

Having the Spirit Within to Vision: New Aboriginal Teachers' Commitment to Reclaiming Space

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This grounded theory research study distinguished two central categories that emerged in an analysis of new Aboriginal teachers' perceptions. Six participants from across Ontario, along with an Elder, a university-based Aboriginal center for education and research, graduate students, and university faculty engaged in a Wildfire Research Method to better appreciate new Aboriginal teachers' experiences during their induction into the profession. The categories included, "participants' emotional biographies" and "moral discernment." The findings attest to new Aboriginal teachers' unique sense of awareness of the bicultural dichotomy they represent and their collective determination to reclaim their sociocultural and epistemic places.

Introduction

Although Aboriginal peoples in Canada consist of hundreds of communities that represent an array of cultures, languages, and traditions, First Nations people generally consider learning as a holistic and lifelong process (Battiste, 2002). The common values related to education affect Aboriginal peoples' self-perceptions of their relationship with the social and natural world, and it is in the context of relationship that the foundational principles of their learning are best understood ("Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Metis Learning," 2007). Aboriginal knowledge traditions, however, are distinct from colonial epistemic paradigms (Kirkness, 1999; Hill, 2000). The shores of Turtle Island possess memories of colonization in its infancy as it washed up on these lands many years ago. Over the course of time, it grew and swept across the Nations opposing the Aboriginal people's approach to life in waves of oppressive behaviors and attitudes. One stratagem worth mentioning for the purpose of this article is displacement of Aboriginal children and the role education has played in subjugating Aboriginal knowledge and the desire to drown all traces of such, thus considered a means of domination (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000). Further to the above-mentioned, policies and procedures of colonial education sowed seeds of distrust and suspicion by Aboriginal peoples, and much of this still flourishes today (Graham, 2005; Shaw, 2001). First Nations peoples have, therefore, advocated for decades that teaching and learning are holistically embedded in

linguistic and cultural traditions that represent Aboriginal students' ways of learning (Elijah, 2002; Fishman, 2001).

Given the uniqueness of Aboriginal learning traditions, the education of Aboriginal children, and the preparation and induction of Aboriginal teachers in this country, significant attention is warranted particularly when considering that the mainstream population of school-aged children is projected to decline by almost 400,000 in Canada within the next nine years, while it is predicted that nearly 375,000 Aboriginal children will be in Canadian schools within this time frame (Redefining, 2007). Native Teacher Education Programs (NTEPs) have been created across the country in an effort to recruit Aboriginal peoples into teaching and prepare them to deliver bilingual programs to best address the specific needs of Aboriginal students and communities (Heimbecker, Minner, & Prater, 2000; Kavanaugh, 2005). These programs also offer prospective teachers opportunities to employ Aboriginal paradigms of teaching and learning to better articulate Aboriginal epistemic understandings.

Purpose of the Study

Critical to improving Aboriginal student success is the retention and support of new Aboriginal teachers in Ontario (Anderson, 2004; Kawagley, 2001). An objective of this study was to solicit the perceptions of new Aboriginal teachers from across the province who were in their first two years of practice. The outcomes of this study may in fact inform provincial and federal policy-makers with data grounded in the voices of new Aboriginal teachers themselves and thereby positively influence their decisions. The findings in and of themselves address a void in the literature that new Aboriginal teachers have a keen self-awareness of the bicultural dichotomy they represent and a collective determination to reclaim their sociocultural and epistemic spaces.

Conceptual Framework

In Ontario, there is both a demand for Aboriginal teachers and difficulties retaining practicing teachers of Aboriginal language instruction (Corbiere, 2000; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). Various obstacles have been discussed in the literature as they pertain to Aboriginal teacher recruitment and retention (Morgan, 2002), including a lack of curricular materials for teachers of Native languages (Graham, 2005). As Redwing Saunders and Hill (2007) suggest, "First Nations education continues to be affected by outside influences such as federal fiscal management and divisions between provincial and federal ministries" (p. 1016) that potentially pose adverse consequences for Aboriginal teachers who foster culturally driven experiences for Aboriginal students in schools. Such a divide impedes new and practicing Aboriginal teachers from authentically aligning their practice in the context of nurturing communities that "celebrate successes and provide forums for professional

development with like-minded teachers" (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1086; Melnechenko & Horsman, 1998; Quiocho, 2000).

Aboriginal teachers in both mainstream and First Nation schools improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal students (RCAP, 1996). Aboriginal teachers can foster culturally driven experiences for Aboriginal children as they proceed through formal education (Purcell-Gates, 2002). Aboriginal teachers who are steeped in the rich traditions of their language, culture, and epistemologies can be instrumental in Aboriginal students living these traditions. Aboriginal teachers can illuminate an intellectual awareness of what it means to be an Aboriginal person and learner (Neegan, 2005; Weenie, 2000).

Methodology

The study employed grounded theory research to examine the perceptions of new Aboriginal teachers. Six new teachers from across Ontario were hosted by the research team consisting of an Elder, mainstream university faculty, a university-based centre for Aboriginal education, and graduate students. The participants represented Mohawk, Anishinabe, and Métis peoples. Participants voluntarily engaged in a three-day Wildfire Research Method (Hodson, 2004) in the traditional territory of the Wendat Confederacy where they stayed in semi-communal accommodations and were guided in ceremony and teaching by an Elder who provided a culturally affirming environment for participants (Cordoba, 2006; Redefining, 2007). The Elder opened the Talking Circle, representative of holism and respect, with a story before inviting the new teacher participants to share their perceptions as novice educators. Of the six participants, two were male and four were female. They ranged in age from mid-20s to mid-40s and had between one and three years of teaching experience.

Participants readily shared of themselves and their acuity in the Talking Circle. Several guiding questions, structured according to Rubin and Rubin (2006), provided the impetus for discussion and included:

- What experiences contributed to your becoming a teacher?
- How has your formal teacher preparation prepared you for the realities of the classroom?
- What kinds of support have been afforded to you as a new teacher?
- What are some of the most significant concerns that you have as a new Aboriginal teacher?
- Who has been particularly instrumental in supporting your professional growth?

In many instances, the participants engaged in personal and intense reflection about their individual circumstances as Aboriginal peoples who had chosen teaching as a career path. The conversations were audiotaped, transcribed, and brought to each new teacher for member-check.

Using the guidelines of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), data were systematically reduced to codes that provided an analytic frame

from which the codes and their respective properties were theoretically saturated into categories (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The categories were grounded in new Aboriginal teacher participants' perceptions and reframed the central points that emerged throughout the coding and constant comparison process (Glaser, 1993; Richardson, 1994; Kennedy & Lingard, 2006). Of particular relevance to this study, the bi-epistemic research team collectively coded the transcripts and assigned preliminary labels. The sustained and interactive dialogue on the part of all participants not only lent itself to triangulation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994), but to culturally sensitive interpretations of participants' perceptions. The Elder and Aboriginal researchers situated the words of the new teachers in relation to a much more comprehensive geopolitical framework. In these instances and others, mainstream researchers garnered an even greater appreciation of the social, emotional, spiritual, and physical realities that were shared in the context of participants' culturally based perceptions (Cherubini, Niemczyk, & McGean, 2008). Grounded theory was particularly well suited for this research because it concedes multiple analytic directions for the same body of data; thus certain ideas and conceptualizations can be applied to a particular focus, enabling the research team to re-engage in the data in other areas (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003; Charmaz).

Findings

Two categories emerged from the theoretical saturation of new Aboriginal teacher participants' perceptions described as *participants' emotional biographies* and *moral discernment*.

Participants' Emotional Biographies

Participants' life experiences were unanimously described as having a profound effect on their personal and professional development. More specifically, the new Aboriginal teacher participants shared how their experiences as Aboriginal children, adolescents, students, and later as working professionals, contributed to their emotional foundation as teachers. Typical of others, one participant referred to his experiences as an addiction counselor to suggest that "working in addictions prepared me more for [teaching] than any teacher classroom management style or anything else like that." They told various stories of how their "background stood [them] well" in the light of their responsibilities as educators. As parents, counselors, students, and support staff in private and public institutions, participants described how "nobody taught [them] how to do these things [various skills from budget management, to counseling, to basic plumbing were mentioned]. You did it and if you made a mistake you embraced the learning." Of utmost importance is the fact that Aboriginal peoples traditionally identify mistakes as opportunities to grow and find new insights that sustain and motivate them as life experi-

ences. These experiences prepared participants emotionally to support independent thinking, initiative, and flexibility: attributes that participants considered as key to being a successful teacher. Particularly telling was how all the participants attributed their life experiences to complementing their emotional readiness as classroom teachers. One referred to her experiences growing up as an Aboriginal person in terms of "knowing that when you walk down the street the same thing is not going to happen every day.... It makes us [Aboriginal persons] more flexible in the classroom," according to this new teacher, because they can relate their experiences with the unpredictable life events from their own upbringing to some of those experienced by the children in their care. Participants spoke of seeing a reflection of themselves in their students' eyes, thereby grasping the feeling of disconnect that the children are struggling with while being fed curriculum that does not sate their hunger. It is through this emotional awareness of students' strife, identities, and experiences that guides them to be more compassionate in their teachings and ways of instruction. As another person suggested, as Aboriginal people they can "rely on the tool box that [their] mistakes have given [them] in life" to better prepare not only Aboriginal students, but all children to make wise decisions. Participants described how their life experiences, more than any formal education program, essentially grounded them emotionally to manage the challenges of being a novice teacher effectively. With such a basis, participants were better able to manage what they believed to be "covert discrimination" among colleagues because in many instances, the discriminatory practices were, as one individual stated, "like the same stuff I had when I was at [named corporation] and had somebody say, 'hey, you got your job because you are an Indian.'"

Similarly, participants' experiences as students contributed to the emotional resilience that is serving them well as new teachers. They recalled situations when, as one individual described, "I kept pushing and pushing and pushing but always had people say, 'No, that's OK, you just go home. You are getting B's and that is enough' ... even university professors telling me the same thing."

In some instances, participants expressed their frustration with school board hiring practices that seemed to discount their academic qualifications. One participant described his frustration by stating, "So being Aboriginal, going through the school system, going on to get my degree as an Aboriginal, and teaching in a First Nation school is not enough?"

It was also intriguing how participants described the evolution of their own identities as Aboriginal persons as being a paradoxically emotionally exhausting but self-enlightening experience that further positively situated them as teachers. They described how imperative it was for them to understand fully their uniqueness as Aboriginal persons. One participant reflected, "I have walked my whole life never feeling that I was a

full anything. I'm half this ... half Indian, on-reserve, off-reserve ... I just [had] too many labels." Another new teacher shared her rationale in response to the stereotypical assumptions of poor and indifferent First Nations people. She described how Aboriginal peoples, at least from her experiences, measure richness by "times that we share together." Interestingly, all the participants discussed the negotiation of their identity in the context of meaningful encounters with others. Inherent in their life experiences were circumstances whereby participants became emotionally exhausted having to "walk in both [Aboriginal and mainstream] realms." They identified with Native customs and traditions, but had to negotiate this identity in social and educational institutions where such an identity was essentially unrecognized (and in some cases, discriminated against). Participants were candid in sharing their emotional struggles with "really [not] understanding" what it means to be "half-white." They became, as another suggested, "antagonistic" and "defensive" in feeling forced to establish an identity in these two realms. However, even in their recognition of having "paid a price" for these emotionally draining experiences, participants related how their experiences had better equipped them to give back to their students and nations and afforded them with opportunities to be successful in their private and collective identity formation.

Moral Discernment

At the core of the new Aboriginal teacher participants' principled judgments and actions was their keen awareness of the paradox of being, as one individual described and the others supported, "Native people teaching a non-Native curriculum to our own people." The irony inherent in this paradox was not lost on participants as they attributed this to Aboriginal students' disengagement from formal education. Participants made it clear that Aboriginal students "do not see any reason whatsoever" for investing in their education. In turn, there was a general consensus that engaging students in learning was "one of the biggest challenges" that participants faced, and as a result they expressed a moral discernment to recognize, celebrate, and value what all participants characterized as "a whole richness to [Aboriginal students] that has nothing to do with how poor or rich [they are] or what they have at home." These teachers considered it their responsibility to serve as testaments that the residual effects of colonialism can in fact be overcome. In this capacity they strove to pass on their culture to those communities still suffering from the consequences of cultural genocide. Participants' discernment heightened their sensitivities to change the consciousness of students, some of whom are children of second- and third-generation families relying on social assistance, of the opportunities to emancipate themselves from self-fulfilling prophecies. One response was particularly heartfelt: "They [Aboriginal students] have seen that pattern. They have seen that the life on welfare is good enough [and] because they have grown up in that. They

do not see living on welfare as a problem or that there is anything better out there." Participants felt morally obligated to shift the external forces of colonialism that contribute to students' resignation readily to accept social assistance. These new teachers aimed to affect Aboriginal student consciousness by influencing and evoking their determination to identify themselves as unique Aboriginal people and successful students. They discussed during various times in the Talking Circle how their mandate was to have a positive effect on Aboriginal students' intersubjective experiences of self-doubt. Participants drew on their own experiences to strengthen their moral imperative. As an example, one individual shared how she

could have said well, my mother went to residential school and she did not want to teach me the language so I did not bother learning it. But at a certain point in time ... when I hear that I say to people, "When did you find out and what have you done since? If you would have learned one word a day since that time you would be fluent ... If you want something, you can go out and get something. If you want it because it is important, you will find it."

Participants' sense of moral discernment was not limited to their drive to influence Aboriginal students' consciousness positively by celebrating their distinct identities and encouraging their personal and professional development. It also included a component of accountability. Participants believed that in each instance when "a student fails, we are all accountable for that." They felt that their responsibility as Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal teachers included attending particularly to the success of Aboriginal students because their life experiences made them well aware of the distinct challenges and obstacles that these marginalized students experience in schools. Despite negotiating their own challenges as novice teachers and their enculturation into the profession, participants expressed their discernment to serve Aboriginal students' development as learners and individuals by assisting them with the confounding factors and underlying tensions that contribute to their disengagement from formal education. Time and again, participants shared experiences of

working after school from 2:00 to 7:00 at night doing all the paperwork because I have taken all of those 10 minutes for all of those people in my [school] environment ... it really makes a huge difference—just listening ... It makes it hard on me because it makes for a lot of late nights trying to catch up on the paperwork, but I hope that I have made a difference during the day. I think I have.

By adhering to this moral imperative to guide Aboriginal students, participants expressed the hope that students "would not have to go through the same hardships ... that we went through." Participants shared what was described as a very honest involvement and commitment not only to empathize with the stressful and demoralizing experiences of Aboriginal students, but to hold themselves accountable to help nurture their adaptation strategies, and just as significantly, to motivate them to think critically. Participants were well aware of the public accountability that their

professional roles entailed, yet felt compelled to adhere to a greater sense of accountability in a more private and moral realm. Feeling empowered to speak on behalf of others, one participant suggested, "There are three different yardsticks. There is the provincial guidelines yardstick. There are the principal's guidelines, and then there is yourself." Another participant supported this notion by saying, "Yes, we do a lot of other things besides just being teachers." Implied in participants' interactions and in their spoken words, therefore, was how a higher standard of accountability was theorized and embodied in their day-to-day practice as teachers. Participants' reflections were thoughtful and deliberate in this regard. They attributed their own success to community members who cultivated their own responsibility and intellectual engagement, and as a result, expressed a moral discernment to "remember where [they] came from and [to] not leave anyone behind." It was clear that for these participants, a principled sensitivity supported Aboriginal students in reconciling the two world views in which they existed and in forging stronger impressions of their Aboriginal self-identity. One participant suggested,

If I can make one difference in my 15 students, I will be ever so happy because a lot of the times when you are raised in an abusive, dysfunctional family it just takes one person to acknowledge [you] and to provide you with that hope [of] a better future ... It is more than about teaching these students [because they] are our future.

Discussion

The two categories described as participants' emotional biographies and moral discernment attest to new Aboriginal teacher participants' unique sense of awareness of the bicultural dichotomy they represent and their collective determination to reclaim their cultural and epistemic spaces.

Participants drew on foreboding parallels between their world views as Aboriginal persons and their professional roles as teachers in a Eurocentric education system. The bicultural dichotomy of this position was quite often expressed in the Talking Circle as a central concern. The relative invisibility of Aboriginal epistemologies, values, and linguistic traditions contributed to what we describe as the falseness of their professional circumstances because participants perceived their world views as being considered by mainstream policy-makers and educators as rather lesser than the other responsibilities of being a teacher. Participants understood the importance of situating their emotional biographies in the context of being professional teachers, but were ambivalent about educational policy and practice that seemingly ignored the weight of the past as far as Aboriginal peoples were concerned. These sentiments also resonate in the literature. According to Youngblood Henderson (2000), mainstream education and epistemology are fragmented into disciplines that "deny our holistic knowledge and thought. Indigenous people are forced to exist as an exotic interdisciplinary alterity" (p. 164). Participants lamented that colonial-driven Ministry of Education curriculum has in fact threatened

the extinction of Aboriginal spirituality and world views. One participant wondered, "I do not know if there is any spirituality left in it ... the spirit is no longer a part" of a curricular model that is standardized for all students. Disturbingly, the same historical forces of colonization that attempted to eradicate Aboriginal spiritual practices, as chronicled in the residential school literature (Frideres & Gadacz, 2005), seem to be perpetuated in the experiences of the new Aboriginal teacher participants.

Aboriginal linguistic traditions were also a paramount consideration in participants' awareness of cultural dichotomies. Language, they asserted, was critical to cross-cultural learning for Aboriginal peoples. It is a sustaining and culturally affirming legacy in their social and epistemic landscape. Yet in this regard as well, participants struggled with a pervasive sociocultural dichotomy that seemed to impose what they believed to be a rather despairing dilemma.

We have the language ... why do we always have to make those kinds of really tough choices? You live on welfare [social assistance] and have the language or have a job [in mainstream institutions] and lose everything about who and what you are.

Participants were frustrated that contemporary sociocultural realities were not strikingly different for Aboriginal students than those they experienced. As discussed above, their sense of moral discernment stemmed from their resilient emotional biographies that positioned them as teachers to address the subtle and overt methods of exclusion that currently exist for Aboriginal students. One participant described their aggravation in these terms: "How do you pass along to the students the importance of education when the community [and] social structure is set up [so] that it is irrelevant really what kind of education you have?" Even those considered to be professionals by mainstream standards were described as inferior in the eyes of mainstream communities: "What frustrated me was the lack of respect for our community and for the professionals we have in our community."

One metaphor that was especially notable was this participant's reflection of the bicultural dichotomy inherent in contemporary mainstream education. Education is "a conundrum wrapped in an enigma." Participants struggled to reason how standardized, mainstream, colonially influenced curriculum could do justice to the unique needs, skill sets, and dispositions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. They could not rationalize how individual student identity as defined by time, place, and relationship could be cultivated in standardize curriculum and assessment practices. The literature is replete with references that suggest student learning be addressed through cultural experiences and be made explicitly connected to the larger world (Barnhardt, 2005). This notion supports the fact that Indigenous scholars base their vision in conceptions of independence and assume a fundamental relationship with place and land (Grande, 2004).

Inherent in participants' awareness of the bicultural dichotomy they represent was their sense of moral discernment and collective determination to reclaim their sociocultural and epistemic spaces. Participants were adamant in their suggestions that happiness and contentment for Aboriginal peoples is not determined by capitalist standards of financial and material wealth. There was confidence in their words that fulfillment was defined by multiple meanings for Aboriginal peoples and was intrinsically understood. One participant suggested,

Sometimes people's perception of [Aboriginal peoples] is that they are poor and they have nothing. But if you were on the inside, one may realize that they are not into material things ... they are just so happy where they are at, and they are not for wanting of those other material things.

Participants expressed a genuine desire to reclaim their unique sociocultural space that fosters an appreciation for what one participant described as having "everything that they need." Further, a recurring theme in the discussions was the ominous sentiment that in social settings that included Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal peoples were relegated to a marginalized, predetermined space. It was not uncommon, according to participants, for Aboriginal students to be figuratively "shot down even before [they] took two steps" in a school where in one instance, their Aboriginal teacher was accompanying them to attend a musical production. These impressions are mirrored in the literature. Yazzie (2000) suggests that for Aboriginal educators to recover socioeconomic spaces successfully entails their "exercise [of] internal sovereignty, which is nothing more than taking control of our personal lives, our families, our clans, and our communities" (p. 47). The outcome, as it was reinforced by participants' contributions, was the marshalling of Aboriginal students' strengths and capacities so that they could "become proud of our culture and heritage." In their role as teachers who bring an awareness of their emotional biographies and a sense of moral discernment to their work, it was clear that participants were willing to counter Euro-heritage culture and tradition in the light of reestablishing their own distinct spaces defined by one participant as, "our culture [that] is equal and valuable [and revered for] all the good things from it." This aura of opposition stems from the after-effects of colonialism still lingering in their classrooms. The participants were inclined to challenge what they believed to be racist and colonial assumptions implied in the standard curricula and epistemology. The teachers expressed that through recognizing these philosophical archetypes that had poisoned the traditional Aboriginal way of being, and understanding the need for healing in their own communities, they could not allow the mainstream to continue to define who they are or hinder the growth and aptitude of the students. They also acknowledged the discontinuity of linguistic traditions severed from generations past and advocated for an active attention to mobilize Aboriginal educators,

parents, communities, and Elders to reclaim their epistemological space. All the participants had the insight to embrace a dream by having the spirit within to vision, the strength of conviction, and the fortitude to achieve a way of change by means of recovering curriculum that is epistemologically appropriate.

As Aboriginal educators we need to start making our own curriculum. Writing it down and utilizing it.... We cannot wait any longer for somebody else to do it. We need to find the time and the energy amongst all the other things that we are doing to put it together for ourselves.

Central to such a recommendation is the need for a systematic process to facilitate Aboriginal teachers' efforts. Establishing a network of Aboriginal educators to share curriculum, and ensuring that such a venue is coordinated so that it is readily accessible, would seem to be worthy of further consideration. The words and vision conveyed by the teachers spoke to how they shared belief in an emergent need not only to educate the children, but to do so in a way that unified traditional teachings and Indigenous thought. Along with this, to repossess their epistemological space means, according to participants, feeling empowered to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy that embeds learning in the context from which it is taught. Recovering their epistemological space means creating change in the status quo that transcends political considerations and affects concepts of knowledge-generation and students' experiences as holistic and active partners in their own learning. Further, it serves to inspire what Daes (2000) refers to as the "unique spirit within each [individual that] strives to express itself, to be recognized, to have a name and a destiny" (p. 15). For participants, recovering their epistemological space translated into a dialogue of challenging imperially imposed boundaries in a simultaneous consideration of their roles as professional teachers. They garnered personal gratification from their willingness to engage emotionally, intellectually, and morally to emancipate Aboriginal students from sociocultural and sociopolitical complexities. This is reminiscent of Smith (2000) who calls for Indigenous peoples to establish their own agenda for change instead of reacting "to an agenda that has been laid out for us by others" (p. 210).

The core categories that emerged as findings in this analysis of the data complement what we describe as new Aboriginal teachers' commitment to reclaim their epistemological space. The effect of the legacy of colonialism on Aboriginal student learning must be addressed and altered. Participants' discourse centered on Aboriginal epistemological spaces that were rooted in tradition. They called for structural change in mainstream education paradigms and practices that devalue Aboriginal students' identity and assign them to learning environments in the context of an oppressive history. Aboriginal epistemological spaces account for the cultural, spiritual, and physical dimensions in the process of teaching

Aboriginal children. As one participant questioned, "Is it Indian education or is it educating Indians? It is the same old system and the system is a problem [even] in mainstream society. But they [Aboriginal teachers] are teaching that sort of system ... it is foreign to us." By recovering epistemological space, Aboriginal students can learn and personally develop from the integrity of their distinct cultural world views.

Conclusion

Despite the darkness of colonialism, Sun rises and gives us the gift of a new knowing through the mainstream education realm for Aboriginal students, provided we heed the messages given to us by the participants in this research project. It is the Aboriginal teachers' voice that has spoken to us with such perspicacity that all involved in the world of academia need only to look and embrace their understanding for the betterment of all Aboriginal generations that will follow. One way to heal the wounds and attempt to restore the path of disconnect is to change how Aboriginal children are taught and the context of delivery.

The early career teachers that shared of themselves in this venture felt a responsibility to their students by not only seeing them succeed academically, but to pass on their own culture and when having achieved this, it was seen as great as an accomplishment to them as the measure of standardized curriculum. It would seem apparent that it was a matter of perspective and how one was determining the students' successes as one participant spoke these words: "As educators we're not only responsible for teaching the students, but we're also responsible for nurturing their souls."

Therefore, when Eurocentric and Aboriginal world views unite and find balance, Aboriginal students and teachers alike may finally find that they are able to envision themselves in a world where they can invest. By doing so, Aboriginal peoples may then find a place for themselves in the greater populace as both nations will share and coexist as brothers and sisters during their walks on Mother Earth. In the harmonization of the two epistemologies, may we discover, in the cascading rays of Sun, promises of brighter tomorrows.

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