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The Decolonization of Northwest Community College

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE DECOLONIZATION OF NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

by

Beverly Moore-Garcia

2014

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation written by Beverly Moore-Garcia, and entitled The Decolonization of Northwest Community College, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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The dissertation of Beverly Moore-Garcia is approved.

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Florida International University, 2014

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Armando J. Garcia, and my sons Paolo and Aidan for their love and patience. I will like you for always, love you forever, tummy rubs, and sweet dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the people and land of northwest British Columbia, Canada for what has been shared with me. I thank the study participants for their openness and courage. I will be forever grateful to you. Additionally, I acknowledge the encouragement of my extended family and the many guides and supporters who have passed through my life.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
THE DECOLONIZATION OF NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Beverly Moore-Garcia

Florida International University, 2014

Miami, Florida

Professor Benjamin Baez, Major Professor

In 1996, the authors of the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded Canadian educational policy had been based on the false assumption of the superiority of European worldviews. The report authors recommended the transformation of curriculum and schools to recognize that European knowledge was not universal. Aboriginal researcher Battiste believes the current system of Canadian education causes Aboriginal children to face cognitive imperialism and cognitive assimilation and that this current practice of cultural racism in Canada makes educational institutions a hostile environment for Aboriginal learners. In order to counter this cultural racism, Battiste calls for the decolonization of education.

In 2005, the president of Northwest Community College (NWCC), publicly committed to decolonizing the college in order to address the continuing disparity in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners. Upon the president's departure in 2010, the employees of NWCC were left to define for themselves the meaning of decolonization.

This qualitative study was designed to build a NWCC definition of colonization and decolonization by collecting researcher observations, nine weeks of participant blog

postings, and pre and post blog Word survey responses drawn from a purposeful sample of six Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal NWCC employees selected from staff, instructor and administrator employee groups. The findings revealed NWCC employees held multiple definitions of colonization and decolonization which did not vary between employee groups, or based on participant gender; however, differences were found based on whether the participants were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants thought decolonization was a worthy goal for the college. Aboriginal participants felt hopeful that decolonization would happen in the future and thought decolonization had to do with moving forward to a time when they would be valued, respected, empowered, unashamed, safe, and viewed as equal to non-Aboriginals. Non-Aboriginal participants were unsure if decolonization was possible because it would require going back in time to restore the Aboriginal way of life. When non-Aboriginal participants felt their thoughts were not being valued or they were being associated with colonialism, they felt angry and guarded and were uncomfortable with Aboriginal participants expressing anger towards Colonizers.

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PROLOGUE

Early in June, 2010, I sat with three others in a chilly, dimly lit, empty college cafeteria in northwest British Columbia, Canada, further north than I had ever traveled before. I was meeting Simoighet [chief] and Sigidmna'ax [matriarch] for the first time. These were First Nations¹ people on whose traditional territory the largest campus of Northwest Community College was located. The Chief sat quietly listening as introductions were made and the college president spoke. As the conversation continued, the matriarch made eye contact with me and leaned in quietly saying:

You are shy. That's alright. You will come around. You know chiefs do not travel alone. They always bring another set of eyes and ears. And when they are ready to speak they have a speaker for the house to convey the words. Remember you cannot listen when you are always talking.

Since that time I have tried much harder to listen. I came to appreciate that the word listen was synonymous with the words learn, understand, and know. It is the idea that to learn, understand or know something, a person must listen with their ears, eyes, body, heart and soul. This was a new and foreign idea for me.

The story of this dissertation started years before this event. I had always been drawn to understanding people unlike myself. My interest in Native Americans began during a history of education doctoral class when I was given the assignment to examine the mission of a college or university. I could choose a historically Black, women's, or tribal college, any educational institution that was different from the public state

¹**First Nation:** A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian," which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Some Indian peoples have also adopted the term "First Nation" to replace the word "band" in the name of their community

university I was attending. I chose a tribal college because I knew nothing about tribal colleges, and found one on the Internet with a colorful web site. I made notes as I clicked from page to page, and I began to wonder why there was a need for tribal colleges. What I was reading made me realize how differently native peoples spoke about learning and ways of knowing connected to the land, to the heart, and to the spirit.

I completed the assignment and did not give it much more thought until my curriculum class in which I was assigned to review curriculum designed for a specific purpose. In class we had spent considerable discussion time about how curriculum was not neutral. Given my recent research on a tribal college, I decided to review indigenous curriculum that was based on Aboriginal worldviews. These two assignments introduced me to two key concepts: different ways of knowing based on worldview and the power of curriculum to enfranchise or disenfranchise people.

Given my new interest in Aboriginal peoples, I moved with my family to northern British Columbia to take a position as the vice president of education and student services at Northwest Community College (NWCC). I took the position to participate in the college administration's publicly expressed intention to decolonize post-secondary education. The student population at NWCC was about half Aboriginal and the president had announced in 2005 that decolonization would become a priority to address the lagging educational attainment of First Nations students, which she determined was the result of the colonial educational structure of the institution.

I wondered how the employees of NWCC were defining decolonization. This dissertation represents my understanding of decolonization at NWCC through my experiences of living in northern British Columbia and working on a NWCC campus and

through face-to-face and blog interactions with my study participants. The format of the dissertation was constructed to tell both a story, to honor the First Nations way of sharing knowledge, and to provide the reader with the traditional chapters of a dissertation. The story is actually a series of stories. The stories are provided to allow the reader to gain knowledge of the place, events, and the people through my experiences. The stories are meant to be less linear and more discursive in style. Regan (2005) explained that Aboriginal stories are not traditionally explained as the listener or reader is meant to reflect on its meaning and relevance for his/her own life, thereby learning what lessons the story and the storyteller offer. However, since this style of writing is unusual in a dissertation and may unsettle the reader, I have provided an explanation of why each story was included in my dissertation.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to Apple (1993)

Curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people...the decision to define some groups' knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society. Thus, whether we like it or not, differential power intrudes into the very heart of curriculum, teaching, and evaluation. What counts as knowledge... [is not] simply neutral descriptions of the world... [it] empowers some groups while disempowering others. (p. 222)

Educators contribute to and sustain the belief that there is superior knowledge.

Battiste (2000b) asserted that the current system of Canadian education causes Aboriginal children to face cognitive imperialism and cognitive assimilation. In the United States, this has been referred to as “cultural racism or the . . . imposing of one worldview on a people who have an alternate worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview” (Battiste, 2000b, p. 193). According to Battiste (2000b) this current practice of cultural racism in Canada has made educational institutions a hostile environment for Aboriginal² learners. In order to counter this cultural racism Battiste (2000b) called for the decolonization of education. Smith (1999) defined decolonization as “centering our [Aboriginal] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our [Aboriginal] own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p.39). Battiste (n.d.) defined the decolonization

² **Aboriginal peoples** is a term defined in the *Canadian Constitution Act of 1982*, which refers to all indigenous peoples in Canada, including Indians, Métis people, and Inuit people.

of education as the examination of the assumptions inherent in western knowledge, science and modern education theory and to make visible and dispel the assumption that “Indigenous knowledge is primitive and in binary opposition to scientific, western Eurocentric or modern knowledge” (p.2). In addition, Battiste et al. (2002) stated the objective of decolonizing education is Indigenous resurgence and empowerment. Originally, I had thought decolonization of education would be changing the content and delivery of the curriculum. I had not anticipated that it would extend to examining relationships of power within society.

In the mid-1990s, with the population of First Nation peoples of Canada increasing³, members of a Canadian Royal Commission were tasked to investigate the continued disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. In their 1996 report, committee members felt that current educational practices were based on the false assumption of the superiority of European worldviews; further, European knowledge was not universal, normative, or necessarily ideal. There were alternative worldviews or ways of knowing. Following this report, a discourse emerged, primarily among Aboriginal scholars, related to the need to study post-secondary education through the lens of decolonization and indigenization (Battiste, 2000b; Graveline, 1998; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Smith, 1999; and Stonechild, 2006) have stated that the failures of the education system are inextricably linked to the processes and practice of colonization. There were also non-Aboriginal authors who saw the value in examining the assumptions inherent in Western knowledge. Semali and Kincheloe (1999) wrote: “An appreciation of

³ First Nations peoples were increasing in population because in 1985 Bill C-3 was passed to amend the Indian Act which made it possible for women and their children who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men to claim their Indian status back and because of decreased infant mortality.

Indigenous epistemology holds transformative possibilities, as they [Western peoples] come to understand the overtly cultural process by which information is legitimated and delimited” (p. 17). Battiste (n.d.) wrote “By animating the voices and experiences of the cognitive other and integrating them into the educational process, it creates a new, balanced centre and fresh vantage point from which to analyze Eurocentric education and its pedagogies” (p 2).

Aboriginal authors Smith (1999) and Kovach (2009) argued that to decolonize education would require more than the current practice of inserting Aboriginal values and content into the existing curriculum. The values of the dominant culture must no longer be given a sense of universality to which all other values were compared and validated. Stonechild (2006) contended that Western colleges could not be decolonized and advocated for separate Aboriginal institutions, stating that anything less than total control by Aboriginals was contrary to the true liberation of Aboriginal peoples.

In 2005, a First Nations Summit (FNS) task group was convened in British Columbia (B.C.), Canada and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed by signatories from various relevant Aboriginal and post-secondary organizations (i.e., the BC Assembly of First Nations, the Strategic Action Committee, the United Native Nations Society, the Métis Provincial Council of BC, the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association, the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Ministry of Advanced Education, the University President’s Council of BC, the University-College Presidents, and the BC College Presidents), to work together on improving the levels of participation and success of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training in B.C. As a result of signing the MOU, the then president of

NWCC proclaimed that college administrators, faculty and staff would begin a process of decolonization. She was the only president of a public post-secondary institution in B.C. to publicly link the disparity in educational attainment of Aboriginal learners to the processes and practices of colonization. As president of NWCC, with its service region 102,247 square kilometers in northern BC and home to approximately 72,000 people of which 32% are Aboriginal from 27 of the 197 First Nations bands in B.C., she had reason to be concerned regarding the success of Aboriginal students.

She was not the first NWCC administrator to appreciate the college's need to establish effective relationships with surrounding Aboriginal communities. Back in 1995, NWCC administrators and local Aboriginal leaders had collaborated to create a document titled *Stepping Stones to Improved Relationships: Aboriginal Equality and Northwest Community College* action plan. This action plan detailed three main areas under which all goals were categorized: (a) relationships between the College and the communities: understanding and addressing conflicting expectations, (b) self-government initiatives and treaty negotiations, and (c) student support. The creation of NWCC's First Nations Council, to advise the president, dates back to this action plan. However, it was unclear to me in 2010 as an incoming NWCC administrator with the exception of the creation of FNC what had been achieved from the Stepping Stones plan at NWCC between 1996 and 2005. While the president had joined the college in 2000, it is during the timeframe 2005-2010 after signing the MOU and verbalizing that she sought to decolonize the college that changes in the college are visible. In her quest to decolonize, she took the following steps: totem poles were commissioned and raised in front of the east central campus; efforts to re-name college buildings in the local First Nations languages were continued;

a research project was instituted to understand and record the protocols of each of the seven First Nations in the college's service area; a practice of acknowledging the traditional First Nations territory on which any meeting was taking place was established; a combination of government funding and local community funds were raised to build a traditional longhouse for use as a student and community gathering space to serve as a public symbol of the college administration's acknowledgement of local First Nations people. In addition, the NWCC president established what was called the House of Learning and Applied Research. The staff of the House of Learning hosted professional development workshops for college employees on First Nations culture and pedagogy. House of Learning and Applied Research staff members also sponsored an annual conference—called Challenging the Paradigm—that was open to internal and external participants interested in discussing and learning about decolonizing education.

The NWCC president increased the delivery of educational programs in First Nations communities from zero in 2000 to serving 28 communities in 2009. Sixteen First Nations language courses were developed that provided transferable college credits, at least one course was developed for each of the six area First Nations languages as well as for the Métis⁴. The Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee (ACKAC) was formed in 2009. ACKAC committee members were charged with facilitating the indigenization of the curriculum. The majority of these initiatives were made possible by

⁴ **Métis** were born from unions of Cree, Ojibwa and Salteaux women, and the French and Scottish fur traders, beginning in the mid-1600s. Scandinavian, Irish and English stock was added to the mix as western Canada was explored. They are one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada as defined in section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 according to the Métis Nation of Alberta

3 years of Aboriginal Service Plan⁵ soft funding (from 2007–2010) in the amount of approximately 1.6 million Canadian dollars. During this timeframe, the number and retention of First Nations students increased. According to NWCC’s 2012-2013 Facts report, First Nations students now make up approximately 45% of NWCC’s student population.

In June 2010, I arrived at NWCC, curious and excited to work for a college that was committed to a process of decolonization to increase the number of Aboriginal learners and to increase their educational attainment. However, despite the efforts that had been made, I found few employees could articulate what decolonization meant. Many seemed convinced that decolonization should be done, but they did not know how to accomplish it. Also, there was no measure to determine when the college could be defined as decolonized.

Just two weeks after my arrival in June 2010, the president of NWCC announced she was taking a new position in another Canadian province. Furthermore, in December of 2010, NWCC’s 3-year Aboriginal Service Plan ended and funding was reduced to \$200,000 annually. While additional funds could be requested, all funds were budgeted on an annual basis, making long-term planning impossible. With the departure of NWCC’s president, who had acted as the visionary and champion of the decolonization agenda, and the reduction in Aboriginal Service Plan funding, it became increasingly important to determine how NWCC employees defined decolonization, so the effort could be supported and continued.

⁵ **Aboriginal Service Plan** funding was one of multiple initiatives of the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education to increase Aboriginal student success.

Conceiving the Study Design

I selected a qualitative research method for this study to facilitate a deeper understanding of decolonization through the narratives of NWCC employees. I was interested in understanding, as opposed to quantifying, decolonization. Patton (1985) defined qualitative research as

. . . an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily but to understand the nature of that setting (p. 1).

In addition, I selected a qualitative method because it allowed me to be the instrument of research, with my personal narrative, observations and participant interactions used as data. Qualitative research allows researchers to “position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25).

Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this qualitative research study based upon a social constructivist framework was to build a collective definition of colonization and decolonization at NWCC from narratives, of six Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal employees (selected from union instructors and staff and non-union administrators), collected via researcher observations, a pre blog survey and a post blog survey utilizing open-ended questions, and participant response postings to the researcher’s blog on decolonization.

This study was designed to contribute data to the limited body of research into the decolonization of post-secondary institutions in Canada by focusing on the experiences of employees at one Canadian community college in which the president had publicly stated

it was her intent to decolonize NWCC. Developing a deeper understanding of decolonization may lead to the identification of additional research opportunities based on the collective ideas and definitions expressed by NWCC employees. This research may lead to the development of policy and structural changes in the college that might positively impact the disparity in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students at NWCC and other community colleges serving Aboriginal learners throughout the world.

While the study was designed to focus on NWCC, in the course of the data analysis new insight on different understandings of knowledge and the use of blogs to facilitate sensitive conversations emerged beyond the context of one college. It is my hope that these findings may lead others to engage in additional research with First Nations researchers on their understandings of knowledge which might transform higher education in a way that would allow more students to feel empowered.

Research Questions

The following overarching question was identified to guide this study: What does decolonization mean to employees at NWCC? The following sub-questions were articulated to further define the study:

1. What definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization* were held by NWCC employees?
2. What examples of colonization and decolonization did NWCC employees identify?
3. What did study participants consider essential elements of a decolonized college?

Research Framework

The study was designed based on a social constructivism framework that articulates knowledge is created as a result of social processes and reflexivity and that there are multiple worldviews of knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Soderqvist, 1991). According to social constructionists, humans define reality through interactions with one another, not internally as individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). The decision to utilize individual pre and post blog surveys allowed me to capture the individual worldviews of the participants on decolonization, whereas the use of the blog component facilitated the capturing of a collective understanding developed through blog interactions. Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) discussed the critical value of conversation as a medium for learning through interactions. Sharing in the blog interactions facilitated both the researcher and participants to expand our collective understanding of the topic (Claudin & Connelly, 2000; Stewart, 2008). The design of the study allowed for the collection of data on worldviews held by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and to view how the participants reacted to one another's views.

Delimitations

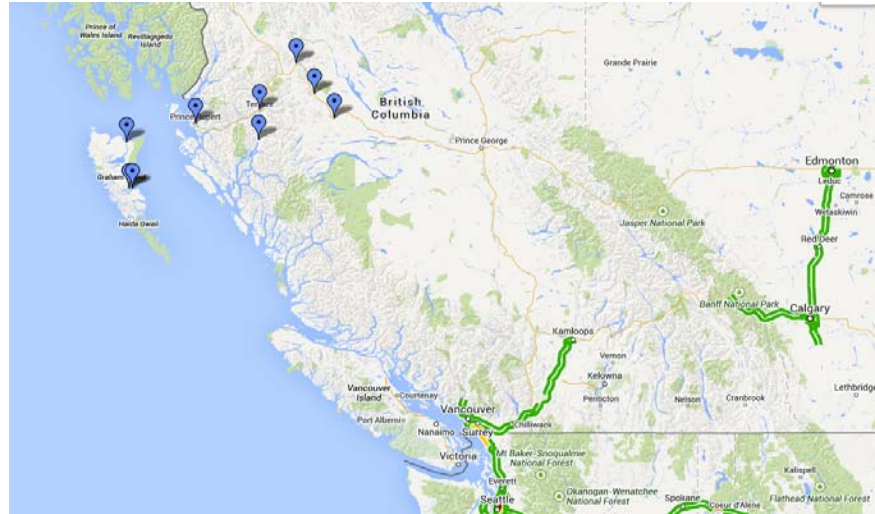
This research was designed to include a voluntary purposeful sample of NWCC employees who had self-identified as being interested in the college administrators' agenda to decolonize by participating in optional activities linked to decolonization. The purposeful sample included staff, instructors, and administrators who, given my interaction with them as a fellow employee at NWCC, I had identified as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Therefore, all possible views held by NWCC employees regarding decolonization were not represented in the research; views of employees who had not

chosen to participate in decolonization activities are missing and views of Aboriginal people who were not identifiable as such might be missing or subsumed in the results reported for the non-Aboriginal sample. Furthermore, the use of surveys and a blog to gather narrative data was selected instead of multiple, face-to-face interviews and group discussions (which might have resulted in more in-depth individual participant information and the ability to probe emergent concepts such as tokenism and empowerment) to allow anonymity between participants, so they could exchange opinions without concern for differences in power as employees and to facilitate sensitive blog conversations between participants. As a result of the blog conversations what emerged was a socially constructed group narrative on decolonization at NWCC.

Summary

Chapter 1 was essential to provide the reader with an introduction to key ideas on which the study was built such as: school curriculum is not neutral; Canadian Aboriginal peoples believe cultural racism in the curriculum makes schools a hostile place for Aboriginal learners, and to counter the existing cognitive imperialism it is necessary for educational institutions to decolonize. The chapter provided context for the discussion of decolonization in Canada and specifically at Northwest Community College. Furthermore, the chapter served to detail the study design, the research purpose, and the research questions. A discussion of the study delimitations was also provided. A brief description of the unique format of the dissertation as also provided to prepare the reader for interlude one to learn more about the area and the people from which the research is drawn.

Figure 1 Google map: NWCC's eight campuses and one learning center



INTERLUDE ONE: FIRST CONTACT

Nisga'a

On my first day of work at NWCC as the vice president of education and student services, I arrived to find that the president had been called out of town on an emergency. It fell to me to give the graduation address at Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI)⁶ in Gitwinksihlkw in the Nass Valley. This was about a 1.5 hour drive from the central campus, and I was accompanied by the Dean of Business. As we drove up the valley winding our way between the mountains and the river, I wondered about making an address in this unfamiliar place. The president had drafted a short text for me to read itemizing the many activities of the college, and I was to speak third after the chancellor and president of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

⁶ **WWNI** is a Nisga'a Aboriginal educational institute with an affiliation agreement with NWCC and with the UNBC to offer transferable credit programs. Most Aboriginal institutes must partner with non-Aboriginal colleges and universities in order to grant credit. The Nisga'a people are a First Nation people of Northern BC who negotiated a treaty to become a sovereign nation within Canada in 2010.

We arrived at the community center, a multiple purpose space with basketball hoops that was packed with community members of all ages. Elders were seated at tables close to the graduation platform, infants only days old were being shown off and children were running up and down the bleacher seats. The floor was covered in cedar bows to honor the importance of the day's event and the room was filled with their smell. There was so much food; some I recognized (i.e., potato salad, pizza, cake) and some unfamiliar things I later learned were moose meatballs, sea lion fins, salmon (smoked, dried, and fried), Ooligan grease,⁷ kelp, and fried bread.

We were asked to line up for the processional to take the stage. I had been given the traditional, black academic robe and a college sash to make sure I was identifiable as belonging to the Academy. The other members of the stage party wore either the regalia of UNBC or the regalia of their First Nations. The UNBC chancellor, a 6' 3" tall man wearing a lime green velvet robe and matching tam, was a commanding sight. The graduates were dressed in traditional graduation regalia, First Nations regalia or a combination of both.

As each of the graduates accepted their diplomas, they were introduced by naming their village, their clan⁸, and their relatives (grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and children) to emphasize their connections to the community. The Academy representatives greeted each graduate with a traditional handshake. The ceremony

⁷ **Ooligan grease** is prepared by First Nations Peoples of Western Canada by ripening several tons of a smelt-like, small, oily fish.

⁸ The First Nations of northern B.C. divide themselves into family or house groups called clans. The link provides a listing of clans and their attributes <http://www.manataka.org/page30.html>

concluded with each academic speaker giving a traditional graduation address much like those I had heard many times. When it was my turn, I read my text and then added a personal reflection: “I have only been working for 2 hours and already I have been given a gift of a hand-painted, carved cedar box.⁹ I have been fed and made to feel so welcome.” The room filled with laughter and applause. It was a great first day of work.

Haida

My second week of work began with a flight to Haida Gwaii¹⁰. The president had arranged for the two vice-presidents and three deans to join her on Haida Gwaii for 4 days. To travel to Haida Gwaii, I had to drive 1.5 hours west to Prince Rupert. There, I had the choice of taking either a ferry for 7 hours or a five-passenger float plane for 2 hours. I elected to take the plane. It was a wet, windy and a grey morning when I got to the float plane launch. In northern B.C., one’s life is controlled by the weather; it allows or restricts mobility and impacts one’s mood.

I had never been in a float plane and was a little nervous, not only due to the plane, but also because I was flying with the college president and board chair. The president said “Jump into the co-pilot’s seat.” I thought she was joking. “No, jump into the co-pilot’s seat” she repeated. The pilot nodded, and I climbed into the co-pilot’s seat, put on head phones, and swallowed hard.

⁹ The First Nations of northern B.C. are a gifting culture always recognizing service with a gift.

¹⁰ **Haida Gwaii** is a series of western islands, population 4,700, off the coast of British Columbia on which NWCC has three campuses.

We skimmed along the water, bumping the white wave tops. Then we were flying into unending, blinding, boring white clouds that allowed my mind to wander. I was sure the pilot was sleeping behind his mirrored sunglasses or maybe he was he dead? I wondered if I could fly the plane if I had to. Finally we saw the islands in the middle of the ocean and landed on Haida Gwaii. We had come to attend three historic events: the *Giving Back the Name with Respect* ceremony¹¹, pole raisings¹², and the Haida Grad¹³.

In the Old Massett community hall, in June of 2010, in the company of several hundred people including the premier of B.C., I and others bore witness as the Haida hereditary chiefs spoke, the drummers drummed, and the dancers danced. The dancers, in bright regalia and carved wooden masks of creatures, symbolically chased the name *Queen Charlotte Islands* into a ceremonial cedar box. The box containing the name was sealed and presented to a representative of the crown to be returned to the queen. Earlier in the month the Haida Gwaii Reconciliation Act had been signed, renaming the islands Haida Gwaii as part of a reconciliation protocol between B.C. and the Haida people; however, it was this ceremony which enabled the Haida people to emotionally and physically experience the shedding of the colonial name imposed upon them by Captain George Dixon in 1787.

¹¹ The links below are provided to allow the reader to experience through pictures a glimpse of the Returning the Name with Respect ceremony and community raising of totem poles held in June 2010. The First Nations people of northern BC believe you must experience the place and the activity to understand it. http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/shared/gallery/archive/abbott/haida_group.html

¹² Raising poles June 2010 on Haida Gwaii
<https://www.google.com/search?q=Raising+poles+Haida+Gwaii+2010&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&a=X&ei=7w8zU7HnIcHJygHb-YGACg&ved=0CFMQsAQ&biw=1600&bih=830>

¹³ Haida Grad is both the feast that recognizes the high school graduation of Haida students as well as the student of Haida heritage who graduates high school.

In the days that followed we participated in a series of pole raisings. Each pole was carved by local Haida First Nations artisans and raised through the collaborative efforts of community members. The poles serve as a lasting symbol that the Haida people are not gone. Pole raising was made illegal by the colonizers; raising them again was an important step in reclaiming the Haida people's history.

We concluded our time on Haida Gwaii by attending Haida Grad, a feast. Feasts or potlatches are held to conduct business and allow attendees to bear witness to important events. They are a time of community collaboration with specific protocols, roles, and responsibilities. In the Haida Grad, high school graduates were officially presented to the community and received their Haida names and button blankets from their families. I was told by a community member, middle school graduates received their Haida names and button vests because few would subsequently complete high school and the community wanted them to have this opportunity for positive acknowledgement.

First Nations names are given and change over time as the individual takes on different roles and responsibilities within their communities. The Haida Grad ceremony served to strengthen the bonds between the young people and their community and to celebrate their educational success. Families who had left Haida Gwaii returned to have their children's graduation acknowledged by the community.

Along with food, the dancing and speeches went on for more than three hours. Each clan was called upon to dance. Finally, non-Aboriginals were called upon to dance. I was reluctant to dance. I felt embarrassed and out of my comfort zone in such a large public venue. I made a brief attempt, so I could approach the blanket in the center of the room on which people were placing donations towards the cost of the feast. This was my

introduction to First Nations of northern B.C. and was the backdrop as I began developing my proposal for this research study.

It is through the sharing of my personal experiences that I hope to help the reader understand northern B.C., historic events and the people since First Nations people believe you cannot separate knowledge from where it is created. Further, the experiences I had shaped my thinking thus influenced me in my interpretation of the data. The two stories serve to provide the reader with context as to the fluidity of history in this region of Canada and how relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal are being redefined almost daily. The Nisga'a people after 113 years of treaty negotiation were able to become a sovereign nation within Canada in 2010. 2010 also marked the signing of a reconciliation protocol between the Haida people and B.C. government officials to recognize the Haida people and their traditional land.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 2, I begin broadly with a discussion of Canada, the history of Canadian post-secondary education, the path of colonization in Canada, and the use of education as a tool for colonization. I then narrow the focus of the chapter to discuss the literature on decolonizing education, including research conducted on the decolonization of post-secondary education. Also, included are counter narratives to the decolonization discourse.

Canadian History of Post-Secondary Education

According to the 2011 Census, Canada is culturally and linguistically diverse, with more than 200 ethnic origins and first languages. Per Statistics Canada, Canada is the second largest country on earth in terms of land mass with approximately 35 million people; however, 90% of the land mass is unpopulated due to the climate. Post-secondary education, in what would become Canada, began with the establishment of the Grand Seminaire de Quebec, a forerunner of Laval University in Quebec in 1663. As the French and then the British colonized the region, they brought their educational systems and their belief in their superiority (Dickerson and Young, 2008). At the time of Canada's birth as a country in 1867 there were 18 universities. With the ending of World War II in 1945, a federally funded veterans' rehabilitation program brought an influx of veterans to university campuses, necessitating an educational expansion. Additional public government universities and then colleges opened throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s to keep up with the demand for post-secondary education (Stonechild, 2006).

Under the Canadian constitution, the 10 provincial governments have exclusive responsibility for all levels of education. The three territories—Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut—do not have the same constitutional status as the provinces, and are subject to more direct control from the federal government. However, currently, the Canadian federal government has delegated its educational responsibilities to the territorial governments. The provincial or territorial governments fund public post-secondary institutions; the federal government funds the Canada Student Loan Program.

Prior to the 1990s, courses in Canadian community colleges were designed solely for workforce and trades training. In the 1990s, college to university credit transfer was expanded and the first of the private post-secondary institutions obtained permission to offer diplomas.

There are three distinct types of post-secondary institutions in Canada: 1) public mainstream colleges and universities, which may or may not serve Aboriginal peoples, 2) Aboriginal institutions that receive Federal or provincial support and have the authority to grant certificates and diplomas, and 3) Aboriginal-controlled institutions, which do not receive provincial funding and must partner with a mainstream public institutions to grant certificates or diplomas.

As of 2005, only two community colleges were recognized as Aboriginal provincially-supported institutions: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) in BC, and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIT) in Saskatchewan. In addition, there is only one federally funded Aboriginal university: First Nations University of Canada, formerly named Saskatchewan Indian Federated College which is accredited through the mainstream University of Regina. Thus, for most Aboriginal

peoples in Canada, attending a mainstream institution rooted in a Western-colonial worldview is the only available path to formal education credentials.

According to the 2006 census cited by the Canadian Information Center for International Credentials (CICIC, 2006), Canada has one of the highest rates of post-secondary education completion in the world, with six out of 10 adults between ages 25 and 64 having completed some form of post-secondary education. However, the educational success rate of Aboriginal students in Canada is well below that of non-Aboriginals: 85% of non-Aboriginals obtain a high school diploma compared to 57% of Aboriginal students. This is especially troubling because the Aboriginal population is growing nearly six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population (Preston, 2008). Furthermore, 50% of the Aboriginal population is under 30 years of age. Thus, Aboriginal engagement in education and the labor force is an important priority for the Canadian government (Preston, 2008).

Tompkins (2002) pointed out that non-Aboriginal educators often failed to understand the many issues of inequity to be addressed in the current Canadian educational system and assumed that First Nations parents and students did not value education. Hewitt (2000) concurred that it was easier for schools to blame the victim by locating the problem of underachievement as an individual failing of the Aboriginal learner and not the result of societal or school structures. According to Kovach (2009) many Canadians believe they were sensitive to multiculturalism; however, most Canadians move through their worlds with only people like themselves. Since most educators remain members of the colonizer group, it is difficult for them to understand

how the colonized feel. As of 2007, less than 1% of post-secondary faculty members in Canada were Aboriginal (Kovach, 2009).

Canadian History of Colonization of Aboriginal Peoples

Initial contact with First Nations peoples resulted in the development of trade. Under the Royal Proclamation of 1763 government agents were required to respect Indian rights and land ownership; treaties with the local Aboriginal people were therefore negotiated between 1763 and 1864. According to Dickerson and Young (2008) the early interaction between the Aboriginal peoples and the explorers and fur traders did not require Aboriginal people to accept European values, customs or religion; it is only when settlements began that the need to convert Aboriginals to be Catholic and loyal to France or Church of England and loyal to Britain began. Thus, the domination and colonization of Canadian Aboriginals occurred when European missionaries came to establish schools for Indians; the belief at the time was that Indians were uncivilized and that schools were the best means to civilize them (Truth and Reconciliation report, 2012).

According to Konkle (2004), an important shift in racial attitudes began to occur around the 1840s coinciding with westward migration of settlers and the need for the British Crown to gain control over Aboriginal lands in order to grant titles to willing immigrants. Prior to this period, colonizers “. . . saw non-white peoples as being people but culturally inferior [then changed] to the more damaging belief that non-whites were racially, and biologically different and inferior” (Konkle, 2004, p. 40). This shift in racial attitudes made it easier for non-Aboriginals to assert Aboriginal peoples were not capable of self-governance and therefore needed governmental caretaking. This governmental

caretaking mentality marked the origins of what would become and currently remains today, the federal Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Over on the west coast, the province of British Columbia became a British colony in 1849 and between 1850 and 1854 Governor James Douglas recognized Aboriginal land title by signing 14 land treaties. However, in 1864 with the retirement of Governor Douglas, Sir Joseph Trutch becomes the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works and sets out to deny Aboriginal title (Victoria library, n.d.). According to the Greater Victoria library web site (n.d.) “His attitude to Native people can only be described as racist. He referred to some native people as the ugliest and laziest creatures I ever saw. He considered them to be bestial rather than human and [considered them to be] uncivilized savages” p 1.

In 1867 the Dominion of Canada was created through the unification of the independent eastern provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Canada (which would become the provinces of Ontario and Quebec). Prior to this time British North America was composed of the independent provinces, the North-western territory and private lands owned by the Hudson Bay Company. To join the entities together the Parliament of the United Kingdom acknowledged the new country’s constitution by passing the British North American Act (BNA). The BNA described the structure and main laws, as well as the division of powers between the provinces and the federal government. The Act assigned jurisdictional caretaking responsibilities for Aboriginal people to the federal and provincial governments, and identified their educational matters as a federal responsibility.

In 1870, a number of treaties were signed with First Nations peoples, which contained specifically negotiated educational provisions. During this same timeframe, the government initiated the mass slaughter of buffalo, removing the primary source of food, shelter, and clothing from First Nations peoples, increasing their need to enter into treaties and their dependency on the government (Savage, 2012). In 1871, British Columbia joined the Dominion of Canada.

Five years later, The *Indian Act* of 1876 further defined the caretaking relationship between the Canadian federal government and Aboriginal peoples; it remains in force today. The Act established land reserves for groups [bands] of Aboriginal people and required their relocation to these reserves. The reserves were often isolated and without adequate hunting areas. The government further imposed a band governance system of elected chief and council. This requirement to have an elected chief was in direct opposition to the historical leadership of hereditary chiefs and matriarchal leadership. Aboriginal people moved to reserves in exchange for promises of local education and economic support. However, within three years in 1879, the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their reserve communities and placement in residential schools would begin.

Once Aboriginal people were reduced to savages in the minds of the White public through the passing of laws, government officials no longer considered it necessary to enter into treaties for land because there were no equal partners with whom to negotiate (Kovach, 2009). The land now free of title could be conveyed to settlers loyal to the crown and the new Dominion of Canada. It is important to remember; according to

Aboriginal scholars their people never relinquished stewardship of ancestral homelands (Kovach, 2009).

Education Used as a Tool of Colonization

In 1857 in the midst of the prevailing view that Aboriginals were biologically and racially inferior the government passed the *Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Canadas*. According to the authors of Truth and Reconciliation report of 2012, each Indian who could be “enfranchised” would cease to be an Indian in legal terms and thus the government’s treaty obligations to them would cease (p. 11). The early 20th century brought evidence of governmental neglect of their Indian wards. Bryce (1922), Chief Medical Officer of the Indian Department, reported that the Canadian government exhibited criminal disregard for their treaty pledges to guard the welfare of the Indian wards of the nation. Among numerous examples he cited the disparity in funding for the treatment of tuberculosis. Whereas the city of Ottawa received \$342,860 in 1919 for the their three hospitals of which \$33,364 was devoted solely to tuberculosis patients, the total sum spent annually for 105,000 Indians scattered over Canada in over 300 bands was only \$10,000 Canadian dollars. Bryce (1922) stated that if the same health-giving treatment had been given to the Blackfeet of Alberta between 1904 and 1916 their populations would not have decreased by 40 percent.

Stonechild (2006) historically, the Canadian government has pursued a policy of aggressive assimilation of Aboriginals into the Canadian mainstream. A key component of this assimilation policy was the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their parents to be placed in residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission documents revealed incidences of Aboriginal children victimized by physical, sexual, and

emotion abuse. According to authors of the Truth and Reconciliation (T&R) Report of 2012, residential schools were not established to meet government treaty obligations to provide schools because those schools were supposed to be on Indian reserves. Rather, removing Aboriginal children supported the government's long-term aim of ending the country's treaty obligations by assimilating its Aboriginal population in to the larger non-Aboriginal population.

According to the authors of the Truth and Reconciliation report (2012), in 1879, Nicholas Flood Davin, journalist and politician commissioned by Prime Minister Sir John A. McDonald, took only 45 days to determine that setting up a system of residential schools would be the best way to remove the Indian from the Indians by providing them with work skills and replacing their spiritual and cultural beliefs with Christianity. The report documents that residential schools served to weaken the attachments the children had to their communities and hasten the disintegration of tribes and reserves. Residential schooling was designed to disturb the informal oral educational system within Aboriginal communities by which traditional knowledge was communicated to young people. (Truth and Reconciliation report, p. 10)

Residential schooling denied Aboriginals their language, their values, and their spirituality (only British values and Christianity were taught in these schools). Only after Canadian church leaders apologized for imposing European culture and values on Aboriginal people in the 1980s, and after more than 100 years had passed was the practice of residential schools finally abandoned by the Canadian Federal Government in 1996 (Minnis, 2009).

According to the Truth and Reconciliation report (2012) once residential schools were closed, many survivors came forward to testify about their experiences at the 1996 Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP); others filed lawsuits. In 2007, the Canadian court in hopes of settling the lawsuits approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement that provided compensation to former residential school students and established the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

According to the authors of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report (2012), the Canadian government established the Commission to educate the Canadian public about residential schools and their place in Canadian history. To date 134 schools have been recognized as sites of abuse qualifying survivors for compensation from a possible list of 1300 schools. Therefore the list of eligible survivors who can claim compensation is relatively small. According to Regan (2010) the ability of those in power (non-Aboriginals) to control the definition of who has a legitimate abuse claim is considered further evidence of the continuance of colonialism. Stonechild (2006) stated that education of the residential school era was focused on assimilation along with domestic and farming skills rather than academics. Less than 3% of residential school children moved beyond the sixth grade in the first 50 years of their operation (Truth and Reconciliation Report, 2012).

Aboriginal people in Canada were not silent during this time period. In 1861, the Nisga'a people protested land rights in the B.C. capital of Victoria. Aboriginal discontentment increases in B.C. until in 1876 the Governor General of Canada tours B.C. and in a speech he attacks the provincial government stating there was

“unsatisfactory feeling among the native people in B.C. He blamed it on the B.C. government for neglecting to recognize what is known as the Indian title (Greater Victoria library, n.d., p 2)

Other important dates in Aboriginal history include the amending of the Indian Act in 1884 prohibiting First Nations in engaging in potlatches/feasts thus prohibiting Aboriginals from assembling to conduct traditional business. In 1912 the Federal and B.C. provincial government agree on a Royal Commission to review Indian reserves which results the McKenna-McBride Commission recommendations to redistribute reserve lands. In 1927 the Canadian parliamentary committee members find land claims have no basis and prohibit Aboriginal people from raising monies to make land claims.

In 1931, the Native Brotherhood of B.C. is formed becoming the first active Native organization followed in 1939 by the Indian Association of Albert. “Their aim was to make the voices of their communities heard by Canadian governments and forge some sort of collective movement.” (Drees, 1997, p. 1)

In 1946, a government committee, faced with insurmountable evidence that residential schools were failing, directed the revision of the Indian Act. In 1951, the federal government transferred Aboriginal education to the provinces and provided financial compensation to allow Aboriginal children to register in provincial schools with non-Aboriginal children. The practice of residential schools to “civilize and Christianize Indians” was slowly being replaced with the practice of integrating Aboriginals into non-Aboriginal schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (Truth and Reconciliation report 2012, p.10) This change in practice from segregating Aboriginal children within residential schools to integrating them into non-Aboriginal schools was still intended to

assimilate Aboriginals into the Canadian mainstream reducing or eliminating their band affiliations and thus reducing or eliminating the government's treaty obligations.

According to Battiste (2000a), Aboriginal children were bused to public schools during this era. However, not unlike the civil rights integration of Blacks into White schools in the 1960s in the United States, Indian children faced a hostile school environment and a systemic belief of their inferiority. Battiste (2000a) asserted that Aboriginal children faced cognitive imperialism, cognitive assimilation, or, as it was termed in the United States: *cultural racism*. In other words, “. . . imposing of one worldview on a people who have an alternate worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview” (Battiste, 2000b, p. 193).

According to Kovach (2009) compulsory elementary and secondary education of Aboriginal children had been identified as a federal responsibility, but the responsibility for post-secondary education has never clearly been delineated in law. Until the 1940s, Aboriginal people who attended post-secondary institutions automatically lost their Indian status, including the right to live on their home reserves. In 1951, the *Indian Act* was amended to allow members of a non-Aboriginal board to decide whether Aboriginals were fit to be enfranchised and lose their Indian status rather than making enfranchisement automatic. In other words, a board of non-Aboriginals had the right to determine if “. . . post-secondary education could deliver the Indian person to an acceptable level of whiteness, deliver him from his Indian identity” (Kovach, 2009, p. 161). Losing Indian status would mean the individual would not have the right to return to their reserve community to live with their families. According to Stonechild (2006) enfranchisement would lead to a loss of connection to culture and birthright. It was not

until 1968 that post-secondary programming for status Indian¹⁴ students was initiated. Nine years later, in 1977, the Post-Secondary Educational Assistance Program was implemented through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. As a result of these barriers to post-secondary education, only 750 post-secondary degrees were granted to status Indians between 1934 and 1976 (Stonechild, 2006 p. 42).

In 1960, Aboriginal people gained the right to vote in federal elections without having to give up their Indian status; it was also a time known as the era of the “scoop,”¹⁵ in which thousands of Aboriginal children were scooped up, placed in foster care, and adopted into non-Aboriginal families. Government officials took this action based on a belief that Aboriginal children would be better off if they were less Indian (Truth & R report, 2012).

The first study of Indian economic conditions was commissioned in 1967 to assess the economic, political, and educational needs and policies of contemporary Canada Indians (Hawthorn Report, 1967). The authors of the report found that, as of 1963, the average annual income for Aboriginals was \$300, compared to \$14,000 for all other non-Aboriginal Canadians. They concluded that government agents had no right to limit the opportunities of Aboriginals, including whether they should be assimilated against their wishes. According to the report authors, Aboriginals could and should retain

¹⁴ **Status Indian:** An individual recognized by the Canadian federal government as being registered under the *Indian Act* is referred to as a Registered Indian (commonly referred to as a Status Indian). Status Indians are entitled to a wide range of programs and services offered by federal agencies and provincial governments.

¹⁵ The *scoop* was the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their families and placing them into the child welfare system <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/sixties-scoop.html>

the special privileges of their status while enjoying full participation as provincial and federal citizens (Stonechild, 2006).

In 1968, Pierre Trudeau became the Canadian Prime Minister. He did not favor special status for Aboriginals; he was convinced that any special status (such as that being advocated by Quebec nationalists based upon their unique French culture) would jeopardize Canadian federalism (Stonechild, 2006). Thus, in 1969, the government released what came to be known as the “White Paper,” whose authors argued for the termination of Indian status and reservations, and advocated for full, non-discriminatory participation of Aboriginals as equal citizens under the law. Governmental officials made no acknowledgement of treaty obligations or the unequal conditions cited in the Hawthorn Report just 2 years earlier. Jenkins (2007) noted that the government’s proposal sent a shockwave through Indigenous communities, inciting intense activism p 10. The official Indian response from the Indian Association of Alberta’s Citizens Plus—referred to as the “Red Paper”—was presented to the Canadian Cabinet in 1970. The authors proposed the termination of Indian Affairs, which was primarily directed by non-Aboriginals, arguing that Aboriginals had a living culture, and that treaties and Aboriginal rights should be honored. Agents of the Federal government were unprepared for such a fierce reaction and retracted their plan (Truth and Reconciliation report, 2012). In response to the Red Paper recommendations the Department of Indian Affairs was not disbanded but responsibility for Aboriginal education began to be transferred to the provinces. However, by then, Aboriginal culture, language, and family bonds had been severely negatively impacted as a result of federal policies and actions (Stonechild, 2006).

In response to perceived cultural termination, a decolonization movement began, whose members advocated for the revitalization of Indigenous languages and culture (Stonechild, 2006). In 1973, agents of the Federal government implemented recommendations for self-governance made by authors of the National Indian Brotherhood's position paper, "Indian Control of Indian Education." Furthermore in 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Calder decision that the Nisga'a held Aboriginal title before settlers arrived. This court decision opened the way for Aboriginal peoples to make claim for ancestral lands.

During the 1980's supported by federal and provincial funding, leaders of several Canadian universities developed Aboriginal education centers and programs with the goal of educating a generation of Aboriginal teachers. According to Oberg, Blades, and Thom (2007), these programs had questionable success as the structure of the teacher education programs did not reflect Aboriginal approaches to education. Hampton and Roy (2002) characterized the educational training as Aboriginals teachers using non-Aboriginal methods taught by non-Aboriginal teachers.

Decolonizing Education

In 1982, legislators passed the Canadian Constitution Act. This Act re-recognized the existence of Aboriginal rights; however, the authors of the Act failed to define those rights. The Canadian Constitution Act along with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were meant to protect Aboriginal treaty rights, which included the provision of education. According to Kovach (2009)

Given the potential role of education in upholding cultural way of knowing, and given the consistent attention to educational provision by the Indigenous

community (first outlined in written treaties), education has always been more than a matter of policy. (p. 160)

In 1985, Bill C-31 enacted by the Canadian parliament restored the status and band membership to native women which had been lost under section 12(1) (b) of the *Indian Act*. In 1987, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en nations, served by NWCC, file in the B.C. Supreme Court claiming right of ownership of their ancestral lands. In 1991, the Chief Justice McEachern finds that Aboriginal title has been extinguished but upon appeal the B.C. government officially recognizes the inherent rights of First Nations to Aboriginal title and self-government and pledges to negotiate just and honorable treaties. (BCGEU, n.d. p. 4) In 1992, the Canadian Prime Minister and Premiere of B.C. signed the B.C. Treaty Commission Agreement¹⁶ and began negotiations regarding Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal self-government. In 1996, members of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recognized the goals of Aboriginal parents for the education of their children and the gaps in the current educational system. The authors of their report outlined how current educational policy was based on the false assumption of the superiority of European worldviews. The authors recommended the transformation of knowledge, curriculum, and schools to recognize that European knowledge was not universal, normative, or necessarily ideal and that there were alternative worldviews and ways of knowing. In concurrence with Apple (1993) and Tyler (1949) there is recognition that curriculum and schooling has not been neutral and that the exclusion of Aboriginal

¹⁶ **B.C. Treaty Commission Agreement** signing ceremony highlights
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xywIupgSVkk>

knowledge has been an intentional act and reflects their disempowerment within Canadian society.

“Schooling has not been benign. It has been used as a means to perpetuate damaging myths about Aboriginal cultures, language, beliefs, and ways of life. It has also established Western science as a dominant mode of thought that distrusts diversity” (Battiste, 2000b, p. 194). Colonizers have engaged in this “formal and informal method (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources... because it allows them to maintain and or expand their social, political, and economic power.”(Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005, p 2)

According to Battiste (2000a) Aboriginal consciousness cannot be maintained without the ability to question modern thought; there must be psychological space within each individual to question the dominant worldview. First and foremost, decolonization must occur in the minds of Indigenous peoples. According to Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005), “the first step toward decolonization, then, is to question the legitimacy of colonization.” (p.3)

According to Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005):

Since the relationship between colonizer and the colonized is so deeply entrenched in the United States and Canada, most of us [Indigenous Peoples] have never learned how to actively challenge the status quo. The current institutions and systems are designed to maintain privilege of the colonizer and the subjugation of the colonized, and to produce generations of people who will never question their position within this relationship. (p.1)

Jenkins (2007) asserted that colonization has resulted in a host of negative consequences for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada: the dismantling of Indigenous

sovereign governments, devaluing Indigenous knowledge, outlawing Indigenous languages, marginalizing Indigenous cultural practices, demonizing Indigenous religious and spiritual practices, destroying Indigenous ecosystems and environments, claiming Indigenous lands and natural resources, undermining sustainable Indigenous economies, demoralizing youth attending Eurocentric schools, and criminalizing traditional Indigenous activities and behaviors that were directly related to colonial structures of oppression. Colonialism was not a phenomenon of the past but continues today, visible in the low graduation rates of Aboriginal students. “What needs to happen is that the colonial elements in Native education need to be deconstructed so that the impediments that prevent us from practicing these pedagogies may be identified and rooted out” (Nicholas, 2001, p. 10). Graveline (1993) called for the resurrection of Indigenous histories to determine how they have contributed to the world history and rewriting of colonial histories to expose colonization as a path to poverty rather than progress. Jenkins (2007) called for self-determining Indigenous governments, protecting Indigenous knowledge and knowledge production process, revitalizing Indigenous languages, continuing and sharing Indigenous cultural practices, respecting and reviving Indigenous religious and spiritual practices, restoring Indigenous ecosystems and environments, initiating and defending Indigenous land and treaty rights claims, rebuilding sustainable Indigenous community economies, encouraging and aiding Indigenous youth in their personal development, and rallying against the in-justice system while pursuing alternative ways to address destructive behaviors.

According to Hewitt (2000) worldviews do not arise spontaneously; therefore, our perspective of the world in which we live is shaped in part by the cultural imprint of

socialization. Authors writing about global perspectives have come to acknowledge different worldviews and argued that one worldview cannot be better than another. Because education and learning is culturally based, methods of teaching and learning must address the learner's worldview (Hewitt, 2000)

Hewitt (2000) believed the Western education system prized individual success and relied on the transmission of knowledge by an expert. Education based on an Aboriginal worldview recognized the need for cooperation, the development of relationships, and social order. Aboriginal education emphasized humans' co-dependence with the land and the need for holistic life-long learning. When First Nations students attend Western worldview schools, they received a message conveying that the Aboriginal worldview is inferior.

In the last decade there has been a surge in scholarship on indigenous worldviews. For example, the faculty of the University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada committed to addressing equity concerns, so as to create an environment welcoming to Aboriginal ways of knowing and being through sustained and meaningful consultation with Aboriginal faculty members and Aboriginal communities. They recognized the importance of including Aboriginal epistemologies, methodologies, practices, ontologies, and protocols in all areas of the academy (Oberg et al., 2007).

The University of Saskatchewan hosts the Aboriginal Learning and Knowledge Center and the Aboriginal Education Research Center. Staff at these entities is dedicated to educational decolonization through Aboriginal education research. Faculty members at the Center for Indigenous World Studies are committed to conducting research to further Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is working to bring recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems citing the importance of cultural diversity. However, Kovach (2009) noted that Indigenous centers within universities founded on a Western worldview might further marginalize Aboriginal scholarship by confining it to only one area of the university. Kovach (2009) wrote that universities might subsume Aboriginal knowledge without understanding it was fluid, created from a connection to the land and could not be captured and contained.

Strategies for decolonizing education have included what has been referred to as *indigenizing the curriculum* (Mihesuah and Wilson, 2004). Indigenizing the curriculum, an international initiative, was based on the inclusion of cultural practices or beliefs. This included the creation of learning environments that re-affirmed Indigenous values and religious faiths by presenting an Aboriginal worldview. An Indigenized curriculum incorporated Aboriginal languages, culture, and history to counterbalanced Western values, consumerism, and power (Mihesuah and Wilson, 2004).

Aboriginal scholars (i.e., Kovach, 2009; Nicholas, 2001) have argued that Indigenous knowledge cannot be integrated into curriculum that is conceived through a Western worldview. Adding a unit or course in Indigenous studies cannot counterbalance the effects of colonization.

Kaminski (n.d.) stated that First Nations pedagogy was profoundly different from traditional Western education, in that the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional growth and development of the student was included. First Nations pedagogy was grounded in spirituality, and education was considered to be a life-long process. Key elements included experiential learning, oral traditions, and student centeredness. The

transmission of knowledge was informal; elders served as teachers and role models, providing lessons through stories about how to live the right life. Learning in the Aboriginal paradigm was always socially situated, socially constructed, socially produced, and socially validated. Respect stemmed from the belief that all people were responsible for themselves. In this educational paradigm, students learned to respect nature, others, and self; they also learned to accept and live with the differences of others Kaminiski (n.d.).

An indigenous curriculum would be expected to model the importance of individual rights, but not at the expense of the community's right to survive. It would be expected to model respect for elders as keepers of knowledge, respect for the land and community, respect for family, and respect for the sacredness of life and spirituality. According to First Nations Pedagogy (2009) web site, educational outcomes of indigenous curriculum included the development of a sense of quietness, peace, and harmony; an acceptance of others; patience; dignity; and a connectedness with all living things. The pedagogy also included the following key concepts: (a) quaternity, (b) positionality, (c) the four directions, (d) experiential knowledge, and (e) interconnectedness.

Quaternity referred to a circular, repetitive, and center-focused discursive pattern of writing and speaking. This is considered different from the more linear pattern of writing and speaking—introduction, body, and conclusion—common in European education. Circles are thought to create connectedness whereas lines did not. The circle was also important in other ways. For example, a talking circle reinforced the Aboriginal

concepts of connectedness and equality of members, unlike the traditional Western model of teaching students sitting in rows of chairs (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005).

Positionality was related to one's frame of reference or position. The Elders believe we must know who we were and how we engaged and how we were interconnected with our surroundings. Leadership and learning were not hierarchal in an educational model that included positionality. Rather, each individual was connected to everyone and everything else. Content areas based on positionality were interdisciplinary, so students could see a holistic pattern of interconnectedness First Nations Pedagogy (n.d).

According to First Nations Pedagogy (n.d.) a key concept is that of the **four directions** of the earth that supported the idea that knowledge was gained from place. North, south, east and west, each represented a different element connected to mother earth. North gave us knowledge and was viewed as a place of wisdom and strength. South gave us ways of knowing and was viewed as a place of growth. East gave us language, west related to honouring the Spirit, and was viewed as a place of spirituality....

According to First Nations Pedagogy (n.d.) experiential knowledge was gained through doing and interacting with one's physical location; therefore, educational content could not come solely from books, but also from hands-on learning to create meaning and connections with location. To uphold this concept, the curriculum must be designed to allow students to learn independently by observing, listening, and participating. Learning was both empirical (because it was based on experience), and normative (because it must

be integrated into social values to create knowledge and meaning). Decolonized learning would be based on this appreciation that learning extended beyond the classroom.

An aboriginal curriculum must also acknowledge the fundamental belief that all life is interconnected to the earth, that the earth is connected to a larger universe, and that all comes from the Great Spirit. For example, the curriculum would be designed to reflect that humans learn from animals and are only one clan among all living beings (First Nations Pedagogy, n.d.).

Goulet (2002) discussed the importance of outdoor cultural camps to connect students to the land, to each other, and to the past, present, and future. Miller (1996) wrote about the importance of involving elders in the teaching of traditional knowledge. It was through the presence of elders and their story telling that all students were signalled about the importance of aboriginal traditional knowledge: respecting age and respecting the importance of oral storytelling traditions as a non-coercive means of changing behavior.

According to Rattray (2009) to decolonize education, leadership structures would need to be changed. Euro-Canadian institutions are organized based on positional power and expectations about obeying that power. Administrators and faculty in an integrated (i.e., First Nations) environment would need to understand shared power for leadership and learning. Ryan (1996) advocated for three fundamental changes to schooling: (a) aboriginal communities should have total jurisdiction over education, (b) education was designed to incorporate the unique native cultural values, including native language, into an operating structure, and (c) parents and community members had a substantial role in education.

According to Battiste (2000a), there was an educational movement to revitalize indigenous languages, both for their cultural importance and because language is the tool for constructing meaning and conveying knowing. Many indigenous languages are not noun based, but related to activities. There has been a call within the Canadian educational system to provide post-secondary credit for indigenous languages. While there has been recognition about learning English or French (i.e., the two official languages of Canada) to improve students' economic opportunities, First Nations people asked why German, Italian, Greek, or Latin should have more value in the curriculum than indigenous languages. (Battiste, 2000a)

Formal Research on Aboriginal Post-secondary Education

There is a small but growing body of scholarship on Aboriginal post-secondary education. Notably absent were studies conducted at specific educational institutions whose administrators were stating they were actively engaged in decolonizing.

While control of education had been given to Aboriginal peoples in the 1970s Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998) found that "Indian control of Indian education" was elusive and fragmented; the further development of a dual system of education, with First Nations and other Aboriginal authorities gaining increasing authority was needed to counterbalance the continuing colonialism perpetuated by provincial education systems. They advocated research on the following issues: (a) to what extent can modification to accommodate Aboriginal students and communities be incorporated into provincial/territorial educational systems and adult education programs? (b) what forms of mutual learning and cooperation between these systems of education have been attempted and implemented, and with what results? (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 1998)

According to Nicholas (2001) any education that required Indigenous people to use the language of their colonizers served only to co-opt them into the belief that western social values and ideologies implicit in the colonial language were superior. Part of Nicholas's (2001) article addressed how western education was built on a Judeo-Christian sense of power: there was one God and man had hierarchical power over the natural environment. Aboriginal spirituality, in contrast, reflected the belief of humans being part of and interconnected to nature. She stated: "Canadian colleges and universities 1) unquestionably assume the ideology of western civilization and 2) enforce adherence to the ideology in both subtle and obvious ways" (p. 23).

In 2002, Battiste, Bell, and Finlay studied making post-secondary-education accessible to Aboriginal peoples through the decolonization of the university's assumptions, content, structures, and processes. They advocated for post-secondary education transformation by Indigenous peoples' participation and inclusion. The authors concluded that the Canadian Academy must decolonize some of its traditional presumptions, curricula, research, and teaching practices in order to live up to its obligations, mission statements, and alleged priorities for Aboriginal peoples (Battiste et al., 2002).

The study report included a detailed analysis of the recommendations resulting from the 1996 RCAP; Battiste et al. (2002) suggested that the recommendations form a matrix based on which university administrators could examine their development in this area. See Appendix A for the major educational recommendations for the 1996 RCAP.

In 2003 Wotherspoon and Schissel studied the implications of and possible solutions to the education gap between Aboriginal people and the general population in

Canada. They found the provincial/territorial control over critical areas of Aboriginal life perpetuated “internal colonialism” (p. 25). Their results indicated the need for administrators and teachers to actively engage with their learners and the learning context, and to remain sensitive to cultural and social factors outside of the school setting.

In 2005 the Aboriginal Institutes of Higher Education (AIHE) members studied the struggle for recognition of Aboriginal Institutions and control of Indigenous knowledge in which they found the provision of education for Aboriginal persons within mainstream institutions gave rise to issues of cultural appropriation, cultural domination, and ownership of Indigenous knowledge (p. 20). They found that while mainstream institutions were providing space for Aboriginal programs and special programs for Aboriginal students; however, the main body of the institution was generally unaffected or unaware of the presence of Aboriginal persons, their philosophy, or their way of being (p. 20). AIHE members advocated for Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions. They found Aboriginal institutions of higher learning could be distinguished from mainstream institutions in the following ways:

1. Board directed and controlled by Aboriginal communities;
2. Aboriginal faculty ensure a holistic approach to education (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual)
3. Infusion of First Nations history, culture, traditions, and values throughout the curriculum;
4. Methods of instruction that address Aboriginal learning styles;
5. Community involvement/integration of community throughout the educational process, linkages and referrals to various community organizations;
6. Aboriginal support staff ensures a focus on student support and the creation of student support networks;
7. Elder support, spiritual and traditional teachings;
8. Programs and services that instill recognition and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and history, recognition and respect for the land,

- environment, people and community, designed and delivered by Aboriginal peoples for Aboriginal peoples; and
9. Program and service delivery in community based, culturally rich environments (p.33-34).

Researchers with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC, 2005) conducted a study to investigate Aboriginal peoples' access to post-secondary education. Their report included a review of Aboriginal programs and services provided by the association's 140 member colleges and institutes. Representatives of 61 ACCC institutions (59 mainstream and 2 Aboriginal) participated in an on-line survey and interviews. The overall response rate was 44%; however, mainstream institutions were vastly over-represented in the study responses.

The ACCC report authors did not mention colonization, and only briefly mentioned historical barriers such as residential schools. They did not link the academic issues of today's Aboriginal students with any broader social or political structures. Their report mentioned inadequate funding for Aboriginal students, but not why funding inequity existed (ACCC, 2005). The authors stated there was an urgent need for greater participation of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education that necessitated addressing Aboriginal control of education, learner access, success and retention, and overall Aboriginal community development. Their conclusions were as follows:

1. Leaders of mainstream and Aboriginal colleges and institutes across Canada must continue to reach out to form partnerships with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal institutes with a view to providing the education, training, and skills development that enabled Aboriginal people to contribute to the

economic and social development of Aboriginal communities and Canada as a whole.

2. Leaders of colleges and institutes must also improve Aboriginal student retention through culturally appropriate counseling and support services, seeking and making use of Aboriginal student input, and hiring more Aboriginal faculty so students felt understood and supported in the challenges they faced while attending colleges and institutes. (ACCC, 2005).

In 2007 Jenkins conducted a study of Indigenous post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States. She compared the development of these institutions by using an historical approach to a systems-level analysis to explore their past and present structures and purposes and the past and present policies that shaped them. She also referenced the ways in which these institutions grew from and contributed to the decolonization of Indigenous communities.

Jenkins (2007) stated that it was imperative, given the rapid population growth and steady increase of high school completers among Aboriginals, that scholars increase the amount of research on post-secondary education institutes in Canada regarding meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners. She called for both quantitative and qualitative studies to identify counter-stories and marginalization processes that have been institutionalized and/or internalized. Jenkins' (2007) research contributed to a body of literature that has been designed based on a "critical decolonizing" lens, connecting how education both supported and opposed colonization. She cited both Smith (1999) and Haig-Brown (1995), active scholars in the decolonizing methodologies discourse. Jenkins (2007) noted that pushing Aboriginal students to find space in public post-secondary

institutions was an option considered by many Aboriginal groups to be ineffective, assimilationist, and in opposition to Aboriginal sovereignty efforts (p. 20).

According to Jenkins (2007), decolonized education would move Aboriginal people toward liberation. Teachers would instruct in the Native languages. The elements of oppression would be made explicit. Students would be required to develop critical thinking skills and engage in self-conscious analyses of the processes and ideologies of colonialism. Existing Euro-Canadian curriculum would be discarded; all levels and all subjects would be rewritten based on Aboriginal values of sharing, equality, respect, and consensus.

Jenkins (2007) pointed out Canada's financial obligations to Aboriginals based on its constitution and Canada's complicity in past cultural genocide—including the government's role in supporting residential schools and its appropriation of Native lands and resources—to provide a liberating education for Aboriginal peoples. She concluded with two key messages:

...there will never be true self-determination for Native People until education itself is liberated, for it is very likely that only those children who have the opportunity of experiencing a liberated education will have all the requisite tools for self-determination as adults. On the other hand, for communities to engage in this task of liberation in education presupposes a measure of self-determination that is at present constrained by federal and provincial policies, as well as by financial and ideological structures. (p. 27)

Ultimately, it is Native Peoples themselves who hold the keys to their own liberation. The reality is that it is not something that the state gives to an oppressed people, for "colonialism never gives anything away for nothing." (p. 28)

Decolonization Discourse

After my study proposal had been approved and the data collected, I came across writers who questioned the approach to Aboriginal education espoused by many of my sources and writers and who did not support the use of the term decolonization relative to education. Had their work been available in 2010 when my proposal was being developed it may have influenced the study. The views of Widdowson and Howard (2013) and Tuck and Yang (2012) are important because they represent a counter narrative which might provide insight for future research opportunities.

Widdowson and Howard (2013) wrote about approaches to Aboriginal education in Canada. They raise the idea that there are two major approaches being espoused regarding Aboriginal education in Canada: “parallelism” (Self-determination and traditional cultural revitalization) and “integrationism” (Inclusion, universality, and progress) (p xiv). They cited a reluctance to include integrationism points of view in the literature that would contradict parallelism (p. xiii). Parallelism is characterized by labelling the Canadian education system as Eurocentric the implication being that modern educational methods are applicable only to those with European heritage (p. xvi). The lack of recognition of marginalized group identities is viewed as discriminatory and oppressive (p. xv). They discussed parallelism as being the dominant approach put forth in the RCAP 1996 report, overwhelming expressed in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* and by writers such as Aboriginal Institutes of Higher Education (AIHE) authors, 2005; Battiste et al., 2002; Jenkins, 2007; Kovach, 2009; Stonechild, 2006; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 1998). In contrast to parallelism, integrationism rejects the idea that the future for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals can be improved by encouraging

autonomous and culturally different Aboriginal educational systems (p. xvii). Liberal integrationists regard individual freedom not group identification as the important agent for change. Any attempt to link a person's status to heredity or appealing to group solidarity is questioned (p. xvii). There are integrationists who support the recognition of Aboriginal culture as a means for having Aboriginal peoples join into mainstream education such as the 2005 Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) report. Widdowson and Howard (2013) state that they have been boycotted at presentations and that the editors of the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, rescinded permission to use articles for their book because they questioned the existence and usefulness of Aboriginal knowledge (p. xii).

Tuck and Yang (2012) questioned the appropriateness of the decolonizing discourse when applied to educational advocacy and scholarship. While they recognized the worthiness of proposed goals such as social justice, critical methodologies, and approaches to decenter colonizers (i.e., settler) perspectives, they did not want the "metaphorization" of decolonization to make possible a set of evasions, or settler moves to innocence, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (p. 1). Tuck and Yang (2012) argued that decolonization was not about reconciliation, but rather about Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. They were concerned that "decolonization had been adopted into education and other social sciences, supplanting prior ways of talking about social justice or decentering the settler perspective" (p. 2). They wrote "decolonization cannot be accomplished by examining external or internal colonialism; it must focus on settler colonialism" (p. 5). They emphasized that "settler colonialism is not an event but a structure in which land is made

into property and the human relationship to the land is restricted and made pre-modern and backward” (p. 5). Based on this perspective, research on decolonizing education would never be undertaken. Researchers would not question how decolonization would look; they would question: what would the consequences of decolonization be when the land has been returned and the colonizers were elsewhere.

Tuck and Yang (2012) expressed concern that settlers who engaged in discussions and research on decolonization were attempting to “move to innocence” (p. 9). According to them White people position themselves by telling stories of personal exclusion which they equate with structural racism and exclusion. “They are simultaneously the oppressed and never the oppressor as they have an absence of experience of oppressive power” (p. 9). In another attempt to “move to innocence White people make claims to have Indian blood thus marking themselves as blameless as colonizers trying to rid the land of Aboriginal people” (p. 10) or “White people adopt Indigenous practices and knowledge in attempt to become without becoming Indian” (p. 14).

Summary

The review of literature reflected a Canadian history of colonization during which settlers sought through education to eliminate the Aboriginal identity. Battiste (2000b) is the most prolific Aboriginal writer calling for the decolonization of education and the end to cultural racism. Along with the call for the resurgence of Aboriginal languages, values and culture is the call for an Aboriginal controlled education system designed with indigenous pedagogy. A national debate continues about whether universities and colleges founded on a Western worldview are capable of decolonizing or whether an Aboriginal created and controlled Academy would be the only viable path to Aboriginal

liberation. There are Aboriginal scholars who have claimed that not all Aboriginal views on decolonization are being equally allowed into the debate, and some Aboriginal scholars who have written that settler scholars should not be taking part in the decolonization discourse because they will steer it towards settler innocence and not Aboriginal liberation. In the midst of this Canadian national debate and call for change, NWCC administrators have claimed to be on a transformative journey to decolonize since 2005. It was therefore timely to investigate the shared knowledge held by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NWCC employees about how they perceived their journey to decolonize.

INTERLUDE TWO: SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Aboriginal knowledge sharing

NWCC administrators had commissioned a totem pole to demonstrate their commitment to creating a welcoming environment for First Nations students; however, the owners of the totem pole story objected to the carver using their story on the pole without having received permission from the clan¹⁷. Since the carver had not observed local First Nations protocol by obtaining permission to carve the story, the totem pole could never be raised in front of NWCC campus because it would symbolize that the college was not respectful of First Nations protocols and did not respect the owners of the story. The college had taken the carver to court for not fulfilling his contract to carve a pole which could be raised in front of one of its campuses. The carver responded in court that he had fulfilled his contract, and it was the college that was not honoring the contract by not accepting the pole. With the court case decided in Western fashion through a legal ruling, it was time to settle the case in a Pacific Northwest Aboriginal way through an apology feast, so the two clans could move forward, and so NWCC administrators could demonstrate there were no bad feelings toward the pole. A pole surrounded with negative feelings would not be wanted by others. The idea that knowledge was owned by those who had experienced it was new to me.

It was through this feast that I began learning the Pacific Northwest Aboriginal perspective of sharing knowledge. As I understood it, ownership of knowledge remained with the storyteller or the family who had lived the story. In that way, knowledge or

¹⁷ This link discusses the purpose of totem poles and the importance of ownership of the story <http://www.manataka.org/page30.html>

learning could never be separated from the experience and the place where it occurred. The carver's offense was to carve the story on a pole which would publicly share the story without obtaining the permission of the clan that owned the story.

A small apology feast was held at a NWCC campus between the carver and his family and the family representatives of the other clan. We shared food and the carver told a story and offered gifts to the other clan. Both agreed to move forward and reaffirmed which clan owned the story and the knowledge.

Non-Aboriginal knowledge sharing

B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education staff implemented a number of strategies in 2007 to increase the post-secondary educational attainment of Aboriginal learners. In December 2010, a non-Aboriginal consultant had been hired to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and to provide a report to the ministry for the purpose of developing new Aboriginal frameworks. The ministry staff had waited until the very end of the funding period to begin gathering knowledge from the First Nations peoples.

The consultant announced face-to-face meetings in the southern region of the province but not in the NWCC service area which had a 32% First Nations people population and which served the largest number of Aboriginal learners in the province. I, as an administrator of NWCC, objected and voiced that this plan was not reflective of respectful collaboration with First Nations peoples.

The consultant responded by offering to video conference to NWCC. I explained that video conferencing was not an engaging form of communication for First Nations people that it was important the consultant come up to the First Nations communities to form relationships and to understand the land on which the First Nations people

experienced life. He explained there was not enough money and time for him to travel north, but he would invite people who could not come to the video conference to email him. I explained that many of the communities did not have Internet service beyond the band¹⁸ offices, and sharing opinions was a very personal experience and that asking people to write emails would silence many people. He explained there was nothing he could do.

I explained that conducting the meeting in the winter would silence the voices of our rural First Nations community members because they would not be able to travel to a campus as roads often became impassable with the snow. The consultant explained that he could not adjust the timelines, nothing could be done.

On a cold, snowy February morning we packed three video conference rooms with students and community members. There was only time for one video conference to rural B.C. before the report was written and submitted by the consultant. Based on this report, B.C. government officials developed their new strategies for increasing Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education.

It was my opinion the Aboriginal people of northern B.C. were willing to share their knowledge, but the non-Aboriginal consultant and the B.C. government he worked for misunderstand the importance of making time to listen. It was my observation, while working at NWCC that there were non-Aboriginal government and college staff who

¹⁸ A Band, or Indian Band, is a governing unit of Indians in Canada instituted by the *Indian Act*, 1876. The Indian Act defines a band as a body of Indians, (a) for whose use and benefit in common, lands, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, have been set apart, (b) has funds held for it by the federal government, and (c) is declared a band by the Governor-in-Council.

failed to respectfully engage First Nation peoples and continued to act as if they knew what was best for Aboriginal learners. Furthermore, Aboriginal institutes continue to be required to partner with non-Aboriginal institutions in order to grant credentials, and thus Aboriginal programs and services continue to be developed and implemented by non-Aboriginals.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 3, I reiterate the purpose and research questions of this study and described the study methodology. I include my autobiography in this section because this is a qualitative study in which my past experiences influenced my research design decisions and my ability to perceive themes in the data. I was conflicted whether the autobiography belonged entirely in the methodology section or should have been placed in the findings section since my observations, as a non-Aboriginal employee of NWCC, contributed to the data. The research design details the use of individual participant surveys completed by email and a moderated private blog which facilitates the participants being able to anonymously respond to each other's opinions without concern for public opinion. The chapter provides information on the purposeful selection of participants, the data collection process, the analysis and data management processes, and integrity measures. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the study limitations.

Purpose of the Study

As discussed in Chapter I, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the concept of decolonization at NWCC by seeking to build a definition of colonization and decolonization through the words of six Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal employees who held employment within one of three employee groups: staff, instructors, and administrators. My development of a collective definition based on employee narratives via open ended questions on pre blog survey and post blog surveys as well as blog posts was premised on a social constructivist framework. By adding to the limited body of research on the decolonization of post-secondary institutions in Canada, the data

derived in this study offers new insights regarding decolonization based on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. The findings may help in the development of policy and structural changes to positively impact the disparity in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Furthermore, the in-depth understanding of decolonization presented in this study may help to identify future research opportunities at NWCC and similar institutions.

Research Questions

The following overarching question was identified to guide this study: What does decolonization mean to employees at NWCC? The following sub-questions were articulated to further define the study:

1. What definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization* were held by NWCC employees?
2. What examples of colonization and decolonization did NWCC employees identify?
3. What did study participants consider essential elements of a decolonized college?

I selected qualitative research to facilitate a deeper understanding of decolonization through the perceptions of the NWCC employees. I was interested in understanding, not quantifying, decolonization. Patton (1985) explained that qualitative research was used in an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context. The understanding was an end in itself. It was not an attempt to predict what might happen in the future, but to understand the nature of a particular setting.

The use of qualitative research afforded me the opportunity to be both the collector of personal narratives as well as to contribute my personal experiences as data. In this form of research, the researcher takes the role of subjective meaning maker. This requires the researcher and the participants to engage in highly interactive communication. However, being a researcher from a colonizer background may have caused me to bring into the data interpretation process perspectives different than what would have been found by an Aboriginal researcher.

Research Design

In order to develop a holistic understanding of decolonization at NWCC, I undertook to include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants from each of the three employee groups. Since my study included Aboriginal participants, I was sensitive to the historical reality that Aboriginals have often been the topic of analysis and have been denied the opportunity to create knowledge about themselves Smith (1999). According to Smith (1999) Aboriginal peoples have good reason to mistrust research that interprets their experiences and hopes for the future. I wanted a research design that would give Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices an equal role in defining decolonization at NWCC. Therefore, I turned to qualitative research which “creates spaces for the heretofore unheard voices and positions in human inquiry” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 249).

Initially, I had considered utilizing face-to-face interviews and a participant focus group session or participant talking circle to share the responses, to facilitate dialog, and to collect the interpretations of the data from the group; however, I was aware as an employee of NWCC that my position as Vice President might cause some participants concern in sharing their opinions because of a difference in power within the

organization. Further, being non-Aboriginal might create hesitation on the part of Aboriginal participants to share their opinions. Moreover, I was aware as an employee there was sensitivity in engaging in conversations about decolonization or colonization within the college and that asking employees in a face-to-face group to share their opinions might be difficult. Therefore, I selected to do individual surveys completed via email to capture baseline individual opinions which were then shared via a blog. The private blog allowed the study participants who were anonymous to each other to respond to the aggregated responses without concern for the power disparity between participants from different NWCC employee groups and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. Further, it allowed participants to share negative opinions of the college without concern for reprisals. In this way all participants had a more equal opportunity to generate knowledge. However, the requirement of a written response to the survey questions and blog posts probably advantaged non-Aboriginal participants as one Aboriginal participant noted he/she was more comfortable in an oral conversation, but did find that the need to write gave him/her more time to reflect on the postings and to develop a response. Only one of the six Aboriginal participants made note of a difference in comfort in participating in written rather than orally.

I served as the blog's moderator. I believed as the researcher that I should try to remain an observer to the blog conversations, so I was not intrusive with requests for clarification and probing questions. I believe I was naïve to think that the participants would forget who I was or the position I held at the college if I was unobtrusive, and I gave up a valuable opportunity to get deeper information. I noted that 5 of the 12 participants engaged me in face-to-face conversations about the blog responses with

questions on whether they were contributing enough or expressing that they were learning from the postings. I underestimated the need for participants to have face-to-face interaction with me and a possible need by the participants for affirmation of their opinions.

The research design was based on the theory of social constructionism. Social constructionists believe knowledge is the result of social processes and reflexivity and that there are multiple worldviews of knowledge (Soderqvist, 1991). Humans, therefore, construct our realities through interactions with others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Vygotsky 1978). Since I was an employee of NWCC and contributed my observations and experiences as data to this study, the study would have been richer in social interactions had I engaged the participants during the blog.

I was specifically drawn to the writings of Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) on the critical role of conversation in narrative research. By incorporating a blog component into the study it allowed for written conversations between the participants and the expansion of our understanding of decolonization through the sharing of our stories (Claudin & Connelly, 2000; Stewart, 2008).

Role of the Researcher

The background of the researcher is important in qualitative research because themes do not emerge unless the researcher perceives them (Tesch, 1987). I am not of First Nations descent or a native of northern B.C. in Canada. I held the position of Vice-president of Education and Student Services at NWCC for 3.5 years during the time this research proposal was being finalized and the data were being collected. Due to the time spent at NWCC, I felt I processed knowledge about the context of my dissertation topic

(i.e., where the college had been in terms of colonization and where it was going in terms of decolonization).

I considered my position as vice-president, a new immigrant to the north, and a non-Indigenous academic researcher to be a challenge, but not insurmountable to forming authentic relationships with study participants. I was able to develop real relationships with participants over time, which aided me to find a research design which was respectful. I had carefully reviewed the literature on the history of exploitation, appropriation, and abuse involving non-Aboriginal researchers working with Aboriginal participants and had given a great deal of thought about how to conduct research that would not reproduce historical patterns of disenfranchising Aboriginal participants. My position and recent arrival to the community gave me an authentic interest in the research results. A new NWCC president began work in 2011 and engaged in community consultations¹⁹ with the surrounding communities as well as strategic planning with NWCC's internal stakeholders throughout 2012. Thus, conducting this study in January of 2013 was timely as study participants were already reflecting about where the college had been and how the college should move forward.

Autobiography and Assumptions

When I reflected on my life to understand my personal motivation to understand decolonization prior to conducting this research, I realized I began the study thinking if I understood decolonization I could aid those who have been colonized to take strength in

¹⁹ A **community consultation** is the act of requesting to be allowed to come into a community and meet with Elders, Chiefs, elected officials and community members to seek their wisdom on a topic. NWCC went to 3 non-Aboriginal communities and 14 Aboriginal communities to consultant on the following questions: What did they know about NWCC? What did NWCC do well? And what were the educational needs of their community?

their differences. After completing the study, I came to understand that decolonization meant I needed to examine how my beliefs and actions maintained the oppression of others.

I was attracted to Aboriginal identity because I perceive it to be based on a strong connection to the land, to family and community, and I had no strong sense of my ethnic identity, my family or sense of connection to any one place. I had never perceived that I was discriminated against because of my ethnicity. I had no experience fighting for my land, my language, my culture, and my existence, but I was drawn to understand colonization and decolonization. I wanted to create an opportunity to engage in a dialog in which both colonizers and the colonized could learn from each other's perspectives.

I was born in a small city in eastern Canada; my family had lived on the Canadian east coast—in the Maritime Provinces—for hundreds of years as farmers, lumberjacks, fishermen, and coal miners. They were people of the land. My grandparents' generation had moved from the land into the cities created at the end of World War II. I grew up knowing that my family was English, Scottish, and Irish and that our family farm had been obtained through a British land grant to my father's ancestors in 1775.

My father, a musician, took sales jobs to provide for his family. Initially, my mother stayed home with my brother and myself, but later went to work as a teacher's assistant then salesperson. We moved from town to town as my father got promotions. When I was 4 years old, my parents decided that they would leave the east coast and move to central part of the country, Ontario, where my father had been offered a promotion. This pattern of moving, so my parents could follow work, continued throughout my childhood: I lived in four provinces and moved 21 times before I left

home at the age of 19, so I felt I had a comprehensive understanding of Canada and had experienced education in four provinces.

I remember moving to a new area in which the school was overcrowded, so my mother decided we should attend the private Catholic school, even though we were not Catholic. My mother convinced the priest that we should be allowed to attend and that she had no objection to her children receiving religious instruction. We were registered as the first non-Catholics at the school.

The nuns made it clear that we were different and I always felt like an outsider there. I didn't know the automatic prayer responses, the proper way to cross myself, or what would happen in the confessional. I was afraid of doing something wrong and not doing something I should be doing. But my greatest fear as a 12-year-old was not fitting into the group of my peers. As I analyzed the data and rewrote my biography, I wondered as I analyzed the data if this feeling of not fitting in was associated with my interest in Aboriginal children being forced to fit into a school and culture that was foreign to them.

Because I moved often, changed schools, and also travelled domestically and internationally as a young person, I learned the skill of observation. Each new place and each new school had rules that guided behavior. The degree to which I could learn these social rules and adapt to them directly correlated to my social and academic success. I had inductively understood that school had values and rules which governed success.

Despite attending secondary school in four Canadian provinces, I never met a First Nations student. They were absent in my textbooks and in my circle of friends, but I never knew they were missing. I heard about Indians for the first time in 1974 when I was 13 and living on Vancouver Island in B.C. In 1974 the term First Nations was not yet

used. My mother had gone to an interview for a teacher assistant position; she came home and said she was not interested in the position because they did not want her to teach, they wanted her to babysit the students. She was told: "Those Indians, they do not want to learn. Just keep 'em quiet with chips and coke." I remember hearing adults describing drunken Indians being hit on the highway walking home from the local bars. The stories were matter of fact; no empathy was expressed. I remember adults being angry because they believed Indians could always escape responsibility for their actions by running back to their reservations where they were safe from law enforcement. There was never any discussion of the effects of colonization. I left B.C. in 1975 and First Nations people were again gone from my consciousness.

I graduated from a Canadian university with a degree in Psychology and moved to Europe, taking odd jobs. I moved from country to country learning how to disappear into society at large. I eventually landed a scholarship to the University of Basel in Switzerland, but had to pass a fluency test in German. I spent 3.5 months in a full immersion German language program, where I came to terms with not being able to communicate and not understanding what was happening around me. This experience made me empathetic to individuals who must make meaning of their world in another language. There are ideas that do not translate from one language to another.

While at the University of Basel, I lived in a student dorm where we each had an individual bedroom but shared a common kitchen and lounge area. The other students had decided to exclude me from group meals and gatherings because the previous international student had been offensive. This experience of being excluded and not feeling valued because of what others perceived about my background was the result of

my electing to stay; I could have ended the experience. I cannot image the effect if I could not turn the exclusion experience off.

After 3 years in Europe, I went to Texas and entered a master's program in school psychology, intending to work with students in special education. I was disturbed that so many minority students and boys were in the special education classes. It saddened me when I observed children who feared acknowledging they spoke Spanish. So many students were desperately trying to fit in. I was to observe the same pressure on First Nations students trying to fit into an English only non-Aboriginal environment.

As a graduate with a master's degree in school psychology, I took a position as a counselor for an Upward Bound Program. Upward Bound dates back to Civil Rights legislation, and was designed to help minority, first generation, and economically disadvantaged students prepare for and enter post-secondary education. My students would call my attention (with a mixture of frustration and adolescent humor) to how college security guards would watch them. "They think we are going to steal or damage something because we are not White." Another said, "Watch the store clerk put my change on the counter because he does not want to touch my black hands." These young people walked each day between two worlds of conflicting expectations.

After some years, I was drawn to pursue my doctorate in international development education, and I moved to Miami. I was disappointed to find the model of international development, established in the 1960s, was one of paternalism. It did not make sense to me for experts from developed countries to tell people from other countries and cultures what they needed. Additionally, the financial support from the developed world created further dependency and resentment as recipients attempted to fit into

artificial funding models. I found First Nations people also felt frustration at having to fit into artificial funding models which did not give them control of their futures.

It is against this backdrop of life experiences and academic training that I was drawn to take a position at NWCC in northern B.C. I was intrigued to know how a college could decolonize within a colonized society; how would decolonization look and how would the college function? As I considered researching how decolonization was being defined at NWCC, I found my psychology training made me more interested in understanding how people experienced decolonization than quantifying it. I decided that a qualitative study using narratives would best serve my desire to understand decolonization of NWCC through the thoughts and feelings of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees.

Once my data collection process began, I rushed home each evening to read the posts to the blog; the posts became longer and more personal as the participants grew in their willingness to share their thoughts. During this phase of the research, participants sometimes directed me to a link or document about decolonization. One of the books I read during this time was *A Geography of Blood* by Candace Savage (2012), chronicling the colonization of Aboriginal lands in Saskatchewan. Savage detailed the British plan to systematically kill off the buffalo to eliminate this vital resource used in housing, clothes, and food by Aboriginal people. The purpose was to create governmental dependency and force the Aboriginals to sell their lands to survive. This led to government agents granting land titles to encourage settlers to move west. The presence of these settlers in the west of Canada stemmed the northern expansion of the United States and was instrumental in creating the bi-coastal country of Canada.

My Canadian education had not taught me about colonization; even today the social science curriculum in B.C. as experienced by my children in middle school and high school does not tell the settler story fully disclosing of the cost to Aboriginal people. While I had already acknowledged (in the abstract) that I had personally benefited from being a member of the colonizer group, after reading *A Geography of Blood*, I finally understood that the land granted to my father's family in 1775 in Nova Scotia was not empty. The voices of the First Nations Peoples who had taken nourishment from that land prior to my family were denied this nourishment as a result of our colonization. They had been silenced. The Aboriginal presence in Nova Scotia still is virtually unacknowledged.

My great grandmother's brother had made his way west to Alberta in the early 1900s to homestead. Growing up, I heard tales that he had lived in a mud house and worked the land into a prosperous ranch. No one in my family ever mentioned that others had made their homes on that land for thousands of years before his arrival.

I was already writing my dissertation before I read two important works that influenced my thinking: Tuck and Yang (2012), who questioned whether the discussion of decolonization of education was missing the more important question of Aboriginal sovereignty and liberation, and Regan's (2010), book *Unsettling the Settler Within* in which she discussed the need for colonizers to embrace not knowing and being uncomfortable as they acknowledge their role in oppression of others.

Based on my self-exploration as a colonizer, and my reading about the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, I acknowledge the following assumptions about decolonization. These informed my decisions regarding the construction of my research, the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis:

1. The meaning of decolonization is socially constructed and can be studied.
2. As NWCC employees we individually and collectively created an understanding of decolonization.
3. To understand the collective essence of decolonization at NWCC, it is essential that employees engaged in discussions with each other.
4. Discussions regarding the decolonization of the NWCC workplace need to be constructed with anonymity to create a safe environment to share opinions because colonization is not a fully explored topic.
5. An employee's understanding of decolonization may differ depending on whether he or she identifies as a colonizer (non-Aboriginal) or someone whose land was colonized (Aboriginal).
6. Decolonization and colonization are related but are not necessarily opposites.

Setting

NWCC is a public two-year community college located in the western Canadian province of B.C., serving approximately 7,000 students. According to NWCC Facts, the offerings at NWCC include continuing education, adult basic education, developmental education, English language training, certificates, trades training, university credit, and baccalaureate degrees in partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia. The NWCC service region encompasses 102,247 square kilometers and is home to approximately 72,000 people; 32% of these individuals are Aboriginal from 27 of the 197 First Nations bands in BC. NWCC's main campus is located in Terrace and programs are offered at seven additional campuses and one community-learning center in the region.

Over the last 3 years, NWCC faculty and staff have provided educational programming or services to 28 remote and majority Aboriginal communities; in the past 5 years, NWCC has been successful in raising the number of Aboriginal students attending the college, who now represent about 45% of the student enrollment. This is the largest number of Aboriginal students—approximately 3,000—in a mainstream college in B.C. and possibly in all of Canada (NWCC Facts, 2013).

In 2005, NWCC leaders committed to enhance the participation of Aboriginal learners by engaging in a “transformative journey” to become a bicultural institution. In 2007, the House of Learning was established to focus applied research initiatives on issues relevant to the Aboriginal community. In 2009, NWCC held a summer gathering to discuss how to decolonize post-secondary education. In 2010, another summer gathering focused on Indigenization. The excerpt below is taken from NWCC web site:

Northwest Community College is on a transformative journey to indigenize the culture and practice of how it provides education in Northwest British Columbia. This involves learning from Aboriginal values and needs, and taking direction from the communities. We base our approach on respect, relationships and responsibility. This provides the College community with tools for generating culturally responsive curriculum.

As a public community college, administrators from the provincial Ministry of Advanced Education oversee NWCC. The Post-secondary Employer’s Association is the employer agent for all colleges, universities, and institutes in B.C. An appointed board provides long-term leadership within NWCC, while the president works in collaboration with the education council (that includes students, staff, faculty, and administrators) and the First Nations council to determine the short-term direction of the college.

By creating the First Nations council, NWCC's president facilitated a formal advisory relationship with the educational advisors of the First Nations bands without having to seek legislative permission to alter the membership of the mandated education council and board. In 2013, the education council endorsed a recommendation to formally alter its board and education council composition to require the appointment of an Aboriginal community board member. The Lieutenant Governor and the Board Resourcing and Development office members of the Provincial government have not responded to the recommendation. The continuance of a separate First Nations Council structure reflects that there has not been a legislative change to recognize the need for First Nations members in governance and advisory positions. As part of the B.C. government's 2007 Aboriginal recommendations governmental staff began encouraging Aboriginal participation on governing boards, but this has not become a statutory requirement.

Participants

Participants for this research study were members of three employee divisions within NWCC:

1. Administrators (including the president, vice-presidents, deans, and directors who are non-union members and form the management of the college). Administrators communicate policies and mission to faculty and staff.
2. Instructors, including faculty who taught in either the transfer credit areas or the vocational areas. Faculty members communicate the college's policies and mission to the students.

3. Staff, including both academic and non-academic staff members (First Nations Access Coordinators and administrative assistants). Staff members also communicate the college's policies' and mission to the students.

The purposeful sample of 12 individuals who participated in this study included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees who served in staff, instructor, and administrative roles. They were selected based on their interest in decolonization evidenced by participating in one or more of the following optional college activities or initiatives: Challenging the Paradigm Conference *Learning and Knowing in Two Worlds*, the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee, the Aboriginal Service Plan Advisory Committee, the First Nations Council, the college's participatory planning²⁰ activities *This Way Forward*, and elders-in-residence workshops. Participants were also purposefully selected from different campuses to represent the three regions within NWCC's service area, as the regions serve 34 diverse communities of which 28 are Aboriginal communities composed of seven different nations.²¹ I personally knew of the participants' involvement because I was involved in each of these activities in my role as vice-president.

My goal was to work with 12-16 participants, so I called or visited 18 employees to discuss the study. Sixteen expressed interest in participating and were sent an

²⁰ **This Way Forward** was the report of the president's community consultations finding which preceded and informed strategic planning.

²¹ The map reflects the different First Nations Council Bands served by NWCC <https://www.nwcc.bc.ca/about-us/explore-nwcc/first-nations-council/first-nations-council-band-locations>

explanation of the study (see Appendix B). Participation was strictly voluntary and anonymous to other participants. With no risk for participants, a signed consent form was not required; however, I did request that once the participants had reviewed the study explanation, they acknowledge their informed willingness to participate via email (with the option of providing a personal email address if they did not want study correspondence sent to their work email). All sixteen individuals acknowledged their interest in participating and no one gave a personal email. These 16 individuals received a written invitation (see Appendix C) and a pre-survey to complete (see Appendix D). They were asked to complete the pre-survey (attached to the email in a Microsoft Word document) within two weeks.

The survey questions were developed to guide participants to share their broad overarching definition of colonization and decolonization. Additional questions prompted the participants to give examples of colonization and decolonization within NWCC and to describe what would be needed for NWCC to be decolonized. This question was to elicit how the college could be moved to an ideal state that would be congruent with their definition of decolonization.

There was no direct benefit to the participants for participating. However, in recognition of their willingness to share their knowledge and time, I pledged to donate \$20.00 to the NWCC student emergency bursary for each participant who completed all three stages of the study.

In Table 1, a listing of the roles and background of those who participated in the study is provided. In Table 2 the regions in which the participants' home campuses were located is provided.

Table 1

Composition of Study Participants

Position in Organization	# of Study Participants	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Administration	5	2	3
Instructors	3	1	2
Staff	4	3	1
Totals	12	6	6

Table 2

Participants' Home Campuses

Eastern	Central	Western
5	6	1

Data Collection

As of the pre-survey deadline, only 6 of 16 pre-surveys had been submitted, a response rate of less than 50%. I extended the deadline by a week and sent out a second, reminder email (see Appendix E), along with the original invitation and pre-survey document. After another week, 12 surveys had been submitted. I sent a third and final email 2 days later to the 4 participants who had not responded to ask if they had changed their mind about participation (see Appendix F).

2 of the 4 remaining participants responded by email saying they were interested but did not have time to participate. 2 never responded. Of the 12 who had completed the pre-survey, there were an equal number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, so an overall balance was maintained. Since I knew the participants personally I knew whether they identified themselves as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

The collective responses of the 12 participants were arranged by pre-survey question and any information identifying the participants was removed. These responses were then posted to the blog in a controlled fashion. Only the participant responses to Question 1 were visible in the blog when it was first opened. I served as the blog moderator and prompted the participants to reflect on the responses that the 12 had written in response to the pre-survey question and to post additional responses and questions.

To keep the identities of the participants anonymous, each participant was assigned a random number in the following manner: the numbers from 1–20 were written on pieces of paper and placed in a bowl. As each participant submitted a pre-survey, I drew a number from the bowl and assigned it to the participant. The identity of the participant and their assigned number was then recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet separate from his/her responses. I intentionally did not review the responses in detail before they were posted, so as not to dwell on what specific participants wrote.

The day after I had received surveys from all 12 participants, I opened a WordPress blog on the Internet and sent each participant an email with instructions on how to logon, the password, and their participant number (see Appendix G).

As the discussion of each question waned, I posted the responses to the next question and notified the participants via email. The responses to the questions were not taken down as new question responses were added, so by the end of the blog period the participants were able to see all the responses and comment on any or all postings. At the end of the blog period, the participants were sent an email that the blog was about to close to give them one more opportunity to contribute final comments. The timeframe for

the blog was similar to the traditional 60 day period which NWCC utilized to obtain feedback on proposed changes to college policies.

Blog

I created the blog using WordPress, a popular blogging platform. WordPress provided the capability to make the responses visible only to study participants via a password feature. The blog shell is available at <http://www.decolonization.net>

In addition to the blog posts, I provided participants with links to associated information on decolonization in education for those who might desire context on the decolonizing discourse. These links included:

1. A Transformative Framework for Decolonizing Canada
2. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
3. American Indian Higher Education Consortium
4. Assembly of First Nations
5. BC Teachers' Federation: Aboriginal Education
6. Bibliography: Educational Decolonization
7. Decolonizing our Schools: Aboriginal Education in the Toronto District School Board
8. First Nations pedagogy
9. Indigenization Strategy Literature Review
10. Indigenous Education Institute
11. Indigenous Evaluation Framework
12. The Indian Act

Post-Survey

After the blog was closed, all 12 participants were emailed the post-survey, containing 4 questions which included questions on whether their perspectives on colonization and decolonization had changed as a result of their participation in the study and whether they felt safe sharing their opinions on the blog and if they did not feel safe what could have been done differently to aid in their feeling safe to fully participate (see Appendix H). The participants were requested to respond within 9 days as the winter term was ending, and it was not unusual for employees to take extended vacation in the summer. 9 participants completed the post-survey by the deadline. I am unaware as to why the other 3 participants did not respond. I did not follow-up with them as I feared questioning them might cause them to feel they had done something wrong by not completing the third phase by the deadline. Of the 3 who did not respond to the post-survey, 2 were Aboriginal and 1 was non-Aboriginal.

Data Management

All documents related to this study were kept on my personal computer and a back-up external hard drive. My computer was password protected and the external hard drive was kept in a locked cabinet in my home. The identity of the participants was maintained on an Excel spreadsheet separate from the responses. The blog was password protected, so only participants knowing the password could see the posts. The email addresses of the participants were not visible to them. A number was assigned by me to each participant to keep their identities anonymous from one another. When the blog was closed, the password was changed and the responses removed. The blog will remain closed and will be deleted once this dissertation is approved.

Data Engagement

There were two elements with regard to data engagement: the degree of understanding I possessed of the context in which the data was created and the number of postings in response to the participants' survey responses. First, as the researcher of the study, I lived in the area, northwest British Columbia, and interacted with community members which aided me to develop a context for the participants' comments. Further, for 2.5 years I worked with and formed relationships with the individuals who became study participants before sending out the first surveys. During this time, I had been journaling questions to myself about my experiences which aided in the development of the research proposal. Once the study began and the blog was opened, I monitored the posts nightly and journaled questions for myself. I posted encouragement to the blog for the participants to respond. Once the data from the surveys and the blog was collected, I read the data multiple times and in different formats—by participant, by time, and by survey and post-survey. This reflected there was a high degree of researcher interaction with the data.

In order to know if the participants had been truly engaged in the data, I posed specific questions to the participants in the post-survey (see Appendix H) to determine how each participant assessed the responses of the other participants. Overall, participants felt the blog responses were thoughtful, reflective, and honest.

Several elements of the study design increased the data trustworthiness as described by authors writing about qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Merriam, 2002; Patton 1990). Study participants reflected on their colleagues' comments and posted questions when they did not understand or support what participants wrote giving

the comments more clarity and context. For example, when a participant wrote about the good intentions of Colonizers other participants wrote questioning what the writer meant by stating that Colonizers had good intentions. Additional examples include numerous responses on whether specific actions taken by NWCC were steps toward decolonization or examples of tokenism.

Data trustworthiness was increased by having used a sample with an equal number of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals who were purposefully selected from all three NWCC employee groups and from all four regions ensuring sample diversity. Finally, there were multiple participants who completed all three elements of the study: pre and post-surveys and the blog posts. 12 participants completed the pre-survey and 9 of the 12 answered the post-survey. 11 of the 12 participants posted 33 blog comments during the 9-week period in which the blog was active. 1 participant did not post to the blog. The blog was closed only after the posting activity waned. 11 blog responses were posted in response to Question 1, 9 for Question 2, and 13 for Question 3. In total, over 1700 lines of text were written by participants.

Data Analysis

I began formal data analysis after the blog was closed and the post-surveys were returned. I reviewed the responses to the research questions posted to the blog to identify significant participant statements, and used those to inductively build themes. I organized the data in three ways to disrupt any potential assumptions.

1. By participant: each participant's pre-survey, posts, and post-survey responses (if available) were pasted into a Word document to develop a holistic response for each of them.

2. By date order: I organized the pre-survey responses, posts, and post-survey responses in date order in a Word document, to understand how the conversation evolved over time.
3. Only post-survey responses: I organized only the post-survey responses into one Word document to evaluate whether it seemed as if the participants felt safe to share their opinions on the blog and whether they viewed the responses of the collective group as being sincere and honest. This was an exercise intended to help me know if the data was believed by the participants.

I recorded my observations about the written data in a journal. In this process, I observed literally what was written, I thought about what was written within the context of my personal experiences at NWCC, I thought about what was written within the context of what I knew about the history of colonization in the region and the country, and I thought about what was written in context with my literature review. I coded the ethnicity of each participant to observe any patterns to the responses of Aboriginals compared to non-Aboriginals. I coded the employment role of each participant to observe any patterns to the responses of one employ group compared to another.

Moreover, I noted how people chose to explain their answers. I considered whether the participant had shared first hand experiences, whether he or she told a story, or whether the participant created distance with his or her choice of words. For example, a phrase such as “In the past, my ancestors. . .” came across to me as creating time and emotional distance whereas using “my great grandparents” would seem less distant.

While journaling my observations about the written material from each participant, I tracked on an EXCEL spreadsheet the repetition of words. I began to

highlight repeating words, what I perceived to be significant participant statements. The statements formed meaning units and then were clustered into categories. I began to see patterns in the categories. Eventually the meanings of the categories became more complex and suggested themes. For example, comments by participants regarding feelings began to develop into a potential theme of how colonization and decolonization felt or was emotionally experienced by the participants.

Limitations to the Study

As previously stated, my articulation of the research questions and my research design decisions were shaped by my experiences and academic training. By acknowledging study limitations, readers can make their own decisions about how the results might be used to understand decolonization.

The qualitative research design was chosen specifically to understand the decolonization of NWCC; the results were not meant to be generalized to other colleges or instances of decolonization without the appropriate case study research of that site. My use of a voluntary purposeful sampling of NWCC employees limits the transferability of the results to other NWCC employees. Further limitations of this study include that 1 non-Aboriginal participant elected not to contribute posts to the blog and only 9 of the 12 participants completed the post blog survey and the study design did not allow me to follow-up with individual participants to better understand emerging concepts such as tokenism, Aboriginal curriculum equality and Aboriginal empowerment. Moreover, the interpretations of the findings are based on my perspective as a non-Aboriginal and may have been different if I had been Aboriginal or had co-authored with an Aboriginal researcher.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I described the purpose of the study and the research questions, followed by a detailed discussion of the research design, research assumptions, setting, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, data management, data engagement, and limitations. In addition, I included a brief autobiography, to establish the context for making my research decisions. In Chapter 4, I provide the findings. The findings are comprised of participant quotes and contextual explanations. The findings are clustered into themes and sub-themes.

INTERLUDE THREE: HEALING

Personal Healing

I remember him slowly approaching the podium in front of the crowd of students and staff gathered in the library. He was short, round, slightly stooped, and clad in a light jacket and jeans. I guessed he was in his late 70s; his face was etched with years of hard living. He did not look comfortable speaking to a crowd: his voice was soft; he did not make eye contact. He told how he had been taken to a residential school as a child and had been beaten for speaking his own language. He wanted to go home, but home was too far away. When he was 16 he left the school, got into drugs, drank too much. As a young man he stated he was “bad” to his wife and children. His voice strengthened as he explained he had found God, he gotten sober, and returned to school. He had to take courses to complete high school, and he was getting ready to graduate, and it was the first time he had ever graduated from anything. He looked up at the crowd of students who were majority Aboriginal and said: “You can graduate, too” and slowly walked away from the podium.

Community Healing

I travelled by floatplane with another non-Aboriginal administrator to a coastal Aboriginal community to attend a program graduation. It was a short flight, but a world removed. An elder met us and gave us a tour of the small community, taking pride to show us the new indoor swimming pool. “What a great pool,” I said. He said “Yes, we

got it because we had such a high youth suicide rate²² that they thought a recreational facility might help.” My heart sank.

Community leaders had asked the NWCC administration to offer ethno botany—the relationship between people and plants—and the cultural modules of the Guardian Watchmen program. NWCC had hired a local Aboriginal resident to teach the program to 10 men, aged 18–55. The 12-week program had included learning about their Clan system, traditional medicine, and ethno botany. All 10 of the students had completed the program and the community, between 40–50 people, had come to a feast to recognize their accomplishment.

The young and senior men lined up with their notes in hand. One by one the students introduced themselves speaking in Sm’algyax, a dialect of the Tsimshian language. They recited their First Nations names and identified their Clan. When one of the students faltered, the other students jumped in to assist him. Their efforts were met with a round of applause and tears from the Elders.

The students served the Elders and gave gifts—eagle feathers, shells, and bells—to the Elders and to us as their guests. Community members and students were given the opportunity to speak. Some of the students talked about how wonderful their teacher had been. How much they had enjoyed learning from the land. How for many of them this program was the first thing they had ever completed, and they now wanted to continue their education.

²² Suicide rates for Aboriginal youth are five to seven times the non-Aboriginal population. Current Mental Health Issues in Canada: The mental health of First Nations and Inuit communities Publication No: 2014-02-E January 6, 2014

A community member started to speak: “We are very proud of these men,” he said. Then looking at us, non-Aboriginal, NWCC staff members, he said “Don’t get me wrong. We are proud to hear these men talking in our language, telling our stories. But you need to know that you took our language and culture away from us. It is only good that you bring it back to us.” He did not say this in anger; it was just a statement of fact. I was conflicted because I was enjoying this wonderful moment of pride and success for these 10 men, but I also needed to acknowledge that I was part of a culture and system of education that had sought to forcibly extinguish this First Nations’ language, culture and worldview. I was as Regan (2013) has stated “unsettled” and conflicted in my acknowledgement of the activities of colonization. However, it was through these opportunities for First Nations to acknowledge the experience of residential school, poverty, substance abuse, the loss of language and culture and for non-Aboriginals to listen that a shared understanding of healing could be forged.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In Chapter IV, I present the findings of this qualitative study based on the thoughts and feelings expressed in writing by six Aboriginal and six Non-Aboriginal employees at NWCC about decolonization. This data adds to the limited body of research on the decolonization of post-secondary institutions in Canada.

Data were analyzed inductively, using Tesch's (1987) process for identifying meaning units—significant statements made by the participants—and themes (i.e., partial descriptors of the phenomena). As I worked with the data to identify themes, I was compelled to rework my autobiography narrative which is found in the methods section. Similar to the study participants, I had learned as a result of our written conversations and understood decolonization differently. The process of rewriting and rewriting my autobiography narrative helped to evolve my understanding of decolonization.

As discussed in Chapter three, as I worked with the data I coded whether responses were from Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal participants, their gender, and their position in the college as staff, instructor or administrator. I found that responses differed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants but did not differ according to gender or employment group within the college. Thus, each theme is therefore discussed in relation to being Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

My data analysis included a mix of priori and emergent themes. The research questions established three priori themes: the definition of colonization, the definition of decolonization, and what changes would be needed for NWCC to be considered

decolonized. There was one emergent theme: emotional experience and numerous sub-themes.

1. Emotional experience: (a) feeling valued and equal, (b) feeling used/tokenism, and (c) feeling angry
2. Colonization: (a) in the past, (b) continuing, (c) intentions
3. Decolonization: (a) resistance to decolonization, (b) uncomfortable with anger, (c) feeling less valued, (d) guarded to voice opinions, and (e) awakening
4. Steps needed to decolonize NWCC: (a) changes in mindset, (b) changes in curriculum, (c) employee professional development training, (d) student support, (e) public displays, (f) changes in college structures, (g) increased Aboriginal leadership control (h) development of policies, and (i) government action.

Emotional Experience

Feeling Valued and Equal

When participants were asked to define colonization and decolonization the emotional experience was a reoccurring theme for Aboriginal participants but not for non-Aboriginal participants even though there were an equal number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. Aboriginal participants described the essence of decolonization as a feeling. The idea of decolonization could not be defined without describing the feeling or state of being that was necessary for decolonization to exist. The feeling of being valued and equal to non-Aboriginals as found in the following Aboriginal participant quote: “FN [First Nations] must see them as being valued. The

value proposition for FN would be that they are cared for, honored, that FN knowledge is valued and included as part of the college fabric.” According to Hall (2002); Konkle (2004); Timpson (2009) colonialism and settlers brought with them a constructed view of Anglo-Europeans as superior and First Nations as being inferior. In order to expand the nation state of Canada settlers needed to perceive First Nations as “less than” to justify their ability to put First Nations on reserves and take their land for settlements. The roots of this racist culture fostering the “othering” and marginalization of indigenous people can be traced to the Victorian era of the 1880 as the British Empire expanded its reach (Hildebrandt, 2008, p. 56). The quote above demonstrates that feelings of being less than and not equal continues today. An Aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

Maybe decolonization is when FN don't feel shy, embarrassed or shame for our past and for the cultural activities in our daily life, and for that we want to bring into the campuses for example what we traditional eat, how we may speak, how some first nations learn, how some first nations deal with trauma.

This additional Aboriginal participant quote reinforces the sub-theme of the importance of emotional component of decolonization. The following are recent examples when Aboriginal people attempted to practice cultural activities at NWCC and were rebuffed leading them to feel embarrassed and sometimes ashamed: 1) an Aboriginal student living in the student residences was banned from preparing traditional medicine because other non-Aboriginal students found the smell to be repulsive, 2) Aboriginal employees had requested the ability to “smudge” work areas to cleanse them with smoke by burning sage or sweet grass but their requests were denied, and 3) Aboriginal employees were forced to take vacation leave or unpaid leave to attend the funeral of their community members for which they have a clan cultural responsibilities, (such as preparing food,

dancing, and feasting) because the college's human resources policy only provided bereavement leave for immediate family members. Each of these is an example of how Aboriginal cultures are not currently celebrated and accommodated within the college.

This sense of being valued was not only connected to how Aboriginals were perceived by non-Aboriginals but also how they felt about themselves. Battiste (2000) discusses that Aboriginal people have internalized the feelings of inferiority which have resulted from colonization. Decolonization would require Aboriginal empowerment. Aboriginal participants used a list of adjectives—respected, proud, empowered, unashamed, and safe—to describe how they would feel if there was decolonization. The following quotes by Aboriginal participants describe the desire for respect: “We must first have empathy and respect for a peoples before we can value them and you must value them to be able to teach about them. We only teach what we value.” And “when respect is shown, we can be seen as “true leaders” without respect for who we are, how can we be true to who we are, if we do not see ourselves in the stories, how can we grow from our historic oppression?” The reference to “we only teach what we value and not seeing ourselves in the stories” reflects that most curriculum taught at NWCC still has little Aboriginal content and most courses and programs do not incorporate Aboriginal pedagogy such as the use of elders and learning from the land. NWCC's president had created an Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee (ACKAC) in 2009 to review new curriculum and to indigenize it. However, currently there is no universal understanding of what an indigenized course or program would look like and there is no requirement to review existing courses. Thus, this initiative as currently defined will have little or no impact on the vast majority of the curriculum.

Decolonization based on a desire by Aboriginal participants to feel valued, respected and accepted for who they are was described as needing both non-Aboriginals to exhibit respect for Aboriginal values and ways as well as for Aboriginal participants to assert their sense of personal and collective worth. An Aboriginal participant wrote: “If NWCC want to be decolonized that all will need to really understand First Nations peoples and then maybe societal acceptance can be accomplished. I feel once acceptance is reached, equality will follow.” Battiste (2000a) would explain this lack of feeling equal and accepted that Aboriginal participants expressed was the result of mainstream education which has imposed its belief that a Eurocentric world is superior.

As a result of reading the blog posts non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged that colonization and decolonization was a personal and emotional issue for Aboriginal participants. Non-aboriginal participants posted to the blog:

Wow, how similar yet we each took a different prism to explain what “colonization and decolonization” meant to each of us. I so appreciated reading what other’s definition means and how, for the most part, it was very personal matter.

I, too, was amazed at the similarity (re impacts of colonization) and diversity (re definition of colonization and decolonization) of responses. Some of the responses felt very personal and others were more abstract/theoretical.

I believe these quotes reflect many non-Aboriginal employees do not understand the emotionality of the subject of colonization and decolonization holds for Aboriginal employees.

The Aboriginal sense of feeling valued—and therefore decolonized—was also intertwined with how Aboriginal participants perceived their power relationships relative to colonizers. Aboriginal participants discussed the need to question colonization by

taking back their language, culture and modes of learning thus ending the cultural dominance of the colonizers. The following quotes capture this idea of taking back Aboriginal empowerment by questioning colonization and the superiority of the colonizer's culture: "In order to decolonize, we must recognize and/or begin recognizing those bits within ourselves that have been imposed and adopted by each of us and then we must look to those opportunities we experience that make us whole, balanced, centred (for me decolonizing);" and "We [Aboriginals] have delegitimized the role of the master (colonizer) by not accepting status quo or role of slave (colonized)." According to Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005) the first step toward decolonization is to question the legitimacy of colonization. Aboriginal employees participating in the study appear to have taken the first step toward decolonization.

Another facet of feeling valued and equal to colonizers was the desire to take back ancestral land. For some Aboriginal participants this was a question of legal title to the land and for others it was the idea of having access to the land to continue traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering berries. An Aboriginal participant wrote: "It [decolonization] is about regaining control of lands and resources, ending destructive policies of the residential school system and respecting Indigenous women." I believe the idea of "control of lands" expressed by the Aboriginal participants relative to feeling valued is different than the Western notion of land ownership. The First Nations of northern British Columbia still practice communal use of reserve land although the Nisga'a Nation, the first nation to gain through treaty negotiations sovereign nation status within Canada and to be exempt from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada control, is considering family ownership of property. Historically, the British

initially acknowledged Aboriginal people had title to their lands and thus required that non-Aboriginal people must negotiate and must exchange something of value to obtain or use Aboriginal land; however, in the 1880s this changed and Aboriginal people were viewed as inferior ‘less than’ and did not merit consultation or recognition of their existence and the land was considered by non-Aboriginals to be without owner and could be titled to settlers. Thus, regaining control of their lands would remind non-Aboriginals that Aboriginal peoples are not “less than”; they are not gone and the land was never empty and should not have been given to others. There is also the cultural connection to the land. The stories which have been passed down from generation to generation provide guidance as to how the people, animals and the land are interconnected. The land completes the people by connecting them to everything in the world. Regaining access to their ancestral land is to regain connection and to be whole. *Taking back* was therefore both a physical action and a mental action.

In divergence, non-Aboriginal participants defined decolonization as a set of actions with little or no emotional attachment. Non-Aboriginal participants wrote: “decolonization is the act to reverse the consequences of colonization and re-establish Aboriginal cultural values, independence, and property. Aboriginal values and ways of being would be acknowledged, reconciled, and included into the current worldview.” This contradicts Aboriginal authors Smith (1999) and Kovach (2009), who believed that to decolonize education would take more than the insertion of Aboriginal values and content into the curriculum. Colonizers must also stop considering their own value system as universal and superior. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey response to question 1:

Decolonization to me means the reversal of the intended or unintended consequences of colonization. In North America, the intended and unintended consequences of colonization are a loss of culture, language, autonomy, rights, independence, property etc. A loss of the way of “being.” Decolonization means a restoration to whatever degree possible for these losses through the active and intended efforts of documenting and practicing cultures, languages etc, and the restoration of property and rights. Decolonization also means an acknowledgement by the colonizers that different world views, understanding, and priorities exist, and need to be acknowledged and reconciled.

A second non-aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey response to the same question:

Decolonization means to reverse the effects of colonization. It is a process of reclaiming, resurrecting, and restoring the traditional practices of indigenous societies that were lost during colonization. This would include all aspects of their traditions such as language, culture, religion, and identity. Decolonization allows these groups to redefine themselves, regain their dignity and celebrate their heritage.

As previously discussed, accommodating traditional practices into the college could include smudging, preparation and use of traditional medicine, and the facilitation of bereavement leave that recognizes First Nations clan responsibilities. Additional traditional practices that could be restored include the provision of community control over education, shared governance, use of First Nations and Metis languages, use of elders and storytelling to convey knowledge, use of talking circles, and learning from the land.

When participants were asked to identify examples of colonization and decolonization at NWCC both participant groups concurred that the NWCC had taken positive steps toward decolonization but that the institution was not decolonized at this time. An Aboriginal participant wrote: “NWCC is trying and thus far shows positive steps toward decolonization but the goal is still there waiting to be attained.” Participants cited the strengthening of FNC, the recommendation that Aboriginal representation be a

requirement for education council and the Board, the priority planning activities that included the wisdom of communities, and the delivering of educational programs in First Nations communities as examples of NWCC's positive steps toward decolonization.

Feeling Used: Tokenism

In response to being asked to identify examples of NWCC decolonization, Aboriginal participants began a blog discussion on whether the examples cited such as valuing the advice of FNC, the hiring of Aboriginal employees, and acknowledging Aboriginal traditional territory on which a meeting were in fact examples of positive steps taken by NWCC in order to decolonize or were they merely token gestures to look good to the Ministry of Advanced Education and not because of a true respect and value for Aboriginals. Aboriginal participants questioned the sincerity of the intent behind the several actions. An Aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

The college has administrative systems in place ACKAC [Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Council] etc. FNC [First Nations Council], FNAC [First Nations Access Coordinators] setup to keep FN issues and needs in the forefront. At times it feels like it works...as it usually starts out that way, but this system doesn't feel genuine...it feels like FN council and FN staff are not used to their potential therefore, are there for more looks used to gain provincial status. We still don't have FN people a part of the decision making process...as it relates to first nations communities and or needs.

Currently Canadian community colleges are not required to have a First Nations Council even if they serve Aboriginal students. While NWCC has a voluntary FNC its advice does not have to be taken by the Board or the president. The RCAP (1996) report and the Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998) study, and the ACCC (2005) report all point to the need for Aboriginal control or leadership involvement in post-secondary education in order to increase Aboriginal student retention and success.

An Aboriginal participant questioned the prominence of First Nations leaders at NWCC stating: “Are First Nations leaders prominent among the faculty, staff and student body? Or are there token aboriginal people here or there, brought out whenever there is a PR need to put them on display?” Currently, Aboriginal employees make up 17% of the college’s workforce while the Aboriginal population of the area is 32% (NWCC Facts 2013). Aboriginal employees remain concentrated in staff level positions. Some gains have been made in increasing Aboriginal administrators and instructors. However, Aboriginal instructors remain concentrated teaching First Nations Studies, First Nations languages and First Nations art. As the authors of the Aboriginal Institutes of Higher Education’s 2005 report wrote when Aboriginal students are served in mainstream public colleges, Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal knowledge is found in clusters of Aboriginal programs but the entire Academy is not changed.

The use of the word token strikes a chord with non-Aboriginal participants. The following two quotes reflect non-Aboriginal participants defending the college while others reflect that going through a tokenism phase might be necessary to get to decolonization. This first quote by a non-Aboriginal participant defends the actions taken by the College as being sincere and rebuffs that it is helpful to point out potential tokenism. A non-aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

I found the mention to tokenism interesting as well. I think that, when people actively invest in something (e.g. time, money, resources), the action is less likely to be just a token approach. The pole raising in several campuses, construction of the long house, naming and consistently using the FN names of building to me are not just token approaches. Reading out who’s territory we are on may be. Acknowledging territories that we are on, and recognizing FN that are present at our meeting requires more thought than just reading from a text that has been handed to us. I also think that some of the staff (and students) in NWCC are at different stages in their journey, and as an institution, we should help each other

in that journey. While some may start including FN assignments or texts because they have been told to, I think it is more productive and progressive to assist with this, encourage it (tracking and fanning²³) then to point out potential tokenism. It is a step, and while this step may seem small to some, it may be big for others. Colonization happened over a long time, Decolonization will take a long time.

This second quote by a non-Aboriginal participant continues the idea that specific actions such as the creation of the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory committee tasked to indigenize the curriculum, the participation of non-Aboriginals in FNC meetings, the erection of an Aboriginal gathering space (Waap Galts'ap), the renaming of existing buildings in local First Nation languages and hosting an intentional conference on decolonization are all examples of how NWCC has decolonized. However, the writer indicates he/she sees only some employees genuinely trying to engage their understanding of decolonization in the way they do their work. A non-aboriginal participant responded in the pre-survey:

I have experienced the creation of a committee to develop a more inclusive and full way of developing curriculum. I have enjoyed participating in the First Nations Council meetings. I have worked to support the building of Waap Galts'ap. At NWCC we are consciously doing things that support the inclusion of all cultures. We acknowledge the territory we meet on. We name our buildings in the local indigenous language. We hold international conferences on decolonization. I also see some employees genuinely trying to engage their understanding of decolonization in the way they do their work.

I remember a time when a new taxation course was presented to ACKAC for review, so it could be taken to education council for approval. The program coordinator had indicated that the course did not need to be indigenized because the tax content of the course had no connection to the local context or Aboriginal knowledge. The coordinator was asked

²³ Tracking and fanning is a reference to a strategy of encouraging specific behavior in individuals that was taught to employees of NWCC in an Appreciative Inquiry workshop.

who had been consulted to make this decision. The course developer had not consulted outside of the business discipline. The Aboriginal participants on ACKAC indicated that consultation was important and their belief the course should include content on taxation rules on reserve and that it was important to counter the misinformation that First Nations people do not pay any taxes and only financially take from the province. The coordinator indicated he would take the information back to the discipline for consideration but could the course be moved forward in its current form. A number of NWCC employees, who participate in decolonization activities such as the *Challenging the Paradigm* conference and cultural workshops is larger than those who actually take the information and change their actions and beliefs.

Still other non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged a phase of tokenism and wondered how members of NWCC could move past it. The non-aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

Two of the posts used the term “token” while answering the questions. It makes me wonder whether the decolonization that is encouraged/nurtured in policy and action at NWCC is evident in actions more than actual acceptance (Do people just participate b/c it is considered the right thing to do, or do they truly believe in decolonization and want to further work in that direction?). When I look at the lists of examples of decolonization at NWCC, it looks impressive, but how many of those items could be considered “token” versus how many of them are honestly nurtured and believed in by administration, staff and students? I believe that NWCC is making a difference and the actions started here are working towards decolonization, but I also wonder how you move from colonized system to a decolonized setting without moving through a “token” phase. There is so much learning that needs to take place and it is a process— one that has been started.

This participant raises the idea that decolonization is not just a set of actions set out in policy but requires acceptance and an individual internalized desire for change.

The postings reflected there was not agreement on examples of decolonization within the college and further introduced the idea that the same action could be viewed as promoting decolonization or viewed as tokenism depending on what was believed about the intention of the action. Aboriginal participants believed that decolonization actions must be done out of a respect for Aboriginal people not for any other agenda.

As blog posts became more emotional Aboriginal participants questioned how to have safe conversations on decolonization. It is in response to question 3 of the pre-survey that an Aboriginal participant wrote: “People may find such a conversation, to be threatening and uncomfortable, because we lack trust in one another not to discriminate against each other either intentionally or by being misunderstood.”

It is important to remember that the removal of children and placement in residential schools only ended in 1996, so there are recent memories that invoke a sense of fear for Aboriginal people. It was my experience while at NWCC that there were few public conversations about colonization or decolonization outside those had as part of the *Challenging the Paradigm* conference. Employee participation in the conferences which focused on decolonization and indigenization was optional. To increase employee attendance leave was not required, supervisors arranged coverage plans and the conferences were scheduled when instructors were not teaching and yet the conference had to be canceled for low registration last year. I believe this reflects a resistance to having conversations on decolonization. This resistance may be occurring out of fear that Aboriginal participants may express anger regarding colonization to which non-Aboriginal participants are not prepared to respond and a fear on the part of Aboriginals to express negative opinions about their employer and suffer retaliation.

Feeling Angry

Blog discussion of colonization evoked feelings of anger in Aboriginal participants. They wrote about how colonization made them feel angry and frustrated. An Aboriginal posted:

I realize that in my earlier years I was angry, frustrated and at times enraged, however as a young FN person I had no opportunity to understand or was even encouraged to explore those feelings. I now know that the intergenerational trauma (from civilization/assimilation policies and practices) of my family members was internalized by me without knowing it. I never knew one day without the influence of the federal government, or the politics or the disfunction, that has resulted in the many realities that young Fn people experience.

The quote captures that Aboriginal people feel they are expected not to voice anger or frustration over colonization. Non-Aboriginal people have expressed that colonization was in the distant past and therefore Aboriginal people should move forward. This attitude is similar to when then Prime Minister Trudeau released the white paper in 1967 eliminating what he viewed as special status, eliminating reserves and making all citizens equal under Canadian law. He failed to recognize that actions of colonization had made Aboriginal “less than” and hitting the restart button when Aboriginal peoples were in a position of financial and cultural disadvantage was not fair or respectful.

The idea of masking anger continues with the following quote: “Final rant: The impact and effect of colonization will never going away. It is now in the genetic make-up of First Nations and Aboriginal children and part of their world view.” In the quote, use of the words “Final rant” by the Aboriginal participant seemed to reflect his/her need to be careful before giving a negative opinion. This same participant used the term “If I were cynical,” which appeared to create a safe distance from his/her anger at having to request funds for Aboriginal education that should be unquestioned. The participant

thought the Ministry of Advanced Education continued to put First Nations people in a subservient position by requiring them to request financial help. This participant was Aboriginal but not First Nations and clearly identified these as two different groups. He/she provided examples of the continuation of colonization: "...we still have reserves in this country. Looking at the difficulties of First Nations/Aboriginal people face in Northern Ontario and Quebec indicates that colonization on a global level is doing well." This reference had to do with media coverage during the study reporting on the third world housing conditions on northern Ontario and Quebec reserves and how slow the Canadian government was to respond. One community's chief began a hunger strike and made a request for international recognition of human rights violations in Canada against First Nations people.

Other quotes reflect that Aboriginal participants are careful and sometimes fearful to enter into a conversation about wanting change. An Aboriginal participant posted:

My first reaction to reading the comments, I was pleasantly surprised. I have to admit, I'm conscious of getting too invested in this conversation...Only for my own fears. In reading your insightful posts, I'm less apprehensive in participating. I too find hope in this process. The beginning of decolonization is talking about the issues...sharing our understandings, even though it can be messy and uncomfortable, it is the starting point.

Another Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post-survey visible only to me:

Initially I didn't [feel safe], but the responses allowed me to dig deeper and be more honest. Being it is an inside NWCC blog, may have increased people's fears, as we are speaking about possible changes and opinion with regards to our place of employment. I soon decided, I trusted the group and I needed to trust this process.

I can understand how fear and concern remains regarding how non-Aboriginals perceive Aboriginal peoples. When I moved with my family in northern B.C., we attempted to rent a home, we were told "Do not move there that is where the Indians live and there is lots

of crime.” “Do not put your children in that school as there is a majority of Indian children and they have behavior problems and the teachers have to go slow and your children will fall behind.” I was told by non-Aboriginal people “you need to be careful the college could be viewed as an Aboriginal college and then non-Aboriginals will not want to attend.” I am unable to determine the number of non-Aboriginal people in the society at large who do not believe that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals are equal but there remain some. Poverty and crime in Aboriginal communities continues to get less national media coverage. Many educational programs continue to focus on what is perceived as deficits in the Aboriginal learners and do not question who or what is being valued in the curriculum. As described in the above quotes, if NWCC and society was decolonized, Aboriginal participants would feel valued, respected, proud, empowered, unashamed, safe, and equal to non-Aboriginals. In the current colonized environment, Aboriginal participants felt angry and guarded. There was only one reference by a non-Aboriginal participant to how decolonization would feel “When NWCC is fully decolonized all will feel as members of one big family☺” I wonder if it is an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal family or if a blended family is possible.

Colonization

In the Past

The second major theme which emerged from the data was the definition and impacts of colonization. Non-Aboriginal participants often saw colonization as something that was in the past, whereas Aboriginal participants considered colonization was continuing. If colonization is in the past then today’s colonizers do not have to be

responsible and Aboriginal people should move forward and not need apologies or financial compensation. I have heard non-Aboriginals angrily state Aboriginal people should not get special privileges everyone has had things happened to their people in the past, but they move on and do not ask for a hand out. If they had been the superior people they would not have been conquered. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post-survey when it was only visible to me:

I do think that it is important to remember that the intention and the methods of the day should not be judged by the acceptable standards of the present day. I think that it is easy to point to these injustices in retrospect, and I understand the temptation and outrage at some of the things that happen. I don't think this is trying to justify what happened in the past, however, I do think that it is not entirely productive or beneficial to apply today's standards to everything that happened in the past.

I think it is important to remember the following when considering the intentions of colonizers and whether colonization is in the distant past. As of 1884, Aboriginal peoples were banned from assembling to conduct business in feasts, in 1927 the Canadian parliament makes it illegal for Aboriginal peoples to raise monies to file land claims, in 1960 Aboriginal peoples obtained the right to vote in Federal elections but their children could be forcible removed and put into foster care and adopted out to non-Aboriginal families throughout the 1960's, Aboriginal people had to give up their Indian status and right to live in their communities in order to obtain post-secondary education until 1968, it was 1973 when the B.C. Supreme Court ruled in the Calder decision that the Nisga'a Nation had held Aboriginal title to the land before the settlers and recognized that the Nisga'a still existed, it was 1977 before financial assistance was provided for Aboriginal peoples to attend post-secondary education, it was 1982 when the right for Aboriginal peoples to legally exist was re-established in the Canadian constitution, it was 1996

when the practice of residential schools ended even though there had overwhelming evidence of its failure since 1946, it was 2006 when a commission investigated more than three decades of continuing reports of deaths or disappearance of more than 30 Aboriginal women along the Highway of Tears²⁴ and yet the commission's recommendations had not been implemented as of 2013, it was 2008 when the Prime Minister of Canada apologized for the Canadian policy of assimilation acknowledging it was wrong and had caused great harm, it was 2010 when the Nisga'a Nation became the first nation to negotiate freedom from the guardianship of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, it was 2010 when the Haida were able to shed their colonial name giving it back to the Queen, and it is 2014 and only three aboriginal institutions in Canada have the authority to grant credit without partnering with a non-Aboriginal institute, and aboriginal institutes remain without equitable funding.

Continuing

In contrast, Aboriginal participants believed that colonization was continuing that examples of Aboriginal poverty, high Aboriginal youth suicide rates, substance abuse, poor educational attainment were the direct result of continuing colonization. An Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey:

Colonization is a continuing process; its impact continues through the Indian Act, through the federal governments' successive attempts at assimilation; through ignoring the courts as resource developments are planned in absence of FN rights and responsibilities; through horrible third world conditions on reserves and off reserves: Through the loss of language the core of FN communities. Through different laws that impact only FN (the Indian Act) inequality.

²⁴ The Highway of Tear Symposium
<http://highwayoftears.org/uploads/Highway%20of%20Tears%20Symposium%20Recommendations%20Report%20-%20January%202013.pdf>

The Indian Act continues today and maintains control of almost every action of an Aboriginal person's life. The simple act of going for medical or dental services requires the production of a Status card which separates Aboriginals from non-Aboriginals who carry Care cards. Access to post-secondary education and financial educational assistance varies if you are a Status Indian or not. At NWCC, Indian Band council educational funds cannot be used to fund an Aboriginal student who wishes to attend a professional trade program such as culinary or electrical because it is considered below the post-secondary level and thus not eligible for post-secondary funding based upon Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada definitions.

Intentions

Another sub-theme of colonization was the intentions of the colonizers. I was not surprised that intentionality was a theme as I had found during my time in northern BC that for Aboriginal people what was in one's heart, one's intention was important to consider. I found Indigenous research protocols discussed the importance of having an open and good heart before engaging in research with Aboriginal communities. Tuck and Yang (2012) had written how discussions of decolonization usually became centered on intentions as a way for Whites to move from guilt to innocence. If non-Aboriginals had not intended harm or could not understand that they were causing harm then they could be freed from guilt. Tuck and Yang's (2012) research correctly predicted that non-Aboriginal participants asked to engage in dialog on decolonization would discuss that colonizers had good intentions as a possible response to feeling guilt. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey:

If I were to travel back in time and experience life as a colonizer, I would likely be surprised by the good intentions that were present in our actions. We would I believe, be trying to make life better for those who were there when we arrived. What I would not see in that time and can only appreciate through history is the general negative impact of this imposed “salvation.” At its most successful, colonization would result in the complete assimilation of the indigenous residents.

The participant continued the idea that colonizers had good intentions and only when reaching a “tipping point” did Indigenous people need to rebel against the assimilation. This narrative did not acknowledge the multiple cultures of the colonizers and the colonized, reducing colonization to a bi-cultural phenomenon. Another non-Aboriginal participant continued the dialog on the intentions of colonization in the following pre-survey quote.

...colonization is when a species migrates to a new area and settles in that area. For humans, colonization to me means the migration and settling of a group of people (e.g. new culture) with the result of displacing or assimilating the current residents of that area (intentionally or unintentionally). This can be inadvertent (e.g. at the time of colonization, the group settling into the “new” area may treat the new area as “empty” even though there are already humans living there).

Aboriginal participants did not view colonizers as having positive intentions or unintentional or inadvertent intentions. An Aboriginal participant posted to the blog after reading the above pre-survey responses:

I am intrigued by the idea of “positive intentions or to make a better life. “ I get where this might be perceived by the colonizers, however positive intentions translates to me that my ancestor’s way of life was seen as negative or maybe not as good as. Make a better life, interprets that the colonizer judged that my ancestors different lifestyle was perceived as bad or negative and therefore the colonizer came to save us from ourselves. I think this where our society needs to have a better understanding of White privilege that is presumed based on skin color.

Because each participant was not asked specifically about the intentions of colonizers, it is not possible to determine from this data if the beliefs of Aboriginals and non-

Aboriginals were universal to their group. It is hard for me to believe in light of my research that colonizers had a positive intention when the stated purpose of residential schools was to “take the Indian out of the Indian.” (Truth and Reconciliation 2012 report) When it was acceptable to remove Indian children from their families believing they would be better off if raised by non-Aboriginal families. It is hard to believe that colonizers have positive intentions and really believed in the equality of Indians when Canadians continue to accept the need for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to supervise Indians. It is hard to reconcile the positive intention of colonizers who think it acceptable to gather information on the impact of Aboriginal strategies from a limited consultation with Aboriginal peoples and then write a report on what Aboriginal people need to succeed in post-secondary education. It is hard to believe in the positive intention of colonizers who consult with Aboriginal communities whose way of life could be negatively impacted by possible oil and gas pipelines, but then discount the communities’ concerns stating the economic health of the country must be considered.

Decolonization

Resistance to decolonization

Resistance to decolonization was another sub-theme that emerged in the theme of colonization. Regan (2010) wrote about settler denial and the difficulty of settlers to acknowledge that oppression does not have to be the norm. Non-Aboriginal participants identified challenges to decolonization. The first challenge for non-Aboriginal participants was being able to see examples of colonization as a colonizer. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote “It’s difficult to recognize examples of colonization since I identify with the group deemed responsible for the process in the first place.”

The second reason why non-Aboriginals resisted decolonization was that decolonization was likely to result in a loss of power. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote: “The conquering group often does not wish to participate in the decolonization process (as it is often perceived as a loss of power).”

Non-Aboriginal participants introduced the idea of the superiority of colonizers with regard to why colonization occurred and why decolonization might not be a good idea. The quotes from non-Aboriginal participants seem to reflect the continued acceptance of the superiority and power of colonizers and thus the continued acceptance of the inferiority of non-Western cultural ways. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey:

Colonization is the changing of an existing indigenous culture by a new arriving group (the colonizers). Colonizers arrive with superior technology and resources and strive to leverage these to recreate their homeland in the new place. The replication often has negative implications for the indigenous population

This participant introduced the idea that colonizers had superior technology and resources; the replication of the colonizers’ homelands “often” (but not always) had negative implications for the indigenous population. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey:

Colonization is the expansion into and the taking over of one area and its peoples by a more powerful group. It is the goal of the more powerful group to have the peoples they have conquered leave behind their culture, language, and religion and to become assimilated into the conquering group.

I found it interesting that none of the participants mentioned that initially the British had recognized Aboriginal title and traded with the First Nations. It was only later when the British and the French were competing for settlement of the land that Aboriginal peoples became inferior and needed to be assimilated and converted. Both the

British and the French wanted to conquer and convert the Aboriginal peoples, so as to increase their military advantage and ability to compete as the more powerful group for the new land (Dickerson and Young, 2008).

The pre-survey quote of a non-Aboriginal participant captures the continuing belief that Western thinking is superior” “the way we teach Math and Science --we teach math and science from a western view. There are culturally more sensitive ways to teach Math and Science, however as a scientist myself I find these ways difficult to envision or adopt.” A non-Aboriginal participant was concerned that if programs and courses reflected too much Aboriginal culture and values that it might lose value and thus transferability within an educational system that was dominated by a Western world view.

Only non-Aboriginal participants questioned whether decolonization was feasible and implied that the adoption of an Aboriginal worldview might be less effective given a colonized world. The existence of a colonized world was accepted as given. A non-Aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

I think we need to balance decolonization and our efforts in decolonization with providing tools for our learners to function in a “colonized world” when they graduate. For example, we could, as an institution, agree to move away from deadlines, assessments, etc, but would that really be in the best interest of our student who will end up looking for jobs and working in a world where those are real expectations on the job?

Uncomfortable With Anger

Some non-Aboriginal participants expressed discomfort when they sensed Aboriginal participants were angry regarding colonization; this became the sub-theme *uncomfortable with anger*. Regan (2010) wrote how discussions of decolonization forced

settlers to be unsettled and work through their denial and guilt; however, being open to being unsettled was necessary to move toward decolonization. Tuck and Young (2012) wrote that decolonization should not be about settlers seeking to move to innocence. They wanted settlers to understand it was not the responsibility of Aboriginal people to make non-Aboriginal people comfortable. They wrote that decolonization is about Aboriginal liberation and Aboriginal peoples should not be asked to restrain their anger. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote the following in the post-survey when the text would not be visible to the other participants:

I felt that some of my colleagues' responses and comments were based in anger. I am wondering if that anger has grown so strong because they have not been listened to in the past and the frustration of that grew into anger. When people are ready to listen and act towards decolonization though, I wonder if that anger becomes unproductive. When I as a non-Aboriginal am met with anger in regards to colonization, I tend to pull back because I feel the anger directed towards me as a European and it puts me on the defensive (even when we are arguing the same side) and makes me very uncomfortable and less willing to participate in the process. I don't believe that I am the only person who relates to anger this way)... I did not always feel safe sharing my opinions on the blog. The strong emotions expressed by some participants made me uneasy.

I had noticed prior to the study that if non-Aboriginals disagreed with comments made by Aboriginals during discussions at FNC or at ACKAC meetings that they would not raise them if they were in the minority. However, they would voice their concerns to me afterwards. They expressed a concern about appearing racist if they were opposing an idea expressed by an Aboriginal participant to further decolonization.

Feeling Less Valued

In an interesting switch, it was a non-Aboriginal participant who expressed feeling less valued for not being Aboriginal when blogging about decolonization. Many of the Aboriginal comments had focused on how colonization had made them feel less

valued. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post-survey when only visible to me: "Because I am not Aboriginal, I also felt as though my thoughts were not as important (valuable) as those made by participants who are Aboriginal." It is interesting that conversations regarding decolonization evoked for non-Aboriginal participants concerns regarding Aboriginal anger, feelings of not being valued because of ethnic identity and a sense of needing to be on guard in what they did and wrote.

Guarded to voice opinion

Only non-Aboriginal participants expressed a sense of feeling guarded in discussing decolonization. A non-Aboriginal participant posted to the blog towards the end of the blogging period:

For example, while I do think that some of my behaviour may be interpreted as racist (though I try to make a conscious effort not to be racist), I also think that some of the behaviours of First Nations people towards other groups could be interpreted as racist. I think this works both ways, however, I do not feel safe to voice that opinion openly. How can we create a safe environment? How can we feel safe to give critical and constructive feed back even when that feed back may be hurtful to some? How can we separate the acts of colonizing and decolonizing from individual people, or can we?

I am not sure why this guardedness occurred. I am not aware of any incidences of aggression against non-Aboriginals at the college. I believe it is related to the Canadian psyche where we like to believe that we are nice, non-racist people. We want to believe we are superior to other nations because we support multiculturalism, and we believe we had a non-violent history. However, in reading counter narratives of Canadian history there is another story of racism and physical and emotional abuse inflicted on First Nations people to be read and considered.

Awakening

There was a non-Aboriginal participant who described becoming awakened to an alternative worldview and acknowledging critical assumptions about others that come with being a colonizer. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post survey response to whether his/her perspective had changed as a result of participating in the study:

I have always been aware of the impositions of the attitudes and standards of our European settlers on Canadian Aboriginal people, but this new opportunity to put my thoughts and mind to the still existing invasion has opened my eyes even further to some of the malaise and some of the strengths that exist in the aboriginal population of our communities.

Over the course of the 9 weeks in which the blog was active, I found later posts by non-Aboriginals reflected a change in thinking as they reacted to the often emotional responses of their colleagues. This was further evidence of what I called *awakening*. A non-Aboriginal posted to the blog: “I had viewed colonization and decolonization as outside changes to a group of peoples, but in reading the posts, the people involved have been so changed themselves that I see that the changes need to be both inside and outside of all the groups.” Non-Aboriginal participants adjusted their view as a result of the interaction with the blog posting. In alignment with the social constructionist framework meaning is created through social interaction. A non-Aboriginal participant’s post-survey quote further captures the power of blog interactions to change understanding:

While I thought I had an understanding of what they were and what the College was doing to change, reading very personal accounts from people more involved than myself made me realize how intensely personal and emotional colonization really is to many people. I had viewed it in more of an academic sense before – not the personal one. I was of the belief that great strides had been made and that we were righting wrongs that had been done. I did not realize that the wrongs

were still being done, and the damage was continuing. I also did not realize the extent that colonization was impacting this generation – not just past generations.

I believe the change in understanding experienced by the study participants highlight that using moderated anonymous blogs to engage in sensitive conversations may give participants a sense of safety to explore their feelings.

Steps to Decolonize NWCC

The *awakening* sub-theme provided a good transition into the last of the three major themes: steps needed to decolonize NWCC. When asked what was needed for NWCC to be considered decolonized, the first step was the need to change how people thought about Aboriginal peoples. Non-Aboriginal people needed to accept and respect Aboriginal people. Acceptance and respect would be achieved when Aboriginal people examined how they had internalized oppression and when non-Aboriginal people examined how they had internalized dominance.

Changes in Mindset

According to the blog post of one Aboriginal participant, the first step was to influence how people thought and felt in order to change how they acted. "...what does a tangible decolonization look like, and to not only SEE decolonization but to FEEL it, people must exude it..which comes from our ability to talk about it and gain confidence and respect in the culture...proud to be it and or a part of it!" The quote also returns to the earlier idea that decolonization must include respect for Aboriginal culture. An Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey: "We must first have empathy and respect for a peoples before we can value them and you must value them to be able to teach about them. We only teach what we value." The relative absence of Aboriginal

content and pedagogy at NWCC even though its Aboriginal student population is 45% is seen by some as a continuing reminder that Aboriginals are not valued as equal to non-Aboriginals and therefore worthy to be included in the curriculum. ACKAC had begun a study in 2013 to ascertain how much of the curriculum could be identified as indigenized. The president of NWCC had tasked ACKAC in 2009 to indigenize the curriculum, but there remains no definition of what that means, no understanding of how to measure it, and what would be an acceptable target and timeline for completion.

To change mindsets Aboriginal participants felt it was necessary for them to examine how they have internalized oppression. “For F.N working toward our examination of our oppression we need to work toward understanding how we have internalized oppression, and how this is played out in small communities. For the college, we need programs to help us examine this.” Currently, NWCC does not offer programs which specifically address the tools for examining the internalization of colonial oppression.

Aboriginal participants felt that non-Aboriginals needed to examine their internalized dominance and role in oppression. “However, I don’t believe it’s up to FN to teach non first Nations what has gone wrong (our historical trauma by colonization) I believe it’s up to the dominant society to examine their internalized dominance, to do their own work to find a place where FN are naturally included.” Regan (2012) discussed the need for settlers to examine their role in oppression in order to become allies with Aboriginals for change. Currently, NWCC does not offer courses or workshops that specifically aid non-Aboriginal employees to reflect upon their role in oppression.

An Aboriginal participant acknowledged a responsibility to be informed and to ensure his/her practices were inclusive. The participant wrote a list of questions after reading and reflecting on the posts to facilitate the process of examining internalized dominance.

- Can I name the forms of oppression that exist within my practice and NWCC?
- Do I truly understand the ways in which I may be complicit in forms of oppression?
- Do I fully understand the impacts of colonialism and the structures that continue to support it?
- Do I really understand power and privilege?
- What is my role in supporting indigenous rights to self-determination?
- How do I perpetuate and how do I challenge tokenism?

These questions could be a good starting point for the conversation on how non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal employees may have a role in oppressing others. Another Aboriginal participant wrote: "... do we have a collective understanding of the power and privilege held by individuals within NWCC system? Are we in a place to openly and honestly have discussions about the power and privilege of individuals and the institutions." The concept of investigating how colonialism has been internalized as a step in the decolonization process is in keeping with the research by Battiste, 2000a; Jenkins, 2007 and Wilson and Yellow Bird, 2005.

Aboriginal participants discussed in their posts ways in which colonizers could address the internalization of dominance and move toward decolonization by being open to learning about "the other," listening to Aboriginals, and accepting them for who they were. They gave examples such as instructors asking questions and wanting to learn what

are [Aboriginal] protocols, including aboriginal communities in the decision making about the educational content and direction of their educational journey, and recognizing the importance of Aboriginal cultural responsibilities to Aboriginal peoples.

In contrast, non-Aboriginal participants were not confident that decolonization was possible. A non-Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post-survey:

And with Elders getting older and some taking their stories with them when they pass away as well as a diminishing number of fluent language speakers I am concerned that we may not have the needed depth of knowledge to guide us to a decolonized destination.

It was unclear what the non-Aboriginal participant meant by this comment. It was not visible to the other participants. It could reflect the belief held by many non-Aboriginals participants that to decolonize requires going back to the past and replicating traditions as they were. In contrast, Aboriginal participants continued to focus not on going back but moving forward. They discussed that their culture was a living culture which had never stopped, and it was an evolving culture that continues to adapt.

Changes in Curriculum

Additional steps toward decolonizing NWCC included a sub-theme of changes to the curriculum. The first step identified by an Aboriginal participant to change the curriculum was including an Aboriginal perspective in the curriculum and this would be done by hiring First Nations individuals to do program development. An Aboriginal participant posted to the blog:

First Nations must write and tell our own stories and put new memories in place of historical oppression and walk on a path that is true to who we are with our values of Respect, spirituality, honesty, inclusivity, accountability, trust, and encouragement. This means embedding F.N. into the fabric of institutions. Changing our intergenerational traumatic experience of the residential school needs to happen by embedding positive experiences into the class room by

programs that are FN that builds FN individuals to be true to who they really are and not a mirror image of the dominate society.

As previously discussed, First Nations at NWCC do not currently have representation in many areas of the college including curriculum development. While there is Aboriginal participation in curriculum review through ACKAC of new courses and programs, it is an advisory committee without the ability to require changes.

Similar to the writings of Kovach, 2009 and Nicholas, 2001 Aboriginal participants felt it was not enough to include First Nations content into existing courses. An Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey: “First Nations culture is treated as an add-on; we must squeeze culture into a noon hour. It’s not a part of the classroom, otherwise we would have First Nations elders, mentors, lecturers, professionals, authors, athletes etc. in the college classrooms and hallways.” As part Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) funding, NWCC was able to take the additional funds to offer cultural activities and elders-in-residence programs; however, ASP funding has been greatly reduced. The college does not provide for elders as part of its core funding. The current community college funding formula does not take into account additional costs to serve Aboriginal populations such as the cost to deliver educational programs in remote First Nations communities, the costs of engaging First Nations communities in the development of curriculum or the need for elders to enhance instruction. A non-Aboriginal participant concurred in his/her post-survey response that there needed to more inclusion of Aboriginal identity in the curriculum writing: “I would like us to make sure that when we indigenize a program it doesn’t just mean including an aboriginal story in one chapter or

any other token gesture, but that we find a way to make text books relevant, in terms of including relating content to everyday life of the aboriginal Northwest.”

According to one Aboriginal participant’s blog posting, First Nations content alone was not enough to move NWCC toward decolonization unless the programming created an experience of First Nations empowerment. All students would be moved toward empowerment if they were less empathetic to colonization. “As society does not recognize or sympathize with decolonization or different ways of learning for any culture...therefore our students...must be taught with the balance...as they will walk into the world...with less empathy for colonization...” This quote may reflect a belief among some Aboriginal participants that not all non-Aboriginals at the college want to decolonize or become less empathetic toward colonization. I would concur given the comments of some non-Aboriginals employees and the low attendance of non-Aboriginals to Aboriginal cultural activities and the decolonization conference. The quote may also be in reference to a belief that the larger society is not empathetic toward decolonization.

An Aboriginal participant wrote about his/her concern that Aboriginal languages were not given the same status as English and French in the Canadian educational system. This is similar to the writings of Battiste (2000a) which questioned why First Nations’ languages were not given the same status as English and French. While it is not possible to complete a credential at NWCC in a language other than English, as a result of ASP funding the college was able to develop and recognize 16 First Nations courses for transferable college credit. During the development of the courses, I was party to conversations with Aboriginal community leaders who were concerned the college would

exert ownership over the language when the language could only belong to the Aboriginal peoples who had created it and sustained it through its use. This concern regarding cultural appropriation and ownership of Indigenous knowledge, I experienced was reflected in the Aboriginal Institutes on Higher Education's 2005 report where they discussed this occurrence when Aboriginal learners were served by non-Aboriginal institutions.

Aboriginal participants wrote in their pre-surveys that a decolonized curriculum would need to reflect more than "a single source of knowledge and understanding". It would have to "examine how native and non-Native ways of learning overlap, intersect, influence each other, or are in conflict?" It would "Welcome all learning styles and approaches that place value on difference instead of statically normalizing our practice and processes so that it fits into a bell curve." The curriculum would need to be developed in true partnership with the communities, and it would "honour learning that happens in the community." The participants did not provide specific examples of this decolonized curriculum possibly because it represents an ideal curriculum which is yet to be developed.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged the importance of experiential learning, learning from the land. This was the curriculum feature that most participants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, pointed to as being a step toward decolonization. This was also prominent feature of First Nations Pedagogy, (n.d.) and Kaminski, (n.d.) research. NWCC offers field schools in which students and faculty complete coursework while learning on traditional First Nations territories, learning from the land and the elders. Field school participation has been relatively small but the

additional cost to cover travel, lodging and food may be a barrier to participation. NWCC' School of Exploration and Mining (SEM) utilizes a remote, outdoor tent community to teach its mining exploration program. The experiential program aids in teaching students how to respect the land and First Nations protocols. The camp also has a live-in elder-in-residence who shares knowledge of First Nations culture. The program has received national awards for both its retention of Aboriginal learners and its training quality.

An Aboriginal participant listed the following items in his/her pre-survey response to the essential elements for NWCC to be described as decolonized.

- Honour our communities, our land, ourselves and our women
- Shift in language, pedagogy
- Community based education supporting communities
- Shift evaluation
- Model qualities of respect for the natural world, elders, culture
- Embrace alternative ways of teaching and knowing
- Provide mentoring for staff to develop
- Develop curricula and educational programming through genuine partnerships
- Include First Nations content perspective and ways of knowing
- Continue work such as the field schools, cultural camps
- Support alternative instructional methods such as experiential learning
- Honour learning that happens in the community

This list might form the foundation on which ACKAC could build a definition of what Indigenized courses and programs would contain.

Employee Professional development training

According to participants, decolonization of NWCC would include more than just changes to the curriculum's content. It would include the need to train faculty, staff, and administrators regarding the effects of colonization. Aboriginal participants wrote about the need to sensitize faculty and staff to the negative effects of colonization and to share

with them a better appreciation of First Nations cultures, languages, diversity, sensitivities, histories, current issues etc.

Student Support

Aboriginal participants pointed to the need to address the inequality of student support services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. First Nations Access Coordinators (FNAC), who serve as support personnel, are employed fulltime at only one of the eight campuses. These employment levels are only increased when ASP grant dollars are received in addition to base funding. Since ASP money must be applied for each year, the FNACs face continual uncertainty about their employment. A decolonized NWCC according to an Aboriginal participant would prioritize fulltime employment of FNACs into the NWCC's base budget.

Further, Aboriginal participants discussed that decisions regarding Aboriginal student services must be made by Aboriginals. They discuss the need to the use of talking circles, shared learning through activities and the engagement of community members into student services. One example of tension between Western and Aboriginal perspectives is how to support Aboriginal students. The prevailing Western perspective is that students are individuals and once they turn 18 years old their records may not be shared without the student's authorization. The belief of many northwestern bands is that it is both a right and a responsibility to help their students and thus all records should be shared with the students' community. Aboriginal education counselors indicate that the community is prevented from helping their members because the privacy laws create an artificial separateness between the student and his/her community. As a result many

Bands require their sponsored students to sign information consent forms to gain access to their records.

Public Displays

An important sub-theme for Aboriginal participants was that NWCC leaders would publicly support Aboriginal rights by endorsing Aboriginal positions against companies whose actions would endanger the environment. Given the strong connection of Aboriginal people to the land and their need and desire to live from the land, any entity that threatened the land threatened the existence of Aboriginal people. An Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her post-survey:

NWCC must put their value and principles on the table, when it comes to industry and developments that are irreversibly detrimental to the lands and territories, when it threatens the way of life of the colonized – will NWCC stand behind first nations when they say no to Enbridge. How far can NWCC afford to decolonize, we must be honest with ourselves to be vulnerable and open to the truths of how far NWCC can and is willing to go.

Enbridge's Northern Gateway project proposes the development of an oil pipeline to carry crude oil from the Alberta tar sands in the east across the width of B.C. to the coastal community of Kitimat on the west coast where the oil would be transferred to freighters for shipment to China. First Nations have objected to the pipeline crossing over their traditional territory in fear that an oil spill would forever damage the sensitive ecosystem which sustains salmon fishing, hunting, and clean drinking water. In addition, coastal First Nations have expressed concern that freighter traffic passing by coastal First Nations communities and the islands of Haida Gwaii could result in an ocean oil spill which would damage their growing tourism, aquaculture economies and their traditional way of life. Enbridge approached NWCC with a gift of scholarship money. The Board

decided not to take the gift. The Canadian government is scheduled to rule in December of 2014 if the project can go forward over the objection of many First Nations' communities.

An Aboriginal participant described in his/her pre-survey how NWCC would need to take an active public role in educating the non-Aboriginal communities on the effects of dominance over First Nations. It would need to educate the public on the injustices of residential schools. The participant wanted the college leaders publicly celebrate the school's commitment to decolonization. Another Aboriginal participant posted that the college could demonstrate publicly its commitment by painting some of the college's buildings in First Nations and Aboriginal including Metis colors. These comments reflect a possible tension that exists between Aboriginal participants and the surrounding non-Aboriginal community. Aboriginal participants want the college leaders to increase the number of public displays and visible commitments to Aboriginals as a means of decolonization and yet some non-Aboriginal community members do not want the college to be seen as an Aboriginal college because that would diminish its reputation. Given that the vast majority of Aboriginal institutes are unable to grant credit and have inequitable funding there may be something to the belief that Aboriginal Institutes are viewed as less than by Canadian society and that the belief that First Nations are inferior to Whites continues in Canadian society.

There were non-Aboriginal participants who wrote about the importance of NWCC's public displays of decolonization such as the raising of totem poles, hosting Aboriginal cultural activities, and hosting educational feasts as necessary to symbolize to the students, employees, and the communities that NWCC was committed to being a

welcoming place for Aboriginal learners. However, it is impossible from this study to determine if this is the dominant sentiment of non-Aboriginal employees at NWCC. The need to create welcoming environments for Aboriginal learners is one of the educational recommendations in the 1996 RCAP report.

Changes in College Structures

Some Aboriginal participants focused on the need to make structural changes to NWCC to advance decolonization. One Aboriginal participant wanted to start with the name of the college: “Imagine a college called First nations and Settlers’ House of Learning.” This same participant continued by discussing how the current titles and functions of the college departments did not convey an Aboriginal perspective nor did the college require non-Aboriginals to understand both the native and the non-native perspectives in order to graduate. The participant is correct that while some of the college’s buildings have been renamed and a traditional northwest First Nations long house has been erected as a student and community gathering space most of the college’s units are based on a western traditional model of education and there remains no graduation requirement to learn anything about an Aboriginal perspective or worldview.

Another Aboriginal participant suggested in his/her post-survey creating a First Nations Department controlled by First Nations people would be a positive structural change that would move NWCC toward decolonization. “Maybe it is time for NWCC to consider a First Nations department, with a newly developed holistic approach; address the basic needs first, effects of this trauma, awareness, acceptance including self then education.” This idea of Aboriginal control within a public traditional college department aligns to the work of Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998) in which they wrote about the

need to research to what extent can provincial colleges be modified to accommodate Aboriginal students and communities with what results?

Increased Aboriginal Leadership Control

Another step toward the decolonization of NWCC was increased Aboriginal leadership within the college. Aboriginal participants pointed to the need for Aboriginal students to have a voice in the college that NWCC should have an Aboriginal Student government as part of decolonization. Aboriginal participants wanted the First Nations Council (FNC) to have a stronger voice in the college. Currently, NWCC leaders have given the chair of the First Nations Council a non-voting seat on the board. In 2013, NWCC's Education Council (EdCo) members recommended that the chair of the First Nations Council become a voting member of EdCo and sent a letter to the board and the B.C. provincial government. Further, the board sent a letter to the B.C. provincial government recommending that Aboriginal representation on the Board be required. As of this writing, the B.C. provincial government entity has not responded.

As previously discussed, currently NWCC's FNC advises the college president but its advice does not have to be heeded. There is no legislative requirement for the appointment of Aboriginal representation to the boards of governors or the educational councils even though this has been a recommendation dating back to the 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Development of Policies

Another sub-theme in the category of steps needed to decolonize NWCC was policy development. Aboriginal participants cited the need for a representational

workforce. In response to the question what were the essential elements for NWCC to be described as decolonized a non-aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey :

We must strive to commit to hiring qualified First Nations managers, instructors, counselors, advisors, maintenance people and others. In an area where the population is close to half First Nations, certainly our workforce within the college should begin to reflect that reality.

As previously discussed the current Aboriginal proportion of the NWCC workforce is 17% whereas the college's service area has an Aboriginal population of 32%.

A blog post cited the need to enact policies requiring all employees to attend orientation and cultural training as a requirement of their employment. I understand the desire of Aboriginal participants to require cultural training given the relatively low employee turn out to cultural activities and the *Challenging of the Paradigm* conference when attendance is voluntary.

One Aboriginal participant mentioned the idea of changing collective agreements (labor contracts) to reflect First Nations cultural views and responsibilities. NWCC has 3 collective agreements covering all but 22 employees who serve in management roles, so changes to labor contracts could have a significant impact in reaching a large number of employees at the college. However, in order to change contracts there would need to be provincial wide agreement because while labor unions have a local presence at the college's bargaining table the actual contract must be approved at the provincial level. A non-Aboriginal participant did not think changing collective agreements and hiring practices was feasible.

Government Action

The final sub-theme identified in response to the question of what did study participants consider an essential element of a decolonized NWCC was the need for government action. The first idea was that the government would stop requiring the submission of funding proposals for Aboriginal services; rather, funds would be provided in the college's base budget because the success of Aboriginal students was valued as equally as the success of non-Aboriginal students. An Aboriginal participant wrote in his/her pre-survey: "...the very act of providing funding for Aboriginal education by submitting applications to the Ministry is in fact another form of colonization."

The second idea was that the government administrators would recognize the community-based programming done by NWCC. While NWCC receives praise from the Ministry for Advanced Education for conducting community-based programming, it is not provided with any corresponding budget increase to account for the increased cost of delivering programs to remote locations.

Once again, the concepts of valuing, respecting, acknowledging were expressed as being of greatest importance by Aboriginal participants.

Summary

In chapter 5, I presented the responses of 6 Aboriginal and 6 non-Aboriginal employees from NWCC to pre and post survey questions as well as their blog postings. Key points from the chapter include: the confirmation that the use of a blog provided an anonymous, safe environment for the sensitive discussion of decolonization; the blog interactions caused participants to socially construct an understanding of *colonization* and *decolonization*; the discovery that NWCC employees held multiple definitions of

colonization and *decolonization*; the definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization* varied between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants but did not vary between employee groups; four themes a mix of priori and emergent were reflected in the data: 1) emotional experience, 2) colonization, 3) decolonization, and 4) the steps to decolonize NWCC; and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants felt the decolonization of NWCC was a worthy goal, but they disagreed on whether it was possible.

In Chapter 5, a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions is provided, along with possible next steps for NWCC to decolonize, future research areas, and applications for the field of Higher Education Administration.

Figure 2 Highway of Tears: Symposium's report 2006, p.7



INTERLUDE FOUR: TEARS TO HOPE

Highway of Tears

I often drove the 500-mile stretch of two lane highway between Prince Rupert and Prince George. Highway 16 was the only way in and the only way out. The drive was picturesque, with S-shaped curves winding through mountain valleys connecting and dividing the communities. It was only safe to drive eight months of the year, as snow could make the highway impassable. Even in good weather, it was a lonely drive. Sometimes I would not see a passing car for hours. As soon as I left town, cell service was unavailable; soon after I lost radio reception. If I forgot to bring music, there was only silence.

On these trips, I often saw Aboriginal youth hitchhiking as they stood under the signs warning that hitchhiking was illegal. Legislation had been passed to make hitchhiking illegal due to of the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal

women; the problem had become so severe that the route was known as the Highway of Tears²⁵. No one was sure how many young Aboriginal women have been murdered since 1979; some sources reported 15, others more than 30.

When a young Aboriginal woman went missing, police would assume she ran away, even when family members insisted she would never leave without saying a word. One thing was certain: generational poverty in First Nations communities made cars an extravagance that most Aboriginals could not afford. Authors of the Highway of Tears Symposium report concluded that with few stores, recreational facilities, and medical services in First Nations communities and limited public transportation, young Aboriginal women would continue to put themselves in harm's way even after the law was passed banning hitchhiking. The only victim to ever gain national news coverage was the only non-Aboriginal victim. There continues to be a difference in attention paid to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal issues. A Highway of Tears Symposium was organized, but 8 years after the symposium, 33 recommendations to improve the situation have not been implemented.

Hope

I was invited to attend an educational feast co-hosted by the Witsuwit'en Nation²⁶ and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). It was unusual for a First Nations feast to be co-hosted by a non-First Nations group and even more unusual was this partnership

²⁵ The Highway of Tear Symposium
<http://highwayoftears.org/uploads/Highway%20of%20Tears%20Symposium%20Recommendations%20Report%20-%20January%202013.pdf>

²⁶ The **Witsuwit'en Nation** is composed of a number of communities in northern B.C. of which many are accessed from Highway 16. This First Nations was involved in the landmark B.C. supreme court case to have their land claim recognized.

with the RCMP given a history of poor relationship between the police and Aboriginal communities. Aboriginals considered hosting a feast a great honor and responsibility and members of the RCMP had been instructed in feast protocol.

Hundreds of people attended the feast on a snowy spring day. I had gained experience in feasting, and I had come prepared with my take-home bag to collect the many food offerings that I had learned would be generously provided for my trip home. I brought cash in case I needed to pay for an offense of protocol and to contribute to the cost of the feast during the traditional dancing.

When I arrived at the doors of the community center hall, I was asked my title and affiliation. After a slight pause, I was introduced by the Speaker for the House, who held the talking stick, and led to the rows of seats assigned to the Bear clan. I was seated between a chief and the mayor of the nearby non-First Nations town, and I understood this to be a place of honor.

Guests continued to be introduced until the hall was filled with people seated three rows deep on three sides, creating a U around two tables of hereditary chiefs. The fourth side of the hall held a 6-foot display of food gifts that would be shared. White paper was rolled out on the floor in front of our seats to serve as our table; soups, bread, flounder and salmon, drinks, fruit, and sweets were served. To say no to anything would be an insult. As the food service slowed, the speakers began.

Members of the RCMP expressed their desire to be part of the First Nations community. The community-policing officer was given an award for her service. Community members shared funny stories about how she had learned to become a member of their First Nations community.

Educational advisors spoke next and shared the success of their *I Can* program: a community alternative high school for students who were not satisfied with public high school. The young people—in brightly colored *I Can* t-shirts—proudly shared a video documenting their many field trips and academic progress. One of the young men from the group had killed his first deer. With great pride, he shared the meat with the elders who were present. Many speakers mentioned the importance of the RCMP officers and community members working together to improve communication.

When the clans were called to dance, I danced with my hosts in the Bear clan, who waved me onto the floor, saying “You are Bear today.”

The two juxtaposed stories reflect that there remains a serious problem with getting national attention for Aboriginal issues such as violence against women, poverty, lack of services in rural areas; yet progress in communication is being made locally between a First Nations community and the RCMP as law enforcement attempts to become part of the community and respect Aboriginal protocols.

The feast story also reveals my personal growth in understanding First Nations culture from the earlier feast story situated in Haida Gwaii.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the research findings in relation to the research questions. Also included are possible next steps for NWCC leaders in regard to decolonization, potential further areas of research, and how higher education administrators might apply these findings.

The dissertation began with a prologue providing the reader with an opening to the narrative and a context for the study. Chapter 1 provided a brief discussion of the background of the decolonizing education journey begun at NWCC, the study design, research purpose, and the research questions: 1) What definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization* were held by NWCC employees; 2) What examples of *colonization* and *decolonization* did NWCC employees identify; and 3) What did study participants consider essential elements of a decolonized college. Chapter 1 was concluded with a discussion of the study delimitations.

Chapter 1 was followed by the first interlude: *First Contact* which continued the story begun in the prologue. The interlude provided the reader with geographical context of the isolation and remoteness of the area and a description of how the First Nations people of the area struggle against the impacts of colonization. As a narrative analysis, I felt it was important to place the traditional chapters of the dissertation within a larger narrative story of the area and my attempts to understand what I had experienced. Moreover, the choice of storytelling as a mode of presentation honored the Aboriginal way of transmitting learning.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review which began broadly with a discussion of Canada, the history of Canadian post-secondary education, the path of colonization in Canada, and the use of education as a tool for colonization. I then narrowed the focus to discuss the literature on decolonizing education, including research conducted on the decolonization of post-secondary schools. Also, included are responses to the decolonization discourse.

The second interlude: *Sharing Knowledge* served to pause the dissertation and return the reader to the place in which the study was experienced. The two stories highlight the differences between how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples understood the concept of knowledge and learning. In the first story, I learned firsthand as a witness to an apology feast that knowledge held in stories belonged to those who have experienced it, and it may be shared but never taken. Whereas in story two the First Nations people wished to share their knowledge with the government's consultant, but he did not understand that he had to come to the people and the place which had created the knowledge/experience to learn from it.

Chapter 3 reiterated the purpose of the study and the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The study's methodology was described detailing the research design, autobiography and assumptions, setting, selection of the participants, data collection, analysis and data management, and data engagement. The chapter concluded with the study limitations.

The dissertation was again paused with the third interlude: *Healing* which tells two stories to draw the reader's attention to the freshness of the pain of residential

schools and the continuing struggle of First Nations to regain the ability to use their languages and culture without negative connotation.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study of how the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal employees of Northwest Community College were making sense of decolonization. It details the finding of four themes a mix of priori and emergent themes which include 1. Emotional Experience: (a) feeling valued and equal, (b) feeling used/tokenism, and (c) feeling angry; 2. Colonization: (a) in the past, (b) continuing, (c) intentions; 3. Decolonization: (a) resistance to decolonization, (b) uncomfortable with anger, (c) feeling less valued, (d) guarded to voice opinions, and (e) awakening; and 4. Steps needed to decolonize NWCC: (a) changes in mindset, (b) changes in curriculum, (c) employee professional development training, (d) student support, (e) public displays, (f) changes in college structures, (g) increased Aboriginal leadership control (h) development of policies, and (i) government action.

Chapter 4 was followed by the fourth interlude: *Tears to Hope* that told two stories. The first story of the *Highway of Tears* and how the reality of poverty places Aboriginal women in positions of vulnerability which continues to be ignored by the non-Aboriginal population of Canada and the second story *Hope* shared how a First Nations' community was working with police to strengthen relationships.

Research Questions

What follows is a discussion of how the findings detailed in Chapter IV related to the research questions posed in the study.

What does decolonization mean to employees at NWCC?

1. What definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization* were held by NWCC employees?

Discussion of Question #1

NWCC employees who participated in this research offered multiple definitions of *colonization* and *decolonization*. These definitions of colonization always included the negative impacts on Aboriginal peoples—loss of land, sovereignty, dignity, language, culture, the resulting poverty, unemployment, and higher rates of suicide, alcoholism and abuse—but there was disagreement among participants about the intent of colonization. Aboriginal participants described an intentional and systematic cultural destruction; non-Aboriginal participants were unsure if the negative impacts were intentional or unintentional and whether colonizers' dominance was inevitable due to superiority.

Another area of disagreement was whether colonization was only a phenomenon in the past or was continuing today. Similar to Nicholas (2001) Aboriginal participants perceived colonization as continuing, citing the continuance of the Indian Act, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, and the lack of Aboriginals at decolonization activities and in decision-making roles at NWCC. Also cited by Aboriginal participants were the third world conditions on reserves; the higher rates of suicide, alcoholism and unemployment on reserves; and the lower education attainment of Aboriginal learners. Only Aboriginal participants made a direct connection between the lower educational attainments of Aboriginal learners with the continuance of colonization.

Non-Aboriginal participants initially expressed the belief that colonization was something perpetrated by distant ancestors in the past. Towards the end of the time the

blog was active; some non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged a shift in their thinking and also perceived the continuance of colonialism.

For Aboriginal participants, thinking about colonialism evoked feelings of anger and being on guard. Non-Aboriginals did not discuss their feelings in relation to colonialism. Aboriginal participants wrote about experiencing colonialism emotionally, physically, and spiritually through a loss of connection to family, community, language, culture, and their traditional land.

The participants expressed points of agreement and disagreement about the definition of *decolonization*. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants thought it was a worthy goal, but non-Aboriginal participants wondered if it was a goal possible to attain. Aboriginal participants felt hopeful that it would happen in the future and thought decolonization had to do with moving forward to a time when they would be valued, respected, empowered, unashamed, safe, and equal to non-Aboriginals. Non-Aboriginal participants were unsure if it was possible to restore the Aboriginal way of life and discussed decolonization in terms of actions. For non-Aboriginal participants, decolonization would be going back in time for the restoration of Aboriginal languages, values, and culture.

Aboriginal participants did not perceive decolonization as the reversal of colonization. One Aboriginal participant wrote that colonization is now in their DNA. There is no going back. Aboriginal participants viewed decolonization as the recognition that Aboriginal peoples and cultures were not primitive and had not ceased to exist with the arrival of settlers, the idea that Aboriginal cultures are adaptive and thus can and should be valued as another way of viewing the world. This is congruent with Battiste's

(n.d.) definition of the decolonization of education, which included making visible and dispelling the assumption that indigenous knowledge is primitive and in opposition to western knowledge.

Aboriginal participants felt that decolonization would require self-examination of internalized colonialism and a willingness to question colonization. They also required non-Aboriginals to value and respect them as equal to non-Aboriginals. Non-Aboriginal participants did not discuss a need to self-examine their views and did not acknowledge why colonization might be continuing. Aboriginal participants stated that non-Aboriginals would not want to decolonize because it would mean a loss of power. Non-Aboriginal participants wrote that decolonizing might lessen the value of transfer credit and might reduce student readiness for the workforce in a colonized world. Neither participant group discussed what would be collectively gained if NWCC was decolonized.

When non-Aboriginal participants felt their thoughts regarding decolonization were not being valued or that they were being associated with colonialism, they felt angry and guarded, and were uncomfortable with Aboriginal participants expressing anger towards colonizers. According to Tuck and Yang (2012) this is an issue when non-Aboriginals engage in discussions of decolonizing education the focus shifts to how settlers/colonizers feel and not on the more important goal of Aboriginal sovereignty and liberation.

2. What examples of colonization and decolonization did NWCC employees identify?

Discussion of Question #2

Aboriginal participants were able to identify examples of colonization at NWCC: the lack of Aboriginals in decision-making roles, the part time status of First Nations Access Coordinators, the lack of elders-in-residence, the thought process that there is a single source of knowledge and understanding, inserting Aboriginal content as an add-on into courses rather than developing courses specific to Aboriginal content, squeezing Aboriginal culture into an activity hour at lunchtime, the lack of non-Aboriginal attendance at cultural workshops, requiring Aboriginal learners to learn about non-Aboriginal culture but not requiring Non-Aboriginals to learn Aboriginal culture, the development of Aboriginal content by non-Aboriginals, the requirement to apply for Aboriginal Service Plan funds, and the hierarchal organizational structure of the college.

Non-Aboriginal participants struggled to identify examples of colonization at NWCC. They recognized that most courses, policies and procedures at NWCC were designed without a First Nations approach, classrooms were set-up in rows not circles, the overvaluing of learning inside a classroom versus learning in communities or on the land, the belief in the singular expert...the teacher who professes knowledge, and similar to Aboriginal participants the requirement to apply for Aboriginal Service Plan dollars was viewed as an example of colonization.

The participants all agreed that the NWCC leadership was taking positive steps toward decolonization. Both groups identified similar positive steps including: the strengthening of First Nations Council, raising totem poles, creating an Aboriginal gathering space, re-naming buildings in local First Nations languages, listening to First Nations community members, delivering community-based programs, and using

Aboriginal Service Plan funds to increase the hours for First Nations Access Coordinators and to increase the number of Aboriginal cultural activities.

There was disagreement whether these steps toward decolonization were sincere or were a reflection of tokenism. Aboriginal participants questioned whether NWCC leaders were taking these steps to look good; a non-Aboriginal participant thought that these actions were taken, not based on an acceptance of First Nations people, but because they perceived it to be the right thing to do. The participant did not elaborate on who or why it was the right thing to do. The participant could have felt that decolonization was a stated goal of the college and thus as an employee the participant should want to fulfill this goal. A discussion ensued that moving from tokenism to sincere acceptance would take time, resources and must result in Aboriginal empowerment.

3. What did study participants consider essential elements of a decolonized college?

Discussion of Question #3

According to participants, a decolonized NWCC was one in which non-Aboriginal people accepted and respected Aboriginal people. Acceptance and respect would be achieved when Aboriginal people examined how they had internalized oppression and when non-Aboriginal people examined how they internalized dominance. According to one Aboriginal participant each NWCC employee would need to regularly ask him/herself a number of questions regarding oppression, power and privilege in order to be mindful of his/her role in supporting indigenous rights to self-determination.

NWCC employees would need to listen to their Aboriginal counterparts with an open-mind, heart, and soul. The non-Aboriginal participants said they would take direction from Aboriginals to define the steps toward decolonization. An Aboriginal

participant pointed out when Aboriginals were accepted and valued, non-Aboriginals would naturally want to recognize them in the curriculum. “You only teach what you value.”

Participants discussed at length the changes they felt needed to be made to the curriculum to move NWCC further along the path to decolonization. Aboriginal participants felt Aboriginals must be in charge of writing and developing the curriculum and that Aboriginal content could not be merely an add-on. Traditional knowledge must be held in equal value with Western content. These opinions are in alignment with the findings of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People report and the writings of Gaveline (1993) and Hewitt (2000). The participants did not provide examples of the Aboriginal traditional knowledge that needed to be equally valued in the curriculum.

Aboriginal participants wanted the curriculum to be empowering, a sentiment similar to Jenkins’ (2007), who called for curriculum to be uplifting and lead to self-determination and Nicholas (2001) who called for curriculum that would lead to liberation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged the importance of experiential learning because Aboriginal knowledge was created from a sense of place or connection to the land and should not be subsumed by the Academy. (Kovach, 2009; Miller, 1996) also supported the importance of experiential learning.

Both sets of participants agreed on the importance of community-delivered programs. As the authors of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Residential Schools (2012) report indicated, the original treaty promises made to First Nations people were supposed to provide for education on the reserves; these promises have never been fully kept. For 100 years, Government agents forced Aboriginal children

to leave their families, communities, and cultures to obtain a formal education. Residential schools were designed to weaken the bond between Aboriginals and their communities, their sense of place, and their sense of being Aboriginal until such time when they would disappear into the general population of Canada according to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Residential Schools (2012) report. Given this history, it was understandable why Aboriginal parents continue to be reticent about sending their children away to pursue post-secondary education.

Study participants made recommendations for changes to NWCC's structure. The first recommendation was to be more inclusive of Aboriginals in the decision-making process by designating a voting seating on the governing board and on the educational council. All study participants appear to embrace a hybrid integrationist approach to decolonization outlined by Widdowson and Howard (2013) and not the parallelist approach advocated by Battiste (2000b) and Stonechild (2006), who advocated separate Aboriginal controlled colleges. Aboriginal participants wanted to strengthen the decision-making power of the First Nations Council members and Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee members. Aboriginal participants recommended that a First Nations department be created under the control of First Nations communities.

Aboriginal participants suggested mandated employee attendance to cultural workshops on the effects of colonialism and to the annual *Challenging the Paradigm* conference. They wanted the government to stop requiring an application for Aboriginal Service Plan funds. Rather, they thought the government should provide core funding that recognized the number and needs of Aboriginal students attending NWCC.

Aboriginal participants wanted more First Nations Access Coordinators and a greater use of talking circles to support students in recognizing the impact of residential schools on their family members and in recognition of the poor schools that remain. This recommendation was aligned with Rattray (2009), who emphasized the need for student support, and Wilson's (2000) discussion of talking circles to aid student in navigating between conflicting worldviews.

Aboriginal participants recommended modifying hiring policies to ensure Aboriginal employees were present at all levels of the institution in numbers representative of the area's population; this was also noted by authors of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (2005) report and the 1996 RCAP report. An Aboriginal participant recommended including Aboriginal values into the college's collective agreements, but a non-Aboriginal participant did not feel that this was possible. The other non-Aboriginal participants did not comment, thus it is not possible to gauge how many employees held this feeling.

An Aboriginal participant wrote that NWCC leaders would have to determine how far they were willing to go to decolonize while remaining a public community college funded by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, with a local board and local community members appointed based on their political affiliation to whatever political party had provincial control. For example, Aboriginal participants asked will NWCC's leaders: a) educate the public on the effects of colonization, b) publicly oppose entities that threatened the land and Aboriginal ways of living, c) discard the appearance of neutrality, e) give control of departments to First Nations communities, f) deliver educational programming in all First Nations communities, g) stop the universal use of

English, h) throw out the existing curriculum and re-write it with Aboriginal content equality, and i) proudly acknowledge First Nations and Aboriginal peoples and proclaim their acceptance as valued and equal?

The recommendations of NWCC employees were very similar to the recommendations made by the authors of the RCAP report in 1996, which recommended Public post-secondary institutions in the provinces and territories undertake new initiatives or extend current ones to increase the participation, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students by introducing, encouraging or enhancing

- (a) a welcoming environment for Aboriginal students;
 - (b) Aboriginal content and perspectives in course offerings across disciplines;
 - (c) Aboriginal studies and programs as part of the institution's regular program offerings and included in the institution's core budget;
 - (d) Aboriginal appointments to boards of governors;
 - (e) Aboriginal councils to advise the president of the institution;
 - (f) active recruitment of Aboriginal students;
 - (g) admission policies that encourage access by Aboriginal applicants;
 - (h) meeting spaces for Aboriginal students;
 - (i) Aboriginal student unions;
 - (j) recruitment of Aboriginal faculty members;
 - (k) support services with Aboriginal counsellors for academic and personal counselling;
- and
- (l) cross-cultural sensitivity training for faculty and staff. (RCAP, 1996, 3.5.24)

The participants acknowledged challenges to decolonization similar to Regan (2012), that settlers (i.e., colonizers) resisted decolonization through acts of denial and helplessness, and were unsettled by feelings of guilt. Aboriginal participants stated that colonizers would not want to decolonize if doing so would mean losing power.

Non-Aboriginal participants stated that they were not able to perceive colonization because they came from the colonizing group; when they did recognize an instance of colonization, they did not know what to do about it. This is similar in Tuck and Yang (2012) who claimed that discussions of decolonizing education often resulted in colonizers seeking to flee from their guilt. Some non-Aboriginal participants believed in the superiority of Western ways and the inferiority of non-Western ways and did not want to adopt curriculum that would impact course transferability. One non-Aboriginal participant wrote that it was easy to revert back into colonial ways of thinking as this was the dominant narrative of his/her colonizer background.

The participants agreed that more safe conversations were needed to discuss colonization and decolonization at NWCC, however if the conversations were not carefully facilitated, employees would be afraid to express themselves out of fear of being called racist. Aboriginal participants acknowledged that they felt angry, unsafe, and put in their place in a colonized world; non-Aboriginal participants felt angry, guarded, and unvalued in discussions of a decolonized world. Aboriginal participants acknowledged that the study blog conversations had given them confidence and the language to ask questions. Non-Aboriginal participants acknowledged that colonization was a personal experience for Aboriginals; they were becoming aware of the negative effects of colonialism and its continuing impact on generations of people.

The following quote from an Aboriginal participant captures the idea of needing safe conversations to move forward any efforts to decolonize NWCC.

I am envisioning a safe conversation (cultural sensitivity workshop) with a smaller group of NWCC staff to start with. This group should reflect the spectrum of staff...this group would have a facilitator to take the group through a process of understanding and respecting both/all cultures...so as to prepare the group for the more difficult conversation; this group discussion will have rules and boundaries, that allow for people to say when their button is pushed and to work through that and ask why...sounds a bit like a therapy group...it will require therapy 101 for people to better understand maybe why they have these feelings or differenced, to better hear what the other is saying or intending to say. If we don't do the hard work of getting through misunderstood racial questions or opinions or ideologies...then decolonization stays ambiguous to all of us as we haven't addressed the elephant in the room.

The quote provides insight for the reader to understand the current status of conversations within NWCC.

Next Steps for NWCC

The findings from this study could allow NWCC employees to create shared goals about how they want people to think, feel, and act if they are committed to a decolonized NWCC. The goals could be measured using quantitative and qualitative methods developed for that purpose; college employees and First Nations community members could then monitor progress towards decolonization. A few examples of possible measurements follow:

Quantitative Measures of Decolonization

The number of existing collaboratively redesigned courses that incorporate culturally relevant material and balance Western and Aboriginal knowledge could be counted and compared to the number of existing courses at the time of the study. A matrix could be developed to evaluate whether courses were indigenized from the list an

Aboriginal participant provided in response to how the college including its curriculum would need to change to move toward decolonization.

- Honour our communities, our land, ourselves and our women
- Shift in language, pedagogy
- Community based education supporting communities
- Shift evaluation
- Model qualities of respect for the natural world, elders, culture
- Embrace alternative ways of teaching and knowing
- Provide mentoring for staff to develop
- Develop curricula and educational programming through genuine partnerships
- Include First Nations content, perspective, and ways of knowing
- Continue work such as the field schools, cultural camps
- Support alternative instructional methods such as experiential learning
- Honour learning that happens in the community

Additional quantifiable measures include the number of Aboriginal employees in each employment category could be counted, as well as the number of community consultations taking place each year, and the number of implemented First Nations Council recommendations could be tracked. The ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal student services personnel could be measured.

Qualitative Measures of Decolonization

An anonymous survey of employee feelings regarding safety, fear, shame, trust, respect, feeling valued, empowerment, having voice, and hope could be carried out every 3 years to track how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees experience NWCC's environment. The furtherance of decolonization at the college could be measured by determining if feelings of safety, trust, hope and empowerment by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees was increasing from a baseline measurement.

The results of this study and data collected from the measures above could be used to aid other educational institutions around the world should they wish to engage in

educational decolonization. While this study is focused on the actions of one college in northern B.C. that sought to decolonize, the study has potential implications to populations throughout the world whose differences in educational attainment could be examined through a decolonization lens. It is time to question whether humanity benefits from the continued educational assimilation of the “other”. According to anthropologist Wade Davis (n.d.):

Indigenous cultures are not failed attempts at modernity, let alone failed attempts to be us. They are unique expressions of the human imagination and heart, unique answers to a fundamental question: What does it mean to be human and alive? (p.1)

Future Research

This research study could be repeated, using NWCC students and community members as participants, to determine if the constructed meaning of decolonization expressed by the employees is similar to that of students and community members. The study could be repeated at an Aboriginal institution to determine if when Aboriginal employees are in the majority if definitions of decolonization change and whether there is a preference for a parallel versus integrated post-secondary institution.

Additional research could be done on the stories colonizers tell about colonization to determine as Tuck and Yang’s (2012) found that colonizers equate experiences of exclusion to structural racism and are unable to view their role in oppression. This type of research could aid in identifying if there are decolonization phases through which non-Aboriginals need to pass to engage in the advancement of Aboriginals. Additional research could be done on what causes a perception of tokenism and whether this is a step in decolonization or a defense mechanism that is antagonistic to decolonization.

Another opportunity for research on decolonization could be to further explore Widdowson and Howards' (2013) premise that there are only two emerging approaches to decolonizing education in Canada: *parallelism* and *integrationism*.

Applications to the field of Higher Education Administration

These study findings have applications for the field of higher education administration in that curriculum that has been designed to liberate students must instruct about counter narratives and create experiences to teach students how to listen for them. A curriculum that has been designed to create space for different worldviews has “transformative possibilities for students to understand the overtly cultural process by which information is legitimated and delimited” (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, p. 17). Utilizing this type of curriculum would aid students in learning to ask better questions about the structures, policies, and practices of higher education institutions.

The results of this study made an incremental step toward connecting the research on decolonization of education with the actual opinions of those working inside an educational institution that college administrators have publicly stated was decolonizing. The study served to give voice to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and facilitated anonymous yet interactive written conversations on a sensitive subject. Participants were able to receive immediate feedback on their assumptions and over time appeared to change their understanding of decolonization.

This study appears to reflect that using a moderated anonymous blog to facilitate conversations on sensitive or complex topics can cause a change in participant perceptions. 5 of 5 non-Aboriginal participants reported in their post-survey that their perspectives had changed as a result of participating in the study and having the

opportunity to read the responses of their fellow employees. 2 of 4 Aboriginal participants also reported they changed their perceptions. All 9 of the participants who completed the post-survey reported they found their colleagues' comments to be honest and thoughtful. 2 of 5 non-Aboriginal participants reported concern about feeling safe to express their opinions in the blog because they felt that some of their Aboriginal colleagues were angry at colonizers even if they were now willing to listen. I believe had the blog not provided anonymity this finding would not have been revealed.

Summary

I would like to close with ideas from Paulette Regan's (2005) presentation of *Decolonizing Dialogues and Historical Conflicts* given to the First Nations Symposium at Royal Roads University, Victoria, B.C. because her words capture where I am in my growth in understanding my past and continuing connection to colonization and the possibility of decolonization through this study. Regan stated that for Settlers, there is power in this place of not knowing, of unsettling, that is key to our decolonization "Being in this place of not knowing and working through our own discomfort opens us to deep transformative learning" (p. 6). She elaborates that dialoguing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals about decolonizing gives us an opportunity to learn to listen deeply to Indigenous testimonies and to engage in acts of truth-telling, restitution and apology. Dr. Regan's work reaffirms the views of the Aboriginal participants that intercultural communication requires more than learning cultural sensitivity. It requires non-Aboriginals to stop engaging in cultural denial and to give recognition and respect.

I know I have experienced a shift in *knowing* as a result of this study. . . knowing as more than an intellectual idea. I am unsettled. I am working through my discomfort

and learning to listen and search for the counter narratives of the story. An Aboriginal participant in responding to the post-survey question: Has your perspective of colonization and decolonization changed as a result of your participation? If yes, how? wrote:

Since participating in *The Decolonization of Northwest Community College*, I now have a much broader understanding that has moved beyond the personal and theoretical realms. I cannot name what happened, but I have experience a shift in understanding. I have had many opportunities to participate in workshops, to listen to keynote speakers, to read scholarly text, and to take courses. I have learned from each experience, BUT this is the first time I have been able to sift through the emotional components and internalize learning. I feel that my theoretical knowledge has shifted to “knowing.”

My experience and that of this participant validates the social constructivists’ belief in the importance of interacting with the opinions of others to the process of constructing meaning and coming to “know” an idea. It also validates the Aboriginal concept that it is necessary to experience an idea on an intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual level to internalize understanding it.

EPILOGUE

I had been at NWCC for more than 2 years, and was to give the graduation address at Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI) in Gitwinksihlkw in the Nass Valley, about 1.5 hour drive away. As I drove, with the dean of business, up the valley winding between the mountains on the right and the river on the left I wondered what I would find. I had not drafted an address to read; I wanted to be spontaneous. Once again, I was to speak third after the chancellor and president of UNBC, but this time I was prepared to listen and really speak to the community.

We arrived at the community center, a multiple purpose space with basketball hoops and a new theater stage. The space was familiar and warm, packed with community members of all ages. Elders were seated close to the stage and children were running up and down the rows of chairs. The floor was covered in cedar bows to honor the importance of the day's event, so the smell of cedar and food filled the air. This time I recognized all the foods.

We were asked to line up for the processional to take the stage. I was wearing my traditional black academic robe, but this time the Aboriginal gentleman standing behind took off his hand-woven cedar headband and asked if I would like to wear it. I smiled, and said "yes." I placed it incorrectly on my head. He smiled patiently and repositioned it. I remember sensing the importance of the moment. I knew my experiences in this place would forever change me. As the graduates crossed the stage, I was no longer content with offering my traditional serious, coldly distant handshake. I opened myself to the warmth of deeply personal hugs that celebrated the accomplishment of the graduate and the feeling of pride from the community.

When it was my turn to give the graduation address, I told a story about my grandmother. She was the oldest of 15 children who had grown up on a farm on the east coast of Canada without electricity or running water and had had only an elementary school education. She had lived to be 96 and was always learning: at 90 she had taught herself to play the electric guitar.

I explained the importance of continuing to learn and that learning should not separate an individual from his or her family. I explained I was the first in my family to graduate from university. My family members were business people. When they had determined I had no useful business skills, my father said “Maybe you should go to university.”

During my time at university my grandmother would say “I will not be able to talk with you with all that education you have.” When I graduated with a degree in psychology, my father said “What job can you do?” “Not much,” I replied. “Well maybe you should go back for more education.” I shared with the audience that I went back to university numerous times and completed two masters degrees, and I was working on my doctorate. During my time in graduate school, my grandmother would always say “You will not want to talk to me anymore, now that you have all that higher education.” I learned that sometimes education can separate us from our families and our communities as we grew accustomed to using vocabulary and references that excluded them. I acknowledged to the graduates that there were many kinds of wisdom and knowledge and encouraged them to never let education separate them from their families. The room filled with cheers and applause for the story. I realized the story was not only for the

graduates but was also a personal recognition that I needed to guard against allowing my education to separate me from others.

I thought it was fitting to finish with a story about the same graduation activity two years later as it reflects my growth from the first day I began working at NWCC and by completing the story circle and using repetition, I tried to utilize Aboriginal quaternary. What had once been unfamiliar upon arrival was growing familiar, and when I showed an eagerness to acknowledge others and work through being unsettled, I opened myself up to being able to listen and learn.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: RCAP Educational Recommendations 1996

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommendations regarding post-secondary education

3.5.20

The government of Canada recognizes and fulfils its obligation to treaty nations by supporting a full range of education services, including post-secondary education, for members of treaty nations where a promise of education appears in treaty texts, related documents or oral histories on the parties involved.

3.5.21

The federal government continue to support the costs of post-secondary education for First Nations and Inuit post-secondary students and make additional resources available

- (a) to mitigate the impact of increased costs as post-secondary institutions shift to a new policy environment in post-secondary education; and
- (b) to meet the anticipated higher level of demand for post-secondary education services.

3.5.22

A scholarship fund be established for Métis and other Aboriginal students who do not have access to financial support for post-secondary education under present policies, with

- (a) lead financial support provided by federal and provincial governments and additional contributions from corporate and individual donors;
- (b) a planning committee to be established immediately,

- (i) composed of Métis and other Aboriginal representatives, students, and federal and provincial representatives in balanced numbers;
 - (ii) given a maximum two-year mandate; and
 - (iii) charged with determining the appropriate vehicle, level of capitalization, program criteria and administrative structure for initiation and administration of the fund; and
- (c) provisions for evaluating demand on the fund, its adequacy and its impact on participation and completion rates of Métis and other Aboriginal students in post-secondary studies.

3.5.23

Canada's post-secondary institutions recognize Aboriginal languages on a basis equal to other modern languages, for the purpose of granting credits for entrance requirements, fulfilment of second language requirements, and general course credits.

3.5.24

Public post-secondary institutions in the provinces and territories undertake new initiatives or extend current ones to increase the participation, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students by introducing, encouraging or enhancing

- (a) a welcoming environment for Aboriginal students;
- (b) Aboriginal content and perspectives in course offerings across disciplines;
- (c) Aboriginal studies and programs as part of the institution's regular program offerings and included in the institution's core budget;
- (d) Aboriginal appointments to boards of governors;
- (e) Aboriginal councils to advise the president of the institution;
- (f) active recruitment of Aboriginal students;

- (g) admission policies that encourage access by Aboriginal applicants;
 - (h) meeting spaces for Aboriginal students;
 - (i) Aboriginal student unions;
 - (j) recruitment of Aboriginal faculty members;
 - (k) support services with Aboriginal counsellors for academic and personal counselling;
- and
- (l) cross-cultural sensitivity training for faculty and staff.

3.5.25

Where there is Aboriginal support for an Aboriginal college within a university, and where numbers warrant, universities act to establish an Aboriginal college to serve as the focal point for the academic, residential, social and cultural lives of Aboriginal students on campus, and to promote Aboriginal scholarship.

3.5.26

Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments and organizations to establish and support post-secondary educational institutions controlled by Aboriginal people, with negotiated allocation of responsibility for

- (a) core and program funding commensurate with the services they are expected to provide and comparable to the funding provided to provincial or territorial institutions delivering similar services;
- (b) planning, capital and start-up costs of new colleges and institutes;
- (c) improvement of facilities for community learning centres as required for new functions and development of new facilities where numbers warrant and the community establishes this as a priority; and

(d) fulfilment of obligations pursuant to treaties and modern agreements with respect to education.

3.5.27

Aboriginally controlled post-secondary educational institutions collaborate to create regional boards and/or a Canada-wide board to

(a) establish standards for accrediting programs provided by Aboriginal post-secondary institutions;

(b) negotiate mutual recognition of course credits and credentials to facilitate student transfer between Aboriginal institutions and provincial and territorial post-secondary institutions;

(c) establish co-operative working relationships with mainstream accreditation bodies such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and professional associations such as the Canadian Association of University Teachers; and

(d) pursue other objectives related to the common interests of Aboriginal institutions.

Appendix B: Study Description



This is a qualitative study of the decolonization of Northwest Community College (NWCC).

Researcher:

Beverly Moore-Garcia, a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at Florida International University.

Research purpose and contribution:

The purpose of this study is to develop a description of how employees at NWCC are making meaning of the phenomenon of decolonization. By adding to the limited body of research on the decolonization of post-secondary institutions in Canada, this study may offer new insights on decolonization by understanding the essence of colonization and decolonization at work in NWCC. And as a result of developing this more in depth understanding of decolonization there may emerge future research opportunities for employees to evaluate the decolonization process at NWCC against their collective expectations and understandings. Furthermore, the research may lead to the development of educational policies within the post-secondary education sector which would positively impact the present disparity in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Subject recruitment:

I am seeking the participation of 12-16 NWCC employees with participation drawn from staff, faculty and administration. I am seeking representation from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees. Participants will have demonstrated an interest in the college's decolonization efforts by having participated in one or more of the following:

Challenging the Paradigm conferences, the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee, the Aboriginal Service Plan Advisory Committee, First Nations Council, This Way Forward: Priority Planning, Elders-In-Residence activities and or cultural workshops.

Procedure:

Your participation would take place in the winter term and would include three phases: the completion of a pre-survey, blogging during a 30 to 60 day period, and completing a post-survey.

It is estimated that your participation would require 20 minutes per week. Your participation in the study would be anonymous. You would be assigned a participant number and your number and identity will be kept private.

The pre-survey will be sent out when 12 to 16 participants have agreed to participate. The survey will include three questions. 1. From your perspective, what is the meaning of colonization and decolonization? 2. Please describe examples of colonization and decolonization which you have experienced within the college. Describing what and how you experienced it including the setting; and 3. Describe what you believe are the essential elements for Northwest Community College to be described as decolonized?

Once the completed surveys have been submitted the collective answers for the first question (meaning of the phenomenon) will be posted to a private blog site. You will receive an email invitation with instructions how to log-on to a web link and participate through a blog to discuss the collective responses of all the participants. I will serve as the blog facilitator. Once participants feel they are ready to move to the next question the collective answers to the second question (what is the phenomenon and where it occurred) will be posted and discussed and then the answers to the third and final question (the essence of the phenomenon) will be posted and discussed. The blog will be open for approximately 30 to 60 days. You are requested to log-in at least twice per week to read the posts of your colleagues and to post your responses.

Upon closing the blog, I will email you a brief post-survey to follow-up on your blog experience to determine whether you felt free to share your thoughts and whether the emerging understanding of the phenomenon of decolonization was consistent with your own understanding.

Benefits:

There is no direct benefit to you for your participation. However, participation in this study has the potential of contributing to a deeper understanding of decolonization at Northwest Community College. In recognition, of your willingness to share your knowledge and time to participate in this study, I will donate \$20.00 to the NWCC Student Emergency Bursary for each participant who completes the study. Thus, this research will contribute both to the knowledge base and concretely contribute to NWCC students in need.

Risks to participants:

There are no perceived risks in participating in the study. Participation is strictly voluntary. Your participation will be anonymous. You may decline to participate. You may withdraw at any time during the research study.

Confidentiality of study data:

Results will be reported in the aggregate no individual participants will be identified. All electronic data will be kept on my personal computer and a back-up drive only until my dissertation is approved. The blog will remain closed and all postings will be removed.

Contact information:

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me, Beverly Moore-Garcia at (250) XXX-XXXX or via email at decolonizationNWCC@gmail.com or my Major Professor, Dr. Ben Baez at (305) XXX-XXXX or via email at Benjamin.Baez@fiu.edu.

Thank you for considering participating in my study.

Sincerely,

Beverly Moore-Garcia

Appendix C: Participant Invitation Email

The Decolonization of Northwest Community College

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of this study is to develop a description of how employees at NWCC are making meaning of the phenomenon of decolonization.

Please answer the following three questions. The document will expand should you need additional space. Once you have answered the questions, please save your responses and email the document back to me at decolonizationNWCC@gmail.com . Early in March once the surveys have been returned you will receive an email invitation with instructions how to log-on to the blog. Please do not self-identify in your responses as participation in the study is anonymous.

Please return on or before Friday March 1, 2013.

Appendix D: Pre-Survey Questions

1. From your perspective, what is the meaning of colonization and decolonization?
2. Please describe examples of colonization and decolonization, which you have experienced within the college. Describing what and how you experienced it including the setting.
3. Describe what you believe are the essential elements for Northwest Community College to be described as decolonized?

Appendix E: Second Attempt Email to Participants

Hi,

I have not received your response to the research survey. I am re-attaching the survey for your convenience. Please note I have extended the deadline to Friday, March 8th. I hope you will participate by answering the questions and submitting them by Friday.

Thank you in advance for your participation

The Decolonization of Northwest Community College

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of this study is to develop a description of how employees at NWCC are making meaning of the phenomenon of decolonization.

Please answer the following three questions. The document will expand should you need additional space. Once you have answered the questions, please save your responses and email the document back to me at decolonizationNWCC@gmail.com Early in March once the surveys have been returned you will receive an email invitation with instructions about how to log-on to the blog. Please do not self-identify in your responses as participation in the study is anonymous.

Second attempt

Please return on or before Friday March 8, 2013.

Appendix F: Third Attempt Email to Participants

Hi,

I do not want to pressure you to participate in my research study, so this will be the final email should I not hear back from you. As you remember the research study has three stages. Stage one the completion of three questions. Those questions were sent out to you with a deadline of March 1. Since not everyone responded by the deadline, I sent out a second email with a new deadline of last Friday March 8. I have not heard back from you after your initial response that you were interested in participating. I will be opening the blog tomorrow evening, which is the second stage of the study. If you have not responded to the three questions by 5:00 pm Monday March 11th, you will be unable to enter the blog and participate in the study.

I hope you will consider participating. I realize that everyone is very busy; however, I hope you will find participating in the study interesting and worthwhile. If I can be of assistance in anyway or you need the questions sent out again, please let me know. If you no longer want to participate in the study, that is fine. Please let me know, so I can record that you elected to withdraw.

Thank you ☺

Regards,

Appendix G: Blog Instructions to Participants

Hi,

Thank you for responding to the three questions. All the responses received by the extended deadline have now been gathered together and arranged by question. The responses to Question 1 have now been posted to the blog.

The blog is now open. It will be open for approximately 9 weeks, so roughly two weeks per question, but I will monitor the posting activity of the group to gauge the interest of the group in continuing with the discussion on a question or their desire to move forward.

Please follow the link to the blog at www.decolonization.net or paste it into your browser. Once in the blog you will find on the bottom left corner of the picture the tab for instructions. At the right side you will find links to materials on decolonization. They are there for your reading pleasure if you wish to review them. You are not required to use the links. The blog postings are password protected. Please enter *2013NWCC*. To post a comment you will need to scroll to the bottom of the page click comment and log in. Please log in as User name: Participant XX. Each participant has been assigned a random number. You may use your own email address as it will not appear in the posting. I will be posting questions under the entry of Facilitator.

Please log into the blog at least once a week to review the postings.

Should you need assistance, please email me at decolonizationnwcc@gmail.com

Thank you.

Regards,

Appendix H: Post-Survey

1. Has your perspective of colonization and decolonization changed as a result of your participation? If yes, how?
2. What are the first three things you would want to see happen to decolonize the college?
3. What is your overall opinion of your colleagues' responses and comments?
4. Did you feel safe to share your opinions on the blog? If not why and what could have been done differently to aid you in feeling safe to fully participate?

VITA

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