what ties us together” (p.2). Additionally, it re-affirmed that teachers’ experience varies according to their teaching context and the priorities of their school division.

**Saskatchewan garden-variety racism.**

Though there are differences across Saskatchewan, there is one thing that most places have in common—racism towards Indigenous peoples. Andrea Sterzuk (2008, 2011) has demonstrated that First Nations and Métis students face institutional racism in Saskatchewan schools. Sterzuk also points out that “the unfortunate reality about growing up as white settlers in Saskatchewan is that colonial discourses about First Nations and Métis come to seem ‘normal’ to many of us at a very young age” (p.5). It is important to note that I understand racism not only as discriminatory discourses about race. I recognize that racism is intricately linked to white privilege: “…racism (White supremacy) should be understood as a set of systemic structures that maintain a racial ruling elite as demonstrated through enforcement of policies and laws that govern the land” (Stovall, 2006, p. 250). Racism is enacted not only in policies and laws. It is also
manifest in the way that “…members of society have internalized racist ideas about what skin colour tells us about the value and worth of a person or group of people” (St. Denis, 2007, p.1071). It is interesting to note that an article, published around the time of my research, brought the racism in Saskatoon into the attention of media. Joni Mitchell, a famous musician who was raised there, pointed to the racism in the city. In an article in the Star Phoenix (a Saskatoon newspaper), she is quoted as calling Saskatoon "an extremely bigoted community, it's like the deep south" (Cuthand, 2013). Many people found her comments offensive and denied her claims. The Sun News Network and John Gormley, both of which represent conservative politics and ideologies in news media, denied that Saskatoon is racist (Sun News Network: http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/2566337539001). Yet many, like the author of the article, Doug Cuthand, readily agreed with her and noted that “…Saskatoon people need to reflect on the racism that exists in this community and Western Canada, as a whole. We need to look at the roots of our community and its history...We live in a country that has a strong streak of settler racism…” (2013). The participants and myself are well aware of the racism in Saskatchewan and we agree that we need to examine our settler racism. Nora captured the idea when she said, "...when we look at our society, you look at, you know, the school where I'm at and a lot of the racism that students have is against First Nations people, towards First Nations" (Nora, 2013). This racism is rooted deeply in the ongoing history of Saskatchewan.

As Sterzuk (2011) points out, the racism and racial hierarchy in Saskatchewan has a long history:
Looking back over the past 150 years through a postcolonial lens, the building blocks of Saskatchewan’s current racial inequality are obvious. Initially, Indigenous peoples were stripped of land as imperial institutions of domination such as the Royal Northwest Mounted Police were put in place. Next, First Nations were confined to reserves and white settlers acquired their seized land. Subsequently, First Nations children were processed through the brutal machine of assimilation, the residential school system. All of these components of Saskatchewan’s history share the common goal of maintaining control and power over land and resources. (p.65)

Throughout those 150 years, settlers constructed myths and illusions of identity that helped maintain their innocence. What I have come to understand is that the notion of settler innocence is maintained through strategic ignorance. Part of the reason that my participants and I engage in treaty education is in an effort to lead people in critically examining our country’s past and present, and work to dispel the myths, ignorance, and settler racism against Indigenous peoples.

**Ignorance.**

As I noted earlier, in situating myself, I was astonished at my own ignorance. Upon the recommendation of my committee, I began an exploration of the epistemologies of ignorance which I introduced in the literature review. I explored the concept that ignorance is purposefully and systemically maintained and justified by groups of people in positions of power and privilege (Mackey, 2002; Alcoff, 2007; Bailey 2007; Calderón 2011). While I explored the concept further, I became
increasingly aware that claiming ignorance is a settler strategy, a part of colonial
blindness and I came to understand that this ignorance is not simply an innocent lack of
knowledge. Rather, it is actively produced by settlers (Calarón, 2011). Ignorance is
actively reproduced and even defended by settlers in an effort to maintain colonial
blindness because doing so allows us to hold onto our false sense of innocence and not
have to be accountable for privileges directly connected to the land. I was intrigued by
this. I wanted to know more about how other settlers had shattered their ignorance and
one of my questions to my participants was about ignorance. I asked my participants to
try to articulate what motivated them to overcome their ignorance or what made them
different from the teachers who have not engaged in treaty education.

The responses that I received from Sandy and Ellie surprised me. Both of them
really struggled to use the term “ignorance”. To them, using the term to describe
colleagues was viewed as a judgement or condemnation, and both of them were quick to
defend their colleagues. They seemed to think of it as an insult, or as more than a lack of
knowledge. It may be that they were wary of being viewed as judgmental because they
are influenced by the discourses of being a good woman (Srivastava, 2005) and they are
positioning themselves as benevolent, not judgmental women. For example, Ellie said,

Yeah, I don't know. It's such a tricky thing to say 'cause part of me really feels,
you know, that the people I work with are these master teachers, and so skilled
and so knowledgeable in their areas. And, so I hesitate to ever even bring that
word ignorance up... (Ellie, 2013)

Sandy also noted her hesitance:
...the more I get out there and talk with people, the less judgmental I am about it being something that, ah, so I don't even think I'd use that word ignorance now, because I think the connotations are, are so strong that I would maybe say that they feel it's not their place, that they don't see themselves in the narrative...

(Sandy, 2013)

Although I believe their intentions were honourable and I acknowledge that speaking negatively about colleagues is unprofessional, constitutes a breach of ethics, and does not accomplish anything, I found it problematic that they were so reluctant to use the term. I had acknowledged my own ignorance. I had worked to move past it and deepen my understanding of treaties and treaty education. Yet, I could not quite understand why the term seemed to trouble them. I understand that the word has negative connotations, but in my mind, and as I articulated it to them, I meant it as a lack of knowledge, not as an insult. This hesitance to use the word “ignorance” parallels the hesitance to use of the words “racist” and “racism”; these words name harsh realities that white settlers resist to acknowledge, rooted in their desire to maintain their feigned morality and innocence. I was troubled by their defense of ignorance and I wanted to explore further explanations for their defensiveness.

Given that my participants and I are all white women, I also explored discourses and the social construction of white women. Sarita Srivastava’s (2005) research is focused specifically on white feminism and anti-racism, but I argue that her premises apply in this context, as well. She recognizes that:
Specific to Western second-wave feminist organizations are the ways that these historical and gendered representations of racial innocence and superiority come together with two other threads: feminist ideals of justice and egalitarian community and national discourses of tolerance, benevolence, and nonracism.

(p.34)

She argues that “even as they produce distinct ethical practices and moral communities, second-wave feminist efforts are also overlaid with the contemporary national discourses of tolerance, multiculturalism, and nonracism that are common to Western nations such as Canada…” (p.35). Following her line of reasoning, I argue that though Ellie and Sandy are trying to be ethical and moral, they are still subconsciously and subtly influenced by the national discourses noted above. They are willing to give other settlers (specifically, their colleagues) a break because they are influenced by these national discourses of tolerance and nonracism. They are reluctant to believe that their colleagues could be racist and they pardon their colleague’s ignorance, I believe, because on some level they want to believe that their colleagues are tolerant and nonracist.

I also believe that the discourses of being a good woman, specifically the concept of benevolence, are also likely at work in the subconscious of my participants and me. Srivastava states that “…colonial and contemporary representations of virtue, honesty, and benevolence have been a historical foundation, whiteness, bourgeois respectability, and femininity” (p.30). She argues that “…not only feminine but also feminist moral identity has been historically focused on benevolence and innocence” (p.33). My participants and I are influenced by a desire to do good, to foster what we perceive to be goodness. I do not believe that my participants and I are trying to ‘save’ anyone, as is
typically associated with benevolence. Instead, I believe we are working towards what we view is the morally right thing to do; that is, to acknowledge the past and present of settler colonialism and engage in treaty education in hopes of creating a more just society. Treaty education represents a path through which to work towards overcoming settler ignorance. Anne Godlewska, Jackie Moore, and Drew Bednasek (2010), argue that “ignorance is a powerful force, especially when combined with mythology and unexamined ideology” (p.436). I believe it is the powerful force of ignorance that upholds white settler’s strategic lack of knowledge of treaties and of the history of settlement.

As Nora and I discussed during the interview, it is a lack of knowledge that she and I deem unacceptable. I was intrigued by the response that I received from Nora, when I posed my question about ignorance. She said that "There are times when I feel like it's simply unacceptable that you don't have an understanding [of treaties]" (Nora, 2013) and I responded by asserting that "I feel like we need to get to that place where it is unacceptable" (Smith, 2013). That was when she drew a comparison between Germans who claimed they did not know about the Holocaust. Her comparison to the Holocaust has been made by others, too. David Stannard wrote a book called *American Holocaust* (1992) in which he describes the genocide of Native Americans. Despite the fact the American history is distinct from Canadian, there are enough commonalities that the premise of genocide can also be applied to a Canadian context (Daschuk, 2013). Although many may think her comparison is exaggerated, I think it is an excellent comparison:
At what point does ignorance become unacceptable? And, I don't really like that excuse, like, you know I was just having this conversation actually with my students today about Nazi Germany and, um, you know ‘Oh what about German people that just didn't know?’ Well how the [hell] don't you know?...and I feel the same way about Saskatchewan. Like, you know, there's Treaty Four flags flying outside every municipal building in the city. There's, um, major things happening, like Idle No More movement and all these things. How don't you know? (Nora, 2013)

The question, ‘when does ignorance become unacceptable?’ has sort of become my mantra in engaging in treaty education.

Tupper’s research with pre-service teachers (2011), Ellie and Sandy’s responses, and my personal experience all show that teachers commonly default to positions of innocent ignorance (or a lack of knowing how) as a rationale for not engaging in treaty education. As my advisor has said to me and my thesis committee member Dr. Shauneen Pete conveyed in a workshop at the 2014 teacher-Elder symposium, using the defense of ignorance would never be satisfactory in the context of teaching another subject. Somehow a lack of knowledge is used as a reasonable, rational defense when it comes to teaching treaties and other Indigenous histories. Yet, this defense would never be viewed as an acceptable response if the subject or discipline were replaced with one already established as being an essential part of curriculum in schools. Such an admission might even be a source of professional shame. For example, if asked to teach a math class, no teacher would ever claim that they were unable to do the job because of their lack of mathematical knowledge and understanding, or refuse to teach math for fear that they
might do something wrong. Instead, they would do the research and learn the necessary skills and knowledge. Meanwhile, these same teachers may claim “I do not know” when it comes to treaty education.

I argue that it should no longer be acceptable for settlers, especially teachers, to claim “I do not know.” Calderón (2011) points out that epistemologies of ignorance have become normalized ways of knowing and not knowing (p.107). As Tuana (2004) exclaims, “…we must abandon the assumption that ignorance is a passive gap in what we know” (p.196). Settler ignorance of our shared history—of treaties, and of the violent, oppressive invasion of Canadian settlers—is not passive, but instead is actively produced and obdurately defended. It is unacceptable that ignorance regarding the colonial foundation of Canada remains unacknowledged and normalized. Regan (2010) asserts that “claiming ignorance is a colonial strategy…” (p.41). Ignorance is actively reproduced by settlers in an effort to maintain colonial blindness, to maintain our illusion of innocence. Our—and I speak from my position as a white settler—colonial stance of comfortable ignorance has come at enormous expense to Indigenous peoples. It has falsely allowed settlers to maintain their unjust cultural and political superiority. Tuana (2004) notes that “…we cannot account for what we know without also offering an account of what we do not know and who is privileged and disadvantaged by such knowledge/ignorance” (P.196). We must learn to see beyond our colonial blindness if we hope to start to make things right, to create an equitable Canada that better reflects the relationships and spirit and intent of treaties.

It is my conviction that not knowing or being ignorant about our histories continues, in large part, because the journey towards knowing is uncomfortable and often
very difficult for settlers. As Regan (2010) says, it is unsettling. Nora explained that there really is no excuse for not knowing: "I don't really feel like it's acceptable any more in society to say 'I don't know' because with access to information and with a lot of the movements that are occurring right now, there's no reason not to know" (Nora, 2013). I agreed with her and responded with a reiteration of my belief: "If you don't know, it's because you choose not to know" (Tamara, 2013). I developed that belief through exploring epistemologies of ignorance and the ways in which dominant, privileged groups actively produce their ignorance because they have an interest in not knowing (Calderón, 2011). In other words, to paraphrase Alcoff (2007) and Mills (1997), white settler people have a vested interest in maintaining their ignorance; it enables them to maintain their innocence in the injustices of the past and present. It allows them to justify and maintain dominance and it prevents any need for accountability.

It is my firm belief that white settlers’ comfort with their ignorance is far beyond the point of acceptable. I suggest that settler’s comfort with their ignorance and with the concept of ignorance in general is directly related to maintaining their innocence. If settlers open themselves to learn the Indigenous versions of settlement—to hear the history of treaty and the history of cultural genocide and oppression of Indigenous peoples—they are accepting a direct challenge to their feigned identity as tolerant and peacemaking Canadians. Learning and acknowledging this history dispels the sense of innocence that white settlers Canadians attribute to themselves and to their pioneer provenance. This challenges their “moral identity” (p.48). As I discuss in greater detail later, this is often very unsettling for white settler people.
Idle No More.

During the winter that these interviews occurred, a grassroots movement was ignited in Canada. Nora mentioned the social movements occurring and how they make it impossible for people to not know the history of treaties in Canada. One of the movements that she was referencing and one that I have mentioned repeatedly throughout my thesis is Idle No More. It was not surprising that the Idle No More movement was mentioned by each participant, despite me not having framed a specific question regarding the movement. Sandy said, and I agree, that learning about Idle No More is a part of treaty education. She was talking about the webinar that she and I participated in together when she said, "It's [Idle No More] what I would have called treaty education” (Sandy, 2013). Sandy also talked about how she has learned from Idle No More:

This year has been—and I keep crediting Idle No More with it—a real cool year for me to figure out how it is I be an activist...and get along with people, and to, instead of alienating people that are actually on the side. (Sandy, 2013)

As I mentioned in my introduction, I truly believe that Idle No More opened up space for Canadians to talk about treaties. As I said to Sandy during our interview, in reference to working on a staff composed mainly of white settlers, “...now it's not just you fighting to open that space, right?” (Tamara, 2013). I have had many conversations about treaty because of Idle No More. Even some of my friends, who are the most resistant, asked me about Idle No More and listened when I explained. As I told Sandy,
It blew my mind, how many people are engaged in this conversation because of Idle No More. So, even if there are a lot of people who still have those closed minds, to me, it's opening up a space to talk about it and that's really powerful. (Tamara, 2013)

I think these conversations are long overdue, but I am optimistic that they have permeated the consciousness of white settlers and I am hopeful that it will help shape our future for the better.

**Students.**

Another theme that developed through the data analysis—one that has also helped me to feel hopeful and optimistic about our future—is that high school students are generally open to learning about treaty. It is likely that my participants and I all discussed experiences of student support because teachers need it and seek it out; it affirms our passion and love for learning. As Daniel Liston notes in his piece, “Love and Despair in Teaching” (2000), without these affirmations, teachers “…may find [themselves] in despair” (p.83) and that can lead to teacher burn out. In particular, taking up issues related to race and privilege in class can be an intimidating and unsettling thing. However, in my personal experiences with students I have found that they are interested in learning more. Ellie’s experiences were similar; she noted that “…the things I’ve done with students have been way more successful than things I’ve done with staff” and “the students have been really receptive to it” (Ellie, 2013). Nora brought up the students when I asked her to talk about a success that she has experienced:
Another, like, success is I'm finding is that students, um, do want to learn, for the most part. Obviously, there's pockets of resistance, but, ah, for the most part they do. We did *Three Day Road* with my English class, this year, and we talked a lot about, um, how the book paralleled Canada's colonial history and some of my students, on final exams, wrote like amazing things that made me be inspired to keep, like trying. (Nora, 2013)

Sandy spoke very positively of taking students to WE day, a day all about youth voice and activism. Each of us acknowledged that students’ willingness inspires and motivates us to continue this work. It gives us hope for future generations.

**Moving from isolated material to meaningful integration.**

An important idea that kept re-occurring both in my personal experience and the interviews was the notion that treaty education needed to be meaningfully integrated through a holistic approach. As I pointed out, I see treaty education as much, much more than isolated teaching of dates and facts about legal documents. To repeat Nora’s description of what treaty education means, it is “…infusing treaty education and Indigenous worldview into all aspects of my teaching, not simply one particular unit in Indigenous Studies 10” (Nora, 2013). Treaty education is about honouring the knowledges and ways of knowing of First Nations peoples; it is about honouring the treaties themselves, including the relationships, spirit and intent; it is about challenging settler privilege and identity; it is about ridding our nation of colonial blindness, and destabilizing pernicious myths about Canada and Canadians. It is more than a mandate, that can be reduced to a unit or the resources distributed in the treaty kit supplied by the
When colleagues, friends, or family ask me about my thesis, I hesitate because they want a simple answer, a solution that costs nothing. There is nothing simple about white settlers meaningfully engaged in treaty education. It is a journey, one that is often unsettling and uncomfortable. But it is an important journey, one that is imperative that all settlers embark upon—especially those who endeavour to teach.

**Teaching English.**

Although I did not purposefully seek out participants who teach ELA, all of my participants teach English whether they were trained to do so or not. My criterion specified participants who identified as white settler women and engaged in treaty education; their common teaching assignments at the discipline level was thought-provoking. From my perspective as an ELA teacher, I could see how others would be drawn to treaty education because the Saskatchewan ELA curriculum is outcome-based and leaves the choice of content up to the teachers. The ELA curriculum recommends themes such as the challenges of life, the world around and within us, and equity and ethics, specifically from the ELA B10 curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.10). Teachers can easily connect the suggested themes to the content of treaty education. The inclusion of First Nations and Métis texts is a requirement articulated in the aims and goals of the ELA curriculum (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 4) and all other provincial curricula. As I reflected on how my practice and the teaching practices of the participants could align seamlessly with the mandated curriculum I came to see that there were larger discourses at work in our pedagogical “choices.” Val Mulholland (2012) writes:
Incorporating First Nations cultural perspectives and practices in English education is a moral and political imperative, more likely to develop when the restrictions created by white-settler discourses are exposed, recognized and addressed. White settlers have easy access to an idyllic rural mythology that interferes with social justice initiatives. A counternarrative to the heroic pioneer story that is suffused in many Saskatchewan schools may contribute to an equitable education for all in this place. (p. 204)

In our efforts to realize the promise of treaty education, the participants and I, have actively worked to expose the dominant pioneer discourse – something I now see can be integrated into a discipline focussed on story with relative ease. As ELA teachers, we may be writing a curriculum that explicitly informs our efforts to engage in treaty education.

Having made this claim of ‘relative ease,’ I do not claim that the discipline of English is a neutral enterprise by any means. It is no secret that “language has long ridden aside the forces of expansion and conquest” (Willinsky, 1998, p.190). Language and literature have a complicated history linked to colonization and oppression. As John Willinsky (1998) attests

It is simply too easy to teach English as if it were the soul of civilized knowing, the heart of great literature, and the very tongue of democracy…With the expansion of the British Empire, English was made an instrument of dominion and silencing; it was used to regulate and police access to authority and knowledge among colonized peoples. (p.191)
Sterzuk (2011) has shown that settler forms of English continue to be viewed as superior and normative, while Indigenous Englishes are viewed as nonstandard and inferior. She asserts that “…improving language bias and educational inequality in settler schools must involve the work of remembering our colonial past and developing an understanding that colonialism continues to produce our present, including…societal (and educator) views about language; and linguistic dominance and oppression” (p.37). That is to say, colonialism lives on through the teaching of English and we must do the work of remembering our colonial past and how it continues to influence our present. Mulholland (2009) describes the acquisition of English language and culture as “part of the colonial identity kit”: “The teaching of English in public schools in Canada has been used for similar purposes, to dominate a variety of groups of marginalized people …” (p. 103). Willinsky (2004) refers to this ongoing reality as “…the history of English teaching, a history that is not yet past” (p.25). As English teachers, we inherit the troubled past of the discipline, whether or not we are conscious of the legacy. Evidence of that difficult legacy can be found in the texts of school book rooms, in the testing practices that privilege particular white-settler social capital and in the notions of “proper English” that infuse teacher language. The control that English teachers have over language and literacy practices continue to play an important role in a system that produces educational inequality in settler schools. It is, therefore, significant that the teachers who participated in this study are engaged in treaty education, a pedagogy well-suited to the anti-colonial project of dismantling settler myths and dominance. To do so alongside the teaching of English has delicious, subversive implications given the history of the discipline to advantage some and disadvantage many others.
**Conclusion: What I hope others can learn from my findings**

As I have mentioned several times throughout my thesis, it is my hope that others can learn something from the experiences that my participants and I have shared. I hope that I have shown, first and foremost, that learning to teach treaty education is a journey. It is not simply an outcome to be attained and there is no end point. There is not a singular set of historical knowledge to attain and then impart to students. It involves learning complex histories that challenge the dominant narratives that white settler Canadians grow up believing about Canada’s past. Though learning to teach treaty education is a journey that is unique for each individual, in each place, the experiences of my participants and me have demonstrated that there are some important things that we have in common.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of support. Whether it is from colleagues; from Elders and our communities; from mainstream media and social movements, such as Idle No More; from the school divisions that employ us; from teacher education programs; from the OTC; or even from our students, teachers need support. The journey is difficult at times. Teaching treaties involves working through ignorance, challenging beliefs and myths held about our collective past, and interrogating our colonial blindness. This work can be emotional. It is often an unsettling journey for settlers. However, our experiences have also shown that the support is out there and it is accessible for teachers. There are plenty of resources, curriculum, and people to support teachers in their journey, but teachers must take the first steps.
I also believe that teaching treaties in a good way involves a pedagogical shift towards criticality and Indigenous epistemologies. Teachers must approach this journey as a learner. It can be difficult at times, but teachers need to become comfortable with not always having all of the answers. We need to recognize when we need support and seek it out. We need to teach treaties in a good way, in a way that honours the spirit and intent of the treaties, and this involves being critical of the discourses we rely on to inform our teaching. I take comfort in knowing that I am not alone on this unsettling journey and I gain strength to continue this journey from the hope that future generations will be enlightened.
Chapter 5: Opportunities to Grow—implications, interpretations, recommendations, and final thoughts

Igniting the Spark: Teacher Education Programs

Each of my participants referenced the influence that their university education had on the way they think and the way they teach. One thing that has become increasingly clear throughout my research journey is the critical impact of teacher education programs. My personal journey has developed so much because of my experiences at the University of Regina. I would not have the language or theory to begin to think about or describe my experiences without my education. From my undergraduate classes in postcolonial literature and Indigenous studies and my graduate courses in critical discourses, the way I think about the world has evolved. I have developed critical consciousness as a result of my university education. Even my journey to understanding and engaging in treaty education began because of the teacher internship program and the internship manual.

As one of my participants, Ellie, said "I almost think that at the university level, [treaty education] needs to be really clear so that the calibre of teachers coming out is maybe just a little different, maybe a little better prepared" (Ellie, 2013). I can only speak of my experience, but I know that the Faculty of Education, University of Regina is working hard to prepare their students. The renewed programs have an explicit focus on social justice and almost all of their programs now require students to take mandatory Indigenous studies classes. In the Faculty of Education, all but physical education and business education require students to take courses in Indigenous studies. As well, the
University’s mission is based on a Cree word: “mâmawohkamâtowin is a Cree wording meaning ‘co-operation; working together towards common goals.’” (Registrar’s Office). Of course, this does not mean that all students readily accept the teachings that the programs offer. Still, teacher education programs have significant impact on their students and the University of Regina has started the important work of unsettling its education students and faculty.

University is where my participants and I developed an understanding of critical pedagogies and it has become a part of who we are as teacher. I again reference Dion (2007):

Critical pedagogy makes clear the need for an investigation of the extent to which belief systems have become internalized to the point that many teachers unsuspectingly rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to teaching without recognizing the inadequacy or questioning the effects of those discourses. (p.332)

As Tony Monchinski (2010) writes, “critical pedagogies draw aside what they see as the façade of neutrality and objectivity in order to expose the power at work in the field of education...” (p.16). Critical pedagogy pushes further than exposing and seeing power. It also involves challenging and dismantling that power: “While allowing one to critically understand our world, critical pedagogies as praxis demand we work to change that world” (p.15). Treaty education involves not only that teachers be critical, but that they help learners to be critical, too. Treaty education is teachers working to change the way that settlers understand and interact with the world.
Professional and Personal Growth: Letting Go of Who We Thought We Were

Once teachers are employed, ongoing opportunities for professional development are crucial. Such opportunities help teachers who seek to engage in treaty education. For example, my research has shown that the Ministry initiative A Time for Significant Leadership had a significant influence on teachers in at least one rural school division. Both of my participants from a rural school division that implemented the initiative talked extensively about the positive impact it has on their pedagogy. Ellie and I, the participants from large, urban communities both talked about the influence of the OTC and the professional development we received from their workshops, which we attended on our own initiative. My research has illustrated the possible impact and necessity of sustained professional growth opportunities.

Treaty education is not something that white settler teachers can meaningfully engage in after a few professional development sessions or even a few university classes. It challenges/disrupts the very core of settler identity and how settlers ‘know’ or view Canada. Developing professionally and engaging in treaty education undeniably also develops our personal identity:

Inevitably, professional development involves teachers in a process of deconstructing existing practices, acquiring new theory in the form of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values, and constructing alternative ways of doing, seeing and understanding. This process involves a realignment and remaking of subjectivity and identity. (Halse, 2010, p.31)
I maintain that engaging meaningfully in treaty education requires white-settler teachers to interrogate their self—their identity and their positions of privilege. Britzman (1998) asserts

…learning demands alteration in that the self must interfere with itself and reconsider its previous investments. New knowledge is first confronted as a criticism toward and loss of the learner's present knowledge if the knowledge offered is felt as discontinuous with the self, if it seems to threaten the ways the world has been perceived. (p.128)

My participants and I did not explicitly discuss the act of shedding parts of our white settler identities, as I did not ask a question specifically on the topic. However, each of us spoke of experiences with questioning and coming to understand our privilege. I see this as a part of the process of letting go of ignorance and the illusions of innocence that are so deeply ingrained in white settler identity. We were letting go of who we thought we were. When I first began my research, I did not even refer to myself as a white settler; I thought of myself as simply a Canadian. Through my research, I have learned that the words white and settler both carry meanings that are necessary to understanding the history of Canada and white settlers’ role as treaty people. I have learned that the social positionings, both white and settler, are an important part of my identity because they have given me unearned privilege and power in Canadian society. As Candace Savage (2012) explains, “As the descendent of incomers to the Canadian prairies, I am the intended beneficiary, however unwittingly, to an ecological and humanitarian atrocity (p.152). The process of interrogating identity can be difficult, unsettling, and uncomfortable, but it is necessary. It can be emotional because white settlers have
internalized the dominant discourses and myths that construct our privilege so wholly that they are a part of who we are—or, as I like to put it, who we thought we were. King (1991) points out that “any serious challenge to the status-quo that calls this racial privilege into question inevitably challenges the self-identity of white people who have internalized these ideological justifications” (p.135). Becoming white settler teachers engaged in treaty education poses a huge challenge to our status-quo, to our settler identities.

As I have emphasized throughout, this process of personal and professional development is a journey, a process. As Christine Halse (2010) explains,

... the process of becoming (Someone? Something?) is never a calm, linear course. It is a knotty path full of twists and turns that always involves, if only partially and in passing, a process of loss, abandonment, or (re)alignment of subjectivity and identity” (p.25).

Settlers will be better able to move towards understanding treaties if we abandon the myths of tolerance, benevolence, and peacemaking, as well as pioneer conquest narratives. As Dion (2004) explains, “Recognition of the post-contact experiences of First Nations people requires Canadians to acknowledge not only our place, but their relationship with us…Canadians have told and retold themselves a particular story; hearing our stories disrupts their understanding of themselves…” (p.59). White settlers need to disrupt our identities; we need to abandon parts of our identities, parts of who we thought we were. We must realign ourselves as treaty people, as partners and allies. As I
have shown through the experiences of my participants and myself, our journeys have not been linear or simple.

**Cautious, but Optimistic**

I worry that my passion for treaty education may be viewed by critics as yet another quick fix approach. In no way do I believe or mean to suggest that treaty education is a quick fix to the settler problems that we have in Saskatchewan. It is my firm belief, however, that treaty education fits into a larger decolonizing movement and is a solid place for settlers to begin an unsettling journey. Treaty education represents the possibility of a truth telling and reconciliation. For me, it represents hope that Saskatchewan may someday be a place that I am proud to call home, a place that is no longer racist, and a place where Indigenous students, their cultures and ways of knowing are honoured as a fundamental part of our history and the education of all students.

I also fear that my stance may lead some to believe that treaties were a great, proud moment in our history. I do not mean to imply that I think treaties were an exception to the racist, assimilationist strategies that the Canadian government employed to interact with Indigenous peoples. Though many First Nations were fierce negotiators (Miller, 2009), most often the treaties were not fair to Indigenous peoples. Often, though many fought honourably to resist, First Nations peoples had little choice but to sign an unfair treaty. Strezuk (2011) summaries it precisely:

...starving, linguistically disadvantaged and unable to resist Ottawa’s forces, First Nations were left with little other choice than to sign unfair treaties that endowed
them with few rights and goods, little power, money or land, which would strip
them of their way of life. (p.63)

According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, there are 70 First
Nations in Saskatchewan. Of the total land base in Saskatchewan, “about 1% of the land
base is reserve land” (Nestor, 2006). One percent is not sharing; it is nowhere near
equitable. Sadly, in many ways, the meagre promises made by my settler ancestors have
not been honoured.

I am also fearful that the treaty education initiative will never been enacted in
some places or will simply fade away, much like A Time for Significant Leadership. At
the time of writing, the Ministry of Education has already phased out the First Nations
and Métis unit, and is now no longer doing the treaty essential learnings assessment at the
grade seven level. I fear that teachers will (or possibly already do) think of treaty
education as another fading initiative in education. The field of education is constantly
evolving and I often hear my colleagues complaining about the change, as though is it
series of insignificant, fruitless adjustments. I fear that treaty education will not be taken
up meaningfully. Regan (2010) warns that the "failure to link knowledge and critical
reflection to action explains why many settlers never move beyond denial and guilt, why
many public education efforts are ineffective in bringing about deep social and political
change" (p. 23). Something that I have come to believe strongly is that treaty education
is different from other educational initiatives on a fundamental level.

Often, other initiatives involve only professional development and this means
teachers attend a workshop and implement their learning into their classroom teaching.
Although professional development is a crucial part of treaty education, I believe that treaty education goes beyond the professional and requires teachers to develop on a personal and moral level. To me, treaty education is about more than curriculum reform; it carries the potential to be a catalyst in Canadian reform, in both the realm of education and, subsequently, in society. Meaningful treaty education involves an ideological shift. It requires a complete change in the way that white settler Canadians think of themselves, about Canada, and about their place within Canada. As I have noted throughout, this shift is challenging on a deeply personal level and it does not happen after a few professional development sessions. It is a personal journey that settlers must take, if they wish to meaningfully engage in treaty education.

My Hopes: Lighting the Way and Passing the Torch

Treaty education represents an opportunity for settlers to begin to view the past and the present with a discerning, more critical eye. I believe that treaty education can act as a catalyst to begin to solve the settler problem, to challenge the myths that enable settlers to maintain their innocence and ignorance. My passion does not lie in ‘saving’ Indigenous peoples. My passion lies, rather, in encouraging settlers to understand that their only right to live on these lands that we so proudly call home comes from treaties (Epp, 2008; Miller, 2009; Johnson, 2007), from the First Nations people agreeing to share the land, their mother. I am passionate about the relationships and reconciliation that can come from acknowledging the significance of treaties.

My interview with Sandy began shortly after 4 p.m. As I dropped her off at her home just after 8 p.m., after the interview and the ‘treaty drive, Sandy hugged me and
told me to “pass the torch” (Sandy, 2013). On my drive back to the Regina, I thought a lot about the things she had shared with me that night, including her parting words. As clichéd as it may be, her statement encompasses exactly what I set out hoping to accomplish. I began this research hoping to learn more, not only to help myself, but with anticipation and hopes of helping others, too. I have come to view teachers like the ones featured in my study as leaders in treaty education. I do not mean to imply that the OTC’s leadership is not valuable or incredibly helpful—it is, and they aided me on my journey. But teachers are at the very core of this work. I see the leadership of teachers as a very important factor in the implementation of treaty education and, ultimately, changing the way that Canadians think about history and about themselves. These leaders are lighting the way on this path that can sometimes be lonely, dark, and daunting. In passing on their stories and learning to others, they are passing on the torch.

I chose to do my research of the experiences of white settler teachers engaging in treaty education because I want to be able to pass the torch. I want to pass it to colleagues, students, and other settler people so that they can begin to think critically, to understand the significance of being a treaty person and begin to dismantle the destructive, hegemonic myths that Canada is founded upon. As I put it during the interview with Sandy,

For me, treaty education is an active disruption of that dominant discourse that we, or that dominant narrative that we tell of Canada—who we are as Canadians and how we got to be that way—it's explicitly against that and it does interrogate, you know, their settler identities. And for me, like, it's kinda been a journey. Like, I agree, you look at those people and think "how can you think that way?"
but then you realize maybe I thought that way at one point too, maybe not quite that extreme. But, it took me a long time to get to where I am, too. (Tamara, 2013)

It is time that settlers recognize that it was not simply the hard work of our pioneer ancestors that gave us the comfortable and privileged positions that we occupy today, though that is the discourse that we have been indoctrinated into. We need to be critical and recognize, as King (1991) explains, that “uncritical ways of thinking about racial inequality accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages White people have as a result of subordinating diverse others” (p.135). St. Denis (2011) argues that “…our schools and educational institutions must be committed to challenging the Canadian fantasy…that Canada does not have a history of colonialism. We must acknowledge both the past and continuing injustice towards Aboriginal people rather than evading and erasing…” (p.315). Savage (2012) acknowledges “If the incomer and Aboriginal communities ever do begin to talk sincerely about how the West was won, we are going to have a lot of painful ground to cover” (p.173). We need to learn to see and tell the truth—that we are all treaty people, that settlers benefit immensely from the treaties, and that, as settlers, we have done a very poor job of honouring the promises made through treaties.

Going back to the notion of the power and potential of education, Kovach (2009) posits that “Curriculum makes space like nothing else I know in education” (p.6). Thanks to the efforts of the OTC and the Saskatchewan government’s support of them, we have the curriculum and supports for treaty education. The space has been opened up. Now, it is up to educators to maximize its potential. As I have repeated throughout, I
believe that teachers can learn from each other’s experiences. My thesis research presents an opportunity for such learning to occur. Teachers who have engaged meaningfully in treaty education can illuminate the path for other teachers to follow. I hope that my research can spur others to act on what I have learned. I am hopeful because “case studies are a ‘step to action’. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development...” (Cohen, et.al., 2011, p.292). I hope to share my thesis findings, my learning, with my colleagues through presenting at conferences and professional development opportunities. I hope that my research will inspire others to overcome their ignorance and develop an understanding of what it means to be a treaty person.

Ultimately, if many teachers begin to meaningfully engage in treaty education (as I have described), I believe it can have a positive impact on the current relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Donald (2004) recognizes the potential in reimagining the relationships between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Canadians:

... Aboriginal people and European Canadians are intimately connected through the stories they tell of living together in this place. This relationship persists to this day, despite the distrust, misunderstandings, and animosities that punctuate it. It is in these relationships between people, and the ways in which the stories people tell reveal these relationships, that a new form of Canadian citizenship can be imagined. (p.23)
Dion (2009), too, recognizes the relational power of the stories that we tell; she believes “...that rendering non-Aboriginal people cognizant of our stories is a crucial first step in establishing fertile ground on which to cultivate an equitable relationship” (p.4). Interestingly, Dion and Donald’s visions of hope for our future, one shared by many critical educators, circles back to the vision that many chiefs held at the signing of treaties: “... chiefs were constantly laying out a vision of the land very different from what was happening. It was a vision of how to live there, sharing the land over the long term. In the short term, their approach was a tragic failure. But it is now the vision that we are slowly moving to” (Saul, 2008, p.17). Their vision was one of sharing and kinship, of living together and good relations (Epp, 2008, p.114), not the exploitation, oppression and domination that came to be.

In Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada, Miller (2009) presents a strikingly similar argument and argues the importance of understanding treaties:

An environment in which treaties were properly understood and appreciated would also be one in which the strong social ties that Aboriginal people have always believed were essential to treaty-making would become general. That is a consummation devoutly to be wished and long overdue. (p.309).

Treaty education has the power to play a pivotal role in the journey towards realizing the chiefs’ vision, towards cultivating an understanding of treaties and nurturing the relationships that were forged in their signing.
The opportunities exist. It is up to educators to seize them—to interrogate their ignorance and examine their positioning as white-settlers, to meaningfully engage in teaching treaties, to make a positive difference in the lives of all Canadians. Something that Elder Noel Starblanket said during an OTC workshop really resonated with me and has helped maintain my motivation and hopefulness in challenging times. He said, “Imagine how enlightened students will be after learning about treaty for twelve years” (Starblanket, 2013). Like Dion (2009), “I continue to locate hope and possibility in education” (p.177). Imagining the possibilities of the future, I am hopeful.
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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1) How did you become engaged in treaty education? Who or what sparked your interest?

2) What does it mean to you to be “meaningfully engaged in treaty education”?

3) Although it is mandated, many teachers still choose not to engage in treaty education. If you did not already answer the following in questions one or two, please explain why you choose to engage in treaty education.

4) The next few questions are regarding your current teaching context.
   a) Please describe the student population of the high school, including size and cultural diversity.
   b) What subject(s) do you teach?
   c) Is your administration generally supportive of treaty education? Explain.
   d) Are your colleagues generally supportive of your efforts with treaty education? Explain.

5) Have you attended any professional development opportunities related to treaty education? If so, what were they and did you find them helpful?

6) The next few questions are based on your educational background.
   a) Was your secondary education in a rural or urban context? Please briefly describe the high school you attended.
   b) Did you take Native Studies in high school?
   c) What university did you attend for your education degree?
   d) Did your university education have an influence on your engagement with treaties? If so, please explain.
c) Did your university education involve Indigenous studies or other courses related to Indigenous histories and knowledges?
   i. If so, please briefly describe the courses you took.
   ii. Did you take them by choice or were they required by your program of study?

7) Are there any resources that you have found particularly useful?

8) Is there anything else you wish to share with me regarding your engagement with teaching treaties?
Appendix B: Interview questions

1) Please share a story (or stories) of your successes and challenges with treaty education.

2) How did you learn about the treaty education mandate?

3) Does/did your administration/leadership explicitly promote treaty education?

4) Please discuss the importance of having supportive colleagues (allies, inspiration, sharing ideas).

5) A question about ignorance: you were once ignorant, too? What do you think is the difference between you (who choose to overcome your ignorance) and your colleagues that choose stay “in” it?
Appendix C: Consent form

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Teachers Engaged with Treaty Education at the High School Level - a Multiple Case Study

Researcher: Tamara Smith, Graduate Student, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, [redacted]

Supervisor: Val Mulholland, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, [redacted]

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:
The purpose of this study is to gain insights into Saskatchewan high school teachers’ experiences with implementing the 2008 mandate of treaty education, specifically asking the question “How have white-settler, female teachers in Saskatchewan engaged with teaching treaties at the high school level and what can others learn from their experiences?” I plan to conduct my research using a bounded multiple-case study method, which analyzes three to four cases. I also plan to include myself and my experiences as one of the cases. I will engage with participants using semi-structured interviews to discover what their experience has been with implementing Treaty education. I plan collect narrative data by asking you to share stories of their successes and challenges in regards to teaching treaties at the high school level. I am specifically interested in teachers who—like myself—are female, white-settlers engaged in teaching treaties. I will also collect specific data using a questionnaire to learn about your individual educational backgrounds, your professional development related to treaty education, the supports you have utilized, and your teaching contexts.

Procedures:
Should you choose to participate in this research, I will send you a questionnaire that I ask you to complete prior to our interview. It asks questions about your teaching context and your educational experiences. It will take approximately thirty to forty minutes to complete. I will send it to you via e-mail and I ask that you respond via e-mail, as well.

I also ask that you participate in an individual a semi-structured interview and a semi-structured group interview, with other participants. They will take place at a time and location convenient for you. The individual semi-structured interview will last approximately thirty to forty minutes and I will ask you to share stories of your successes and struggles with treaty education. The group interview will also be semi-structured and it will last approximately an hour and a half. The interviews will be recorded using a digital recorder.

Potential Risks:
There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. I do not anticipate asking any questions that are sensitive in nature. However, you are free to refrain from answering any questions that may deem uncomfortable.

Potential Benefits:
There are no guaranteed benefits of participating in this research. However, I am conducting this research in hope of learning from your experiences. It is possible that your participation, sharing your experiences, will serve to help other teachers wishing to engage in treaty education. It is my hope that sharing your experiences will help others in their own efforts to meaningfully take up treaty education.
Confidentiality:
The data collected during this research project will be used for my Master's thesis. I will take measures to keep your identity confidential. I may directly quote your questionnaire or interview responses, but you will be given a pseudonym and I will not use any identifying information (such as the school you work at). Given the nature of the study, it is possible that you may be identifiable to others on the basis of the things you have shared about yourself. As well, given that your questionnaire will be returned to me via e-mail, there are confidentiality risks associated with the transmission of e-mails. I will put a note regarding confidentiality at the bottom of the e-mail correspondences. As such, your confidentiality could be compromised.

After your interviews, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and you may delete any information that you see fit.

Also, the researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the group interview, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.

The data collected will be stored electronically until the study is complete. I will have paper copies of the data for analysis, but they will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet on the University of Regina campus. When the data is no longer needed, the electronic files will be deleted and the paper copies will be destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw, I will not use any data that I have collected from you and it will be destroyed. However, your right to withdraw will expire on May 1, 2013. After that point, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:
To obtain results from the study, please contact the researcher by e-mail:

Questions or Concerns:
If you have questions or concerns at any point in the process, please contact me by phone: [Redacted]

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has approved this project.
Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant    Signature    Date

Researcher’s Signature    Date
A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix D: Research ethics approval memo

DATE: January 3, 2013

TO: Tamara Dawn Mario Smith
   188 Ritler Avenue
   Regina, SK S4T 7A4

FROM: Dr. Larena Hoesber
      Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re Teachers Engaged with Treaty Education at the High School Level - a Multiple Case Study (File # 36S1213)

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. Larena Hoesber

cc: Dr. Valerie Mulholland - Education

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 103) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca