RUNNING SOLO:
INDIGENOUS TEACHER IDENTITY IN ROMAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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Tyler Larry Wright, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *Running Solo: Indigenous Teacher Identity in Roman Catholic Education*, in an oral examination held on December 6, 2016. 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

Through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), and whiteness studies the inquiry set out to trouble the question; how does Indigenous teacher identity exist in Roman Catholic education? Following a hybrid methodology that allied critical ethnography and Indigenous methodology, three salient themes emerged: (1) Indigenous teacher identity, (2) systemic barriers and (3) notions of change. Endemic structures of dominance and pressures to colonize influenced the construction of Indigenous teacher identity in Roman Catholic education. Conversations concerning pedagogical philosophy, advocacy and the effects of cultural brokering focused the theme. Systemic barriers were abundant for Indigenous teachers seeking autonomy. Experiences of racism, colonialism, normative thinking, and broken relationships created an oppressive work environment. The participants proposed three notions of change to improve Indigenous teacher experience in Roman Catholic education: (1) dismantle racial and colonial conditioning of settler teachers through professional development, (2) prioritize the hiring of more Indigenous teachers, and (3) develop decolonizing programming and curriculum for students. The study culminates by explicitly stating six personal Calls to Action and three Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a directive model to instigate systemic change.
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To my mother, father, brother, and sister. Thank you for your unwavering support. Your faith in me is my motivation to do good work in this world.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my participants who experience Roman Catholic education in a much different way than I do. May this thesis hold me accountable to engage in decolonizing and indigenizing agency so that my participants (and all Indigenous educators in Roman Catholic education for that matter) can self-direct their pedagogical and practical teaching journey.

I dedicate this work to my daughters Scarlett and Indyana. May you become instruments of social justice and disrupters of inequities.
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CHAPTER ONE – Introduction and Context

1.1 Introduction

Endemic racism and colonialism systemically ingrained in Saskatchewan education has detrimental implications for Indigenous teachers. Through predominantly settler voices (e.g., politicians, the Ministry of Education, board members, administrators, teachers, students and parents) national narratives and dominant discourses are normalized and affirmed within educational structures, processes, and curricula placing Indigenous teachers at a deficit. Donald, Glanfield, and Sterenberg (2012) affirm, “the habitual disregard of Indigenous peoples stems from the colonial frontier experience and is perpetuated in the present educational context as a curricular and pedagogical logic” (p. 54). In Roman Catholic education it is hypothesized that Indigenous teachers endure a more complicated reality than their public education counterparts because of the colonial history of the Roman Catholic Church, specifically the mistreatment of Aboriginal Peoples\(^1\) on account of the Indian Residential School system. The current experiences of Indigenous teachers working in a Roman Catholic education context are unknown due to the lack of research. The present thesis seeks to amend this reality by examining the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous teachers working in Roman Catholic schools with a view to uncover how Indigenous identity exists within the system.

Framed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), and Whiteness studies the inquiry interrogates Roman Catholic

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\(^1\) Peoples is capitalized throughout the thesis so to respectfully acknowledge the sovereign nationhood of the Indigenous Peoples. It is meant to be a tool of disruption concerning Canada’s colonial legacy of naming those they deem subordinate. The ‘s’ is included at the end of Peoples because “it speaks to the incredible diversity of Indigenous Peoples as hundreds of culturally and linguistically distinct groups” (Vowel, p. 10).
education so to surface structures that delimit, devalue and subordinate Indigenous teachers. Dismantling oppressive components of the system and constructing new spaces of equity and opportunity is a critical part of the pedagogical and moral duty of educators, in particular Roman Catholic educators, and thus a primary aim of the thesis. Creating an educational reality that is fair and welcoming and doing so in a “good way” (Kovach, 2009, p. 146) achieves both the mission of the Church and upholds the values of Indigenous Peoples.

In order to make meaningful and trusting connections with Indigenous teachers, I engaged in an ethically relational method. Embracing the tenets of critical ethnography and Indigenous methodology, the inquiry challenged systems of power through the employment of tribal epistemologies. By spending time with the participants during impromptu visits, tobacco giving sessions, the Talking Circle, interviews, and dinner I was able to build trusting relationship which allowed me to attend to the cultural contours that shape the lives of the participants. As Donald, Glanfield, and Sterenberg (2012) assert, connecting this way brings “unity and spirit to our research relationship” (p. 69). By placing myself, a settler teacher, “firmly in a relational context” (Wilson, 2007, p. 194) it challenges me to disrupt Western research practices by embracing Indigenous knowledge, traditions, protocols, and worldviews while interrogating my own colonial conflicts and conditions. As informed by Donald (2009a, 2009b), the ethically relational strategy engaged in was “profoundly dependent on the Cree concept of ‘miyo-wichitowin’, a healing energy or medicine that is generated when we are actively together with the intention of honouring and respecting the relationships we are enmeshed within” (Donald, Glanfield, & Sterenberg, 2012,
By adhering to the concept of ‘miyo-wichitowin’, the participants’ interpretations of the system emerged.

1.2 Chapter Outline

The remainder of chapter one outlines the study. The first section addresses common terminology. The second section links colonialism, Christianity, and Roman Catholicism as it intersects throughout Canadian history. Section three summarizes decolonizing education as a framework for understanding Roman Catholic education. Section four interrogates my context in relation to the research. Section five describes the research question and rationale. Lastly, section six outlines the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.3 Terminology

Deconstructing the names assigned to Indigenous Peoples living in what is now Canada helps to provide context. First, we must understand “that names are linked to identity and notions of identity are fluid” (Vowel, 2016, p. 8) therefore offering a definition of such names requires careful consideration because naming can result in privileging and oppressing. When Indigenous names are addressed in academic literature it typically centers on constitutional law, which, as a result, privileges European settlers thus facilitating the continuation of Canada’s paternalistic and racist legacy. Rearticulating colonial definitions assigned to Indigenous names can be achieved only when we listen to the voices of Indigenous Peoples. Thus Indigenous scholars have been sourced to define the proceeding terminology.

The name Indigenous is the most common name used throughout the present study. In this inquiry Indigenous denotes those descendants (i.e., First Nations, Métis, & Inuit) as the first inhabitants of the geographical space that
Canada occupies today. The name Indigenous replaces Aboriginal because, as Vowel (2016) informs, “its use is incredibly generic and made increasingly obnoxious by its overuse” (p. 10). The word Aboriginal has become a catchall word lumping Indigenous Peoples and others into a category determined primarily by race. Furthermore, Aboriginal is a constitutional construct (Constitution Act of 1982) and therefore an instrument of oppression because it facilitates the maintenance of the power hegemony; settlers, those at the top of the hegemony, are the definers of what it means to be Aboriginal. As a result, many Indigenous Peoples living in Canada prefer the name Indigenous to Aboriginal.

First Nations replaced the colonized label “Indian” during the 1960’s and 1970’s because First Nations Peoples objected to the racialized and colonized contours of the name (Vowel, 2016). The term First Nations is in recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous Nations rightful claim to self-determination and self-government (Gadacz, 2015). The word First Nations encompasses all Nations and Bands that are neither Métis nor Inuit who inhabited the lands before confederation.

Métis or Michif (the traditional word denoting Métis heritage) is best defined in Chris Andersen’s (2014) book, Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood. Andersen vehemently rejects the racialized definition popularized by settler culture that Métis refers to mixed-blood Indigenous Peoples. Instead he argues that we must learn to get outside of race and understand the Indigeneity of the Métis people by learning their history, cultural practices, and kinship relationships (Andersen, 2014). A constellation of kinship ties connects the Métis to many Indigenous Nations, French fur traders
and explorers, and occasionally to other European settlers. However, he maintains that the Métis Peoples’ shared history, which begins in the Red River region of Manitoba during the late 18th century and includes the subsequent diaspora to many regions of the Prairies, in particular Fort Edmonton and Pembina, fundamentally determined the Métis identity (Andersen, 2014). Métis is defined as an autonomous, distinct, and connected to but not racialized by kinship ties. Vowel’s (2016) testimony clarifies,

I’d invariably be asked, “So is it your mom or dad who is an Indian?” To which I’d say, a little challengingly, “Neither. My mom is Métis.” That is the moment bored, drifting eyes would snap back with skepticism written large all over my interrogator’s face. “Oh they’d say, sounding disappointed and perhaps a little triumphant to have found a fake, “So, you’re like a quarter Indian.” As impressed as I am with the mathematical skills of all the people who have asked me this question…my answer is: no, I am full Métis. (p. 37)

As is exemplified by Vowel’s (2016) account, Métis Peoples have a distinct national identity grounded in their own unique political, social, and economic traditions and not determined by the colonizers racial lens.

Inuit Peoples are found in the northern regions of Canada (i.e., Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec, and Labrador) and are therefore culturally nuanced in that that they have their own language, customs, and traditions differing from southern First Nations and Métis Peoples. The vastness of the Northern geographical space in which the Inuit occupy produces regional distinctiveness as it pertains to cultural traditions and practices. Thus, each Inuit group has their own autonomous identity.
The Indigenous names previously examined inform the current inquiry because words shape the meaning of the work. Understanding and knowing the meaning of the name through an Indigenous lens surfaces historical and social nuances that help us better understand the participants’ identity. Of course this is not a simplification of the name, or identity for that matter, but rather, a window into the complexity of naming what is Indigenous (Vowel, 2016).

1.4 A Brief History: Interconnecting Colonialism, Christianity, and Roman Catholicism in Canada

Indigenous Peoples living in what is now Canada have experienced the effects of colonialism since the early 1500’s. Driven by the Christian belief that property is the divine authority of Europeans (i.e., Doctrine of Discovery) and the subsequent wealth and power that resulted from frontier expansion, European leaders colonized the world, including what would become Canada (Smedley, 1999). In order to control Indigenous populations, colonizers were directed by European leaders to do whatever was necessary to “civilize the savage”2 (i.e., in this context the Indigenous Peoples). Consequently, and with increasing intensity as settlement moved West, Indigenous Nations were slowly exterminated or relegated to live at the margins (i.e., reserves) of society so to facilitate European expansion and settlement.

Colonialism is defined as “the subjugation of one cultural group by another” (Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies, 2002, p. 140) and was determined, during European colonization, by the Euro-centric

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2 Savage “denotes a person who lives away from society, beyond the pale of its laws, without fixed abode; by analogy, one who is rude and fierce” (Dickason, 1984, p. 63). The use of the word savage is not meant to be discriminating or prejudiced to the Indigenous Peoples rather it is used to provide the colonizers historic context and positionality to Indigenous Peoples during frontier expansion.
Christian notion that the uncivilized must become civilized. Weenie (2000) notes, colonialism resulted in “a civilized/uncivilized dichotomy” where “colonizers were depicted as the advanced civilization” and “the colonized were depicted as backwards nations” (p.66). Two early decrees helped to ensure the dissemination of such depictions facilitating the succession of colonialism. First, the Doctrine of Discovery as issued by a papal bull in the 15th century secured the right for Christ’s armies to colonize untilled lands that were yet to be claimed by European powers (Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The doctrine also gave colonizers the right to do what they will (i.e., assimilate, enslave or murder) to the Indigenous nations who inhabited the lands. Second and connected closely with the Doctrine of Discovery, was the legal practice of terra nullius. Terra nullius, translated to English as “No Man’s Land”, derived from Roman law and declared unclaimed land as empty until a European power had discovered it (Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 46). Indigenous Peoples living off the land were seen as simply occupiers but not owners of the land. Once the land was claimed by a European nation all resources within the boundaries were unilaterally appropriated. The Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius gave Europeans legal authority to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands.

The racialization of scripture further justified the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius. Anti-Semitic commentaries that racialized Jews as dark and inferior were weaponized during the colonizing efforts. By making race a universal identifier, all coloured people, in particular Indigenous Peoples, were
marked as subordinate (Back & Solomos, 2000). Scripture was interpreted so to celebrate the “Chosen People” and denigrate minority cultures, including Indigenous Peoples. The colonizers believed that God had damned Indigenous Peoples by assigning distinct visible phenotypical features (e.g., darker skin color, coarse hair texture, etc.) (Miles, 1989). Indigenous features were racialized giving higher status to European features (i.e., white skin) thus making Europeans more human in the eyes of God (Miles, 1989). This was especially celebrated in the scriptural interpretation of Noah’s Ark where Ham, the banished son of Noah, was marked with dark skin as a reminder of his immoral character (Hannaford, 1996). Race as a Christian construct is present in much of the early European expansion literature ergo was fundamental in mobilizing the colonizing efforts.

The Christian mission of conversion was core to the European colonization strategy. Subsequently, colonial succession became dependent on the missionaries’ ability to infiltrate Indigenous nations so to create a trusting relationship that would ultimately result in the unilateral capture of lands. Land captures translated into money and power for the Church. Ellingsen (1999) affirms, “Power was at stake for the church in the colonizing efforts because these efforts provided the church with the chance to extend its sphere of influence and serve the sovereigns who requested its presence in the colonies” (p. 252). Missionaries challenged, disrupted and demonized Indigenous culture and spirituality intent on coercing Indigenous Peoples to surrender their ways of living and convert to Christianity therefore permitting the colonizers to move in.

The tactic to convert, for the most part, was unsuccessful until colonial legislation forced the hand of Indigenous Peoples. In particular, the Gradual
Civilization Act (1857), British North American Act (Constitution Act, 1867) section 91 (24), Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1869), Indian Act (1876) and subsequent amendments worked to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their culture and lands. Imbued within the legislation were countless devastating policies, in particular the Indian Residential School legislation, which facilitated the overarching colonizing strategy to extricate the Indian from the Indian (Hanson, 2009). Colonizers believed that by removing Indigenous children from their parents’ care and forcing them to attend residential schools assimilation could be fully realized. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church contributed significantly to the operation of Indian Residential Schools. The Roman Catholic Church ran approximately 60% of Indian Residential Schools in Canada from 1867 to 1996 (Residential Schools in Canada, 2009) and in Saskatchewan, of the 22 residential schools, 10 were run by the Roman Catholic Church (Fontaine, 2006). For well over 100 years Indigenous youth endured the horrific assimilation and conversion tactics set forth by the Federal Government and implemented by the Roman Catholic Church.

Finally, in the early 1990’s, not long after the Oka Crisis3, the Federal Government introduced a commission to evaluate the conditions for Indigenous Peoples. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) uncovered a deplorable and inexcusable Indigenous state of affairs including high levels of poverty and addiction with little to no government assistance. Members of the commission emphasized the need for the Federal Government to

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take ownership of past actions, disrupt current practices (i.e., Residential Schools) and begin working to create a society that would bring equity to Indigenous Peoples. In 2006, Indigenous Peoples won a class action lawsuit against the Canadian government, which resulted in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and a public apology from Prime Minister Steven Harper. Not long after, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was initiated and paid for by the survivors of Indian Residential Schools. During the TRC (2007-2015) survivors told their stories of the unspeakable horrors of pedophilia, rape, physical, mental and emotional abuse, poor living conditions, inadequate food and clothing, and insufficient education (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The TRC interviews heightened the senses of all Canadians to the oppressive reality of residential schools and subsequent generational consequences. The Government of Canada responded with a public decree to institute the Calls to Action as recommended by the TRC however, today, very little has been initiated. Thus, Indigenous Peoples “continue to fear an agenda of assimilation for their children and continue to view educational institutions as perpetuating colonization” (Whitley, 2014, p. 156).

At the culmination of the TRC, the committee directed the following call to action (#58) to the Roman Catholic Church,

We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuses of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report to be delivered by the Pope in Canada. (Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 330)
Although the call to action was issued months ago, the Vatican and the Pope continue to deny an apology. In fact the only apology ever submitted by the Roman Catholic Church (there have been apologies submitted by affiliated Roman Catholic groups but continue to be disregarded by the Church)\textsuperscript{4} concerning their role in Indian Residential Schools came in 1991 when the Canadian Catholic Bishops responded with, “We are sorry, and deeply regret the pain, suffering, and alienation, that so many experienced at the hand of Residential Schools” (Canadian Conference on Catholic Bishops, 2016, para. 5). But this statement is a token as it lacks ownership and forces those associated with the Church to question how the core moral tenets of our faith can be disregarded on the basis of such damning evidence. Most recently the Roman Catholic Church of Canada reneged on approximately 23 of a 25 million dollar TRC settlement because of a miscommunication between the federal and church lawyers. Although the Church had agreed that harm had been done to the residential school students and that they would pay the settlement in full, once the legal technicality surfaced the Church wasted little time reversing their promise (Galloway, 2016, April 17). I wonder if the Roman Catholic Church will ever take ownership of their past transgressions and issue a formal apology?

The legacy of colonialism continues to have deep roots within the systems and institutions of Canada including Roman Catholic Education. Under the guise of colonial structures and processes, non-Indigenous people are allowed to deny accountability as they have been romantically conditioned to believe that what

they are doing is good (Pente, 2009). This denial has facilitated the infiltration of colonial ideals into all facets of the system, however the invisible nature of colonialism makes it difficult to recognize and disrupt (Sterzuk, 2011). In education, the denial of colonialism begins with our failure to accurately and truthfully teach the history of Indigenous Peoples. Smith (1999) asserts that the denial of Indigenous perspectives of history is a “critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenge and resist the mission of colonization” (p. 29). As Chief Ian Campbell stated during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in order to effect change all non-Indigenous people must first acknowledge that, “Our history is your history, as Canada…until Canada accepts that…this society will never flourish to its full potential” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, June 25, 2014, p. 183).

1.5 Decolonizing Education

The inquiry is framed by decolonizing education so to respond to the colonial legacy that endemically influences the system of education. Decolonization refers to the process of disrupting colonial practices, structures, and policies by identifying how one is engaged in colonization and how the system one exists in maintains colonial dominance (Tuhiwai Smith, 2010). Intertwined within the colonial milieu is the agency of racism as a primary organizing factor for the maintenance of colonialism. The conversation of decolonization cannot be had without acknowledging the inter-play of racism and colonialism or demanding the disruption of racism as a necessary method to decolonize. Understanding decolonization helps to identify colonial and racial
logic present within the system (i.e., Roman Catholic education) thus facilitating opportunity to become actionable in disrupting colonization processes.

There is hesitancy by non-Indigenous teachers to explore “the relevance of colonization when seeking a deeper understanding of the issues faced by Aboriginal Peoples and the subsequent effects these challenges have on education” (Costello, 2011, p. 19). However, it is difficult for non-Indigenous teachers to confront the unsettling reality concerning their role in colonization because it forces them to investigate their personal relationship with Indigenous Peoples (Dion, 2009). Although decolonization may be uncomfortable it is nevertheless necessary. As Smith (1999) explains, teachers need to develop “a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform [their] practice” if they are to become effective agents of decolonization (p. 20).

A commitment to decolonize one’s teaching practice is challenging, not without risk, ongoing, and ever changing (Regan, 2010). This is because decolonization requires teachers to come to terms with their racist logic by seeking out “ways to incorporate decolonizing principles and practices into their daily lives and work in ways that shift binary colonizer/colonized identities” (p. 218). “It is a re-learning of one’s history, a reshaping of one’s history, a reshaping of one’s touchstone stories, the capacity to culturally respond by shifting their teaching identity, and the ability to re-imagine a future as a reconciling Canadian” (Costello, 2011, p. 71). The effects of engagement can be both positive and negative; however the opportunity to serve justice by informing our colleagues and students about the realities of the system and
ultimately, motivating agency in decolonization, far outweighs the negative outcomes. Engagement is truly transformative to one’s pedagogy and humanity.

Decolonizing one’s practice is best informed by joining forces with allies in the field. Making strong collegial bonds with Indigenous colleagues helps to expose one’s colonial faults through “unsettling encounters” (Regan, 2010, p. 218). Hearing primary source accounts about how systemic colonialism and racism impacts the working and social lives of our colleagues, forces non-Indigenous people to interrogate their own colonial perceptions and behaviors thus encouraging agency in the disruption of colonization (Costello, 2011).

Becoming an ally of our Indigenous colleagues, and students for that matter, can mobilize fundamental change. The TRC asks us to reconcile with our Indigenous brothers and sisters so to become owners of our past and instruments of change. This call to decolonize is imperative and one that non-Indigenous teachers need to embrace.

1.6 My Context

I grew up in a white, middle class, Christian home. My parents were university educated, had well-paying jobs (my mother was a primary grade teacher and my father a professional hockey player and later a fire fighter) and were active in ensuring that I had opportunities to succeed. I spent my childhood and adolescent days attending a Saskatchewan suburban elementary and high school, which was almost exclusively white (including the administration, teachers and students). My extra-curricular time was dedicated to sport: in the winter I lived on the basketball court and in the summer I travelled to the country clubs of Saskatchewan competing in golf tournaments against other white youth. My childhood permeated privilege.
I remember only two Indigenous students attending my elementary school. They were wards of the state and happened to be placed in a house near the school. Racist chatter from my peers was occasional and sometimes direct but almost always reflected the attitude that “we were better than them”. It is likely that both Indigenous students felt marginalized and subordinated on account of our deficit thinking and behavior. As I review these memories through a decolonizing lens it is clear that my friends and I were conditioned by a society that celebrates whiteness. Our ignorance allowed us to perpetuate colonial and racial logic helping to keep my Indigenous peers firmly in a position of oppression.

At the age of ten, I remember an argument between my sister and grandmother, who was a primary grade teacher. My sister had recently read the family genealogy book chronicling our heritage and confronted our grandmother concerning the fact that her grandmother was First Nations. My grandmother’s reaction is imprinted in my mind. She glared at my sister and in a forbidding voice exclaimed, “We don’t talk about this!” She turned and stormed away. My sister and I were taken aback by my grandma’s response. Why did she feel this way? What in her history forced her to respond in such a harsh and angry way?

Basketball influenced my understanding of diversity. There was something exotic about having “black” teammates on my basketball teams. Maybe it was the Michael Jordan effect; arguably the best basketball player of all-time and subsequently, every kid, no matter the skin color, wanted to “Be like Mike”. It was assumed that a black teammate was in tune with the basketball culture, guaranteed athletic, naturally skilled, and intimidating. Myth making facilitated the persona of the black basketball player providing an
opportunity for them to escape some of the limits of racial oppression. Interestingly, I never had an Indigenous teammate on my basketball team throughout elementary and high school. I cannot recall a myth about the Indigenous basketball player; they seem to have been forgotten all together, eerily similar to the aim of colonialism (e.g., purge Canada of Indigenous Peoples). Even on the playgrounds of my youth a defined hierarchical reality existed where whites and blacks shared power and Indigenous kids were placed beyond the margins, so far away that they were denied an opportunity to play. Sadly, not once did I question the cultural make-up of my team or the absence of Indigenous players. I chalked it up to a lack of skill and/or interest. Little did I know that deeply seeded colonial and racial projects were hard at work.

As is exemplified by the stories I shared about my early life, I was a product of my racialized and colonized environment. The privileged lens in which I saw through clearly determined what I understood as normal. I plodded along in life with this understanding until early in my teaching career I SLOWLY started to make connections between the vulnerability of my Indigenous students and a system that, on the surface, appeared to be interested in effecting change but through further examination was simply placing band-aids over deep generational wounds.

For 14 years I have taught social studies and Christian Ethics and it is evident that there is a capacious gap between the abundance of content celebrating white settler culture and the almost non-existent content addressing Canada’s Indigenous Peoples; well, there is Native Studies. Of course Native Studies alone is not the answer to decolonization. It is perfunctory and a superficial cure to once again avoid other systemic changes that are required.
Pente (2009) speaks of the romantic nature of Canadian acculturation in that it produces and reproduces the “meta-narrative” (p. 113) that Canada is “good”. As a “Canadian” educator I am structurally designed to believe that because we are “good Canadians” the work we do is “good”, “fair” and “promotes equality”, and thus, would never intentionally be harmful to Indigenous Peoples (Pente, 2009). However, on many occasions Indigenous students have shared their feelings of disconnect with Roman Catholic education and the Social Studies and Christian Ethics curriculums. Their reasons range from a lack of culturally affirming content to the failure of non-Indigenous teachers to build relationships with them. Regrettably, in the past I did little to improve the situation for my Indigenous students, although I worked hard at fostering healthy teacher-student relationships (guided philosophically by my Euro-centric conditioning), I failed in the area of affirming culture as I ignorantly crutched on the white meta-narrative that doing a “good” job meant teaching the curriculum; ‘we’ created it so it must be “good”!

Problematizing how racism and colonialism advances my life, informs me of my power and privilege. As a result, it is clear to me how colonial systems and ideologies (i.e., capitalism) contribute to the discursive capital of my whiteness (Leonardo, 2009) and that my primary asset is the “white” property I own (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Intermingle the components of male, heterosexual, middle-class and Christian with my white property and my level of unearned power is extraordinary, especially in the system of Roman Catholic education where the vast majority of our board, administration, staff, students, and parents are just like me and are able to let each other “off the hook” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1085) regarding accountability for our discriminatory acts.
As a white educator existing in a Canadian prairie context, working towards deracialization and decolonization is difficult and uncomfortable, however necessary. Deconstructing one’s story through critical interrogation surfaces “Eurocentric ideas, prejudices, assumptions, actions, and privileges” (Costello, 2011, p. 8) creating a consciousness of how racism and colonialism are perpetuated and marking a starting point for active disruption. Uncovering one’s racial privilege or “the notion that white subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as white” (Leonardo, 2004, p. 137) forces me to examine the racial and colonial space I inhabit and consequently reconstruct this space by shifting my understanding of Indigenous Peoples so to transform my pedagogical practice towards one that is actively decolonizing.

Lorde (2007) asserts, “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations that we seek to escape, but of that piece of the oppressor which is planted deeply within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the oppressors relationships” (p.123). It is the duty of the responsible educator, in this case the white educator, to learn to know how one racializes and colonizes and, in turn, works to deconstruct their behaviors so to create a climate conducive for emancipatory work. “For we have, into all of us, built old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures” (Lorde, 2007, p.123). This thesis acts as a catalyst for effecting decolonization in Roman Catholic education. It begins with the disruption of my behaviors but transitions to disrupting the behaviors of other colonizers who share the classroom, school, and system in which I work.

1.7 Research Question and Rationale
The study asks the question: How does Indigenous identity exist within the context of Roman Catholic education? The purpose of the inquiry is to expose the barriers limiting Indigenous teachers so to facilitate a space where Indigenous identities can thrive. By accessing Indigenous teachers’ knowledge and experience, it is anticipated that a deeper understanding of the system will surface, facilitating an opportunity to trouble notions of improvement. Critical Race Theory (CRT), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), and Whiteness studies frame the research process facilitating a view of the system through a lens contextualized by racism and colonialism. Connecting with Indigenous teachers in a respectful, traditional, and covenantal\textsuperscript{5} manner (i.e., giving of tobacco, Talking Circle, etc.) and providing a safe space to share their stories created a strong relational bond that allowed for rich, and deep, responses to the questions that may have been absent if a Western scientific approach was employed. The overall intent was to create a space for deracializing and decolonizing dialogue to begin to shift the discursive framework currently conditioning Indigenous teacher practice in Roman Catholic education.

The inquiry elaborates on previous studies (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1994; Henry 1992; Legare et al., 1998; Lynn, 2002; Quiocho, 2000; St. Denis, Bouvier & Legare, 1998; St. Denis, 2010; Thiessen, Bascia & Goodson, 1996) that sought minority teachers’ input concerning their experience and knowledge of teaching. However, the present study seeks to go beyond findings from the existing literature and previous methodology as participants in the present study are Indigenous and teach in a Roman Catholic education system in

\footnote{\textsuperscript{5} Covenantal. The use of the word covenantal takes on the Indigenous meaning in that it emphasizes relationship rather than non-Indigenous institutional legal terminology referred to as a contract.}
Saskatchewan. Beyond the identified need to build on the existing literature, the present study appears warranted given the disproportion between the estimated number of Indigenous teachers in the local Roman Catholic system (4%) versus the estimated number of Indigenous students (14%) raising systemic concerns and confirming the need for the present investigation.

1.8 Outlining the Study

The present study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduced the study. Chapter two transitions to the analysis of relevant literature and theory as it pertains to the thesis question. Pertinent literature, Indigenous identity, CRT, TribalCrit and Whiteness Studies are explored so to frame the study. Chapter three outlines the ethnographic and Indigenous methodology, research design, data collection process, data analysis procedure, and provides a short biography of each participant. Chapter four focuses on the three emerging salient themes: (1) Indigenous teacher identity, (2) systemic barriers, and (3) notions of change. The final chapter introduces three calls to action for Roman Catholic educators, clergy, and parishioners to become agents in decolonization.
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Chapter two provides an overview of pertinent literature, an outline of Indigenous teacher identity, and a framework of the theoretical underpinnings of the inquiry including CRT, TribalCrit, and Whiteness studies which inform the study.

2.1 Literature Review

The lives of teachers, including Indigenous teachers, have been studied for decades, however a void in the research exists examining Indigenous teachers working in Saskatchewan Roman Catholic schools. Therefore, the aim of the present inquiry is to explore Indigenous teacher identity as it exists in this context. In order to do a thorough interrogation of the thesis question an examination of the applicable literature is required. The literature review examines the following areas: teacher knowledge and experience, Indigenous teachers’ lives, Indigenous teacher identity, counter-narrative, and Saskatchewan curriculum.

2.1.1 Teacher Knowledge and Experience. Exploring teachers’ lives is significant and valid (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Prior to the 1990’s “focusing on teacher’s lives and telling their stories was not thought of as serious scholarship” (Bullough, 2008, p. 11). It was not until participatory qualitative data collection reached the mainstream that teacher’s knowledge and
experiences were deemed useful (Bullough, 2008). As Goodson (1992) asserts, researchers in today’s context, in particular the context of telling minority teachers’ stories, have an obligation “to assure that teachers’ voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately” (p. 112).

The acquisition of knowledge through experience informs us about teachers’ lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Therefore, establishing a definition of teacher knowledge is critical. Shulman (1986) organized teacher knowledge into three areas: (1) subject matter content knowledge, (2) pedagogical content knowledge, and (3) curricular knowledge. However, St. Denis (2010) notes Shulman’s method of organization is criticized by many scholars because of the disregard of moral, emotional, and contextual knowledge (Gordon, 1995; Sockett, 1987). The failure to account for moral, emotional, and contextual knowledge ignores the political dimensions of knowledge, which are fundamental to the positionality of Indigenous teachers (St. Denis, 2010). As Quirocho (2000) contends, minority groups tend to fight “against social and political forces” (p. 17) that defines and determines mainstream education as it contradicts their moral, emotional, and contextual knowledge. The present inquiry frames the meaning of knowledge around Shulman’s (1986) three areas but focuses the definition by applying the moral, emotional and contextual dimensions.

Teacher knowledge is determined by educational experience. St. Denis (2010) affirms, “the concept of teachers’ knowledge emphasized the importance of experience, and especially personal and practical experience in developing and shaping professional knowledge” (p.13). Experience, therefore, is an essential part of teachers’ expertise and “a source of valid theory” (Brown &
McIntyre, 1993, p. 11). Connelly and Clandinin (1988) are two leading scholars in the area of teacher knowledge and experience. They coined the phrase “personal practical knowledge” (p. 25) which refers to capturing teachers as “knowledgeable and knowing persons” (p. 25) within the systems in which experience occurs. We must understand that teachers are constantly engaged in learning and, therefore, evolving their professional knowledge. In the case of the present inquiry, uncovering how Indigenous teachers place value on their practical experience and give “recognition of that experience as constituting knowledge,” (St. Denis, 2010, p. 14) is pivotal to effectively interrogating the thesis question. The intent of the study is to elevate the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous teachers as one act that strives to counter racism and colonialism by emphasizing that their lives are valued and matter in Roman Catholic education.

2.1.2 Indigenous Teachers’ Lives. During the 1990’s the researchers in the area began to investigate the lives of Saskatchewan Aboriginal teachers by examining their knowledge and experience (Friesen & Orr, 1996; Legare et al., 1998; McNinch, 1994; Melnchenko & Horsman, 1998; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998; Wimmer et al., 2010). Understanding the lives of Indigenous teachers nuances what we know about those in our profession because typically our knowledge is determined by white normalized voices (St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998). Today, many studies celebrate Indigenous teacher’s professional successes as they engage in pedagogies intent on educating all students, mostly from the perspective of their epistemology, traditions and history. However, the literature also communicates a bleak picture of how systemic racism and colonialism embedded within educational practices impacts
the lives of Indigenous teachers (e.g., Legare et al., 1998; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998;). In St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste’s (1998) research they explain that the Saskatchewan government is moving in a positive direction by bringing cultural equity to education however there continues to be a failure amongst those in power to include Indigenous Peoples in the decision making process. Political decisions such as this maintain the colonial practice of paternalism therefore denying any potential move towards equality. Further, we learn from St. Denis’ (2010) participants that racism remains permanent and often unacknowledged as the colonial legacy continues to be an endemic feature of the curriculum and the behaviors of teachers, administrators, and stakeholders. Pertaining to the present thesis, troubling findings in relation to current Roman Catholic education becomes a fundamental directive of the study. As highlighted there is a void in research exploring Indigenous teachers’ lives in Roman Catholic education and the existing literature has studied and described Indigenous students’ lives from a historical context (i.e., Bull, 1991; Hall, 1992; LaRocque, 1978, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), as such the aim of the present inquiry is to more directly attempt to uncover features of the system that are currently oppressive and nameless.

As mentioned previously, salient racism and colonialism systematically permeating education is a prominent issue affecting Indigenous teachers (Legare et al., 1998; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998). Due to the colonial and racial logic that shapes our past and continue to shape present systems, Indigenous teachers face a work environment imbued with cultural stereotyping and discrimination. In Kitchen et al. ’s (2009) study one participants stated, “I am not an Indigenous teacher, I am a teacher who is Indigenous…I am a math
teacher” (p. 364). As is exemplified in the excerpt, stereotypes are regularly assigned to Indigenous teachers by white society as a way to diminish and marginalize (St. Denis, 2007; Tompkins, 2006; Vanouwe, 2007). Through the disregarding of qualifications, unrealistic and intensive demands, perceived lowered expectations for Indigenous youth by Indigenous teachers, discounting of colonial and racial history, system failures to address racist staff, and marginalization of Indigenous teacher contributions domination is maintained and pervasive racism and colonialism is allowed to weave its way through the fabric of education (St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998).

The Canadian education system needs to employ more Indigenous teachers (Battiste, 2005; Bazylak, 2002; Bennett 2002; First Nations Education Steering Committee Society, 1999; Goulet, 2005; Legare et al., 1998; Halas, 2011; MacIvor, 2010; Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli, 2009; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Silver et al., 2002; St. Denis et al., 1998; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002; Whitley, 2014). Silver et al.’s (2002) study of inner city Winnipeg schools concluded that most Indigenous students attend schools where there are very few if any Indigenous teachers. Saskatchewan schools (including public, Roman Catholic, and independent schools) are likely similar as the 2010 statistics indicate that only 6.6% of teachers and 5.5% of administrators identify as Indigenous (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 55). In schools where there are a low number of Indigenous teachers there is typically a high failure rate amongst Indigenous students, on the other hand, where there is a high number of Indigenous teachers, Indigenous students typically experience higher levels of success (e.g., improved graduation rates) (Bazylak, 2002; Levin, 2009; Silver et al., 2002; St. Denis, 2010). Increasing the number of Indigenous
teachers in schools can give Indigenous students hope and direction, improving their self-confidence and self-worth (Baille, 1994; Bell, 2004; MacIver, 2010; McNinch, 1994; Thiessen, Bascia & Goodson, 1996). Silver et al. (2002) also notes the importance of having Indigenous teachers educate non-Indigenous students because the students are provided with the necessary understanding of what it is like to be Indigenous, the effects of colonial history on Indigenous Peoples, and how they contribute to the proliferation of racism and colonialism within the systems in which they are members of. Educating non-Indigenous students about such topics may also motivate non-Indigenous student agency. However, as education systems continue to silence the voices of Indigenous teachers through a failure to provide jobs, Indigenous students continue to endure the same hopelessness and difficult future, while non-Indigenous students are able to celebrate a future of success.

Non-Indigenous teachers must be exposed to the history of Indigenous Peoples so to understand how racial and colonial logic create a system of unfair advantage. Because most non-Indigenous teachers are unaware of their contributions to the racialization and colonization of education it is vital that they are provided the necessary knowledge concerning how they are contributing and how to disrupt their conditioning (Cannon, 2012; St. Denis, 2007). The assumption that celebrating Indigenous culture will be enough to “disrupt ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1085) is erroneous and likely will have no long-term causal effect. As Cleary and Peacock (1998) argue in their study, “Schools cannot effectively integrate American Indian culture and language into curriculum… if racism in schools is not confronted” (p. 254). As so many studies have found (i.e., Delpit, 1995;
Foster, 1994; Henry 1992; Legare et al., 1998; Lynn, 2002; Quiocho, 2000; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998; Thiessen, Bascia & Goodson, 1996), the disruption of racism and colonialism in education will be difficult to achieve if non-Indigenous teachers have not gained insight into their own conditioning.

2.1.3 Indigenous Teacher Identity. The existing research literature has explored the general topic of teacher identity. For example, Beijaard et al. (2004) examines teacher professional identity, characteristics of teacher identity and identity formation in teachers. Indigenous identity is explored by numerous disciplines and by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous scholars. Indigenous identity, contemporary Canadian Indigenous identity, and the conditions that created current Canadian Indigenous identity have been studied by a number of scholars (i.e., Adams, 1999; Chandler et al., 2003; Frideres, 2008; Friesen and Orr, 1996; Valaskis, 2005). Within this body of research, generational differences, sub-group distinctiveness and diversity, urban versus rural Indigenous identities, and the effects of gender on Indigenous identities are addressed (Frideres, 2008). Saskatchewan Indigenous teacher identity is addressed in a few studies (Legare et al., 1998; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998). A theoretical framework for understanding Indigenous teacher identity is included later in this chapter.

2.1.4 Counter-narrative. The use of first-person story telling is a common method for the collection of teacher knowledge and experience (e.g., Bullough, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Elbaz-Luwisch (2007) purports that teacher knowledge is acquired through “stories teachers tell about their work and their dialogue with one another, pupils, with teaching materials, and with themselves” (p. 359). CRT employs
first person counter-narrative as a tool because it allows “others” to tell their story, which “adds necessary contextual contours to the seeming objectivity of positivist perspectives” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p 11). Delgado (1989) posits, counter-narrative provides an alternative reality by “naming your reality” (p. 2073), which informs the construction of one’s social reality and helps the oppressor take ownership of their racist behaviors. “Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). Employing first person counter-narrative facilitates effective exploration concerning how race is involved in the explanation of Roman Catholic education and how racism is actualized in Roman Catholic education policy, curriculum, and pedagogy. Counter-narrative inquiries troubling Saskatchewan education from the perspective of Indigenous teachers has been conducted by a limited number of researchers (i.e., Friesen & Orr, 1996; Legare et al., 1998; McNinch, 1994; St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis et al., 1998; Wimmer et al., 2010).

2.1.5 Saskatchewan Curriculum. St. Denis’ (2010) study asserts that her Indigenous participants view the ignoring of curricular directives concerning the implementation of Indigenous content into courses as “a form of racism” (p. 41). In Saskatchewan, curriculum expectations call for mandatory inclusion of Indigenous content into all courses and at all grade levels. Beginning with the recommendations coming from Directions (Saskatchewan Education, 1984), and continuing today with the explicit expectation that Indigenous content in K-12 classrooms is integrated into all curricula. Furthermore, beginning in 1992 and ending in 1997 a Native Studies elective course was developed for grades 10-12 to provide a comprehensive examination of Indigenous history and current
organization. On December 10, 2007 the treaty education initiative was introduced as a K-12 enrichment course to educate all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students about their role in treaty citizenship (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013). Today the TRC is calling educators to action by imploring them to emphasize Canada’s colonial legacy within their curricular practice, in particular Indian Residential Schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The goal of the TRC’s calls to action in the area of education is to engage youth in understanding the colonial history of Canada so in turn they can become active in the process of reconciling with their Indigenous brothers and sisters and become agents in disrupting non-Indigenous people’s oppressive behaviors.

The above literature review informs the present inquiry and exposes the void in the existing research regarding how Indigenous teacher identity exists within the walls of Roman Catholic education. It also addresses the mandates set forth by the Ministry of Education regarding the compulsory integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, culture, and history into all courses at all grade levels. The Ministry mandates emphasize the need to disrupt the saliency of Indigenous discrimination in Canada. Unpacking how Indigenous teachers experience Roman Catholic education helps to illuminate endemic issues impacting the delivery of curriculum.

2.2 Framing Indigenous Teacher Identity

Indigenous identity may be created by culture but in Canada it is greatly influenced by racial and colonial projects. Since the European settler movement colonizing efforts have fundamentally impacted Indigenous identity construction. In today’s context racism and colonialism systemically ingrained
in the institutions of Canada influence the construction of Indigenous identity (Lawrence, 2004).

Colonization and Euro-centric nation building (i.e., residential schools) are clearly linked to Indigenous identity construction (Broad, G., Boyer, S, & Chataway, C., 2006; Daniel, 1998; Duran, 2006; Halvorson, 2005; Morris, Crowley & Morris, 2002). The Indian Act and the employment of the word “Indian” within the act determine Indigenous identity as race-based. Lawrence (2004) writes, “a crucial way in which the cultural distinctiveness- and the nationhood- of Indigenous societies have been denied within the colonizing society has been to reduce cultural identity to race” (p. 228). The use of the word “Indian” positions Indigenous Peoples as the “other” therefore relegating Indigenous Peoples to the “uncivilized” margins of society (Fopssett, 2001). Furthermore, Frideres (2008) posits that the label “Indian” constructs Indigenous identities as static and uniform, proliferating current stereotypes casting all Indigenous Peoples as the same.

Anti-oppression and decolonization projects work to disrupt systems of oppression intent on shifting discursive frames so that Indigenous identity can be centered on culture rather than colonial logic. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) asserts:

Aboriginal peoples are not racial groups; rather they are organized, political and cultural entities. Although contemporary Aboriginal groups stem historically from the original peoples of North America, they often have mixed genetic heritages and include individuals of varied ancestry. As organized, political entities, they have the capacity to evolve over time and change in their internal composition. (p. 177)
Therefore, Indigenous identity is fluid, malleable, and multivalent and change with the times as a result of outside cultural forces (Warry, 2007). However, remaining in place are foundational cultural attributes that anchor Indigenous identity, ensuring that outside cultural forces are incapable of eroding, assimilating and/or annihilating Indigenous identity (Warry, 2007).

A consequence of colonialism is the construction of a binary reality where Indigenous identity is forced to transform and adapt. As a result, Indigenous Peoples of Canada often take on a “border identity” (Frideres, 2008, p. 322). “Border Identity” is the notion that Indigenous Peoples exist between and across pre-determined social boundaries, Indigenous and White, and are able to adapt their identities as they cross between boundaries allowing them to belong, however, conditionally (Frideres, 2008). In this reality, Indigenous Peoples experience identity shifts as the power-oppression binary is repositioned depending on where they locate themselves in relation to the boundary. Where one is located is dependent on a constellation of privileges and oppressive factors none of which is more influential than race; however, other factors like education level, gender, and relationships can influence one’s positionality across the borders. Kitchen et al. (2009) informs the theory of “border identity” with his notion of “cultural brokering” (p. 356). Cultural brokering posits that Indigenous Peoples, in particular teachers, are brokers between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. Kitchen et al. (2009) discovered that Indigenous educators face a difficult reality as they attempt to straddle two divergent worlds (the Indigenous world and the professional world where normative discourses are affirmed). A border identity and cultural brokering complicate Indigenous teacher identity construction and therefore lends valuable knowledge to
understanding Indigenous teacher identity as it exists in Roman Catholic education.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was first employed in the field of law but soon evolved into an interdisciplinary theory (i.e., education). To understand CRT we must begin with an examination of critical theory. McCarthy (1991) purports that critical theory challenges notions of rationalism, and systems of power, and emphasizes the practical over the theoretical, the importance of not “disembodying” (p. 43) oneself from the oppressed but rather building relationships, and working towards social justice together through troubling current oppressive realities. In the context of CRT, Leonardo (2013) explains that being critical “takes on the meaning of both analyses and a politic” (p.14). That is, critical self-reflection, an assessment of one’s racial bias regarding context and ideological positionality, and a commitment to work towards “under-cutting white racial knowledge” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 118) through agency are vital to comprehending the dynamics of racism, how one perpetuates racism, and how to disrupt through the reconstruction of racism.

CRT is “an oppositional intellectual movement because of its refusal to mute an analysis of race and racism within a liberal ideology” (Taylor, 2000, p. 541). CRT facilitates an examination of the relationship between race, racism and power that is displayed “not merely as individual acts of discrimination, but rather historical, systemic, and ideological manifestations of power to serve, maintain, and protect white privilege” (Haynes Writer, 2008, p. 2). Two mutual CRT interests direct the study; (1) how ‘common sense’ ideas of race remain in
place in Roman Catholic education as it oppresses Indigenous teachers and (2) to shatter the bonds between Roman Catholic educational practice and policy, and racism (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Gillborn, 2006).

CRT is a social justice approach to disrupting endemic racism within societal systems like education. However, it is not limited to simply examining race and racism rather it also explores the intersectionality of race with other subordinated groups (i.e., colonialized peoples) (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Understanding the work of CRT can be complicated and messy and requires careful scrutiny if one is to accurately discern how racializing processes is impacted by intersecting subordinations (Leonardo, 2013). In the context of the present inquiry the CRT lens enables an examination of the racial dynamics at work in Roman Catholic education and helps to identify implications arising from present intersections, specifically colonization. Colonization, addressed more thoroughly in the TribalCrit section, is implicated in the racial milieu of Roman Catholic education because of Canada’s agency in historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous Peoples.

CRT is rooted in the notion that racism is normalized within Western systems (Milner, 2008). Through normative modes of thinking (e.g., deficit thinking, meritocracy, etc.) white society is privileged while rendering Indigenous Peoples incapacitated as they attempt to create space within the system (i.e., education) (Flyn, 2014). White teachers and administrators are often ignorant of their racist practices due to their “immersion in the normalcy of whiteness” (Sefa Dei et al., 1997, p. 141) as is exemplified in policy, pedagogy and curriculum and therefore perpetuate racism even when they have “best intentions” (p. 141). Reimagining a space that is actively working to disrupt
white normalization is a discursive practice of CRT and a primary aim of the inquiry.

CRT is an effective tool to examine the system of education. Exploring the historical, systemic, and ideological manifestations of racism as it impacts “others” (i.e., Indigenous Peoples) in the classroom, school and broader educational community uncovers “insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that seek to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). Therefore, as critical race theorists we are asked to trouble the racializing factors that impact Indigenous teachers in educational spaces. It is in this light where CRT analysis surfaces salient racism in education (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, policy, and relationships).

The teacher’s role, as seen by a Critical Race theorist, helps to disrupt racial modes of thinking so to welcome Indigenous ways of knowing (Cannon, 2012). Deconstructing racial thinking in education can have transformative effects. CRT imbued within pedagogical practice facilitates critical deconstruction so that colleagues and students can learn to surface stereotypes, affirm culture, and become allies in the fight to deracialize. In particular, the sharing of counter-narratives by Indigenous teachers elicits essential change; for non-Indigenous colleagues as it stirs up feelings of empathy making them more likely to actively combat racism in both their personal and professional lives (Cannon, 2012). For Indigenous teachers, like-minded alliances merge efforts and strengthen bonds producing effective methods of disruption. For students, witnessing relational connections in action encourages their mobilization to disrupt racism. Building a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers
and students with the common purpose to deracialize and decolonize oppressive systems has transformative potential.

2.3.2 Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). TribalCrit is an extension of CRT because it works to disrupt “othering” through the employment of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit recognizes both the commonalities and varying forms of Indigenous culture that exists throughout North America. Through the lens of TribalCrit Indigenous Peoples’ liminality as both racial and legal/political groups is problematized and is therefore expanded (Brayboy, 2005).

TribalCrit’s foundational tenet is rooted in the reality that colonization is a salient feature of the current socio-political system and thus acts as the principal tool of oppression of Indigenous Peoples (Brayboy, 2005). Colonization refers to the systematic destruction of Indigenous cultures via the acquisition and exploitation of their land and assimilation efforts via the forcible indoctrination of normative Euro-centric ideologies (Battiste, 2002). Indigenous Peoples have been affected so deeply by colonization that they are now living out the ideals of the dominant culture by adhering to societal rules and regulations that contradict Indigenous values. Brayboy (2005) asserts, “Indigenous identities have become regulated by governments to meet their interests rather than those of the people who take up those identities” (p. 431).

Within the TribalCrit framework race remains interconnected, however TribalCrit’s centering of colonization makes it more culturally nuanced than CRT. Lawrence and Dua (2005) explain, CRT fails to adequately recognize that Indigenous identity is integrally connected to colonization; “that histories of colonization are erased through writings on the history of slavery; that
decolonization politics are equated with antiracist politics; and theories of nationalism contribute to the ongoing delegitimization of Indigenous nationhood” (p. 128). Further, colonization is also informed by the intersectionality of race as Indigenous populations are not only subject to oppression at the hands of whites but also by other minorities who have been conditioned by colonized structures to engage in oppressive acts (Simpson et al., 2011). Therefore, TribalCrit’s specific acknowledgement of colonization uncovers the critical causes of the oppression of Indigenous peoples that race theories often ignore or fail to locate. By placing the lens of TribalCrit over the testimonies provided by the participants, ongoing systemic colonization can be effectively interrogated.

TribalCrit addresses how Indigenous philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous Peoples and communities.

Growing out of a foundation in culture, knowledge, and power, the beliefs, thoughts, philosophies, customs, and traditions of Indigenous individuals and communities serve as a foundation from which to analyze the schooling practices, self-education, and experiences of Indigenous people. (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437)

Understanding Indigenous ways of knowing informs researchers of the unique theoretical frameworks that shape Indigenous Peoples’ lives. In the context of the present study the counter-narrative approach employed and the Indigenous customary protocols and ceremonies incorporated into research practices facilitate relationship building. As TribalCrit contends, the contractual language and legal protocol used in Euro-centered research fails to build trusting
relationships amongst researchers and participants, which is a clear reflection of cultural ignorance (Brayboy, 2005). Effective research under the tenets of TribalCrit calls for researchers, specifically white researchers, to adhere to the protocols and ceremonies of Indigenous cultures so to gain an authentic understanding of the lived realities of Indigenous Peoples.

2.3.3 Critical Whiteness and Whiteness Studies. Whiteness is the primary organizing component in the construction of race. Scholars have difficulty defining whiteness because its “elusive, varied, and historically contingent nature is particularly difficult to disentangle from its intersectionality with class, gender, sexuality, and other axes of domination and its intimate relationship with power” (Burrows, 2013, p. 22). However, defining whiteness is an essential process, as racism requires rearticulation so whites can be made aware of their racist conditioning. Whiteness is commonly understood as “the structural valuation of skin color, which invests it with meaning regarding the overall organization of education and society” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 7). At the very least the purpose of whiteness studies is to encourage whites to trouble how they impose power on others as a result of being white.

Whiteness is inherently tied to the concept of white privilege. White privilege is the “notion that white subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as whites” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 75). Leonardo (2004) argues that white privilege discourse is a problem as it allows whites to manifest a “sense of oblivion” (p. 138) and an “image of domination without agents” which consequently masks true history (p. 138). In other words, the invisible nature of white privilege facilitates the continuance of the racial system, as whites are unable to detect or recognize their racialized contributions (Dyer, 1997; Hurtado
& Stewart, 1997; Willinsky; 1998). As such, when whites are confronted they are often surprised and/or in-denial. Furthermore, “Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen to be work that will allow ‘them’ to be more like us” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 166). For example, in Canada the normative notion of multiculturalism holds that this Nation is tolerant, generous and equitable towards all cultures (Findlay, 2014). However, scholars such as Schick & St. Denis (2005) argue that multiculturalism is very much a part of the national narrative and actually is a guise for white domination because it ignores the over-arching premise of multiculturalism that asserts, ‘we are all the same’ (because we are Canadian) which really means ‘we are all white’. This inquiry challenges white privilege by bringing to the surface normative structures embedded within Roman Catholic education that reproduce white supremacy.

The present inquiry endorses a reconstructionist approach to recognize and transform whiteness, therefore remaking identity and ideology that are no longer oppressive (Leonardo, 2009). The primary intent of whiteness reconstruction is to center whites in the conversation of race, racism, and racialization, but not as a method to further marginalize non-whites, rather to rearticulate whiteness so whites become agents of racial justice (Leonardo, 2009). However, the notion of centering whiteness in the context of racism can be precarious as Apple (1998) asserts,

We must be on our guard to ensure that a focus on whiteness doesn’t become one more excuse to recenter dominant voices and to ignore the voices and testimony of those groups of people whose dreams, hopes,
lives, and very bodies are shattered by current relations of exploitation and domination. (p. xi)

Whiteness studies recenter whiteness by thwarting the beliefs of whites and presenting an explanation concerning how the social universe actually operates (Leonardo, 2009).

Effectively countering whiteness and white privilege is achieved by making white teachers agents of disruption. Leonardo (2009) states, “White racist thoughts are disembodied, omnipresent but belonging to no one” (p. 82). Therefore, in order to disrupt whiteness we must work at informing white teachers by surfacing their unearned privilege. By making white teachers aware and encouraging them to take ownership, invisible white agency can be disrupted (Leonardo, 2004). White teachers are in influential positions of agency. They are conduits of knowledge and they are in a position to rearticulate their racialized behaviors to white students and staff by helping them acknowledge and, in turn, reconstruct their whiteness.

Critical white analysis informs teachers of how whiteness impacts the system of education. Unacknowledged white supremacy allows for the preservation of normalcy (Findlay, 2014). Therefore, disclosing that whiteness affords superior status is “an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). The acquisition of knowledge pertaining to white privilege and power informs teachers of their place in the world, and challenges teachers to become active in reconstructing whiteness. Problematizing and interrogating whiteness and the
social implications of whiteness within classrooms and schools exposes how whiteness manifests and impacts student success. The result is a system that is better informed and a staff that is better prepared to become co-creators of anti-racist and anti-oppressive educational spaces.

CRT, TribalCrit, and Whiteness frame the present inquiry concerning how racism, colonialism, and whiteness systematically influence Roman Catholic education. Employing CRT allows for endemic racial issues negatively impacting Indigenous teachers’ to be flushed out and disrupted. TribalCrit’s culturally nuanced lens troubles the complicated colonial reality that exits for Indigenous teachers facilitating a more authentic analysis of Roman Catholic education in Canada. Lastly, a critical interrogation of whiteness brings agency to the proposed inquiry as it helps to effectively identify how whiteness influences Roman Catholic education subsequently reconstructing whiteness as a tool of racial justice.
CHAPTER THREE: Method and Participant Biographies

3.1 Research Methodology

The present study interconnects components of critical ethnographic methodology with Indigenous methodology to effectively explore the research question: How does Indigenous identity exist within the context of Roman Catholic education?

3.1.1 Critical Ethnography. Critical ethnography is grounded in critical theory (Carspecken, 1996; Quantz, 1992), which correlates with the theoretical underpinnings of the study (i.e., CRT and TribalCrit). Critical theory focuses on disrupting normative behaviors that facilitate the existence of the power binary therefore attaching unearned power onto whites and unearned disadvantage onto non-whites (Kumashiro, 2000). Critical ethnography shares a similar framework to critical theory as it seeks to intentionally expose and challenge perceived social orders and the power that derive from such orders (Mahon & McPherson, 2014). Unlike conventional ethnography which focuses on providing a description of the participants interpretation of a system from a status-quo position, critical ethnography places a lens of anti-oppression and, in this case, anti-racism and de-colonization, over the studied reality so to problematize systems of power and invoke social change (O’Mahony et al., 2012). Critical ethnography works towards creating equity through the deconstruction of social systems and the surfacing of new understandings of power.

The critical ethnographer “works towards conscientization, empowerment, and liberation of the ‘marginalized’ through in depth critical
analysis of underlying social fabrics” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 144). A fundamental component to effective analysis is the critical ethnographers’ attentiveness to being reflexive throughout the process. Nightingale and Cromby (1999) assert, “Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the researcher’s process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of “remaining outside of” one’s subject matter while conducting research” (p. 228). Being critically reflexive of one’s positionality as it pertains to the system of power and problematizing how that positionality affects their interpretation of the system helps to increase sensitivity to personal biases thus forcing researcher accountability (Lobiondo-Wood et al., 2009). The reflexivity in the present inquiry was visible during my public acknowledgment of my privilege before data collection and during data analysis. During each of these points I was attentive to Willig’s (2001) types of reflexivity: I was critical of (1) my personal assumptions concerning my placement in the world and how it pertains to my “values, experiences, beliefs, and political and social identities” (Mahon & McPherson, 2014, p. 12) and (2) my epistemological lens concerning how I understand the participants “knowledge and perceptions of reality” (p. 12). Utilizing reflection throughout the research process and recording details in my field notes facilitated my reflexive interpretation of the power system (Carspecken, 1996).

Carspecken’s (1996) five-stage of critical ethnographic research was drawn on during the research process. Carspecken (1996) recommends that the research questions be “general, wide-ranging, and amenable to modification as the research progresses” (O’Mahony et al., 2012, p. 737). Throughout the research process, questions were modified slightly or nuanced by follow-up
questions so to help surface a deeper understanding of the participants’ knowledge of the system in question. This allowed for active questioning and field note taking as the process of data collection occurred which facilitated a deeper interpretation. Carspeken’s (1996) advice to use group focused observation (i.e., talking circle) when gathering data as a critical ethnographer also helped to surface rich data because of the inter-play between participants. As St. Denis (2010) explained, group discussions (i.e., Talking Circle) often incite a more in depth conversation because of the like-mindedness of the participants and the security that comes when allies are present while sharing stories of oppression. Throughout data analysis the primary focus is to deconstruct the power systems at play. This is achieved through the interrogation of testimony, and the reflexive work provided by the researcher. Troubling positionality through reflexivity fundamentally shapes the findings of critical ethnography and challenges critical ethnographers to become actionable to the findings they propose.

3.1.2 Indigenous Methodology. Nuancing critical ethnography with the tenets of Indigenous methodology allows one to better interrogate the thesis question from within an Indigenous interpretation (Bastien, 1999). Indigenous research methods better articulate Indigenous Peoples ways of knowing, reclaiming, and renaming their history (Martin, 2002). Martin (2002) affirms, To reclaim research is to take control of our lives and our lands to benefit us in issues of importance for our self-determination. It is to liberate and emancipate by decolonization and privileging the voices, experiences, and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands so that research frameworks are reflective of this. To reframe research is to focus on
matters of importance as we identify these. It is to respect our ways and honor our rites and social mores as essential processes, through which we live, act, and learn… To rename research is to recognize and use our worldviews, and our realities as assertions of our existence and survival. (p. 4)

Enmeshed within the parameters of Indigenous methodology is the primary tenet of relationship. Martin (2002) suggests that to do ‘good work’ methodology must be relational in nature not individualistic as most Western scientific methodologies adhere to. In other words, “It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation” (p. 177). The latter, must begin before one becomes engaged in the research. Steinhauer (2002) continues, “before data collection is even considered we must introduce ourselves to the community – not just telling people our name or where we live, but by giving personal information about ourselves” (pp. 78-79). After the researcher conscientiously establishes a relationship with each participant can a non-Indigenous researcher engage in Indigenous methodology.

The use of narrative (i.e., Talking Circle) in Indigenous research is a “methodological necessity flowing from a tribal epistemology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 84). Although narrative is constrained by Western methodologies, it remains the most effective way to surface voices that represent worldviews and values that are in opposition to the dominant culture (Kovach, 2009). Bringing integrity to Indigenous research is heightened through participant narrative, which opens up spaces for Indigenous Peoples to testify contributing to the decolonization process (Kovach, 2009). Although non-Indigenous researchers may lack a clear
understanding of tribal epistemologies it is vital to employ the tenets of Indigenous research methodology because it has the potential to “snap the line of colonialist dependency upon Western empiricism and disenfranchise the colonial project” (Kovach, 2009, p.129).

Adhering to sacred Indigenous protocols (i.e., tobacco giving) during research works to decolonize the relationship between non-Indigenous researcher and Indigenous participants. For example, when tobacco is given it represents “respect and reciprocity” (Kovach, 2009, p. 127) for the Indigenous participant, community, and culture. Thus engaging in tobacco giving becomes the responsibility of the researcher, making it clear to the participants that the researcher is committed to an Indigenous centered research method. When an Indigenous person commits to a research project through the accepting of tobacco “they are saying that they will tell the truth as they know it. They are bound in the presence of the Creator as witness to speak from the heart, to speak their truth” (Stevenson, 2000, p. 249). The relational balance with all aspects of the world is sacred and therefore maintained through the commitment of the participants to share what they know as true. Relationships are strengthened and decolonization moves forward when Indigenous protocol and ceremony is honored in research.

Interpreting the research through tribal epistemologies helps to decolonize the research process. The recognition of Indigenous world views, honoring Indigenous social customs, ceremony, and protocol, recognizing the social, historical, and political realities of Indigenous Peoples, and bringing privilege to Indigenous voices and perspectives, grounds the present thesis and interconnects almost seamlessly with the tenets of CRT and TribalCrit. De-
privileging dominant methodologies and employing an Indigenous methodology facilitates a more accurate account of Indigenous Peoples lives and, therefore, Indigenous teachers’ lives in Roman Catholic education.

3.2 Data Collection Process

3.2.1 The Research Participants. The participants were from an urban Roman Catholic school division in Saskatchewan. The division is one of the largest Roman Catholic divisions in the province and it serves a diverse community of students representing various cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. The estimated population of Indigenous students within the system is 14%. The Indigenous teaching staff is estimated at approximately 4.0%.

The participants met the following three criteria. First, were self-identified Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit); second, teach in Roman Catholic Education in the province of Saskatchewan and; third, have taught for at least 10 years in Roman Catholic education. The purpose for setting these inclusion criteria was to provide “homogeneity of background in the area” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 288) as this would help to increase study consistency and accuracy. Participant profiles are included at the end of this chapter.

There were three methods employed to request participation. First, Maria⁶ was contacted through email and asked if she would meet face-to-face to discuss participation in the study. The meeting took place at Maria’s place of work and it was during this time she elected to participate. Second, not long after the inception of the research process, William, a friend and teacher in the

⁶ The names provided are pseudonyms. Some participants determined the pseudonyms while others were chosen at random. All names and locations have been changed to protect the participants.
division of interest, came forward and committed to participate. Third, William became instrumental in preparing and connecting me with four Indigenous educators in the division. During approximately ten consultation sessions, William provided me with a thorough description of Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis protocol and ceremony, specifically the tobacco giving protocol (it should be noted that some First Nations and Métis Peoples and all Inuit Peoples do not have a tobacco giving custom), which is a common practice when requesting research participation of an Indigenous person. Developing a healthy research relationship with Indigenous Peoples first requires following the appropriate protocol and ceremony (Davis, 2006). During one of the consultation sessions, William and I engaged in the tobacco giving custom during which William agreed to officially participate in the study.

William made first contact with four Indigenous teachers in the division to inquire if they would be interested in the study. Four Indigenous teachers expressed interest. When William and I met with each Indigenous teacher we engaged in tobacco giving. Each teacher picked up the tobacco, which demonstrated commitment to the study and engaged in conversation. By adhering to the Indigenous protocol of tobacco giving, a sacred covenantal relationship was entered into by all involved. Employing the same Indigenous protocol, a local elder committed to participate. In total six Indigenous teachers were contacted and five (William, Mary, Lisa, Elizabeth and Maria) were able to

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Offering a gift of tobacco is a common protocol when inviting Indigenous Peoples to take part in research. William, a traditional Métis educator, emphasized the following procedure to follow: (1) offer a pouch of tobacco so to create a sacred covenantal relationship (this means that both parties are equally obligated to contribute to and respect the research process), (2) set the tobacco down on the table in front of the individual and be specific and direct when inviting them to participate in the study, (3) if the individual is interested they will pick up the tobacco and begin a discussion however if they are not interested they will leave the tobacco on the table.
participate in the study, one elder committed but later was unable to attend due to a family tragedy. Because approximately 20% of the Indigenous teaching staff in the system was contacted [based on the estimated number of Indigenous teachers (i.e., 25) as previously mentioned] it is fair to speculate that other Indigenous teachers in Saskatchewan Roman Catholic education may have similar experiences and opinions.

Building relationships prior to the actual Talking Circle and interviews was vital to building trust with the participants. The initial tobacco giving session allowed all involved to become acquainted with me. This was achieved through conversations about family, culture, and teaching. As was mentioned earlier in the Indigenous methodology section, it is imperative during first contact that the researcher centers conversation not on specifics of the study but rather about the personal lives of the participants including language, traditions, customs, and family. The presence of William for each tobacco giving session contributed significantly to the strengthening of each relationship. Essentially, every participant verbalized the high level of respect they have for William and that they trust his opinion concerning the importance of the study and my character as a teacher and researcher.

During the tobacco giving sessions I made a point to come clean of my privilege by owning and speaking of it. I emphasized how my position within the system as a white, male, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian afforded me with unearned power and privilege; however I also explained how this study is meant to be a tool of disruption to engage me in a dialogue that works to reconstruct my privilege. I explained that following this work I intend to be accountable to what I have learned from my participants by engaging in critical
action so to instigate change within Roman Catholic education. Owning my privilege helped to establish trust, therefore, strengthening the relations between the participants and me. Further, it forced me to be critical of my normative behaviors and challenged me to evaluate how my own investment in racial and colonial logics impacts my pedagogy and my relationships with students and staff.

3.2.2 The Research Events. After the participants issued a verbal confirmation to participate, they were mailed a formal letter of invitation (Appendix A), and the consent form for the Talking Circle (guided focus group) (Appendix B) or interview (Appendix C) depending on which data gathering session they were attending. I informed the participants in the letter and verbally of their right to refuse to answer any questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. Included with the letter and consent form was the University of Regina Research Ethics Board official approval form (Appendix D). A Talking Circle was conducted with three Indigenous teachers (William, Mary and Elizabeth) and the remaining two (Lisa and Maria), were interviewed, as they were unable to attend the Talking Circle. The Talking Circle and interview questions (Appendix E) were emailed a week before the sessions. The questions centered on the participants experiences in Roman Catholic education, teacher identity, teacher relationships, system structure, and notions to improve the system.

Both the Talking Circle and interviews followed a dialogical process in that they employed conversation as a method to uncover story. Friesen and Orr (1995) posit, “conversations with Aboriginal teachers is a useful way to gain insight into the stories about their lives and how their lives impact upon their teaching because it is based upon a two-way flow of ideas and does not place the
researcher in a position of privilege” (p. 3-4). By following this process it “invites a reflective discussion of Aboriginal teachers’ experiences to make implicit knowledge explicit” (St. Denis et al., 1998, p. 18). Legitimizing experience as a method for uncovering knowledge and meaning is informed through both the Talking Circle and interviews. Further, because the Talking Circle embraces Indigenous values of sharing, communicating, and cooperating the interaction and communal response to the questions was vastly enriched. The Talking Circle is meant to “deepen the collective understanding of the issues and to support a synergistic and cooperative construct for knowledge production” (St. Denis et al., 1998, p. 20). Ultimately, the Talking Circle allowed the participants to connect through stories of a similar nature and therefore, collectively surface inequities and challenges endemic to the system.

3.2.3 The Research Setting. The Talking Circle and interviews were conducted from May 14, to June 20, 2015 and took place in a school within the system of interest. The Talking Circle and interview #1 was conducted in a cultural room at one of the high schools in the system while interview #2 took place in a conference room at another high school in the system. The participants were given the option to conduct the interview off campus at the local university but chose an on campus location instead. The Talking Circle and interview #1 was on a Saturday while interview #2 took place on a Monday. The Talking Circle started at 2:00 p.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m., interview #1 began at 11:00 a.m. and ended at 1:00 p.m. and interview #2 began at 3:30 p.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m.

3.2.4 Data Recording Procedure. Prior to audio recording the participants were made aware that the Talking Circle and interviews would be
recorded. Further, before the Talking Circle and interviews I explained to the participants the importance of the recording in terms of ensuring accuracy and how the transcription process works. I obtained verbal and written consent from each participant before recording.

The Talking Circle and both interviews were audio recorded with the software GarageBand on two separate computers to ensure accuracy. The Talking Circle required an external microphone to be placed in the middle of the room to ensure that all participants could be heard clearly. Indigenous protocol (i.e., prayer) was followed before the recording devices were turned on. Once the recording was complete I reviewed each recording to ensure the volume level of the participants was adequate and the entire session had been recorded. I chose the best recording from the Talking Circle and each interview and then immediately destroyed the second copy on the backup computer. After dead spots and quiet times were removed from the GarageBand file a final copy was formatted to an MP3 file.

Immediately following the Talking Circle and interviews, I recorded introspective notes that addressed my interpretation and understanding of the experience. Once the Talking Circle and interviews were completed I hired a company (Translation Agency of Saskatchewan) to transcribe the four hours of recording resulting in 115 pages of typed data. I contacted each participant and offered the transcribed documents to them for review and to make changes. All five participants chose not to review the transcriptions.

Ethnographic methodology emphasizes the importance of confidentiality when researching sensitive topics. Conversations pertaining to school administration and staff, and personal stories of racism, prejudice and
mistreatment are held in the highest regard, and therefore all measures (i.e., pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant and all recordings are kept on a password secure computer) have been taken to protect the identities of the participants. Prior to the Talking Circle beginning, I explicitly asked the participants to keep all stories and the identities of the participants confidential.

3.2.5 A Strategy for Accuracy. Traditionally, Western researchers have critiqued quantitative research through the criteria of validity, reliability, or generalizability. However, in the case of the hybrid method employed (critical ethnography and Indigenous methodology), literature suggests that this criterion should not be applied because it is born from Western ontological and epistemological principles (Cohen et al., 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2001; Wall, 2006). Special care and attention was dedicated to ensuring that my critical process was focused on understanding the data through a lens that sought to disrupt power systems, therefore placing me in a mindset that supported Indigenous ways of knowing and not western methods of dominance. Understanding that the chosen method is a postmodernist construct, the present study is not in search of proving facts as “real” or discovering a “real-made world” rather it is interested in comprehending how Indigenous teachers’ interpret the system in which they exist in (Talburt, 2004, p. 80). Wolcott (1990) argues that academic obsession bent on proving research authenticity is preventing the communication of knowledge. Talburt (2004) continues, “this search for ‘real’ limits qualitative inquiry’s potential to break with predictability and to offer new readings of its subjects of inquiry” (pp. 80-81).
The present study follows Richardson’s (2000) criteria for postmodern qualitative research. His criteria includes five areas of focus: (1) substantive contribution, (2) aesthetic merit, (3) reflexivity, (4) impact and, (5) expression of a reality. Substantive contribution is concerned with how the research contributes to better understanding the social world. Aesthetic merit addresses the artistic integrity and asks the question, “is it satisfying, [and] complex” (p. 254)? Reflexivity addresses if the researcher is critically self-aware. The reader should be able to discern the point of view of the researcher because they are regularly establishing their position within the research. Impact refers to the emotional and intellectual impression left by the research on the reader. Lastly, expression of reality evaluates the research in terms of truth. This criterion seeks to uncover if it is a “credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the real” (p. 254).

Rejecting the criteria of validity, reliability, and generalizability for Richardson’s (2000) criteria removes the Western scientific logic to ensure data is valid and rather heightens the value of the participant’s interpretation. The study seeks to answer the question: How does Indigenous identity exist within the context of Roman Catholic education? This study makes a substantive contribution to the academy because currently the lives of Indigenous teachers in Roman Catholic education have yet to be explored or understood as is exemplified by the current void in the research. Aesthetically, the study seeks to produce an analysis that is creatively written and of interest to the academy. Reflexivity is achieved throughout the research process in particular during data collection and analysis. A concerted effort was made relationally so to earn the right to perform the research. The process forced me to become acutely aware of
my racialized and colonized conditioning and it also focused on disrupting my biases which facilitated the study being grounded in the participants understanding of their reality. Consequently, their stories of survival and evolving an autonomous pedagogical identity have a significant impact on the reader. Lastly, special attention was directed towards ensuring that the Talking Circle and interview transcriptions were precise, therefore making the study creditable and trustworthy.

3.2.6 Data Analysis. I began data analysis immediately following the completion of the Talking Circle and interviews because many ethnographic researchers believe that engaging with the data immediately following data gathering sessions improves the integrity of the findings (Cohen et al., 2000; Walsh 2004). This included reviewing my introspective notes taken during the sessions and re-listening to the recordings. Additional notes were taken while I reviewed. At the macro-level, my process followed a “constant interaction between problem formulation, data collection, and data analysis” (Walsh, 2004, p. 228) as opposed to the practice of following a sequential data analysis order. I regularly returned to my notes before, during, and after analysis to gain a clearer understanding of the context. By following a more cyclically and organically evolving data analysis process the “salient features of the situation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 148) were discovered.

The coding process followed Charmaz’s (2006) coding procedure which organized coding into two phases: (1) initial coding and (2) focused coding. The initial coding phase focused on the analysis of the data and concentrated on ensuring the researcher did not influence the coding by preexisting notions or findings from past research (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the initial coding
phase I went over the recordings and transcriptions three times and coded by assigning actions (e.g., experiencing discrimination) to the text. Charmaz (2006) asserts that initial coding requires that during the reading of the text “action words” (p. 116) be assigned because it “reduces tendencies to code types of people” (p. 116) and “it curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps” (p. 116). After assigning action words to the transcribed documents I grouped the action words into alike categories. The alike categories were the basis for phase 2 - focused coding.

The second phase, focused coding, requires sifting, sorting, synthesizing and analyzing (Charmaz, 2006). Framing the analysis by CRT and TribalCrit and following the phase 2 process, themes emerged from the initial coding categories. Rigorous work dedicated to the analysis and reanalysis of the recordings, transcriptions, and notes uncovered three salient themes: (1) Indigenous teacher identity in Roman Catholic education, (2) systemic barriers, and, (3) notions of change. The emergent process of qualitative data analysis is meant to illuminate new themes and/or sub-themes while engaging in focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). In the case of the present study, sub-themes emerged (i.e., systemic racism, normalization) after the primary themes were determined and more focused analysis occurred.

At each stage of data analysis, codes were critiqued for preconceived notions. As was mentioned in the section before, being reflexive in the data analysis process was necessary so to improve accuracy. In order to incorporate reflexivity into the study I employed the following list, as summarized by Charmaz (2006), so to safeguard against imposing preconceived notions. I tried to make sure I was not:
- Coding at too general a level
- Identifying topics instead of processes and actions
- Overlooking how people construct actions and processes
- Attending to personal or disciplinary concerns rather than participant’s concerns
- Coding out of context
- Using codes to summarize but not analyze (p. 159)

Charmaz’s list helped to guide the analysis process to generate themes and sub-themes born from the participants’ experiences and knowledge rather than my preconceived notions. Ultimately, the aforementioned list improved the richness and accuracy of the analysis process enhancing the integrity of the inquiry.

Critical analysis emphasizes the deconstruction of oral texts in order to glean codes and themes. Borrowing from Luke’s (1996) conceptualization of critical discourse analysis, I examined the transcription documents and notes through the lens of relevant discourses (i.e., CRT and TribalCrit) and social contexts (i.e., colonization) so to uncover how “power and identity are legitimized, negotiated, and contested to achieve political ends” (p. 12). The coding revealed systemic structures that were both socially subjective and individually racializing and colonizing (Luke, 1996). Through the data analysis process, three themes emerged, (1) Indigenous teacher identity in Roman Catholic education, (2) systemic barriers, and (3) notions of change, revealing a system that requires rearticulation.

**3.3 Participant Biographies**
3.3.1 William. William is a self-identified traditional\(^8\) Michif (Métis) man who has taught for 23 years. He was raised in Saskatchewan and attended Roman Catholic elementary and high school. After completing his Bachelor of Education degree he was recruited by a Roman Catholic school division in Saskatchewan where he is currently employed. William has developed and implemented curriculum and has contributed professionally to various ministry and Saskatchewan Teacher Federation (STF) initiatives.

3.3.2 Mary. (Mary chose to keep her biography private)

3.3.3 Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a self-identified traditional Cree woman who has taught for 22 years. She attended Roman Catholic elementary and high school in Saskatchewan. After completing her Bachelor of Education degree she took a job with a Roman Catholic school division in Saskatchewan. Elizabeth began her teaching career in 1994 at the high school level and after two years chose to move to the elementary level where she continues to work today.

3.3.4 Lisa. Lisa is a self-identified traditional Dakota woman who has taught for 23 years. She grew up on a reserve attending a band school and was very engaged in the everyday function of the Roman Catholic Church on the reserve. After completing her Bachelor of Education degree she was recruited to come work for a Roman Catholic school division in Saskatchewan. She has taught in elementary, high school, and has held various leadership positions in the system.

\(^8\) Traditional is a term employed by some of the participants to identify that their foundational way of living is based on Indigenous traditions, protocols, languages, and ways of knowing.
3.3.5 Maria. Maria is a status First Nations woman but self-identifies as non-traditional although she has aspirations to become reacquainted with her culture and history. During her youth she attended Roman Catholic elementary and high school in Saskatchewan. She has taught exclusively in Roman Catholic elementary schools for 13 years holding down numerous positions. Today Maria is active in various leadership capacities within the system.

CHAPTER FOUR: Analysis and Findings

Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive examination of three salient themes emerging from the data: (1) Indigenous teacher identity, (2) systemic barriers and (3) notions of change.

4.1 Theme 1 - Indigenous Teacher Identity

Uncovering how Indigenous identity exists in Roman Catholic education is fundamental to the present inquiry. Emerging from the data gathering process are three sub-themes: (1) Identity, (2) Advocacy, and (3) Cultural Brokering.

4.1.1 Identity. The pedagogical identity of the research participants is shaped by their cultural values, which often are in contradiction to the values and behaviors of their dominant non-Indigenous colleagues. William offers a detailed analysis of his value system and how non-Indigenous society is in contradiction of his,

*There are conflicting values at work between traditional Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians, you know I value cooperation, they value competition, I value group, they value individuals... It’s conflicting worldviews and everything else and that happens between colleagues, that happens in the classrooms, it seems as though those values are only shared or when we have them in common with other people on a verbal level, not on a practical level, you know like I’ll use respect for an example because I don’t know how many times I’ve heard people in the division talk about respect and being respectful and living like Jesus... but*
again like that’s a real traditional value amongst Aboriginal people, First Nation, Métis, anyone, that has real strong traditional values but traditional people make a point of living it, exercising it daily. It’s not just talk. Values determine behaviors and those values... they translate into the treatment of people so my value of respect, which I make a note of trying to live it, that translates into a certain way that I will treat people that I am in contact with. (William, June 2015, 29)

A comparison can be drawn from William’s explanation to Day (2008), O’Connor (2008), and St. Denis’ (2010) findings which assert Indigenous teachers adhere to a set of moral and ethical dimensions of teaching that are often contradictory to Western educational practices. For example, the concept of respect as discussed by William is a fundamental value of Indigenous Peoples and is held in the highest regard. On the other hand, respect in Western society as viewed by William is superficial, self-serving, and fleeting. The values William holds frames his pedagogical identity,

It’s a huge part of the kind of educator I am, the educator I have become... I was taught to value relationships, I was taught to value respect, I was taught to value groups over individuals, I was taught to value community, integrity, honor, those are all traditional values with us, family, all that kind of stuff... My cultural identity in who I am has always been the most important thing in my life and it still is today and that’s just kind of overflows into my teaching career traditional values have been my guidelines throughout my life. (William, June 2015, p. 23)

Similar to that of William, Mary articulates her Indigenous pedagogical identity,

My teacher identity is sort of part in parcel with my identity as a First Nations individual and I can’t really separate the two. One of the things is that when I’m in my classroom, I have acquired a comfort zone with students and that goes back to my identity because whatever hardship my family you know, my parents, my grandparents, me, my children, whatever else happens is that we’ve always been firmly, firmly grounded in the knowledge of who we are... If ever I need my own clarification to set myself on the right path, again I just look at the picture of my great grandfather and I showed the kids pictures of him too because some of them have been at the Ledge (Saskatchewan Legislature Building) and I say, “I don’t have this painting in my house but I have his picture in my house” and for me it goes back to him and the idea that yes I became educated but never at the cost of who I was and never giving up any part of my identity. (Mary, June 2015, pp. 20-21)
Lisa explains how staying true to her First Nations identity is vital,

*I’m First Nations and I’ll stick to it and if that affects my job in anyway, so it does... this is my life you know if I can’t fit in now then too bad, you know that’s just part of who I am* (Lisa, 2015, p. 37)

William, Mary, and Lisa’s pedagogical and personal identities are clearly shaped by their Indigenous values. Their pedagogical approach is similar to what Frideres’ (2008) uncovered in his research in which he posits that Indigenous Peoples follow a “distinctive set of values, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and place; in the end, a distinct identity” (p. 322).

Maria’s pedagogical and personal identity are intentionally separated,

*I’m not saying it’s the right way or the wrong way and to be honest, we are all on a journey in life whether it be faith or cultural, I keep my personal values and beliefs and my personal life separate from my career. This is my job and my profession and I would like to say it’s my vocation which it absolutely is that I know that 100% and you know, in our jobs, in our vocation we have to be pretty strategic in how we deliver this kind of stuff in my personal life and my professional life.* (Maria, June 2015, p. 4)

Maria finds it better to compartmentalize her identities. When analyzing Maria’s answer two theories surface that are supported by past studies. First, I speculate that Maria’s identity construction is a consequence of colonialism and normalized thinking as she feels it is necessary to compartmentalize her identities (Broad, Boyer, Chataway, 2006; Daniel, 1998; Duran, 2006; Halvorson, 2005; Morris et al., 2002). Second, as Warry (2007) and Frideres’ (2008) research uncovered Indigenous identities are fluid and malleable and, therefore must adapt depending on the environments in which they exist. For Maria, her response suggested that she has developed a method of managing her identities; however, when re-examining the beginning of her answer, “I am not saying it’s the right way or the wrong way”, it appears that she may be unsure of
her approach because her identity construction has been complicated by varying forces.

In many circumstances the use of language is a tool of oppression. Often colonizers employ binaries such as traditional and non-traditional as a divisive tool marking what constitutes authentic versus counterfeit Indigeneity; the purpose is to remove the “traditional” components from the Indigenous person. Working in binaries is problematic because it engages society in what St. Denis (2007) refers to as “identity politics” or the notion of determining what constitutes a “real Indian” (p. 1069). Identity politics is rooted in the processes of colonization and racialization, and is strategically weaponized so to further divide and conquer Indigenous Peoples by encouraging cultural fundamentalism (St. Denis, 2007). As a consequence of Canada’s colonial legacy Indigenous Peoples are at varying stages of cultural dispossession thus the employment of binary terminology contributes to the annihilative intent of colonizers.

Disrupting the colonizers use of binary terms may be one way to unify Indigenous teachers and strengthen their movement to reclaim what has been taken from them.

Some of the participant’s identities connected well with the values present in Roman Catholic education. Maria contends that her identity is shaped significantly by her lifetime exposure to the traditions and values of Roman Catholic education.

My grandmothers are both a part of the reconciliation process that you are hearing about right now but for them they didn’t tell us those experiences like as family members, they never really shared them. I think their goal was to keep us optimistic. So again, they put us through this Catholic school division. I had done my pre-internship in a public school division and I can honestly say that it wasn’t the same as my internship in a Catholic school division at a Catholic school actually where the feeling
of acceptance, the gatherings, the celebrations of all the people having that one thing in common and not focusing on differences is important. (Maria, June 2015, pp. 2-3)

Elizabeth offers a similar testimony,

*We never ever attended public school, my siblings and myself and therefore my own children, all attended Catholic school with the exception of one and it wasn’t just because we are Catholic, it was just because of the values that the system offered which aligned with some of the things that I grew up learning.* (Elizabeth, June 2015, pp. 9-10)

The data reflects how the values of Roman Catholic education impact the identity construction process for Maria and Elizabeth. Once again we can see how Warry (2007) and Frideres’ (2008) findings about fluid adaptation connect well with the preceding excerpts. The melding of some of the values of Roman Catholic education with Indigenous culture (e.g., the spiritual gatherings, ceremony, etc.) help to shape both the personal and pedagogical identities of Maria and Elizabeth. On the other hand, the identity melding of Indigenous and Roman Catholic values also challenges us to raise the questions: Is the melding process a consequence of colonial forces at work within the division? and Would the participants’ identities be more aligned to Indigenous values if dominant structures were disrupted allowing for a more self-determined identity?

### 4.1.2 Advocacy

The participants’ identity is influenced by their active advocacy in their culture. They noted a conscientious approach to advocating for their culture through developing healthy relationships and passionately integrating their cultural values and teachings into their pedagogy. Mary illustrates how her decision to take a job in Roman Catholic education rather than public education was motivated by a spiritual calling to be an advocate for Indigenous students attending Roman Catholic school so they could, as Butler (1993) states, “become bodies that matter” (p. 16). Mary’s work was to “enable
a rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as ‘life,’ lives worth protecting, lives worth saving” (Butler, 1993, p. 16). Her advocacy is deeply ingrained in her identity as is apparent when reading her excerpt,

*I said to him, my husband, I said “But what about all the ones [Indigenous students] that don’t have anybody to see out for them? What about all those ones that are still being sent to Catholic school that don’t have the benefit of a [high school tailored to help educate Aboriginal students as is present in the local public high school system]…– I went “Okay, I needed to go to the Catholic system. (Mary, June 2015, p. 15)*

Sadly, after Mary had made significant inroads and connections with the Indigenous community at a core area high school, she was moved to a suburban high school where her advocacy work for Indigenous students essentially ended because of the non-existent Indigenous student population. She explains,

*The day I was told I was leaving, it was also – in one breath I was told that I’d be going to [a suburban high school]… I wasn’t very happy about that because first of all I knew really without having to look at any demographics, I knew there were no – visible First Nation or Métis students over there and I just – basically I went home and I cried. (Mary, June 2015, p. 7)*

Mary’s commitment to her Indigenous students was a priority for her as reflected in her tears. Her relocation denied her the opportunity to continue mentoring and educating Indigenous students; helping Indigenous students to feel like “bodies that matter” (Butler, 1993, p. 16). Possibly the most significant impact of Mary’s relocation was on the Indigenous students she left behind. By purging the school of Mary only one Indigenous teacher remained on staff, causing her Indigenous students to have one less role model inevitably impacting assistance and support structures and in turn likely negatively affecting attendance and grades. The abandoned Indigenous students no longer mattered in the eyes of the system.
Elizabeth provides the following account concerning the importance of her student advocacy,

*Who I am can impact my community that I teach in and therefore I will do my best to bring the kind of teachings that I think are important to my classroom first because I – that’s where I am there to make the impact upon them. I teach only 8 and 9-year-old children but since they come with their own wisdom and their own knowledge, their own culture, some of them, and some of them are just lost because you ask them where they’re from and some of them don’t know where they’re from, what reserve they’re from. Their worldview is [the core area where they live]. (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 17-18)*

Being an advocate for Indigenous students shapes Elizabeth’s identity. We can see this in how she connects with her Indigenous students through cultural education. Conversations about reserves and Indigenous worldview allow her to create strong relational bonds.

Maria makes a similar connection in the spirit of advocacy and relationship building,

*Our self-declared population was very high [at a core area elementary school] so I’m sure that’s why my position during that time was created and implementation of Indigenous perspectives through curriculum was the focus, but for my specific students in general, there was a comfort level in that too and them knowing that “Hey, my family comes from a reserve. Hey I go to my reserve on the weekends” and like there’s definitely a comfort level for them in being open, taking pride in knowing that that’s okay. (Maria, June 2015, p. 7)*

Maria’s positive relationship with her Indigenous students is assisted by her connection with Indigenous life (i.e., reserves). Cultural familiarity bolsters the relationships between Indigenous teachers and students thus facilitating effective advocacy work and life changing possibilities for their Indigenous students. Advocacy work is also strengthened by having experiential knowledge of the tragic history of Indigenous Peoples (i.e., Indian Residential Schools). Elizabeth
articulates how being the daughter of a residential school survivor allows her to make important connections with Indigenous students. She continues,

*You know I was a child, of one of those people [residential school survivor] and I understand you know, the shoes that those people walk in.*

*(Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 11)*

By having firsthand knowledge of the generational trauma caused by Indian Residential Schools, Elizabeth recognizes the support her Indigenous students may require in order to find success in life. Elizabeth, like so many Indigenous educators, plays a fundamental role in helping Indigenous students work through the effects of generational oppression. As Mary, Elizabeth and Maria testified, advocacy through care, love, respect and support of their students is fundamental to their pedagogical identity. This data parallels well with the findings in many studies including O’Connor (2008), Jephcote & Salisbury (2009), and St. Denis (2010) who agree that Indigenous teacher identity rooted in their cultural values and beliefs provides pathways to better knowing Indigenous students therefore facilitating transformational advocacy work.

The identity of the participants is shaped by their advocacy in Indigenous culture, which is partially achieved through how they deliver curriculum. Maria cites the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s curriculum policy and how it influences her pedagogical philosophy,

*It is the ministry’s expectation [integrate Indigenous education within all curriculum] that we focus on doing – delivering this, embedding it into the curriculum, you know focusing on this kind of stuff, we do have the duty to provide treaty education and awareness and to me it’s non-negotiable and it’s just a part of what we do and it has to be a part of what everyone does.*

*(Maria, June 2015, p. 13)*

Maria’s curricular approach is entrenched in Indigenous education, in particular treaty education. Teaching Indigenous and non-Indigenous students about the
sacred covenantal responsibility of treaties and dialoguing the damage caused when one of the treaty signatories (i.e., white settlers) reneges on their commitment challenges students to question their current role in upholding the treaty promises. By understanding the history that caused the fragmentation of treaties, non-Indigenous students are able to discern how they are agents in the denial of treaty rights for Indigenous Peoples. The process of critiquing one’s behavior is fundamental to the tenets of decolonizing education as it is the first step in learning to name and rearticulate oppressive tendencies. Maria’s commitment to treaty education is vital to Indigenous advocacy and St. Denis’ (2010) affirms, Indigenous teachers “believe that teaching Aboriginal culture and history gives them and their Aboriginal students back their lives” (p. 64).

Mary explains through the following story how her pedagogical identity is also about disrupting stereotypes.

*And so I prayed long and hard, very hard and I woke up at about 3:00 in the morning and I can say that – I can’t say this was a dream because it wasn’t but when I woke up at 3:00 in the morning, I knew my answer and that answer for me was I need to go over there [a suburban area high school- essentially all white staff and students] to show these kids that not all Aboriginal people are negative or like you pick up the [the local paper] and somebody stabbed so and so or all those negative things or that somebody is going to jail for three years or whatever. (Mary, June 2015, p. 7)*

Sometimes being an advocate requires active disruption of racialized and colonized stereotypes. As is exemplified by St. Denis’ (2010) Indigenous teachers “were motivated to make a difference in the lives of students by challenging negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people” (p. 69). Throughout my visits with the participants stories of stereotyping by white society were common.
William articulates both his desperation and the disheartening reality concerning how his and his Indigenous colleagues work is not going to be continued. This is a reflection of the advocacy work they have been engaged in and how important this work is to their pedagogical identities.

*I just want to make a comment on this because I’ve been hearing it—about you know when we’re gone and what’s going to happen and things like that, is there anybody coming up the ranks and all that other stuff. Well you know what, you know even if they are—you know there are people coming up the ranks – like they are coming up the ranks, the university programs are running, they’re all producing teachers, they are not necessarily ending up like us, but they are still being produced right? But I’m not sure if all of these teachers being produced nowadays are like the teachers sitting here you know? I’m not sure if they’re as traditional, have as much courage or would be willing to do the type of work that some of the people in the circle have done with their time in the system and something tells me probably not. So you know, we’re done when we’re gone. (William, June 2015, p. 30)*

William’s fears strikes a deep chord in the dedicated hearts of the participants (as reflected by their reactions of nods and yeses to William’s comment) as they also recognize that the future appears hopeless for Indigenous teachers in Roman Catholic education. Further, and maybe even more concerning, is the difficult road ahead for Indigenous students attending Roman Catholic schools as they will likely experience an educational space absent of Indigenous mentorship, guidance and education. William’s chilling quote reveals a desperate situation where Indigenous advocacy may possibly vanish after the participants retire.

**4.1.3 Cultural Brokering.** Found within the literature is the concept of cultural brokering and the effect it has on the identity construction of minority peoples (i.e., Indigenous Peoples) existing within a dominant system. Cultural brokering in this context addresses how Indigenous educators are forced to negotiate their identity as they move between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds (Kitchen et al., 2009). Straddling two opposing realities,
where values, worldviews, and spirituality are often in complete contradiction, can make the job of an Indigenous educator complicated and confusing. Maria explains the difficulties of brokering between two worlds,

*To be quite honest with you, lots of confusion because at times I feel torn between two separate worlds but again how I feel about that personally remains in my brain and I how I connect the two worlds remains personally in my own brain. I tried to connect both aspects of me in my head and can see some similarities, for example the importance of prayer, belief in the Creator and one God, respect for nature, religious gatherings, protocol in celebrations, there are lots of connections that I can create personally for myself.* (Maria, June 2015, p. 17)

Maria’s testimony explains how she is able to switch on and off as she moves between the borders of her occupational and personal worlds. This conscious action of brokering by Maria makes me wonder if her stress and anxiety levels rise as she brokers. As a white teacher I can attest that I have never had to broker between two worlds or balance the causal stresses that likely arise from this exercise.

Other participants mention the requirement of having to prove themselves or attain acceptance from the dominant culture. The expectation to become less Indigenized in order to fit in; a sort of forced cultural brokering if you will.

*When can I stop having to prove myself.* (Lisa, June 2015, p. 8)

*I think being accepted as who you are has been one of the things I think we will always continue to deal with.* (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 25)

Lisa and Elizabeth express a common frustration regarding the pressure to tow the line of the dominant culture so to achieve acceptance ultimately, brokering their identity so to appease those in power. Mary articulates her approach concerning how she effectively brokers between two worlds,

*I very early learned that there’s – the white man way of praying until their needs are heard and then there’s our way of praying and you learn to do both and the reason that we learn to do both was because he [my*
Mary’s explanation of her grandfather’s vision shows how the system can be negotiated so Indigenous identity can co-exist within the boundaries of the dominant system. For Mary, moving between borders is not structured with the same rigidity as Maria as she has developed an identity that marries her personal and pedagogical life however, as expressed in Lisa and Elizabeth’s testimony about proving themselves and being accepted, there remains a place of tension where identity assimilation is an implied expectation by the dominant culture. It appears that the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of Indigenous teacher identities are an exhausting, stressful, and challenging function of the participants’ daily lives. The brokering that Indigenous teachers are forced to endure consequently denies autonomous identity construction.

In the context of the present study, Indigenous teacher identity in Roman Catholic education is expressed through the participants’ pedagogy, advocacy and experiences of cultural brokering. When interrogating the pedagogies of the participants, it is clear that their identities as teachers are influenced by the values and worldviews of the Indigenous culture. Two participants (i.e., Maria and Elizabeth) noted that their teacher identity is determined by the values of both the Indigenous culture and Roman Catholic education, which surfaces questions pertaining to how the oppressive structures of the dominant system impact Indigenous pedagogy. Advocacy played a significant role in the identity construction of the participants. The inquiry discovered that participants were
heavily involved in advocating for their Indigenous students and the Indigenous culture. Curriculum acted as an effective method to achieve this advocacy work. Disrupting stereotypes was commonly cited as a way to support and defend Indigenous Peoples. The participants’ dedication to resolute advocacy makes it a significant piece of Indigenous teacher identity. Lastly, the construction of Indigenous teacher identity was greatly impacted by cultural brokering. Negotiating back and forth between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds was an ongoing job of the participants. The data demonstrated that the participants were well equipped to broker between both worlds (likely because of their many years of experience) without having to alter significant aspects of their identity. However, I speculate that learning to broker was likely stressful, difficult and took many years to perfect. Meanwhile the dominant culture is able to opt out of learning about Indigenous histories, experiences and cultures facilitating an escape route from the uncomfortable and complicated stresses that cultural brokering inevitably demands. For Indigenous teachers new to the profession, learning the process of brokering could have detrimental implications on the construction of an autonomous Indigenous teacher identity.

4.2 Theme 2- Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers endemic to Roman Catholic education work to obstruct and delimit opportunity and autonomy of the participants. Systemic barriers are understood in this context as structures that intentionally and/or unintentionally create privilege and power for non-Indigenous people while marginalizing and oppressing Indigenous Peoples. Systemic barriers emerged under the four sub-themes of (1) racism, (2) colonialism, (3) normative thinking, and (4) broken relationships.
4.2.1 **Racism as a Systemic Barrier.** CRT contends that race continues to be a signifier and definer of Western systems (Leonardo, 2009). A fundamental organizing pillar of Western society is normalizing race (i.e., whiteness) within its institutions such that it provides privilege to those in dominant positions and oppresses those in subordinate positions. Non-Indigenous teachers, specifically white teachers, are immersed in the normalcy of whiteness on account of social conditioning aiding in the propagation of the racialized system (Sefa Dei et al., 1997). Thus, white teachers are able to preserve racial projects because they have been trained to ignore discourses that challenge the continuation of their dominance.

Racism as a systemic barrier is discernible within the data at the colleague, institutional, and student relational levels. Racism deeply conditioned in colleague behaviors and present during colleague interactions emerged as a thematic commonality. Institutional racism was present in various capacities including stories of marginalizing the work of Indigenous teachers and denying opportunity. Accounts of racism by non-Indigenous students towards Indigenous teachers and their culture reflected the nature of race as a systemic problem in education. Racial logic and the behavior of colleagues, the institution and students had a lasting impact on the feelings, thoughts, and future interactions of Indigenous teachers with non-Indigenous staff.

4.2.1.1 **Colleagues.** The participants cited racial ignorance by their non-Indigenous colleagues as a systemic barrier. Mills (1997) theorizes racial ignorance as both socially sanctioned and an operation of power. The dominant group via a racial contract exercises ignorance so to maintain power. He explains that the phenomenon of racial ignorance is pre-mediated and facilitated
through “a certain schedule of structured blindness and opacities in order to establish and maintain white polity” (p. 19). Therefore, whites typically see themselves as “good” and morally innocent as it pertains to race thus legitimizing their ignorance. Racial ignorance is witnessed in William and Lisa’s excerpt,

*I think that certainly a good many of them [non-Indigenous colleagues] do lack knowledge and are quite ignorant to culture and anything that goes with it, you know, world views and lifestyle and you name it, just about everything.* (William, June 2015, p.39)

*As for the staff, I don’t know if – they never mentioned anything when I’m around or anything, I don’t know but as for the ignorance of the culture yes there definitely is.* (Lisa, June 2015, p. 19)

William and Lisa contend that the ignorance of their non-Indigenous colleagues is a result of their lack of knowledge and understanding of the culture but we can also see how Mill’s (1997) theory of intentional blindness is at work. According to Mill’s theory the conditioning of non-Indigenous Roman Catholic teachers that William and Lisa interact with are intentionally blind to Indigenous ways of living and knowing, such that non-Indigenous Peoples are allowed to ignore the Indigenous condition and accept, in its entirety, the dominant way of understanding the world. William’s next quotation further reflects Mill’s (1997) theory,

*You know, if you are being socialized by one – to become competitors in a capitalist society and this has gone on for generations then there’s not much of a stretch between their colleagues and the actual mainstream students themselves especially the ones that are from the middle class and upper middle class families... yeah, they’re ignorant.* (William, June 2015, p. 39)

William’s testimony shows us how components of the dominant culture (e.g., capitalism) maintain power over Indigenous Peoples. The conditions set forth by
the dominant society reproduce racial ignorance thus preserving the hegemony (Leonardo, 2004).

Tupper (2011) posits the notion of strategic ignorance as a way to resist “meaningful engagement” (p.49) in Indigenous issues. In the context of this inquiry the meaning of strategic ignorance is slightly nuanced and is therefore understood as an insincere attempt or resistance by colleagues to engage in meaningful conversations about Indigenous reality including culture, lifestyle, and history. Strategic ignorance is present in William’s example,

_Sometimes their [non-Indigenous colleagues] inquiries are quite genuine and sincere, but other times I think you know they’re just trying to make themselves feel better by asking these questions, like as if they try and you know they are not really doing anything. So they’re just trying to make themselves feel better and that’s how you end up with the patronizing corny questions and everything else. And those outnumber the sincere ones by a long shot. (William, June 2015, p. 39)_

Here we see strategic ignorance in action; non-Indigenous teacher’s insincere attempt to demonstrate interest in the Indigenous culture reflects self-service and, superficiality. This sort of strategic ignorance can be more damaging and distancing than not engaging at all. The notion of ‘white guilt’ as a form of strategic ignorance is also present in William’s excerpt. White guilt is understood as the feelings of shame and remorse white people carry as a result of the racial oppression minorities have historically and continue to experience at the hands of white people (Steele, 2006). These feelings of guilt and the subsequent actions that follow, exemplified by William’s quote regarding how white teachers attempt to show they care by asking patronizing questions, are strategic in that white teachers are attempting to rid themselves of their guilt by
making token attempts to prove that they really care. Of course William, along with the other participants, can see right through these insincere efforts.

Elizabeth and Maria’s examples below could also be considered strategic ignorance, however, understood in a slightly different way than William’s understanding. In each of the excerpts below, non-Indigenous teachers’ feelings of inadequacy and disinterest fuel their resistance to not engage in meaningful conversation about Indigenous culture.

*These people [colleagues] were very close-minded when it came to cultural stuff. (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 4)*

*With my non-Aboriginal colleagues I can definitely sense a cautiousness and sometimes negativity when approaching certain situations or issues. (Maria, June 2015, p. 10)*

Elizabeth and Maria’s testimonies are common ways strategic ignorance is produced in Roman Catholic education. Lisa offers a similar example,

*It’s just like being a guidance counselor or a teacher of Aboriginal students and it’s not only sometimes not only Aboriginal poverty students that you have to take special note – give them a little special credit for – or another extra day because my mom had a party all night and I couldn’t do my homework you know, so you got to give them that extra day...I don’t know how many teachers actually do that but it’s the same staff, the same thing that they need to understand a little bit more of the Aboriginal lifestyle. (Lisa, June 2015, pp. 21-22)*

Non-Indigenous teachers often strategically choose to be ignorant of the Indigenous condition and how the consequences of this condition impact the lives of Indigenous students. The continual application of racial logic (e.g., hard work ensures success in life) to understand the problems impacting the Indigenous condition fails to address the root causes that facilitate the preservation of the system (St. Denis, 2010). This paradox may be the ultimate example of strategic ignorance in that until non-Indigenous people (e.g., teachers) recondition their understanding of the oppressive system, in particular
Roman Catholic education, they will continue to view the world through a racial, colonial, and white supremacist lens.

Stories of racism as provided by the participants tell of an occupational space where non-Indigenous colleagues are privileged and Indigenous teachers are oppressed. In the following excerpts the privilege/oppression binary is produced and reproduced through instances that directly affect Indigenous teachers and students. Maria explains the following example of racism in which a non-Indigenous colleague attempts to transfer all of her Indigenous students to another class,

*One specific example would be the classroom assignment of students and purposefully, maybe purposefully I don’t even know if that was her [non-Aboriginal colleague’s] intent to exclude that group of kids [Indigenous] from her room make-up.* (Maria, June 2015, p. 10)

Although Maria is not completely sure of the intent of her non-Indigenous colleague it is fair to speculate that she was uncomfortable with or possibly disliked the Indigenous students. Endemic racism conditioned within non-Indigenous teachers often results in behaviors that place Indigenous people in a subordinated position (Leonardo, 2004). By marginalizing the Indigenous students of this story, a message was sent to Maria, and all Indigenous Peoples for that matter, that their lives are secondary to the lives of non-Indigenous Peoples. Lisa illustrates two incidents of systemic racism that happened while she was an Aboriginal Liaison (i.e., in charge of providing academic support and cultural experiences for Indigenous students, also an educational bridge for non-Indigenous teachers and students to learn about the Indigenous culture): excerpt one discusses the Indigenous scholarship awards and the second addresses the Indigenous breakfast program she created.
I had so many awards [Indigenous academic awards] for things and I kind of think the rest of the school [non-Indigenous colleagues] didn’t like it but yet that was my way of having the kids be a part of it you know? It was awesome for them to get all dressed up that night and come out there and they were going to be getting something. (Lisa, June 2015, p. 3)

Because some teachers did get upset with me having this breakfast there, why does she get a fridge and all that kind of stuff. (Lisa, June 2015, p. 26)

In each of Lisa’s citations she asserts that her attempt to help her Indigenous students, who she explained during the interview were poor, came from unsafe homes (e.g., parental addictions), and were exposed to gangs, was met with opposition from some of her non-Indigenous colleagues. Critical race analysis would contend that Lisa’s non-Indigenous colleagues believed the awards and the breakfast program privileged the Indigenous students, therefore, giving them an unfair advantage over non-Indigenous students. In this case, white privilege has manifested agent-less domination and a sense of oblivion within non-Indigenous teachers (Leonardo, 2004). As can be interpreted in Lisa’s citations, her non-Indigenous colleagues were oblivious to the plight of her Indigenous students and, therefore, the transformational importance of such programs. As a result, her non-Indigenous colleagues’ opposition is an excellent example of how the privilege/oppression binary remains firmly in place in Roman Catholic education.

Not all non-Indigenous colleagues were intent on maintaining the binary. In some circumstances informed non-Indigenous colleagues were welcoming, friendly, and allies of the participants. Mary explains about her first few months at a high school after being transferred. As a new staff member Mary felt
unwelcomed and excluded so she spent every lunch hour driving around in her
car and eating lunch on her own.

Then there were other staff who actually were very supportive, one of them
is not there anymore and he goes “Where do you go at lunch time every
day?” and I said “Well, I jump in my car and I drive around until the bell
is going to ring”- “Don’t do that. You come and hang in my classroom”.
(Mary, June 2015, p. 8)

The racial climate of the school created an environment where Mary felt more
comfortable away from it and outside of it. This is not an uncommon experience
for Indigenous educators (St. Denis, 2010). Thankfully supportive and caring
colleagues located Mary and invited her to eat lunch with them. This had a
marked effect on improving her teaching experience. As St. Denis (2010) makes
clear, non-Indigenous allies must be “genuine, honest, and trustworthy” (p. 68)
if they are to build positive and lasting relationships with Indigenous teachers.

Elizabeth also cites colleague support. She reflects on an occasion where she
asked her administration if she could organize a PD day for the staff in order to
help them understand Indigenous culture, history, and lifestyle.

So we spent a day with the elder, we brought – I was also – I’m also a treaty
teacher and we have access to – to the elders from that office and I had
them come in and spend the morning and one elder from the North came
down and I finished off the day and I asked for a sweat for my colleagues
and you know, some of them took me up on it and some of them didn’t which
was okay. What was most important is my administration took me up on it
and that was my focal point was to get my administration to change their
minds. (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 6)

Elizabeth’s story reflects her pedagogical mission; she knew if she did not
provide an opportunity for her colleagues to learn about Indigenous culture then
the Indigenous students attending her school would continue to feel isolated and
alone. The commitment by her administration to engage in the PD day (and
continue engaging afterwards) facilitated the construction of an alliance that benefited all Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students at the school. Despite the fact that racial barriers exist within the walls of Roman Catholic education Mary and Elizabeth shared experiences where colleague support enabled them to overcome obstacles and establish themselves as educators within the system. Clearly, there are spaces within Roman Catholic education where the binary is shifting such that collegial alliances are growing stronger and are therefore playing a significant role in working to disrupt the current racialized reality (Regan, 2010).

4.2.1.2 Institutional. Institutional racism in education creates and recreates structures of power that benefit the privileged and marginalize the oppressed. Institutional racism is bent on propping up the dominant group while the oppressed and the professional actions they engage in are marked as inferior (Gillborn, 2006). The participants provided many stories of institutional racism that denied opportunities for Indigenous teachers to find success in their pedagogical endeavors. Often the stories were fraught with contradictions and reflected a system that showed little support for the work they were doing.

For many years Lisa was the Aboriginal Liaison at a core area high school where she established a successful Indigenous Leadership program for her Indigenous students. Lisa explains how the program took off,

*I was able to get a number of grants to get this program going and have it be successful and from that grant I was able to get a classroom... I was able to purchase a new chair, TV, you name it, I was able to get a fridge, we got our own fridge and so from that I found snacks, morning snacks, the kids definitely needed something to eat...* (Lisa, 2015, p.1)
The intent was to improve Indigenous student retention and graduation by providing academic support, cultural opportunities, and a safe and inviting place to gather. Lisa continues,

_We had sweat lodges once a week... we’ve gone out to Piapot a lot to sweats... the [Elders] would run a male and female sweat...So we went to youth conferences all over the place as far as Grand Prairie, Alberta, Edmonton, Saskatoon, what was that – some way up North, I can’t remember the place and then we even did three-day student exchanges where we stayed up there for a few days and their students came down here_ (Lisa, 2015, pp. 2-4)

_I also created a special Powwow dance credit... a Cree language credit... I had a student from the university who was in his final year of learning – being a – educator as well as going to be a Cree instructor somewhere in one of the reserves.... He taught us Cree games and all kinds of things so they had a choice of doing the powwow dance or the Cree language and it was very successful... Then again another grant, I got for one summer, I was able to hire 10 students to become some elder’s helpers... I employed the 10 students as well as myself and the school lent me the van so we went to activities such as treaty four and that and they worked with the elders._ (Lisa, 2015, pp. 2-4)

The program found great success as Lisa emphasized, “I had 0% dropout rate” (Lisa, 2015, p. 6) in three years of the program. Students were completing classes and graduating consistently but this came at a great cost to Lisa in terms of her family time and health. She was regularly dragging her children to activities and sacrificing personal time so to help her Indigenous students succeed. She explains in the following testimony,

_I always had to take one of my kids along because this was all mainly on my own time... they’ve been to many conferences._ (Lisa, 2015, p. 2)

_So I had to put out so much extra for those kids that really – I think I was the parent, the grandmother and everything, everything that they needed._ (Lisa, 2015, p. 23)

Lisa’s work was exhausting and stressful especially considering this was only a half-time position. St. Denis (2010) findings correlate with Lisa’s story.

Participants expressed often having “too much on their plates” (p.59) due to
competing obligations. Too many expectations were burdensome for St. Denis’ participants because they could not be everything for their Indigenous students, especially due to the fact that they did their job almost entirely in isolation with little support from colleagues or administration (St. Denis, 2010). Lisa culminated her story with an explanation of how the program ended,

> I was very tired and they [senior administration] wouldn’t give me fulltime – I said I had to go full time one way or the other and they [senior administration] wouldn’t do it so I just came back to full time teaching. (Lisa, 2015, p. 6)

Institutional racism is visible throughout Lisa’s account. The system’s choice to isolate her as she did this important and time intensive job, the failure to provide regular support, and then to end her program because senior administration deemed there was no money available for her to do the job full-time forces us to ask the question: What counts as important work in Roman Catholic education? In this case, there was a program that was improving the lives of Indigenous students (i.e., reducing dropout rates, increasing completion rates), however, the decision was made that suggested that Lisa’s labor did not count or was not meaningful. It became apparent to Lisa that the small amount of money required to continue the program was deemed better spent elsewhere even though the program had been clearly beneficial to her Aboriginal students. Sadly, it was Lisa, who would be blamed for the institutional decision,

> It was kind of hard when the kids who were coming or the parents saying, “We knew this program was there that’s why I sent my kids there but it wasn’t there anymore” and it was hard to be apologizing to the kids that I couldn’t help them anymore and stuff like that so I just decided to leave. (Lisa, 2015, p. 6)

It was heartbreaking for Lisa to leave the school but she felt that she had to because she no longer wanted to apologize for the decision the senior
administration had made. Her work had been discounted and her effort invalidated.

Institutional racism courses through many of the accounts provided by the participants. Mary tells of a story regarding the systems attempt to block opportunities for her to share preparation time with William,

> And this is where I met William. And after our first year together they never did give us the same prep no more. And it was an experience being here, William and I had you know had a voice that needed to be heard and whenever we could we made sure that it was heard. (Mary, June 2015, p. 2)

As seen here, controlling preparation times reflects how the institution denies Indigenous teacher autonomy. St. Denis’ (2010) findings show that her participants saw collaboration as a vital part of their pedagogy because, “We [Indigenous teachers] learn a lot of valuable stuff together” (p. 55). Relationship is the pillar of Indigenous culture so denying an opportunity to connect with Indigenous colleagues not only destroys the sacredness of relationship between Indigenous colleagues but it also widens the fracture that separates Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people. Lisa shares a similar story during her time as Indigenous consultant (i.e., system leader of Indigenous curriculum, traditional ceremony and protocol, elder relations, etc.) when she was told that she could no longer arrange meetings for the Indigenous teachers in the system.

> I know I got spoken to in regards to having these meetings [collective Indigenous teacher meetings] with us together, they didn’t want that to happen, that’s almost like the damn Indian Act where they don’t want two or more Aboriginal people meeting together because they’re scared something is going to happen. (Lisa, June 2015, p. 30)

Once again Indigenous teachers were controlled and marginalized through an institutional racialized regulation. Imagine if such a rule was imposed on non-Indigenous teachers? It would be met with vehement opposition.
Institutional racism is present in the curricular assignments of the participants. Lisa explains about a forced transfer that resulted in her losing her Native Studies courses to a non-Indigenous teacher.

*I was told I’m going to be moved and another teacher [white teacher] is going to take over here, she taught a Native Studies class last semester so she’s going to take over all the Native Studies classes... You know I don’t know why they would do something like this? (Lisa, June 2015, pp. 9-10)*

The result of Lisa losing her position as the Native Studies teacher reflects deep seeded institutional racism. It is pragmatic to think that a primary source teacher educating students about Indigenous culture would surface a more accurate narrative. The academy regularly directs students towards primary source resources because they are the most creditable and accurate, so why was Lisa’s experience and knowledge deemed inadequate? Maria reflects on her first assignment in the system,

*I was at St. Agapious [name changed] and St. Abel [name changed], prep at St. Agapious, cultural awareness and prep at St. Abel and then being that I was actually teaching 19 different curriculums at that time it was very evident in my C2PG (teacher evaluations) process of that time that that was overwhelming. (Maria, June 2015, p. 1)*

Maria testifies that her experience of teaching 19 curriculums at two core area schools while balancing the difficult duties that come with being the cultural awareness coordinator (i.e., a localized teacher leader in charge of all Indigenous curriculum, ceremony, elder relations, etc.) was very difficult and overwhelming. Extra pressure was felt because the staff and students placed high expectations on her to have all the answers to everything Indigenous. This of course was racializing in and of itself because not all Indigenous Peoples have the answers to such questions, now couple this with the fact that Maria self-identifies as non-traditional, and one can see how institutional racism is real and
visible in the system the participants work in. Until decolonizing efforts are implemented by the system, institutional racism will continue to affect the lives of Indigenous teachers.

4.2.1.3 Students. A consequence of existing in a racialized world is that dominant members of society, including youth, are conditioned by the racial structures imbued within the system (Leonardo, 2009). In the case of the present inquiry, participants’ responses show how non-Indigenous students are products of their environment thus perpetuators of racialized behaviors endemic to the dominant culture. Mary cites the following example after being transferred from a core area high school to a suburban high school,

*It was very much – the hardest part was getting the [suburban high school] students to understand that I’m here to instruct you and I know what I’m doing, that was a really, really, really difficult hurdle to overcome. It’s that, will the day ever come when I can stop having to prove myself, that I know what I’m doing and I know what I’m talking about? (Mary, June 2015, p.8)*

Here, Mary is forced to endure a common response from privileged non-Indigenous students who are conditioned to believe they hold power over her on account of their membership to the dominant culture. They do not understand how their racialized logic has conditioned them to impart dominance on Mary in particular diminishing her teaching credentials on account of her race. Mary provides a second story about a student that arrived from student services, entered her classroom, looked at her, and then quickly left. She continues,

*About 15 minutes later he comes back and – he [the guidance counselor] had to bring him back – yeah this is the right room. And I told that kid “I have a question for you and I want a really honest answer.” And I go “Why did you leave here?” ... “Well I thought this was the Native Studies room and you were the Native Studies teacher and I don’t have that on my schedule. (Mary, June 2015, p. 42-43)*
The behavior and answer by the non-Indigenous student models his racist conditioning. Although it was likely not intentional, he clearly racialized Mary by attaching a Native Studies teacher identity to her based solely on how she looks. Overall, the mistreatment of Indigenous teachers by non-Indigenous students was cited infrequently. For the most part non-Indigenous students appeared to be respectful.

Racism as a systemic barrier impacts the identity construction of Indigenous teachers working in Roman Catholic education. At the colleague level most accounts told of incidences where fellow teachers and administrators facilitated the maintenance of the dominant system through ignorance and marginalization. We learned in the section on institutional racism that Indigenous teachers often experienced racialized rules and structures that controlled and/or denied pedagogical autonomy. Finally, the treatment of Indigenous teachers by non-Indigenous students surfaced the racialized reality that they were discursively conditioned to be members of. However, on a more positive note, participants infrequently cited students as being a primary issue in the perpetuation of racism. The construction of Indigenous teacher identity is greatly influenced and transformed by the system in which they work. Distressingly, we see how the effects of the racialized system on Indigenous teachers threatens to strip their cultural identity forcing assimilation to Western educational and pedagogical values and practices.

4.2.2 Colonialism as a Systemic Barrier. TribalCrit championed by Brayboy (2005) is grounded in the notion that colonialism is the primary organizing factor for the continuation of Indigenous oppression in the Western World. In the case of Roman Catholic education, colonialism occurs via the
forcible indoctrination of normative Euro-centric ideologies. The data surfaces a number of examples concerning colonialism and its impact on Indigenous teachers.

As expressed in the TRC final report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015) the Indian Residential Schools was the most consequential colonial legislation impacting Indigenous Peoples. Mandatory residential school attendance for Indigenous children caused extensive erosion to every component of the Indigenous culture subsequently resulting in multi-generational suffering. The participants were no exception; they too experienced and continue to experience the impact of the Indian Residential School legislation. Maria articulates how it has affected her,

*Though I did not experience the physical presence and the physical impact of residential schools, it’s sad because I know it exists within my own family... it’s sad because there are gaps and holes inside my own being.*

(Maria, June 2015, p. 6)

The deep wounds passed on to Maria on account of her grandparents attending residential schools has had a significant effect on her as an Indigenous person. The gaps and holes she speaks of refers to her disconnect with her culture on account of the urbanization she experienced during her youth. Today the disconnect remains in place for various reasons one of which is the colonial logic that shapes the Canadian institutions (i.e., Roman Catholic education) that she is associated with.

Mary provides a story of her experience attending a residential school,

*I was schooled very much Catholic... at residential school... I was willing to learn, it was difficult sometimes. My first language at that time with spending time with my grandfather and his mother was the Saulteaux language, and many of the old ways and especially for prayers, we’ve*
been always praying in English so when you’re, you know, 5 years old, 6 years old, 7, 8, your little brain is filled with three different languages and sometimes you make errors and so on and you know, you had all your Dick and Jane books and some of those were in French and so you know you have – you know, you See Spot Jump See Jack Jump, you know, I mean okay fine they said. And then the French of course it had different – these primer phrases like that. You know and once in a while like I said we make a mistake (offers a Saulteaux quote) which is basically in English “See Jack Jump Jane” that didn’t go very well. And so I often got in trouble. (Mary, June 2015, pp.12-13)

Mary should have been praised for her remarkable talent to speak and understand the nuances of three languages at the age of 5. Instead the nuns scolded her. The literature is vast when addressing language loss as a result of colonization, in particular as a residential school initiative (Kitchen, et al., 2009; Soto & Kharem, 2006; Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Vick-Westgate, 2002). In Mary’s narrative we can see how the actions of the nuns, to punish her for using her native tongue, reflected the policy of the day, students were not allowed to speak Indigenous languages. The Final Report of the TRC affirms, “The forbidding of children to speak Indian, even during recreation, was so strict in some of our schools that any lapse would be severely punished” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 81).

Experiences such as Mary described are common to Indian Residential School survivors and, as a result, have significant consequences concerning how they would view education later in life.

Elizabeth provides a powerful excerpt concerning her context as a child of a residential school survivor and draws important connections to how it influences her pedagogy,
I understand why I came back [to a core area elementary school]” I said, “I have to come back and find myself” and heal myself... because I’m also – my mom was also a residential school survivor and therefore I come as an adult child of a residential school survivor. So therefore I bring those kinds of teachings too and had those kinds of experiences both for my parents and when I was able to – the residential school thing came alive, we came and talked about it, it allowed me – it opened the door. I remember the first time sitting at a meeting and saying, “You know I’m one of those people. You know I was a child, one of those people and I said I understand you know the shoes that those people walk in. (Elizabeth, June 2015, p.11)

Elizabeth makes it known that through this process of finding herself she strengthened her relationship with the Creator and her culture. The experience also helped to nuance her teaching practice so she could be a more supportive voice for her Indigenous students who also struggle due to the generational trauma that has resulted from the Indian Residential School legacy. Elizabeth continues,

But I said I overcame a lot of obstacles, I didn’t use the Catholic faith, I used my spirituality, my belief to overcome a lot of things and therefore I tell my (Indigenous) students you know, I am Catholic but I said I don’t – I pray, but I said I don’t have the ability to pray like many people do. I said my belief is out there (pointing to the natural world) and that’s where it lies... (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 11)

Elizabeth’s excerpt brilliantly reflects the importance of having Indigenous teachers present in schools, in particular but certainly not limited to schools where there is a high concentration of Indigenous students. Having a teacher present who understands the generational consequences of Indian Residential Schools can truly make a significant difference in the educational and life journeys of our Indigenous students (St. Denis, 2010).

One of the foundational goals of colonization was to separate and isolate Indigenous populations from white society (i.e., the reserve system) (Truth and
Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Within Roman Catholic education we can see how this is achieved via assigning only one Indigenous teacher per school.

Often feelings of isolation and loneliness arose. Elizabeth explains,

*I wanted so bad to have somebody [another Indigenous teacher] to be with me because it was really hard to want to do cultural kinds of things and you know, somebody to bounce ideas off of but again, once again I did it all alone.* (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 5)

Not having a likeminded Indigenous teacher on staff resulted in Elizabeth choosing to not introduce cultural initiatives to her staff or school (she remained dedicated to imparting the Indigenous culture to the students in her classroom).

This likely came at a significant cost to Elizabeth’s pedagogical identity and to the students who were not in her class. In most circumstances the participants endured work environments where it was solely up to them to motivate the Indigenous student population. Elizabeth affirms,

*I ran solo in every building that I was in and it was hard especially in the high school to bring – to figure out where it was culturally relevant for me to bring the culture to the kids because at that time there was no culture happening and my job as guidance counselor was to keep my kids at school, to keep our kids at school, First Nations to maintain kids in school and I thought “How can I do this?”* (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 4)

Elizabeth’s rhetorical question culminating the excerpt shows the desperation of the situation. Too many times the participants’ relayed messages of loneliness regarding a work environment that left them isolated and alone to do the work of their culture. Subsequently, and much like what Lisa discusses next, it was easier just to ‘shut down’ than to try to contribute when you knew you did not have an Indigenous ally in the building.

*I seem to have really shut down myself I guess ..., I don’t mind helping when I need to but other than that I just feel so alone in the workplace.* (Lisa, June 2015, p. 19-20)
Today most of the buildings in the studied division have a maximum of one Indigenous teacher and/or support staff in the school; however there are a few exceptions to the rule where multiple Indigenous teachers, elders, and support staff are present.

One way colonization continues is through the silencing of Indigenous voices. In Roman Catholic education this occurs through its failure to hire Indigenous staff, specifically Indigenous teachers and elders with a vast knowledge of tradition, protocol, and ways of knowing. Mary speculates why she thinks the system continues to not hire Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing.

*When I look at our system, I very often wonder why the resistance to be unconditionally accepted, accepting of all our people who would consider to come work for us and I often think, is this really a subtle form of racism or you genuinely must be afraid of us and for what reason?... When I see things like an Aboriginal person coming to apply because they don’t have a reference from a priest but they are very good person and they are very spiritual and they are very respectful of the goings on in our system which involves the Catholic rituals, they’re respectful of that because they know how to be [respectful of tradition and protocol], so then when all is said and done, and some of them may be baptized but not practicing, I have a real problem with that [when they don’t get a job].* (Mary, June 2015, p. 28)

Some hirings are legitimized because there is a need for qualified teachers in certain subject areas (e.g., French immersion) therefore, the obligated Roman Catholic baptism and confirmation sacrament is waved. Why is the latter not applied to the hiring of Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing? The division’s failure to make a concession in this area reveals what they mark as valued. Value is given to the students who register for a French immersion program: a program that is present because of the bilingual commitment within our confederacy legislation, a program that is
deeply colonial. Value is taken away from Indigenous education, including Indigenous languages, because the colonized settlers who manage education view it as tertiary. Silencing Indigenous voices in education occurs over and over again in various ways but none as prominent and effective as denying jobs to Indigenous teachers. In today’s Roman Catholic schools there is a substantial absence of Indigenous teachers.

Colonialism as a systemic barrier courses through the data. The generational consequences of Indian Residential Schools continue to be the primary cause of Indigenous oppression. When analyzing the data we can see that Indigenous teachers and students of the studied Roman Catholic division are greatly impacted by the generational consequences of Indian Residential Schools, as such their pedagogical identity is influenced by this tragic legacy. The separation and isolation of Indigenous teachers when it comes to the physical locating of Indigenous bodies in schools reflects how colonial logic has permeated the decisions of the system. By not placing Indigenous allies together in schools, it facilitates the continuation of the dominant system because it is exceptionally difficult for Indigenous teachers to make systemic changes when they are alone, without support, and facing an army of colonially programmed staff and students. Denying the voice of Indigenous teachers, whether it is collaboration opportunities or the hiring of Indigenous teachers, keeps Indigenous teachers firmly in a position of oppression.

4.2.3 Normative Thinking as a Systemic Barrier. Normative thinking, as it pertains to CRT, refers to the ways in which the dominant society conditions their understanding of the world onto all citizens, in particular minority people, often to the point of indoctrination (Leonardo, 2009). The
results of this are two-fold in the context of the present inquiry; first, normalcy has programmed dominant people into thinking that what they know and do is right. Second, it subordinates those who are in opposition to normativity because normative practices force those subordinates to make a choice either to assimilate to normative modes of thinking if they are intent on succeeding in the system or reject it and face further oppression. The data demonstrates the normative practices of the division.

Imposed normative modes of thinking are present throughout the participants’ experiences. Salient racism and colonialism embedded deep within the system constructs Indigenous worldviews and values as abnormal and inferior. The system has trained non-Indigenous people in leadership positions to operate the division by adhering to discursive colonial practices that maintain normalized thinking. We see below how Lisa negotiates the normalized expectations of the system and how this approach is a necessary lesson to teach her Indigenous students and children how to find success in white society.

And I’m not saying they [White rules] are bad because you know I tried to tell them about – you know, and that’s what we got to teach our kids, that’s what I’ve always taught my kids, you got to look out for the rules that somebody else applies to you. You want the job you got to be able to do it. (Lisa, June 2015, p. 21)

Lisa’s acquired survival skills to negotiate colonial rule ensures that she will keep her job. Cultural sacrifices such as what Lisa has explained inevitably causes deep wounds to the personal identities of Indigenous teachers. The historical prohibition of Indigenous teacher autonomy destroys any opportunity of our Indigenous teachers to become “themselves” (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 145). The impact of normative thinking on Indigenous educators is visible. In
Lisa’s testimony below we see how the effects of living in a normalized world has infiltrated some of her Indigenous colleague’s attitudes.

Yeah and it was – like we are trying to get more, more Aboriginal teachers to backup one another... I got a list of who the self-declared Aboriginals were, sent them an invitation to come to this meeting and some of them got mad because they’re being identified as being Aboriginal and they didn’t want to – well you know, maybe – how else did you get your job? (Lisa, June 2015, p. 31)

Lisa’s attempt to forge alliances with her Indigenous colleagues resulted in responses of scolding and indignation. Her attempt shows how many of her Indigenous colleagues have been impacted by normalized thinking, as many forcefully stated that they want to remain anonymous and invisible. Later she speculates why,

It is just wanting to fit in with the bigger crowd, you know I don’t want them to know I’m Aboriginal you know. I guess being honest with themselves I guess I don’t know shit about the Aboriginal life – I just know I got my Bill C31 card and that’s it and you know that’s all. (Lisa, June 2015, p. 31)

It is disheartening to see that many of Lisa’s Indigenous colleagues feel uncomfortable declaring they are Indigenous. On one hand it is likely they were hired as Indigenous teachers to provide the Indigenous perspective to the students (of course it may have been to fit a perception of a hiring quota), however paradoxically after receiving the job they deny their Indigenous voice, and therefore their identity, so to blend in. This may be particularly common for those individuals who come from a mixed heritage and are not visibly Indigenous or have closer ties to non-Indigenous people. Identity denial is a goal of colonialism as it ensures the proliferation of the dominant system while maintaining Indigenous oppression (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Further Lisa’s testimony speaks to the complexity of Indigenous identity
as it exists in a colonized system. Her Indigenous colleagues’ conscious choice
to deny their Indigeneity reflects a system that normalizes status quo white
identity in that ‘others’ must learn to make modifications so to escape alienation.

Sometimes normative thinking results in non-Indigenous teachers
assuming they understand the Indigenous culture, history, and lifestyle. Typical
to the dominant way of thinking, those in power often assume they know
everything or they can solve the problem by casting their normalized
understanding over oppressed realities. Mary explains,

> When you criticize some of our young people in our high schools or
probably in elementary, you don’t know their story. You don’t know why
they are hungry every day, you think you know because you took Social
Studies at the university or you think you know because you heard
something in Native Studies and so all of a sudden you think you know the
story and that’s not even – like you don’t know every person’s, individual
story. (Mary, June 2015, p. 32)

As is exemplified in Mary’s quotation and dovetailing on what was stated earlier
in this section, non-Indigenous teachers have a high level of ignorance and often
assume they know what is best for Indigenous Peoples (i.e., Indigenous
students). The normalized lens is filtered by notions of ignorance, which results
in remedies that ignore Indigenous epistemologies, values and practices and, in
turn, offer solutions framed by dominant discourses. Disrupting the normalized
thinking of non-Indigenous teachers requires engagement in the tenets of
decolonizing education so issues such as ignorance can be fleshed out and
owned.

Normative thinking is an endemic feature of Roman Catholic education
and detrimental to the autonomous identity construction of Indigenous teachers.
Conversations with the participants discussing the pressures of having to follow
normalized policy to ensure they remain safe in their jobs, indicates that
as assimilation practices are in place. It is fair to speculate that Indigenous teachers, and likely Indigenous students, may feel it is necessary to sometimes sacrifice, or at the very least modify, their cultural identities so they can exist more comfortably within the confines of the normalized Roman Catholic education world.

4.2.4 Broken Relationships as a Systemic Barrier. The consequence of racism, colonialism, and normative thinking in Roman Catholic education has fractured the relationship between Indigenous teachers and the division.

Elizabeth explains her feelings about acceptance as Indigenous teachers,

*I think being accepted as who you are has been one of the things I think we will always continue to deal with... that’s not always possible because you come across administrators who have that one mindset and whether it be the attitude that they were taught growing up which I’ve had to contend with at one point in my life and it’s just a matter – I think we will never be totally accepted as who we are within our school division... I know what kind of circles I can travel in within my school division.* (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 25)

Mary agrees,

*I very often wonder why the resistance to be unconditionally accepted, accepting of all our people.* (Mary, June 2015, p. 28)

Both Elizabeth and Mary question why the division continues to deny equity. Elizabeth hypothesizes that the inequities are likely a result of historic conditioning which correlates with the TRC findings that declare the root cause of the current Indigenous reality is due to hundreds of years of oppression catalyzed by racist government legislation and broken treaty promises, including the involvement of the Roman Catholic church in Indian Residential Schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Canada’s colonial history has facilitated the creation of an entitled non-Indigenous population, in particular
white settlers, who have been taught to feel no remorse or take ownership of a
system that gives them privilege while oppressing Indigenous Peoples (Cannon,
2012). Mary adds the following as it pertains to why the relationship is broken
and why it may fracture further,

*I mean 25 years ago I’m trying to think of how many First Nation teachers
were within our system and I can’t think of anybody… 25-30 years ago. I
can’t recollect anybody and so you know, they weren’t ready for that then.
I did share earlier that I had thought that the way some things are going
when William leaves, when I leave, when Lisa leaves, my cousin has
already left so that leaves [one core area High School] without an
Aboriginal voice… I don’t know that there are going to be replenished –
our presence with anybody, a reasonable Aboriginal person. I don’t see
that and that’s kind of discouraging because what it means is – with the
little inroads we’ve made, we may take ten steps backwards. (Mary, June
2015, p. 22)*

There is a hopelessness shared by the participants. If more Indigenous teachers
with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing are not hired
and if such Indigenous teachers do not replace the participants after retirement
the damage to the system would be unheralded and difficult to fix.

In Mary’s next quotation she explains what needs to change.

*One of the things with non-Aboriginal teachers in mind – we need some of
your own barriers to get across… I know very many people in our system
think that we’re white bashing and we aren’t. Why do you think that we
are bashing you? Where did that come from? Like “No, we’re not. We are
telling you how it is and how it was and how very many of our people got
to some of the places where they are in their life” but yeah, very large
number of our colleagues think that we are white bashing and we aren’t.*

Mary points out that if the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous
educators in Roman Catholic education is to be repaired, non-Indigenous
educators must take ownership of their racialized, colonized, and white
supremacist conditioning so that they can learn to empathetically understand the
lives of Indigenous Peoples. In order to disrupt subordinating behaviors non-
Indigenous teachers need to learn to see and name how they perpetuate racism
and colonialism. For example, recognizing that it is a conditioned colonial response to rebut sound evidence of white supremacy by flipping it around and labeling it “white bashing”. This supremacist response is a lesson white settlers must learn because this sort of behavior helps to ensure the continuation of the dominant system. Mary resumes by deconstructing the guilty feelings surfacing in white settlers on account of the historical mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples.

*Do you feel guilty? And so I know that when people feel guilty, they want to put away the objects of their guilt, like you don’t have to do that. Why would you feel guilty you know? You can’t take on the guilt or your entire nation of people whatever your ethnic background is. If you’re British, you know you can’t take on the guilt of the colonization of this country. You can’t take on the guilt or remarks that some of our early politicians made. You can’t take them if you are Catholic, you can’t take away the guilt of (voice cracked, Mary broke into tears) knowing the pedophiles that were among that group of people, you can’t take that away but you need to be able to talk about it and you need to be able to say I’m really trying to understand that. I’m really trying to understand that and unfortunately not a lot of people are willing to try to understand. (Mary, June 2015, p. 35)*

Mary’s words are powerful and pointed as she pleads with her colleagues to try and understand. For white settlers learning to own their colonial history is not about carrying guilt rather it is about agency; it is about learning how to recognize and name their contribution to oppression and, in turn, disrupting oppression through action so Indigenous colleagues can feel welcome and autonomous. Our system is broken, the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and students are broken, and it appears the fracturing will continue unless significant changes occur.

Systemic barriers coursing through the data raises concerns as it pertains to Indigenous teacher identity construction. The stress on Indigenous teachers as they experience the effects of systemic racism, colonialism, normative thinking, and broken relationships impacts autonomous Indigenous teacher identity
construction. Racism deeply ingrained in the behaviors of colleagues, the institution, and students facilitates the continuation of a system that oppresses Indigenous teachers. Structures of colonialism act as barriers to further marginalize and subjugate Indigenous teachers by failing to address the effects of colonial legislation (i.e., Indian Residential Schools), separation and isolation of Indigenous teachers, and silencing Indigenous voices. Normalized thinking legitimizes racialized and colonized behaviors declaring Indigenous teachers as ‘less than’ or ‘abnormal to’ non-Indigenous teachers. Normalized thinking also makes assumptions about what Indigenous teachers bring with them to the classroom (St. Denis, 2010). The question must be troubled, what are the expectations and skills required of Indigenous educators? Clearly, if systems do not prioritize the employment of Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing they will continue to hire the appearance of Indigeneity. The Indigenous quota may be met but the system remains protected and the power structure firmly in place. Until systemic barriers are addressed by Roman Catholic education systems the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers will remain broken.

4.3 Theme 3- Notions of Change

There are a number of systemic issues cited by the research participants that require immediate disruption if the experiences of Indigenous teachers and students in Roman Catholic education are to be improved. Although some notions of change center on the restructuring of division policy and practice, many are directed towards the reprogramming of our non-Indigenous staff (i.e., board members, administration, teachers, support staff, etc.) and students so they can learn to see how their current programming is racializing and colonizing and
in turn work to these behaviors. The changes below are organized in the following sub-themes: (1) disrupting racial and colonial conditioning, (2) hiring Indigenous teachers and staff with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing, and (3) programming and curriculum.

4.3.1 Disrupting Racial and Colonial Conditioning. Disrupting the racial and colonial conditioning of non-Indigenous teachers and students is necessary if Roman Catholic education is to become a place where Indigenous teachers (and students) feel they belong. Acquiring the knowledge and tools to critique one’s current behavioral tendencies that contribute to the maintenance of the oppressed system is the beginning of decolonizing one’s pedagogy (Tuhiwai Smith, 2010). William puts forth a comparable idea,

_I think a lot of the improvement starts within ourselves, you know and that’s why I thought that this work [the present thesis] was very valuable because that’s what it’s after, to look at yourself and your own behaviors and your own assumptions and to kind of shake that up a little bit and see what you can change with it and stuff like that because I think that’s where a lot of the improvement has to start within ourselves._ (William, June 2015, p. 40)

Mary, similar to William, speaks candidly about the need for non-Indigenous teachers to look within and address their racializing and colonizing behaviors, in particular how they live in contradiction to the values of Christ. Mary explains,

_One of the things with non-Aboriginal teachers in mind is – we need some of your own barriers to get across... You know, not a lot of people are willing to put what they know to be common sense into practice, what a lot of people are not willing to be able to put their own Catholic teachings into practice, where Aboriginal people are concerned, why is that? Will we never get over that hurdle? Will we never be able you know, to just be accepted for who we are_ (Mary, June 2015, p. 35)
I understand from the participants’ responses that disrupting racial and colonial conditioning in Roman Catholic education requires an anti-oppressive dialogue. This in turn will help to disrupt some of the contradictions that exist between the behaviors of non-Indigenous teachers and their commitment as Roman Catholic educators to adhere to Christ’s law. The values and guidelines set out by the virtuous teachings of Jesus clearly direct us towards a life of love, acceptance, equality, and social justice. The contradictions raised by the participants call for immediate action. Elizabeth’s position for disrupting the racialized and colonized logics of non-Indigenous teachers further nuances the contributions made by William and Mary.

*Elizabeth’s* position for disrupting the racialized and colonized logics of non-Indigenous teachers further nuances the contributions made by William and Mary.

> A lot of our teachers need to experience coming to (a core area school) as one of their first teaching experiences because that’s the grassroots of our city. That’s where you see the socioeconomic [problems], that’s where all the different problems are. You see the poverty, you see the addictions and you see everything there. These children that you work with are exposed to that. There’s not a day that goes by when you don’t get a parent at the door or whatever or a child going into foster care and a parent going missing and the ripple effect that it has upon the child. And we say you know, let’s open up those teacher’s eyes as they come in the door of our Catholic system and put them in a school like ours to have them understand that it isn’t all roses out there – which we call suburban schools, this is the reality of teaching within our city. *(Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 19)*

Non-Indigenous teachers who are employed by the studied Roman Catholic division typically come from a suburban reality and, therefore, have limited context of the core areas except for what they glean from the media. Elizabeth’s idea for the division to provide an opportunity for non-Indigenous teachers to teach at a core area school would be beneficial because it would provide non-Indigenous teachers a clearer understanding of the challenges that Indigenous students encounter. Elizabeth’s idea would help non-Indigenous teachers
interrogate their prejudices and assumptions helping them to recognize and name their oppressive behaviors. Through empathetic experiences non-Indigenous teachers can learn to deracialize and decolonize their conditioning. There are some potential dangers of intentionally placing non-Indigenous teachers in core area schools (i.e., it could reinforce stereotypes) that is why decolonizing training is vital. PD opportunities focusing on decolonizing one’s practice, as mentioned by Elizabeth, could also be effective but maybe not to the same extent as a firsthand experience. Maria agrees with Elizabeth’s PD idea, however she notes that adult learners require internal motivation to modify their behavior, external motivation via PD may not carry the same weight as a school experience but it may expose non-Indigenous teachers to the racialized and colonized logic framing their understanding of the world.

### 4.3.2 Hire Indigenous Teachers With a Vast Knowledge of Traditions, Protocol, and Ways of Knowing.

Indigenous teaching practices grounded in Indigenous culture and values have positive effects on both non-Indigenous and Indigenous students (St. Denis, 2010). However, a common observation shared by the research participants is that the division fails to hire Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing. Most of the research participants were adamant that this practice be changed. Lisa addresses the issue,

*There’s got to be some more meetings as to why we don’t have any more Aboriginal teachers… you know what is the problem, is there a way of fixing this?* (Lisa, June 2015, p. 28)

*Same with hiring a certain percentage of Aboriginal teachers, that’s supposed to be happening? Has anyone ever asked within the Catholic system? How many?* (Lisa, June 2015, p. 30)
Lisa is confused as to why Indigenous teachers are not being hired. Mary explains what she sees at the beginning of the year as it pertains to the new hirings and the lack of visible Indigenous teachers.

*I see all those young people, energetic, probably nice young teachers – and I see them with their nice bright blue t-shirts but I don’t see any Aboriginal faces in there. “Oh yeah there was three”, “Really? Okay, I believe you. How could I not believe you?”, but I don’t see it and you know, you might have been able to check the box right? But let’s see you do some walking here and if you ain’t walking and you ain’t talking, you ain’t nothing. (Mary, June 2015, p. 22-23)*

The concern issued here by Mary aligns with the concerns voiced by the other participants. Hiring Indigenous teachers who check the “status box” but have no relationship with the culture contributes little to disrupting the racialized and colonized behaviors of the division. The benefits of hiring visible Indigenous teachers with strong traditional backgrounds is multifaceted: for Indigenous students a traditional understanding of the culture creates a healthy mentorship relationship, improving Indigenous students self-confidence and, in turn, success in school; for Indigenous teachers it would create a stronger allied team facilitating many programs to improve the knowledge and understanding of the Indigenous culture. For non-Indigenous students and teachers it would challenge them to trouble their racial and colonial conditioning therefore encouraging agency in the dismantling of oppressive systems (Bazylak, 2002; Levin, 2009; Silver et al., 2002; St. Denis, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, one systemic barrier limiting the hiring of Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing is the division requirement that all teachers participate in the
sacramental obligations of baptism and confirmation. However Elizabeth and Mary believe this requirement can be negotiated. They explain,

To some of my friends I said “Well you know come aboard. Don’t be afraid.” “But I’m not Catholic.” “Well there are ways around it.” (Elizabeth, June 2015, p. 27)

I see exceptions made for French immersion teachers who may not be Catholic. (Mary, June 2015, p. 28)

Elizabeth mentions that jobs can be attained even if you are not Roman Catholic. Mary cites French immersion teachers as an example. The hiring of Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing is necessary if non-Indigenous staff and students are to gain a clearer understanding of Indigeneity and how they contribute to maintaining Indigenous oppression. Making exceptions for Indigenous teachers much like the system does with French immersion teachers is justifiable as the current practice silencing Indigenous voices is shattering the opportunity to repair the fracture that currently separates Indigenous and non-Indigenous society.

4.3.3 Develop Programming and Curriculum. Participants provided ideas for the roll out of a program that would better facilitate Indigenous student success. We have read a number of excerpts by Lisa concerning the program she created at a local core area high school that had significant positive effects on the Indigenous students under her care. As the Aboriginal Liaison she created a program that included breakfast and snacks, a safe place to study and socialize, tutoring, monitored attendance, developed cultural courses (i.e., Cree, Traditional Dance), created strong bonds with Indigenous families in the community, developed a summer job program, transported Indigenous students to cultural events (e.g., Powows), and developed a mentorship program with
local elders. A program like Lisa’s is strongly supported by the participants. They agreed that programming needs to be created, especially in schools where there is a high Indigenous student population, so the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people could improve. A second Indigenous programming cited by Mary, addresses her and William’s idea of a school within a school. The envisioned educational space would celebrate Indigenous culture while addressing the personal and cultural needs of Indigenous students. It would function similar to two public high schools in the province (i.e., Scott Collegiate and Joe Duquette High School), however with a Roman Catholic education directive.

In addition to programming the participants called for an overhaul to current curriculum. St. Denis (2010) affirms, “Aboriginal teachers…emphasized that the integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives in public education must happen every day, for all students, in all subject areas” (p. 8). This notion is very similar to the mandate of Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (SaskEd) who call for the inclusion of Indigenous content in all courses and at all grade levels, in particular, the teaching of Treaty education which was mandated by the Saskatchewan Government in 2007 but formalized in curriculum in 2013 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013). I asked Maria if she thought there should be a Residential School education program that emphasized the role the Roman Catholic Church played in the operation of the schools? She replied,

Yes because again not only are we recognizing historically what happened but we need to also focus on a generation of kids and how we can get them passed, that they do have equal opportunity and they’re not you know, caught in the systemic barriers that currently exist. I think it’s an important piece for everyone because again like I said this is a generational thing. How we receive this message will impact how we pass
Maria’s reasoning behind the need for Roman Catholic curriculum to include education about the history of Residential Schools addresses two system inadequacies: (1) most non-Indigenous staff and students are ignorant to Canada’s long history of oppressing Indigenous Peoples and (2) many non-Indigenous staff and students are ignorant to how they personally contribute to the maintenance of the colonized system. This idea of Maria’s also corresponds to the TRC’s Call to Action #59 and #62i, which are further discussed in the final chapter. Lastly, Lisa contends that the Native Studies curriculum should be taught by an Indigenous teacher (Lisa, June 2015, p. 28). Indigenous teachers can provide a primary source account of the culture, history, and current condition of Indigenous Peoples thus ensuring accuracy and validity of the content. Interpreting Native Studies through a colonial and racial lens maintains the oppressive system because non-Indigenous people do not educate from an Indigenous epistemological and ontological perspective. When a dominantly positioned teacher is designated to teach the Native Studies course the system further demeans and devalues Indigenous culture.

The data revealed three notions of change necessary to improve Roman Catholic education. First and foremost, the participants noted that the disruption of the racial and colonial conditioning of non-Indigenous staff and students is vital to dismantling the current system. Providing anti-oppressive and decolonizing education challenges non-Indigenous staff and students to analyze their complicity in oppression. Being able to make critical connections with the oppressive conditions imparted by those in power facilitates the building of
allied relationships and contributes to Indigenous teacher autonomy. Second, the hiring of Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing would contribute significantly to creating educational spaces of transformative change. Indigenous teachers come with primary source accounts of the Indigenous world, which teaches non-Indigenous staff and students about their sacred covenantal treaty responsibility to ensuring that the lives of Indigenous Peoples are safe and celebrated. Third, employing programming and curriculum as a vehicle to teach non-Indigenous staff and students how to trouble the way in which they contribute to the maintenance of the racialized and colonized system helps to challenge salient subordinations present within the system. Interrogating the role one plays in the current system can fundamentally disrupt the oppressive structures that marginalize the lives of Indigenous teachers.
CHAPTER FIVE: Implications, Recommendations and Future Directions

5.1 Introduction

The inquiry sought to trouble how the identities of Indigenous teachers exist in Roman Catholic education. The intent was motivated by a void in the research specifically examining Indigenous teachers working in Roman Catholic education (the space in which I educate), however it was also provoked by a realization that systemic inequities present within Saskatchewan education institutions work to delimit, devalue and subordinate Indigenous teachers.

As acknowledged in chapter one, two areas of interest framed by CRT drove the inquiry; (1) how ‘common sense’ ideas of race remain in place in Roman Catholic education as it oppresses Indigenous teachers and (2) to shatter the bonds between Roman Catholic educational practice and policy, and racism (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Gillborn, 2006). Often “common sense” racism surfaced within the participants’ testimony. In many examples non-Indigenous teachers and administrators facilitated the continuation of a racial and colonial hierarchy through the implementation of practices and policies based on colonial logic and
Euro-centric education models. As expressed by the participants and uncovered during the research, effectively shattering the bonds of “common sense” colonial programming is achievable only when non-Indigenous educators in the system are explicitly challenged to see, name and dismantle their own colonial conditions. Thus, it is vital that non-Indigenous Roman Catholic stakeholders be accountable for their complicity in maintaining the racialized education system by providing a mandatory opportunity to attend professional development opportunities focusing on decolonization and indigenization. The Calls to Action in the upcoming sections of this document explicitly address how we, as a system, can go about “shattering the bonds of colonialism” that continue to detrimentally shape the experiences of Indigenous teachers (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Gillborn, 2006).

The final chapter includes four sections. Section one, “William and I”, tells the relational journey of William and I as we negotiate the landscape of Roman Catholic education. This section addresses how working through our cultural differences was the unifying force behind our brotherly bond and, therefore, had the greatest impact on me during my thesis journey. To culminate this section I offer an explicit commitment concerning my intentions for future agency. Section two, “A Call to Action” continues the conversation of agency by recommending directives for rearticulating Roman Catholic education through the inter-connecting of the TRC Calls to Action with the participants’ notions of change. Pairing the notions of change with the Calls to Action contextualizes the recommendations in that it employs the data and findings of the rigorous TRC report to support the participants’ vision for the future. The chapter closes with sections addressing future directions and concluding thoughts.
5.2 William and I

William and I tells a story of two people, conditioned to be in opposition of each other, but connecting nevertheless as brothers. A friendship flourishing because of a commonality, not determined by our occupational similarities (e.g., social studies teachers), but rather a result of a symbiotic connection driven by our intention to improve humanity and directed by our spiritual bond with the Creator, God the Father. At the heart of the process, transformational changes were affected both individually and as a connected binary. The thesis transpired, in the face of our incongruencies, fundamentally unifying the broad diverse identities of William and I.

The bond between William and I speaks to the relational process of Indigenous research. What began as a distant collegial connection evolved into a brotherhood, fortified by Indigenous protocol, ceremony and worldview; the acquisition of Indigenous knowledge and history shattered my oblivious reality and forced me to come to terms with my white oppressive conditioning. The many hours shared in conversation linked us holistically, melding our pedagogy and morality, and grounding us in the Indigenous philosophy to work relationally “in a good way” (Kovach, 2009, p. 146). The thesis process is a story of identity construction; of William’s identity construction as a Michif man existing in Roman Catholic Education; of my identity construction as a white Christian man entitled to live a life of privilege; and the consequences of our identity collision which flipped me on my head and taught me about deep covenantal relationship, William’s most important contribution to my identity transformation.
Honouring the participants and their courageous contributions to the inquiry is reflected in the friendship between William and I. Through William a gateway was opened to establish relationship with three of the four participants (Mary, Lisa, and Elizabeth) – Maria and I were already connected relationally for many years before this study was ever thought of. Guided by William, Indigenous ways of knowing and protocol was integrated into the research process disrupting Western research practices and strengthening my connection with Mary, Lisa, and Elizabeth. Through William, an Indigenous understanding of relationship evolved assisting in the research process I shared with Mary, Elizabeth, and Lisa.

I keep having a third-person vision (William has taught me to honor my visions because it is the Creator who is speaking to me and through me). From above I see William and I walking down a symbolic path representing our careers in Roman Catholic education. As we sojourn together I notice the path is split linearly by a never-ending fracture. On my side of the path the stones are large, smooth, and foundationally stable, a representation of my membership to the dominant group, while on William’s side the stones are small, jagged, broken, and shifting, a representation of the oppression compliments of settler society. With each step I take, my identity is confirmed, my purpose validated, I am allowed to succeed; however, as William attempts to advance, he is slowed by the unevenness and voids in his path, signs of a shattered history compliments of colonization and racialization, his identity is rejected, his purpose invalidated, he is denied opportunity to succeed.

Eventually, as the journey progresses, I find myself alone and empty as I embrace the Western values of individualism, competition, and wealth.
Meanwhile my brother William continues to be impeded by barriers of oppression, feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Then suddenly a change occurs, a watershed moment rearticulates my understanding of the world. I turn back for William and ask him to help me. He offers his hand in solidarity. We know individually we are strong and able but united we can transform our reality. We enter into a covenental relationship, much like what the treaties were meant to be, positioning us as equals and forging a relationship in the pursuit to better our world. It is the unconditional binding of two people (two cultures) to work within the confines of a broken system, intent on expanding the spaces restricted by racism and colonialism so those traveling on the path behind us have limitless autonomy. The symbolic connecting of William and my hands does not instantly change the path ahead; my stones remain smooth and stable while William’s stones remain jagged and shifting, and the fracture continues to separate us. However, as I look further down the path I can see a change. Through actionable praxis, we reconstruct the path ahead and repair the fracture. Our relationship works to dismantle oppressive realities present within Roman Catholic education. Slowly the path transforms. Rearticulation becomes an ordinary action of all citizens.

Alarmingly, my romantic vision of transformational change lacks a framework for actionable praxis. This is where the heavy lifting takes place. This is where the work calls for rigor. This is where I become accountable to the contributions made by my participants. A calculated and significant response is how I honour the covenental commitment I have made. My commitment therefore is of advocacy, advocacy at the system, school, and diocese level so to inform non-Indigenous people of their colonized programming and
consequently, challenge them to dismantle their oppressive behaviors and become tools of decolonization and indigenization. I commit to:

- Present my findings and recommendations to the board and senior administration as laid out in the following section (5.3 Call To Action) so to provide a view of how Indigenous teachers see themselves in Roman Catholic education and offer a framework for change.

- Take an active role in organizing and leading PD opportunities for our board, senior administration, administrators, teachers, and support staff challenging non-Indigenous people to be introspective in how they perpetuate colonization and what they can do to disrupt their tendencies.

- Take an active role in organizing and leading PD opportunities for our senior administration, administrators, and teachers that provide them with ways they can indigenize their practice. Indigenization will be informed by adapting Shauneen Pete’s (2015) “100 Ways to Indigenize and decolonize academic programs and courses” to fit into elementary and high school spaces.

- Encourage all Roman Catholic schools to create a dedication wall to honour those who lost their lives in Indian Residential Schools and lost their culture on account of the generational trauma caused by Indian Residential Schools. Prior to completing the dedication wall, the students would participate in a mandatory instructional unit on the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the operation of Residential Schools in Canada. Learning about our history emphasizes the importance of the dedication wall.

- Organize a Treaty Four celebrational week (Treaty Four week typically lands during the week of September 15 because it commemorates the official signing
date, September 15, 1874), which each school will be required to organize activities, assignments, and tributes to Treaty Four. Ultimately it is about teaching staff and students that we are all Treaty members and therefore are required to honour the obligations set forth in the agreement.

- Continue to be in agency with William through our student lead group, “Unity in Diversity”, who work to educate students and staff about decolonization, Indigenous history, the TRC calls to action, reconciliation as well as many other initiatives that call into question intersecting subordinations in our school (i.e., sexuality).

- Connect with the Archbishop of Regina, Don Bolen, and discuss the development of a decolonization action plan for the diocese. Of the few times I have heard Don Bolen speak and as is reflected in his publication, “Latest Catholic response to TRC Calls to Action is another step on the long walk towards reconciliation” (2016), he has a strong interest in repairing the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Roman Catholics.

Positioning my body in spaces where colonization is active and responding by working to decolonize is how I earn the right to be in relationship with my Indigenous colleagues.

For 12 years I worked alongside William but outside of our monthly Social Studies department meetings contact with one another was rare. My colonial conditioning denied me the opportunity to connect with William perpetuating the oppressive system in which we existed. Today, on account of William and our evolving relationship, my contributions as an oppressor within the system is disrupted. My identity as a privileged teacher is now continuously under construction and moving towards an identity that reflects the position that
I have earned; a position grounded in reciprocity with and for William (and
Mary, Maria, Lisa, and Elizabeth).

When William said to me, “I would like to help you with your research”, I could never have envisioned the process that we would engage in together. Conversations weekly, but often daily, about Indigenous protocol, ceremony, history, and systemic oppression gave me a primary source understanding of William’s life as a Michif teacher in Roman Catholic education therefore revealing to me the reality facing Indigenous teacher’s educating in this context. Having to come clean of my privilege and power so to situate myself rightfully in the conversation was often messy and difficult but it helped to bring trust to our relationship. Today, at the culmination of this research, the maintenance of our relational trust is now predicated on my commitment to agency. Action-less promises are equivalent to the colonial sentiments that course through the treaties and Indian Act. Doing is how the relationship is repaired. Doing is what rearticulates the brokenness of the system. Doing is how reconciliation occurs.

5.3 A Call to Action

Roman Catholic education is failing to provide space for the construction of autonomous Indigenous teacher identity. Systemic barriers abrogating Indigenous worldviews and values forces assimilative identity construction, thus facilitating the continuation of the colonial system. Making space for Indigenous teachers to construct a pedagogical identity free from dominant influences is a primary goal proposed by the participants and supported by this inquiry. Effecting change of this nature requires the dismantling and rearticulation of Roman Catholic educational policies and practices so to provide Indigenous teacher autonomy. Freedom for Indigenous teachers to self-determine their
identity will have positive and lasting effects on all staff and students of Roman Catholic education.

The racial and colonial projects impact on Roman Catholic education was made clear by the testimonies of the research participants. Recommended changes to the system are framed by interconnecting section three of chapter four, the participants’ notions of change, with the Calls to Action from the Final Report of the TRC. However, before I address the TRC Calls to Action, I begin the section with a personal Call to Action directed at non-Indigenous Roman Catholic educators. The remaining Calls to Action align with the TRC Calls to Action thus bringing credibility to the recommended participant changes because it demonstrates that colonialism and racism are salient features of the Canadian system and therefore the responsibility of Roman Catholic educators to be responsive to the oppressive realities present within the system.

5.3.1 Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Pedagogy of Non-Indigenous Roman Catholic Educators. This call to action is informed by the over-arching message of this study, which implores non-Indigenous educators to become agents in the decolonization of their pedagogy and the indigenization their practice. Ultimately, the aim is to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples through teaching educators how to disrupt oppressive practice.

I call upon all non-Indigenous educators and stakeholders in Roman Catholic education to become agents of decolonization by first engaging with an open-mind and open-heart concerning the ways in which they contribute to colonization. This requires that non-Indigenous people own their racializing and colonizing behaviors that are perpetuated both individually and systemically, creating a system where non-Indigenous people are privileged and Indigenous Peoples are oppressed. To further create an educational space of equality we ask non-indigenous teachers to work to indigenize their practice. Indigenizing one’s teaching practice asks us to re-center indigenous worldviews and knowledge so to further question decolonization processes. By Indigenizing, the teacher is able to
mute colonization practices by bringing Indigenous ways of knowing (e.g., relationship) and doing (e.g., talking circle) to the center of the conversation.

This call to action is dependent on the trustees and senior administration to prioritize a rigorous program to counter current colonizing practices and policies. One program specific to non-Indigenous teachers would be the expectation that each year non-Indigenous staff dedicate an allotted amount of PD time to improve one’s knowledge of how colonizing history affects Indigenous Peoples and how this history is perpetuated through their pedagogical practice. There would be an explicit expectation that one of the professional targets set by Roman Catholic teachers would include a decolonizing goal. Formalizing how this goal is achieved and dialoguing the process with a trained supervisor would help to improve effectiveness. Initiating this process would be a system-wide PD opportunity where colleagues would be challenged to “consider themselves different and in relation to” the other helping to “identify the inner workings as a modality of power” and contribute to disrupting teaching practices imbued with colonizing behaviors (Cannon, 2012, p. 23).

Indigenizing one’s pedagogy centers Indigenous world-views and knowledge thus that decolonizing practices are disrupted (Pete. et al., 2013). In order to effectively indigenize ones educational practice it “must reflect the political, social, spiritual, as well as pedagogic, instructional, and communicative needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and their communities” (Sefa Dei, 2011, p. xii). Indigenizing takes the decolonization process one step further because it forces educators to not only be critical of their oppressive tendencies but it calls non-Indigenous educators to become
attentive to the Indigenous culture by centering Indigenous ways of knowing and doing within their pedagogy. This therefore brings Indigenous values to the forefront, in particular relationship, as Indigenizing calls for non-Indigenous teachers to do “sincere relationship building” (Pete et al., 2013). Working to indigenize one’s practice can be transformational because it contributes to the decolonization project and improves the knowledge base of non-Indigenous people (as well as Indigenous Peoples) better preparing them to live equitably and harmoniously in relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

5.3.2 Pope Apology for Reconciliation. In the Calls to Action section of the final report of the TRC point #58 reads,

We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuses of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report to be delivered by the Pope in Canada. (Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 330)

Fundamental to changing the current system requires the leadership of the Church to issue an apology. As cited earlier in chapter one, we are aware that some Roman Catholic groups and agencies have issued an apology for the residential school atrocities, yet this does not garner the same power and effect if the Pope was to apologize. If the Pope would simply embrace his (and the Church’s) sacramental duty of reconciliation the restoration process of relationship between the Church and Indigenous Peoples could begin. The decolonizing effect of such an apology would be transformational for both the Church and the affiliated Roman Catholic schools.
An apology from the Pope would encourage Roman Catholics to trouble their contribution to the racial and colonial projects that influence the system. Further, if the Pope would mandate an obligatory requirement that all Roman Catholics in Canada learn about the Indigenous story of colonization, Roman Catholics could begin to identify how they contribute to the colonial conditions of society. This would help Catholics learn to own and disrupt their behaviors, and become empathetic for the suffering of their Indigenous brothers and sisters. Delpit (1998) asserts, “we must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness” (p. 297). This may be the ultimate challenge for the Church: to understand and accept their contribution in the continuing process of systemic oppression. I like the story Milloy (1999) shares when challenging dominant people to rethink their place in the world and their historical relationship with Indigenous Peoples. He conveys a story of a Kanienkehaka man who begins his essay about his tragic experience in an Indian Residential School with the following, “When I was asked to do this paper I had some misgivings, for if I were to be honest, I must tell of things as they were; and really, this is not my story, but yours” (p. xviii). Privileging and oppressing are relational however determined by those in power. Therefore, it is essential that the powerful Roman Catholic Church take ownership of their history. Reconciling the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people is possible but only after the Pope issues a public apology. Until then repairing the brokenness of the relationship may be hopeless.

5.3.3 Education for Reconciliation. In the Calls to Action section of the final report of the TRC point #59 reads,
We call upon Church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church’s role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 330)

Although the Call to Action #59 does not specifically state that Roman Catholic schools should teach colonization education it is nevertheless applicable as there is an expectation by Roman Catholic school divisions that each student and staff member regularly attend Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, seeing that the mission of Roman Catholic education is to uphold the values and teachings of Christ it is clearly vital that the following history be provided to the students and staff of Saskatchewan Roman Catholic schools. In connection with the Call to Action #59 is point #62i which reads,

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal Peoples, and educators, to:

i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten in Grade Twelve students. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 331)

Here again we see the request to ensure education is actionable, but this time it calls the government to mandate the teaching of our colonial history to all students across Canada. This call to action aligns with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education directive detailed in the literature review.

The Calls to Action #59 and #62i support the participants’ notions to realign the current system by disrupting white settler history with the teaching of Indigenous Peoples’ experiences of colonization. Realigning our curriculum can positively affect society because it challenges non-Indigenous staff and students to recognize their contribution to the maintenance of the oppressive system.
ultimately effecting behavioral change, and affirms Indigenous worldviews, values, and practices creating spaces where autonomous identity construction can occur. Notions of change issued by the participants such as, (1) hiring more Indigenous teachers with a vast knowledge of traditions, protocol, and ways of knowing, and (2) designating only Indigenous teachers to teach the Native Studies courses are pragmatic ways to improve the system while accomplishing the mandate set forth by the TRC and Ministry of Saskatchewan to implement colonization education to all students. Both notions of change can effectively deliver decolonization education because they champion primary source Indigenous educator experiences. Hearing true stories from Indigenous teachers is a vital step in the decolonization of one’s behavior. However, before students can learn to decolonize, the first Call to Action, teaching educators to decolonize, must be realized.

5.4 Future Directions

I am drawn in numerous directions when I contemplate future research. First and foremost I think what was truly unique about my experience as a researcher was my data collection process and the critical ethnographic and Indigenous methodologies in which I employed. Time spent with William and the rich conversations and dialogue that surfaced from our evolving friendship speaks to the importance of relationship and to the fundamental importance in developing healthy and trusting relationships with the participants prior to data collection. This is especially important considering my unearned advantage as a white, middle class, male, Christian and the position I am afforded in Roman Catholic education on account of this advantage. William was instrumental in providing an opportunity for me to connect relationally with three of his
Indigenous friends in the system. Resulting in three new relationships with Mary, Lisa, and Elizabeth. By engaging in Indigenous protocol and ceremony (i.e., tobacco giving) and regularly integrating Indigenous practices (e.g., smudging) throughout the research process our relationships strengthened adding to the richness of the data. With regards to my fourth participant, Maria, the strong relational bonds that had been created during our 20-year friendship and love of teaching provided a comfort level and trust that positively influenced the experience. Honoring Indigenous participants through the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies helped to open up lines of communication and build stronger relational bonds subsequently elucidating powerful responses. In the future, I intend to frame my research by Indigenous method as I feel it contributes to the decolonization process.

One statistic that regularly surfaced during data collection was the significant drop in Indigenous student population in Roman Catholic education. In the school I am currently at it is estimated that the Indigenous population dropped from over 200 students in the early 2000’s to approximately 70 students in 2015-16. This is an alarming statistic when one considers that the Indigenous student population in Saskatchewan has increased year over year during the same period of time. Working to uncover the explanations for this drastic drop in population possibly by interviewing Indigenous students who have left the system or chose not to register after attending a Roman Catholic elementary school may help Roman Catholic education understand why this population shift has occurred. Uncovering causal factors as to why Indigenous students are leaving or not registering will inform the system of oppressive system practices
impacting enrollment. Adjusting and disrupting oppressive practices may augment Indigenous student registration and improve retention.

Lastly expanding the present research inquiry to include Indigenous teachers working in Roman Catholic schools across Saskatchewan would further inform the findings of the present inquiry. I speculate additional nuances would emerge as a result of the complexities and uniquenesses, which are influenced by regional diversity and organizational and administrative differences. The research may also uncover divisional initiatives that have been effective in disrupting racism and colonialism and creating spaces for autonomous Indigenous teacher identity construction.

5.5 Conclusion

How much evidence is needed to motivate public education stakeholders, including Roman Catholic stakeholders, to introduce mandatory decolonization programs? Why the hesitancy to investigate the value of decolonizing and indigenizing education spaces? It dumbfounds me how the response by most educational stakeholders centers on superficial action (i.e., wear an orange t-shirt or hang the Harper apology in the school) to address deeply seeded endemic issues even after volumes of evidence (i.e., TRC & RCAP) of the racialized and colonized legacy of Canada. I chalk this up to white settlers experiencing a blindness caused by only seeing explicit acts of colonization and racism. They cannot (or will not) open their eyes to the extensive invisible system that awards privilege to their skin color. White dominance cannot be flipped on its head if we continue to deny the existence of the racialized and colonized system.

As Roman Catholic educators (unlike secular public educators), we are obligated through the sacrament of reconciliation to own our sinfulness. We are
not able to selectively choose the sins we own because God’s omniscience brings His attention to every sin and calls us to confession. Absolution is achieved only after we confess and our penance is put into action. Therefore it is our duty as a system of Roman Catholics to acknowledge through reconciliation the colonial and racial privileges we have and, in penance, respond by effecting change. God is asking us to dawn the sackcloth and mark ourselves with ashes and wallow in the genuine sorrow of our grievous contributions and hypocritical positionality. God is asking us to be penitent through actions of decolonization and indigenization. The participants’ view forces us to examine how we as a system carry-out the values of Christ when it comes to the treatment of our Indigenous teachers (and students for that matter). This view centers our commitment to reconciliation; it challenges us to live out Christ’s teachings. And if our intention is to be a disciple of Christ, then it is time to start living these values through our actions.

The hope to improve the current system so Indigenous teachers can become autonomous educators grounds this inquiry and overwrites those within the system who subordinate through dominant voices by attempting to trump evidenced arguments that racialization and colonization are not real, present, and damaging. To the naysayers I ask you to first contextualize your thoughts by placing yourself in the position of the teacher who arrives at a job everyday where he/she feels alone, isolated, unloved and invisible, in the position of the student who attends a school where their daily experience is one of mistreatment, neglect, marginalization, and normalization, and in the position of the mother who agonizes over sending their child out the door to attend a school that endorses policies and practices that contradict their way of life and
strategically facilitates the continuation of the harmful generational traumas that have destroyed her People. It is these newly understood realities that have shook me to the core and motivated me to become an agent of change. The present inquiry is only the beginning of the journey.

REFERENCES


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Foster, M. (1994). The power to know one thing is never the power to know all things: Methodological notes on two studies of Black American teachers. In A. Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and Method: Political activism and educational research* (pp. 129-146). New York: Routledge.


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Saskatoon, SK.


Appendix A

Principal Investigator: Tyler Wright, Master’s Student, Faculty of Education  
Supervisor: Dr. Michael Cappello, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education

Hello, my name is Tyler Wright and I am a secondary teacher in Catholic education. I have taught for 13 years. I am currently working towards the completion of my Education Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

You are invited to participate in a research project that asks the question: How do Aboriginal educators understand identity within the context of Roman Catholic Education? The study seeks to explore how Aboriginal teachers balance Roman Catholic education and Aboriginal identity. By sharing your professional knowledge and experience concerning the proposed question the hope is that a clearer understanding of the limits and opportunities of the system will surface. Your contribution to this study is extremely valuable.

Your decision to participate or not to participate in the proposed study will have no impact on your current or future relationship with me. If you agree to participate in the study you are asked to attend a guided focus group conversation, which will last approximately 1 to 2 hours. The guided focus group conversation is meant to be a calm, safe, and reflective opportunity for Aboriginal teachers to share their knowledge and experience. The conversation is informal however directed to ensure that the atmosphere remains relaxed and participants are comfortable. Participants invited to attend the guided focus group are current and/or previously employed Aboriginal teachers and/or administrators in Roman Catholic education. I will try my best to determine a location and time that will best suit the needs of the group. A follow up interview lasting approximately 1 hour will occur after the guided focus group
conversation. The interview is optional and will occur only with those individuals interested in participating. The guided focus group and interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy. After the recording is transcribed you will have the opportunity to read through and make any necessary changes, omissions, and/or additions to the transcript.

There are minimal anticipated risks for the involvement in the study however if a participant does experience any psychological or emotional discomfort elicited from participation the researcher will provide the participant with contact information of appropriate mental health professionals or an elder from the University of Regina or greater Regina community.

There are many potential benefits for participating in this study such as opportunities to: a) network and share ideas/knowledge with fellow Aboriginal colleagues thus creating stronger collegial bonds; b) gain a greater understanding of the limitations and challenges present within the system; c) recognize the advantages and celebrations provided by the system; d) help create a new space that will facilitate positive dialogue and effective change; and e) contribute to updating Roman Catholic teachers’ practice so that they are more culturally responsive to the experiences of their Aboriginal colleagues and students.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Regina. For questions or concerns regarding participant rights or treatment as subjects and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775 or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

Thank-you for considering my invitation,

_______________________
Tyler Wright, Master’s Student
Faculty of Education

_______________________
Dr. Michael Cappello, Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Appendix B

Participant Consent Form
Guided Focus Group (Talking Circle)

**Thesis Title:** Understanding Aboriginal identity within the context of Roman Catholic education

**Researcher:** Tyler Wright, Graduate Student, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Regina.

**Supervisor:** Dr. Michael Cappello, Faculty of Education, University of Regina.

**Purpose(s) or Objective(s) of the research:**
Aboriginal teachers experience a challenging work environment as they are expected to broker divergent educational goals so to serve the Euro-centric education system and their Aboriginal community. Although the body of research addresses this phenomenon in public schools, there appears to be a void in the research regarding Aboriginal teachers working in Roman Catholic schools. Thus the study asks the question: how do Aboriginal teachers integrate their Aboriginal identity into Roman Catholic Education? The overall objective is to gain an understanding of Roman Catholic education from the perspective of Aboriginal teachers so to discern the racial and colonial nuances of the system. By examining the practices of the system, we will better understand the current condition facing Aboriginal teachers in Roman Catholic education thus allowing us to begin exploring possible ways to improve Aboriginal educators’ experience.

**Procedures:**
You will be involved in a guided focus group conversation that will last approximately 1 to 2 hours. The guided focus group conversation is meant to be a calm, safe, and reflective opportunity for Aboriginal teachers from Roman Catholic Schools to share their knowledge and experience. The conversation is informal however directed to ensure the atmosphere remains relaxed and participants are comfortable. Participants invited to attend the guided focus group are current and/or previously employed Aboriginal teachers and/or administrators of a Roman Catholic School Division. The guided focus group conversation will be conducted at a time and location that will best suit the needs of the group. With your permission the guided focus group conversation will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy. After the recording is transcribed the participant will have the opportunity to read through and make any necessary changes, omissions, and/or additions to the transcript. A follow up interview lasting approximately 1 hour will occur after the guided focus group conversation. The interview is not mandatory and will occur only with those individuals interested in participating.
Potential Risks:
We believe that there is minimal risk for participants participating in the study. However, if a participant does experience psychological or emotional discomfort elicited from participation the researcher will provide the participant with contact information of appropriate mental health professionals or elder support from the University of Regina or greater Regina community. Furthermore, to address potential risks, participants will receive a copy of the questions one week in advance of the group discussion to provide individuals sufficient time to become familiar with the questions and prepare if necessary.

Potential Benefits:
The hope is that the following benefits will be achieved as a result of the study:

i. Gain a greater understanding of the limitations and challenges present within the system.
   ii. Recognize the advantages and celebrations provided by the system.
   iii. Benefit emotionally and professionally from the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience of teaching.
      iv. New collegial connections and alliances will be created.
      v. New space will be created which will facilitate positive dialogue and effective change.
   vi. Contribute to updating Roman Catholic teachers’ practice so that they are more culturally responsive to the experiences of their Aboriginal colleagues and students.

Confidentiality:
The information collected will be used for research purposes only however, due to the nature of the study, confidentiality will be limited. To ensure as much confidentiality as possible, your name will NOT be used and a pseudonym will be assigned when the focus group discussion is transcribed and reported. Also, care will be taken that no identifying information will be included in direct quotes. At times alterations to the situation may be made to protect the identity of the participant. When appropriate, the participants will be referred to in aggregate form. Due to the nature of the environments that the participants may be describing, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality.

With regards to those participating in the study, we would ask all participants to be respectful of the opinions of others, to be non-judgmental, and to preserve the confidentiality of each others’ statements.

Storage of Data:
The consent forms will be scanned as electronic PDF files immediately after the guided group conversation and then destroyed. Electronic files will be stored on a password protected computer. Back-up electronic copies of the transcripts will be kept on a flash drive device that is secured with a password as well as the computer of the research
supervisor which is also password protected. After the study is concluded all data collected during the project will be kept under lock and key in a secure location and after five years will be shredded and destroyed.

**Right to Withdraw:**
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. Every effort will be made to remove the contributions of a participant if they choose to withdraw from the study after commencement. However this may not be fully achievable during the guided focus group conversation because voices may not be identifiable and by removing the contributions the conversation may not make sense. Withdrawal from the study must take place no later than after you have read the transcribed guided focus group conversation (approximately October 1, 2015).

**Follow-up:**
To obtain results from the study, please let the researcher know and a copy will be sent to you.

**Questions or Concerns:**
If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, or your rights as a research participant please contact the University of Regina Ethics Board (research.ethics@uregina.ca). If you have any questions about the study please contact my advisor Dr. Michael Cappello, or me, Tyler Wright. Please keep this letter for future reference.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on _______________.

**SIGNED CONSENT**

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

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

Interview

Thesis Title: Understanding Aboriginal identity within the context of Roman Catholic education

Researcher: Tyler Wright, Graduate Student, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Regina.

Supervisor: Dr. Michael Cappello, Faculty of Education, University of Regina.

Purpose(s) or Objective(s) of the research:
Aboriginal teachers experience a challenging work environment as they are expected to broker divergent educational goals so to serve the Euro-centric education system and their Aboriginal community. Although the body of research addresses this phenomenon in public schools, there appears to be a void in the research regarding Aboriginal teachers working in Roman Catholic schools. Thus the study asks the question: how do Aboriginal teachers integrate their Aboriginal identity into Roman Catholic Education? The overall objective is to gain an understanding of Roman Catholic education from the perspective of Aboriginal teachers so to discern the racial and colonial nuances of the system. By examining the practices of the system, we will better understand the current condition facing Aboriginal teachers in Roman Catholic education thus allowing us to begin exploring possible ways to improve Aboriginal educators’ experience.

Procedures:
You are invited to participate in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour. This will be a follow up to the guided focus group conversation you recently took part in. The interview will further trouble the questions discussed during the guided focus group conversation. The interview will be conducted at a time and location that will best suit your needs. With your permission the interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy. After the recording is transcribed the participant will have the opportunity to read through and make any necessary changes, omissions, and/or additions to the transcript.

Potential Risks:
We believe that there is minimal risk for participants participating in the study. However, if a participant does experience psychological or emotional discomfort elicited from participation the researcher will provide the participant with contact information of appropriate mental health professionals or elder support from the University of Regina or greater Regina community. Furthermore, to address potential
risks, participants will receive a copy of the questions one week in advance of the group discussion to provide individuals sufficient time to become familiar with the questions and prepare if necessary.

Potential Benefits:
The hope is that the following benefits will be achieved as a result of the study:

i) Gain a greater understanding of the limitations and challenges present within the system.
ii) Recognize the advantages and celebrations provided by the system.
iii) Benefit emotionally and professionally from the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience of teaching.
iv) New space will be created which will facilitate positive dialogue and effective change.
v) New collegial connections and alliances will be created.
vi) Teacher practice will be updated in ways that are more responsive to the experiences of Aboriginal educators.

Confidentiality:
The information collected will be used for research purposes only however, due to the nature of the study, confidentiality will be limited. To ensure as much confidentiality as possible, your name will NOT be used and a pseudonym will be assigned when the interview is transcribed and reported. Also, care will be taken that no identifying information will be included in direct quotes. At times alterations to the situation may be made to protect the identity of the participant. When appropriate, the participants will be referred to in aggregate form. Due to the nature of the environments that the participants may be describing, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality.

Storage of Data:
The consent forms will be scanned as electronic PDF files immediately after the guided group conversation and then destroyed. Electronic files will be stored on a password protected computer. Back-up electronic copies of the transcripts will be kept on a flash drive device that is secured with a password as well as the computer of the research supervisor which is also password protected. After the study is concluded all data collected during the project will be kept under lock and key in a secure location and after five years will be shredded and destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information provided by you will be destroyed immediately and will not be used in the data analysis or presentation of the study. Withdrawal from the study must take place no later than after you have read the transcribed interview (approximately October 1, 2015).

Follow-up:
To obtain results from the study, please let the researcher know and a copy will be sent to you.

**Questions or Concerns:**
If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, or your rights as a research participant please contact the University of Regina Ethics Board (research.ethics@uregina.ca). If you have any questions about the study please contact my advisor Dr. Michael Cappello, or me, Tyler Wright. Please keep this letter for future reference.

This research project as been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on ________________.

---

**SIGNED CONSENT**

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

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our 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.

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*This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on ________________.*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix D

Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

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<th>REB#</th>
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<td>Tyler Larry Wright</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2015-042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Michael Cappello</td>
<td>Unfunded</td>
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<td>April 16, 2016</td>
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<td>The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.</td>
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| Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation. |

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<td>In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <a href="http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml">http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml</a></td>
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Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: (306) 585-4775  Fax: (306) 585-4893  research.ethics@uregina.ca
Appendix E

Talking Circle and Interview Questions

1. Journey of a Teacher

- Why did you choose to become a Roman Catholic teacher? Were there any significant events that helped you arrive at this decision?

2. Identity

- How do you understand your pedagogical/educator identity? How do your First Nations or Métis roots play a role in your teacher identity/philosophy?

- How do you as a First Nations or Métis educator negotiate your identity within the context of Roman Catholic education? Are there contradictions between the systems that make this negotiation difficult (i.e., curriculum, policy, teaching approaches, spirituality, hierarchy, etc.)?

3. Relationships

- Explain your leadership role as a First Nations or Métis educator for your First Nations and Métis students? Is there extra-pressure placed on you to be the primary First Nations or Métis role model in your school? (Are you the only First Nations or Métis teacher on your staff?)

- Do you feel that your non-Aboriginal colleagues and/or students lack essential knowledge, have assumptions, and/or are ignorant of your culture? Please provide examples if you can.

4. System Structure

- As a white educator my most significant failure is my ignorance of systemic racism. Do you think a program teaching staff and students how to recognize and subsequently work to disrupt systemic racism and colonialism is needed? Why do you think a program such as this would/wouldn’t be effective?
• What would be some of your goals for improving the current system so to make space for First Nations and Métis identity/culture? How would these changes help create space for our First Nations and Métis students?

• What does it mean to be First Nations or Métis and Roman Catholic?

Possible Additional Questions

• Does the history of residential schools, in particular the role Roman Catholic Education played in the atrocities, impact how you understand your identity as a First Nations or Métis teacher existing in a Roman Catholic Education reality?

• How do you broker between your First Nations or Métis spirituality and the Roman Catholic Faith?