"Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards A Cultural Safety Framework for School District #61"

by

Joanne Mitchell
B.S.W., University of Victoria, 1995

A Thesis in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

In the Faculty of Human and Social Development

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Cultural Safety is an educational framework and pedagogy developed by Maori nursing scholar, Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden (2002). Through this research, I explored the application of Cultural Safety to the Greater Victoria School District's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. My research question is: What are the key elements that would be included in the development of a Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District? This research is grounded in decolonizing, Indigenous and action research methods. Theoretically, it employs critical and decolonizing perspectives to critique the appropriateness of public education curriculum and teaching practices for Indigenous students. This study utilized a qualitative research method called Action Research and used an existing community council, the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria (AEC) as a focus group. Data was collected from the focus groups and enhanced through an individual interview with the coordinator of Aboriginal Education in the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD). An outcome of this research is a draft framework for cultural safety in the school district. The framework has now become the property of the Aboriginal Education Council of the Greater Victoria School District.

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Acknowledgments

A conversation in Jeannine's kitchen with two of her visiting friends and my sister, Sandee, sparked the idea for exploring cultural safety in public education. So, thank you, to Jeannine Carriere; Jane Martin; Carolyn Peacock and Sandee Mitchell for helping to put forward an idea I could run with. It's been an exciting concept to explore.

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I thank my family and friends for the understanding & encouragement that you have given me in these last three years. I would especially like to thank my son Sam for his patience and support while I sat at the computer instead of engaging with him. You are my inspiration and I thank all the Goodness in the Universe for the honour of being your mother.

I thank the Eagle Village First Nations Kipawa Band for their support and all the Ancestral Spirits that guide me on my day to day journey.

Thank you to the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria and Ms. Nella Nelson, Coordinator of Aboriginal Education in School District 61, for your participation and for support of this research.
Joanne Mitchell, July 2011

Dedication

Keep a few embers

from the fire

that used to burn in your village,

some day go back

so all can gather again

and rekindle a new flame,

for a new life in a changed world.

Chief Dan George (1974)

This thesis is dedicated to my family (of origin and of choice):

Thank you for your love and support.

Chapter 1

"The omission of the colonial history of New Zealand in the basic state education system had led to a serious deficit in the knowledge of citizens as to the cause and effect outcomes of colonialism" (Ramsden 2002 p.2).

1.   Introduction:

I am a bi-racial woman with Indigenous ancestry from the Algonquin and Ojibway Nations and settler ancestry from Italy and France. I am employed as a District Aboriginal Student Counselor for the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) in Victoria, BC. "Aboriginal" is the term used in our school district to describe students whose ancestry comes from the Indigenous people of Canada and includes those identified as status, non-status, Métis and Inuit. Throughout this document I will use the terms "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" interchangeably although my preference is the term "Indigenous" as it situates people as original inhabitants. I acknowledge that there are many cultural differences amongst the Indigenous peoples of Canada, however, a common experience is the imposition of colonial processes that have ravaged culture, dispossessed land and resources, removed self-determination and centred Eurocentric knowledge. More importantly, a common thread amongst the Indigenous world is the undying resistance to the colonial process and the beauty and salvation of Indigenous knowledges.

This document is part of a social change project that aims to make space for Indigenous knowledge in the public education system in order to make the school experience more appropriate for students with Indigenous ancestry and to increase awareness of

Indigenous knowledges for all students. My thesis research explored the application of a

Maori educational framework and pedagogy called Cultural Safety to the school district's

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, a provincial policy for addressing the

cultural and academic needs of students identified as having Aboriginal ancestry. The

vision of this research is that it could identify ways that public education administrators

and teaching staff could increase their awareness and understanding of colonial processes

in order to understand the over-representation of Aboriginal students in negative public

education statistics. A decolonizing perspective turns the lens on the public education

system to analyze its appropriateness for Aboriginal students, families and communities.

In the context of this research project, the Cultural Safety paradigm asks public educators

to understand their own social conditioning and cultural standards and norms, to help

understand the dispossession of Aboriginal land, culture and self-determination. By

elucidating this knowledge my hope is that public educators will understand that it is a

matter of social justice to engage with decolonizing perspectives and make space for

Indigenous knowledge in their schools whether they have Indigenous students or not.

The Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) and the Coordinator for the Aboriginal Nations

Education Division (ANED) of the GVSD participated as a focus group and key

informant interviewee for this research. An action research method was utilized to create

a draft document that outlines a framework for cultural safety. This framework is one

step in a process that could eventually guide district staff towards decolonizing their own

practices and making space for Indigenous knowledge in the public education system.

Literature reviewed for this thesis included topics relating to colonization, Western and

Indigenous education perspectives and cultural safety. While fostering ways to bring

Indigenous perspectives into the public education system is the main focus of this research, as sub-theme is engaging allies in the Indigenous quest for self-determination as it is a matter of social justice and would contribute to reconciling the Indigenous-Settler relationship in Canada.

2.   Personal Location:

I was born and raised off-reserve in North Bay, Ontario, the sixth of nine children. I am a member of the Eagle Village First Nations Kipawa Band of the Algonquin Nation but have lived in Coast Salish territory for more than half my life, mainly in Victoria, which is the traditional territory of the Songhees and Esquimalt Peoples of the Coast Salish Nation. I have given birth to two sons, Jesse and Sam. Jesse was born six weeks after my 15th birthday and while I did not raise him, we reconnected when he was 28 years old. I am currently raising Sam who is in high school in the Greater Victoria School District.

I grew up in a large, complex family affected by structural issues like racism, sexism and poverty and the complications and distractions that they bring. I left high school before completing grade ten, but have always been drawn to post-secondary studies. At twenty, I upgraded and enrolled in a two year health science program in North Bay. At thirty, I attended the Native Education Centre (NEC) in Vancouver to earn a counseling certificate and it was there that my decolonization process began as it was the first time that I was introduced to Indigenous perspectives to history, culture and healing practices. Many personal and political questions were answered during that time, and many more questions were raised. I decided to continue with post-secondary studies and earned a

bachelor degree in social work from the University of Victoria where the program encouraged a focus on feminist and Indigenous perspectives to structural issues in society which allowed for further exploration of decolonizing theory.

I have been employed as an Aboriginal Student Counselor since 1999 and work with students from kindergarten through grade twelve. A decolonizing perspective and support for Aboriginal initiatives in the province and school district has allowed me to work across boundaries to support students and families with Indigenous ancestry from my position within the public education system. However I have often felt discouraged by the lack of a political perspective to Indigenous issues in public education. While there are provisions for bringing Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom, utilization of resources depends on brokerage from interested staff. The tendency is to highlight Aboriginal cultural expressions like singing, dancing, and arts and crafts. There are some incredibly good Aboriginal-specific courses offered in the district but they are at the high school level and offered as electives. There is also some misunderstanding that these courses are mainly for students with Indigenous ancestry; hence some schools with few or no Indigenous students may not offer the courses at all. Administrative and teacher interest are factors in whether these courses are offered. While there is provincial, district, and union support for Aboriginal education initiatives, school administration and staff engagement seems optional.

Inspiration has come from my graduate studies that have allowed me to explore the more intricate processes of colonialism where cognitive and cultural imperialism were

analyzed and key principles of Indigenous knowledge were highlighted. I began to dream of the ironic vision of a public education system that honors Indigenous history, culture and worldview and one that speaks the truth about the colonial processes that have disadvantaged Indigenous people in their own lands. I envision a time when all students understand basic colonial history and Indigenous theories so that they can participate in a reconciliation process to build a more just society in our country.

Graduate studies and thesis research require a great deal of time and effort. It made sense to me to use this time and energy on research that is connected to my job and that will address an important issue for Indigenous children and families. This research explores a strategy that could increase school district staff knowledge about colonialism and its impact on Indigenous peoples. While some may argue that it is inappropriate for political perspectives to be expressed in the public education system, I contend that the lack of decolonizing perspectives is very political. School district staff employing decolonizing perspectives could influence a new generation of young people equipped with a basic understanding of our colonial history and could provide an environment where Indigenous students may feel culturally safe. Ramsden (2002) clarifies that cultural safety is *an outcome* where people in positions of power have gone through stages of cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competency to then act in a way that provides cultural safety for Indigenous students, their families and communities.

3.   Research Focus:

As a woman with Indigenous ancestry, there are personal and political challenges inherent in balancing my role as a support person to students and families with Indigenous ancestry and the public institution that employs me. Mainstream and status quo perspectives are the norm in the public education system. Historically, a colonial attitude towards Indigenous peoples was that they should assimilate into the dominant culture and while a gross expression of this attitude was the residential school system, it can be argued that the public education system, while less brutal, still follows the same agenda whether conscious or not. Eurocentric standards and norms in curriculum and teaching practices are inappropriate for students with Aboriginal ancestry and this disadvantage is expressed in the historic and ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal students in negative public education statistics. While cognitive imperialism problematizes Aboriginal students and their families, a decolonizing perspective turns the lens on the public education system. Indigenous peoples had their own ways of educating their children (Battiste 2000; Barman et al 1992; Archibald 2008; Bastien 2004) and the brutal imposition of the residential school system is irrefutable evidence that our government strategically implemented policies and laws that meet the criteria for describing cultural genocide (Milloy 1999; Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2008 & 2009; Fournier & Crey 2005). Critical examination of the public education system curriculum and teaching practices highlights the way that mainstream and status quo perspectives are presented as the standards and norms that apply to all Canadians. These practices may seem benign to Non-Indigenous Canadians but consistently negative statistics indicate otherwise for students with Indigenous ancestry.

It could be argued that if the public education system is perpetuating assimilationist views, then Aboriginal students' lack of success in this system could be seen as an act of resistance and a sign of health whether conscious or not. Regardless, in our market economy, education is a key determinant to socioeconomic status. And, as quoted by Dr. Lorna Williams at her Keynote Address to the 2010 FNESC Education Conference in Vancouver, "Aboriginal students are entitled to a quality and culturally relevant education". Indeed, as Aboriginal people continue to resist assimilation tactics and work towards self-determination, communities need to build capacity in their membership for personal and political reasons. Low graduation rates and assimilationist curriculum are not acceptable and systemic accountability is necessary.

While this research employs a critical Indigenous analysis of the public education system, it also acknowledges foundational support for Aboriginal education initiatives already in existence in our province and school district and has a deep desire to build alliances. I acknowledge that there are already some allies amongst public educators. There are those who understand that by consciously implementing Indigenous perspectives in their teaching practices and curriculum they act on a reconciliation process. This research focuses on a way to engage public educators in decolonizing theory in order to make the connection between this colonial history and the ongoing and historic over-representation of Indigenous students in negative public education statistics. From there, the vision is that alliances will be fostered by public educators who introduce decolonizing perspectives and Indigenous knowledge into their schools, thereby making gestures that could be healing to the Indigenous heart and building cultural safety in their classrooms.

Further, decolonizing and Indigenous perspectives presented to all students will build a more just society in Canada. This research also acknowledges that education statistics concerning students with Indigenous ancestry have been steadily improving over the years as systems respond to Indigenous community concerns.

This research uses an Indigenous paradigm and applies an Indigenous framework (cultural safety) to support the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in public education. Wilson (2008) describes a paradigm as "a set of underlying beliefs that guide our actions" (p. 13) and a research paradigm as "the beliefs that guide our actions as researchers" (p.13). He further explains that an Indigenous paradigm is made up of an ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that are influenced by Indigenous perspectives. He defines these terms as "the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology) and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology)" (p. 13). My ontology as a woman with Indigenous ancestry understands that we are all connected to all things and issues of social injustice and environmental degradation put us out of connection with each other. I also understand that there is more than one reality and that Ancestral Spirits are present in everyday life. This ontology helps me to cope with the very powerful epistemology of dominant Settler culture which has impacted my experience as a woman of mixed ancestry, born into a colonial society, raised away from Indigenous traditional culture, and finding my own path. An Indigenous paradigm feels both deeply personal and political to me. A decolonizing perspective allows me to make sense of the forces at play that have threatened and impacted our world. An Indigenous paradigm is the

foundation that drives my passion for imploring Settler culture to consider decolonizing

and Indigenous perspectives. In the context of a cultural safety framework for our

district's Enhancement Agreement, a decolonizing framework would allow public

educators to consider the perspectives of Indigenous People: one does not have to be

Indigenous to consider what Indigenous perspectives might be.

4. Introduction to Cultural Safety:

In order to define key knowledge for understanding colonial history, this research

explored the application of an Indigenous concept called Cultural Safety to create a draft

framework for guiding decolonizing practices for public educators. Cultural Safety, as

further discussed in the literature review section of this paper, is a concept developed by

an Indigenous Maori nursing scholar, the late Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden. Cultural Safety is an

educational framework for the analysis of power relationships between professionals and

those they serve (Ramsden 2002). While this concept was created for analysis of

relationships between the Maori Peoples of New Zealand and the country's health care

system and staff, its application to other societal systems is appropriate as all

relationships are power laden.

> "The dream of Cultural Safety was about helping the people in nursing
> education, teachers and students, to become aware of their societal conditioning
> and how it has affected them and their practice" (Ramsden p.2).

Cultural safety is about more than understanding that there are differences in dominant

and Indigenous cultures; it is about elucidating dominant cultural practices that have

impacted Indigenous cultures and not about learning the cultural expressions of

Indigenous peoples; When that is understood, space is made for Indigenous worldviews

and the relationship between dominant and Indigenous peoples becomes more respectful.

Shawn Wilson (2008) writes that relationships "are the key to an Indigenous research

paradigm" (p. 62). The web of relationships that have been involved in this research

process involves teachings from my instructors, mentors, family and friends; the

members of the Aboriginal Education Council; my Ancestors who have guided me

towards this work; and, my commitment to school children who will hopefully feel more

culturally safe in the classroom and be more informed citizens.

> "In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist
> research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something
> that is "out there" or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the
> truth. Thus an object or thing is not as important as one's relationship to it. This
> idea could be expanded to say that reality *is* relationships or sets of relationships.
> Thus there is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships that
> make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore reality is not an object but a process
> of relationships, and an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an
> Indigenous epistemology" (p. 73).

My hope is that this research may find a way to engage public educators in exploring

their relationship to the Indigenous students in their care. It is not about changing the

curriculum by legislation, placing blame, holding accountable or flaring up feelings of

guilt; it is about how to engage hearts so that matters of social justice can be addressed

and acted upon.

I also have a relationship to the concept of Cultural Safety. It is a political theory that

upholds ideas of self-determination and de-colonization. It has been referred to as critical

social theory because it teaches people "to be aware of the socio-political, economic

issues in society and to recognize the impact that these issues have on people" (Ramsden p.113). As a concept that attempts to change attitudes about power relationships, it has visionary and far-reaching application outside of just the nursing field. It moves beyond cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity to be more of an outcome where action speaks louder than words. My hope is that school district employees will see the relationship between themselves and the historic and ongoing subjugation of Indigenous ways of knowing. While we did not create this subjugation, we all play a role in its continuation if we do not question it, examine it, and make changes where we can. We cannot continue to note that Indigenous students are over-represented in negative public education statistics; we need to do something about it. The way we resolve the dispossession of Indigenous lands, resources and cultural expression will determine our future as a country. A cultural safety framework could help guide our practice because there is no way around the political nature of colonization; it will require a political approach. The question put forward in my research proposal was: What are the key elements that would be included in the development of an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District? Other questions emerged out of the data however and will be discussed in the research findings section of this document.

5.   Alliance Building:

While the main theme of this research is about making space for decolonizing and Indigenous perspectives in the public education system, a sub-theme is that of alliance building. Awareness of colonial history and decolonizing teaching practices could increase the possibility that Non-Indigenous school district staff will become allies in the

Indigenous quest for self-determination. School district staff as allies could then influence a new generation of allies, as decolonizing perspectives in schools have a farther reach to the general population. In the forward of Paulette Regan's book, *Unsettling the Settler Within* (2010), Indigenous scholar, Taiaiake Alfred uses a direct approach to naming the issue of Canadian indifference to the Indigenous struggles in our country.

> Canadians grow up believing that the history of their country is a story of the cooperative venture between people who came from elsewhere to make a better life and those who were already here, who welcomed and embraced them…Canadians like to imagine that they have always acted with peaceful good intentions towards us by trying to fix "the Indian problem" even as they displaced, marginalized, and brutalized us as part of the colonial project. Canadians do not like to hear that their country was founded through frauds, abuses and violence perpetrated against the original peoples of this land. …Writing from a settler perspective primarily for other settlers, the author [Regan] avoids the trap that so many non-Native scholars fall into – telling Native people how we must live. Instead, she homes in on what settlers must do to fix "the settler problem".

Regan and Alfred adjust the lens so that an examination of settler culture can come into focus. In regards to the public education system, there is clear acknowledgment that Indigenous students are less successful than their Non-Indigenous counterparts. However, a focus on Indigenous children and families as the "problem" is evidenced when school staff identify school readiness, attendance, student learning and behavior challenges, and lack of parental involvement in the school as the reasons for this lack of success. Instead, a critical Indigenous perspective points out that the public education system perpetuates settler standards and norms, without acknowledgement of colonial process and impact, and consciously or unconsciously teaches a fundamentally foreign worldview. This research challenges public educators to shift their epistemological assumptions to consider another viewpoint.

To be considered culturally safe, allies must also "decolonize" their minds to be truly helpful. I have compassion for those socialized in the same mainstream systems that I was where Indigenous perspectives were missing and colonial myths perpetuated. I know that some people working in the public education system have some knowledge and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing while others may not have any knowledge. Some people want to know more and others don't seem to show interest. For example, some staff may understand that acknowledgement of traditional territory is protocol and acting on that protocol is a sign of respect for the local First Nations. However, other district staff can seem perplexed at the idea of acknowledging traditional territory and can't even name the larger First Nation let alone the local Bands. A culturally safe administrator or teacher acknowledges local territory whether they have Indigenous students in their audience or not.

Ramsden's point that cultural safety is *an outcome* makes sense because Aboriginal students' sense of cultural safety in the public education system will only come about when school district staff has increased their own awareness and understanding of colonial history, make space for historical truth telling in curriculum, and find ways to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing in their classrooms. Ramsden affirms that "Cultural Safety is about the nurse rather than the patient" (p. 6) or, in this case about the teacher, and not the student.

> "That is, the enactment of Cultural Safety is about the nurse while, for the consumer, Cultural Safety is a mechanism which allows the recipient of care to say whether or not the service is safe for them to approach and use. Safety is a subjective word: deliberately chosen to give power to the consumer" (p. 6).

School district staff as allies to Indigenous peoples could not only increase cultural safety in the classroom for students with Indigenous ancestry, but could also foster alliances with non-Aboriginal students who could be exposed to both our colonial history and to Aboriginal ways of knowing. Allies to oppressed or marginalized groups acknowledge the experience of the marginalized groups and take responsibility for challenging mainstream and status quo perspectives that perpetuate ongoing oppressions in society. Public educators who understand decolonizing perspectives and introduce Indigenous knowledge in their classrooms contribute to a more just society.

6.   Research Question:

The research question that I began with is: What are the key elements that would be included in the development of an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District? As previously mentioned, other questions have emerged.

7.   Support for Aboriginal Education in the Province and District:

The high school graduation diploma in British Columbia is known as the Dogwood Certificate. The 2009/2010 school year statistics retrieved from the BC Ministry of Education website, show that 47% of Aboriginal students graduated in School District #61 compared to 80% of Non-Aboriginal students. Though the Dogwood completion rates have been increasing over the years, it is still quite concerning as Aboriginal graduation rates remain lower than that of the Non-Aboriginal population. To help address this issue, the British Columbia Ministry of Education, with guidance from the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch, has directed all school districts in the

province to develop Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements (EA) to enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students.

In the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) an EA was signed in June 2005 and is presently being reviewed for renewal. The goals of the EA and all aspects of Aboriginal education in the GVSD are overseen by the Aboriginal Education Council of the Greater Victoria School District (AEC). The AEC is representative of local First Nations, urban Aboriginal populations, Métis organizations, as well as teaching and administrative staff from the Greater Victoria School District. A cultural safety framework for the GVSD will address one or more of the goals of the district Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement by guiding teachers towards ways they may enhance the educational experience of their students by increasing their own awareness about Indigenous issues and incorporating that learning into their teaching practice.

The concept of cultural safety is used to express an approach to social service provision "that recognizes the contemporary conditions of Aboriginal people which result from their post-contact history" (Brascoupé and Waters, 2009, p.6). Although teacher education programs in BC have offered elective courses on First Nations issues, and recently the decision was made to also make these courses mandatory for any new teacher education students (Stephenhagen, 2010), that does not address the fact that we have hundreds of teachers working in public education who have no background knowledge of First Nations issues. A cultural safety framework written into the GVSD Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will give teachers this guidance.

8. **The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch of the BC Ministry of**

Education:

In British Columbia (BC), there is provincial support for Aboriginal education initiatives

through the BC Ministry of Education's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch.

Two key initiatives from this branch are the Aboriginal Education Enhancement

Agreements (EA) and Aboriginal Education Targeted Funding.

- An EA is a working agreement between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education designed to enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students. The EA establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision-making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

- Provincial funding for Aboriginal education in the B.C. public K-12 school system will increase from $52.6 million to $61.5 million in the 2010-11 school years. This funding enables school districts to deliver enhanced education programs and services for Aboriginal students who self-identify as being of Aboriginal ancestry. Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements.

The goals of the Aboriginal Education Branch are as follows:

- To improve school success for all Aboriginal students
- To increase Aboriginal voice in the public education system
- To increase knowledge of Aboriginal language, culture and history within the public school system
- To increase Aboriginal communities' involvement and satisfaction with the public school system.

9. **Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements:**

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements (EA) came from a Memorandum of

Understanding signed in 1999 by the Chiefs Action Committee, the provincial Minister

of Education, the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the President of the

BC Teachers Federation. This group acknowledged that: "British Columbia schools have not been successful in ensuring that Aboriginal students receive a quality education, one that allows these students to succeed in the larger provincial economy while maintaining ties to their culture" (BC Ministry of Education website). The MOU signed by this group led to a framework for the design of the EA, which was created by the Aboriginal Education Branch of the Provincial Ministry of Education.

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements can be viewed on the provincial website and are each unique according to their territory. The agreements are signed for a five year period and will be reviewed periodically by district teams. "Enhancement Agreements are designed to provide a framework to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal Communities are reflected within the schools. Enhancement Agreements enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students" (Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Annual Report 2006 – 2007 p.2). All 60 school districts in the province are expected to have EAs.

10.   The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement of School District #61:

The GVSD signed their first Enhancement Agreement on June 21, 2005. The goals of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement for School District 61 are as follows:

- To increase Aboriginal students' sense of place, of caring, and of belonging in the public school system;
- To honor and improve relationships between the Greater Victoria School District and the Aboriginal community and parents; and,
- To increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and culture;
- To increase success of all Aboriginal students.

One of the four goals of our district's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

(EA) is "to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and

culture". In my opinion, this is a key goal; however, its interpretation needs exploration.

Is the goal to understand the brutal colonial history where imperializing nations imposed

oppressive legislation to dispossess the Indigenous populations of land and resources

while populating with immigrants who were escaping oppressions in their own

homelands? Or is the goal to perpetuate the mythical history of the peaceful settler where

immigrants brought "civilization" to the welcoming "Indians" and negotiated fair treaties

(Regan 2010)? Of course, an Indigenous analysis would dictate that basic awareness and

understanding of colonial history is essential knowledge for all Canadians. Indeed, I do

often wonder how anyone could question the lack of Aboriginal parent involvement in

public schools if they do not understand the history of the residential school system.

Strategies for actions written into the goals would provide guidance for public educators

to see themselves in the goals of the district EA.

11.   The Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria:

During the development of the first EA, the GVSD formed an Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreement Advisory Committee made up of educators, administrators,

Local First Nations Chiefs, parents and local Aboriginal-serving agencies. Their hard

work culminated in the signing of the first district EA in June 2005. This group is now

called the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria and they meet monthly

during the school year. At this point, the Aboriginal Education Council is overseeing the

EA renewal process as the five year time period for the first agreement was reached in June 2010.

12.   The Aboriginal Nations Education Division of Greater Victoria

In School District #61, the Aboriginal Nations Education Division (ANED) offers culturally supportive programming in schools via the provincial targeted funding program. ANED programs include: teachers; teacher assistant positions; student assistant positions; student counselors; art and culture teachers; and, cultural awareness programs. The key feature for ANED programs is that they are above and beyond any core program offered in a school. The coordinator of ANED, Ms. Nella Nelson, has held this position for two decades. Ms. Nelson was interviewed for this research as she holds historic information on district and provincial support for Aboriginal education initiatives. Also, Ms. Nelson began her career as a teacher in the district thirty years ago and has helped to lay the foundation of support by protecting programs, building relationships and amassing a large resource library of Aboriginal specific books, games, puzzles, DVDs, CDs, and posters. The district's cultural awareness program offers guidance and direction to district staff looking to bring Aboriginal culture and guests into their schools, as well as honorarium payments for those guests.

School District 61 support for Aboriginal Education initiatives goes back to before provincial targeted funding programs were in place. Ms. Nelson is able to give a broad perspective because of her long history in the district.

> "When I came into this position 21 years ago my budget was 660k and the district at that time was not getting money for Aboriginal education. It was

before the Sullivan commission came in, before targeted funding. I've always acknowledged this district for really having foresight. And, when the target came in, of course then they used the target for ANED, but they still kick in a lot of money. I think that's huge, and to be honest I don't think I would still be here if it wasn't like that because it's really hard to fight the system".

The combination of the provincial Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch's support for the creation of our district Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement and the provision of targeted funding for ANED and long standing local school district support have created a foundation on which real change can take place. The B.C. Teachers Federation has some progressive policy statements regarding Aboriginal Education, as highlighted in the literature review section of this document.

Bringing Aboriginal cultures into the classrooms is certainly important and Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum must continue and increase in practice. This thesis contends that we must also explore dominant cultural paradigms in order to fully understand the Indigenous-Settler relationship. It should come to no surprise that settler culture has done the most harm to Indigenous culture. The residential school system, the Indian Act, the public education system, the child welfare system, and other mainstream societal structures are not Aboriginal culture; they are expressions of settler culture. Dominant settler culture is based on Eurocentric standards and norms that are entrenched in patriarchal, capitalist, heterosexist, racist and Christian worldviews that have caused a lot of harm in the colonized world and have to be acknowledged for their negative impact. A cultural safety framework is an examination of power in our society, and in our public education system and it could help clarify ways that public educators could engage with the goals of the district Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Orientation

"The classroom for all its limitations does remain a location of possibility"
(bell hooks 1994, p. 206).

1. Critical and Indigenous Analysis of the Public Education System:

I understand that our colonial history has been hidden in public education and other

mainstream venues such as the media and political arenas. While new teacher education

programs now have required courses on Indigenous issues, many public educators still

have little or limited knowledge about our colonial history. As a woman of Indigenous

ancestry and an employee of a mainstream institution like the public education system, I

can get incredibly frustrated and equally disheartened to meet with colonial apathy, or as

Smith (2006) says "benign neglect" (p. 62) from public educators. I understand that this

is not something that we would have been taught in school and it is generally, pretty

unpleasant territory to explore. Paulette Regan has offered some refreshingly honest

critiques of the issue of colonial denial of our horrific history. She writes:

> "Philosopher Trudy Govier writes about the Canadian propensity to deny by
> ignoring or minimizing already known truths because they "are incompatible
> with our favoured picture we have of ourselves", but she reminds us that
> "through patterns of colonization, land use, racism, disregard for treaties, and
> the residential school system, we are linked significantly to the institutions that
> are responsible … As members of the society and as citizens of the state, we
> share responsibility for these things. We …are beneficiaries of the injustices".
> Viewed in this way, our willingness to negotiate outstanding historical claims
> with Indigenous people is mediated by our willful ignorance and our selective
> denial of those aspects of our relationship that threaten our privilege and power
> – the colonial status quo" (2010 p. 35).

This research elucidates how pervasive a Eurocentric perspective is within the public

education system; how inappropriate it is when applied to Aboriginal people; and how

it's been resisted by Aboriginal people; hence, negative statistics are produced. This

research also presents a framework from which public educators can begin to explore

their own personal and professional commitment to looking under the rock that is our

colonial history, for therein lies another perspective. In essence, my vision has been that

if the educators increase their understanding of Indigenous issues, they will:

- Incorporate more Indigenous perspectives into their classroom curriculum.
- Have more understanding of their Indigenous students and their families.
- Increase Indigenous student's comfort and success in the public education system.
- Influence Non-Indigenous students and their families to understand Indigenous issues and perspectives.

I believe that given the guidance and resources, school district staff could become allies

in the Indigenous quest for self-determination. There are approximately 20 thousand

students in the Greater Victoria School District and of this population, there are

approximately 1,400 students identified as having Aboriginal ancestry. Clearly, teachers

who bring Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms could influence a new

generation of Canadians who would at least have an understanding of the historic and

contemporary impacts of colonialism on Indigenous populations. Young Canadians who

are equipped with this knowledge may make a difference in the Indigenous quest self-

determination by becoming allies. Self determination for Indigenous Peoples is a matter

of social justice and of honoring our children, past, present and future.

2. Indigenous Worldview:

In 1995, I earned a bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Victoria

where the program encouraged feminist, First Nations and structural analysis of social

issues. This orientation has guided my social work practice over the years as a social

worker for an Aboriginal housing association; a supervisor of an Aboriginal child welfare agency; and as a school counselor for students with Aboriginal ancestry. I began my graduate studies in 2008. In the MSW Indigenous Specialization Program, we explored the more intricate tactics of colonialism where cognitive and cultural imperialism are analyzed and key principles of Indigenous knowledge are highlighted. I knew that grave social injustices took place in our country regarding the Indigenous people. I knew that our government created policies that legislated away the rights and freedoms of Indigenous people. And, I knew that there seemed to be general support in society to uphold them. What I understood deeper from my graduate studies, were the principles of Indigenous world view: we are all connected; there is more than one truth; and, we experience life through our location in space. Through examining these principles I see how incredibly important, how essential, it is to revive them, to make space for them.

3. Indigenous Feminism:

Indigenous and feminist analysis of mainstream society understands that imperialist nations from Europe colonized occupied lands and enforced their standards and norms on the Indigenous peoples. Standards and norms in European nations at the time of contact were those where women and children had few rights and were considered property of men under the patriarchal laws in their societies. Wealth was not evenly distributed in European societies and they had entrenched class systems with both extreme wealth and extreme poverty. Hence, the standards and norms of patriarchy and classism, combined with white supremacy, Christianity and heterosexism were brought to Canada with colonists. This information is important to know as the public school system was built on

the standards and norms of British society at the time of contact. They still permeate our public institutions and conflict with Indigenous worldviews.

4. Decolonizing Perspectives:

An Indigenous perspective to Canadian history is that Canada and Canadian society was created at the expense of the Indigenous peoples. Discussions about Indigenous Rights can be uncomfortable at times as often there is a range of subtle to blatant racist attitudes. It doesn't take long before defenses are raised and people speak of their family's long history in Canada. Anger replaces fear as the idea that non-Indigenous people may feel the threat of their own dispossession as Indigenous peoples continue to fight for reclamation of lands and self-determination. I believe that this is the worst case scenario that shuts down an empathetic connection to Indigenous self determination. As an Indigenous person, it can feel emotionally unsafe to engage in conversations with co-workers, friends and some family, about Indigenous issues.

Canadian culture is steeped in Eurocentric standards and norms. Indigenous knowledge is all about relationships: to land, to our Ancestors, to each other as humans, and to "All our Relations" which are anything we need for survival: water, air, plants, and animals. As so clearly stated in Smith (2006), "Indigenous peoples have philosophies which connect humans to the environment and each other and which generate principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful and possible" (p 105). Indigenous ways of being in the world are evolutionary in that they evolve with time. There is no romantic vision of going back to pre-contact times because that is just not realistic. However, acknowledgement of

colonial processes and their impact, righting the wrongs of history, and, support for

Indigenous self-determination, will always be one of the goals of Indigenous Peoples.

Allies will need to "do a bit of work" to look under the rock that is our colonial history.

An Indigenous friend of mine used to joke that she would like to simply hand out

bibliographies to people who don't have even the faintest understanding of an Indigenous

perspective to history. As an Indigenous woman, she would grow tired of having to "lay

the trail of bread crumbs" for people to follow:

1. People with Settler ancestry fled oppressive and traumatic conditions in Europe;
2. They oppressed the Indigenous peoples when they got here;
3. It's not going well for the Indigenous peoples;
4. Settlers benefit from the oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Within this simple summation lie the reasons why Indigenous people are over-

represented in all negative social statistics. My friend's point was: it's tiring for

Indigenous peoples to educate mainstream Canadians about our history of persecution in

our own homelands. It would be immensely helpful to Indigenous struggles for self-

determination, if mainstream Canada knew this information. As an Indigenous person

who "followed a trail of bread crumbs" just twenty years ago and as someone who has

been trying to make sense of the complexities of colonization as a deeply personal,

political and academic interest, I understand that Canadians will need guidance,

compassion and patience. A cultural safety framework is an examination of power

between professionals and those they serve and can be a tool to help guide anti-

oppressive practices in public education. Anti-oppressive theory is further discussed on

Chapter 3: Literature Review:

1. Introduction:

Literature reviewed for my research topic explored key areas of colonization, Western

and Indigenous education and cultural safety. An historical perspective provides context

for the situation of negative education statistics for Indigenous students. It seems that any

negative social statistic can be contextualized with an examination of our colonial

history. A review of literature pertaining to the history of the public education system

highlights the development of this system as a strategy of social control built on the

British education system with all the standards and norms of that culture. Prevailing

social norms excluded Indigenous peoples from the public education system (Barman, et

al 1992; James 2006; AFN 2008), as well as immigrants from non-European countries

such as China and Japan. Eurocentric standards and norms permeate the public education

system and are inappropriate for Indigenous students (Battiste 2000; James 2006). My

research explored literature that supports Indigenous perspectives of education and

includes information on the background and application of the Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreements in the BC public education system. Finally, literature

pertaining to cultural safety examined the history of this concept, its application in

nursing, child welfare and post-secondary education.

Literature pertaining to colonial processes highlights what Coates and Wade (2002)

identify as the four discursive operations of language. This is "a framework for critical

analysis and research, prevention and intervention that takes into account the conditions

that enable personalized violence, the actions of perpetrators and victims, and the

language used in presenting those actions" (Coates and Wade 2002, abstract). They are:

1. Conceal the violence
2. Obfuscate perpetrator's responsibility
3. Concealing victim's resistance
4. Blaming and pathologizing victims

Coates and Wade write that language use is "indispensable to the acquisition and exercise

of power" (p.3). And, that any group able to publicize its perspective in "public

discursive space often use linguistic representations of persons, events and social

relations to formulate profound differences in status, influence, standard of living, and

social security as natural and necessary" (p.3). I find it disturbing that writers

strategically use language, consciously or not, as a means to perpetuate oppressive forces

in society. It is concerning to know that there are nefarious forces at play: forces that use

trickery to perpetuate power imbalances. As Coates and Wade note "These individuals

are not mindless automatons or puppets of the state, but social agents whose discursive

actions variously reflect, or depart from institutional policies". (p.4) I bring these

thoughts and emotions into the process of analyzing literature for this section and try to

counter colonialism by:

1. Naming the violence (colonial processes that dispossessed Indigenous people from their land and resources; oppressed cultural expression; and, imposed a foreign worldview);
2. Clarify the perpetrator's responsibility (colonially inherited legislations that continue the oppression; settler denial of their role in perpetuating colonialism);
3. Highlight colonial resistance (decolonizing research scholars; cultural safety paradigm; Indigenous methodologies); and,
4. Aboriginal worldviews as different but equal (Indigenous worldview).

2. Colonization:

> **"The ultimate outcome of colonization is when the colonized believe the stories told to them about themselves by their colonizer" (Ramsden 2002, p. 29).**

A critical analysis of our colonial history gives a context to negative education statistics for Indigenous students. An historical perspective provides a foundational knowledge base on which to make sense of Indigenous students' poor outcomes in the public education system; as well as, the reluctance of Indigenous families to engage with the public education system. Colonization has been examined by both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous writers. Also, the impact of colonization on other Indigenous groups provides a global perspective to the strategies and outcomes that have created similar negative social statistics in other "common wealth" countries, those countries colonized by Great Britain.

Colonization is a tricky thing. It not only dispossesses the Indigenous population from their land and resources, it colonizes stolen land with a new population and can also "colonize the minds" of both the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous populations so that the process can be carried on unconsciously until it is considered normal.

> The manipulation of New Zealand history is a clear example of management of knowledge by a colonial system of information dissemination. The fact that student and graduate nurses could not therefore make the correlation between historical events, political agendas, economics and ill health was not their fault but rather the fault lay with those individuals who had the power to design the policy resulting in the curricula of educational institutions. Issues of deprivation of economic resources, land, people and identity, that is, of colonization, have major health and disease outcomes which had remained largely unrecognized and unanalyzed in nursing and midwifery education until challenged by the ideas of Cultural Safety (Ramsden 2002, p. 14).

There needs to be a critical examination of dispossession. Why was it done? How does it continue? How can it stop? What is my role? Colonized minds need to know that assimilation was never the desire of the Indigenous peoples. Historic and current resistance movements need to be highlighted. It's a fact that wherever you are standing in North America you are on the traditional territory of Indigenous people. How do people understand the transition from Indigenous self-determination, to Indigenous dispossession?

An Indigenous perspective of the history of Canada acknowledges, irrefutably, that colonizing nations have dispossessed and disadvantaged all Indigenous groups in their own homelands (York 1989; Berger 1991; Milloy 1999; Miller 1996; Reagan 2010). Imperialistic nations from Europe sought land and resources from the places they landed and strategically set out to remove title and people from lands. This dispossession occurred in other areas of the globe where colonizing nations landed: Australia; New Zealand; Africa; as well as North and South America. Dispossession of land and resources has led to a situation where Indigenous Peoples find themselves over-represented in virtually all negative social statistics. Settlers and immigrants to Canada often overlook Indigenous voices as their desire to live here overrides their courage to address social injustice. Ironically, many early settlers to Canada were escaping injustice in their own homelands where religious persecution and lack of opportunity for land ownership left many people oppressed and at times unsafe in their own ancestral lands. Deborah Chansonneuve (2005) highlights some of the social conditions happening in

Europe during the time when Europeans were first arriving on our shores between late 1400 to the end of 1800.

> "From 1257 to 1816, 500 years of terror were decreed by Papal authority under the "Inquisition" in which over one million people, mostly women and homosexuals, were brutally murdered. Written by a priest, the Inquisitor's handbook entitled *Malleus Maleficarum* recommended that heretics (non-believers in Christianity) and witches be "often and frequently exposed to torture" before burning them alive" (p.10).

The hierarchical social conditions in Europe, for anyone who was not a Christian, wealthy, white, heterosexual and male, would have been incredibly oppressive. Why else would droves of people leave their ancestral homelands to go somewhere they had never been, many with no plans to ever return? Ironically, those escaping state and religious persecution brought all their standards and norms to North American shores and imposed them on the Indigenous peoples they encountered. Of course, imperialistic nations were invested in encouraging immigration to their "new found lands", as populating is a key strategy of colonization. Colonists came to Canada from across the Atlantic Ocean with promises for land ownership. How unfortunate that consideration was not given to the fact that they were being given Indigenous land, and would be imposing foreign standards and norms without the slightest discomfort with their own sense of entitlement. The opportunity to exchange the best of each other's culture, which existed at the time of contact, was missed.

Public educators would benefit from examining the tactics of colonization and the historic and ongoing impact that it has had on the Indigenous students and families that are in their schools. Critical examination of colonization, if undertaken by both

Indigenous peoples and Non-Indigenous peoples alike, supports the notion that allies to social justice not only exist, but can support Indigenous efforts at self-determination.

While at a health conference in Whitehorse, Yukon Territories in 1990, lawyer, author and Native rights advocate, Thomas Berger, (1991), was speaking to five hundred health professionals about the health issues in the Indigenous population in northern Canada. The people he was speaking to were well aware of the "pathologies that threaten the lives of Native persons and undermine the social life of Native communities" (p. 26) and so Berger decided to forgo a discussion of preventions and cures. He writes: "So what could I say? I decided to go back to the beginning, to try to trace the malaise to its origins in the coming of the Europeans to the New World", (p.26). Berger takes an historical look at the Americas since their "discovery". His account of the "slaughter and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples throughout North, Central and South America reveal a searing pattern of almost unimaginable duplicity and inhumanity"(back cover). His perspective examines social issues with a critical analysis of colonialism. Non-indigenous writers like Berger; Paulette Regan (2010); and, Geoffrey York, (1989) tell authentic stories of the Indigenous experience in Canada and address the blatant social injustice inherent in these stories. They are allies to Indigenous peoples.

There is a plethora of evidence that colonial governments have used racist and oppressive strategies to carry out the dispossession of Indigenous land title and rights. Jensen and Brooks, (1991), edit a collection of articles that touch on a range of topics such as education, the constitution, language, culture and activism. One article written by Chief

Joe Mathias and Gary R. Yabsley (1986) examines historical provincial and federal legislation that "has repaired and restricted First Nations in every conceivable manner" (p.40). A collection of essays by authors exploring the issues of colonial fall-out is edited by Diane Engelstad and John Bird (1992). This book acknowledges the challenges of "journeying from discord and mistrust towards reconciliation and respect" (p. 225). In the book's final chapter contributor Tim Schouls states, "we could encourage all Canadians to commit themselves to a process of fair negotiations leading to meaningful self-government for all Canada's aboriginal peoples". He continues in the next paragraph to state words that are healing to the Indigenous heart: "Two hundred years of insisting that Aboriginal peoples adopt a foreign way of life must end now. Today! We must admit we were wrong and then go on together"(p.228). Indeed, if we are to authentically begin the healing process, acknowledgement is necessary, but action is essential.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was a Canadian Royal Commission established in 1991 following the Oka crisis in the summer of 1990 as a federal government initiative in response to Aboriginal concerns. The broad mandate of the Commission was translated into a large and complex research agenda. The commission had four theme areas: governance; land and economy; social and cultural issues; and the North. The commission culminated in a final report of 4000 pages, published in 1996 and had a section on the issue of education. The report highlighted the desire from Aboriginal communities to have quality and culturally relevant education for their children.

> They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision.

> Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically (p. 404). Retrieved from: http://caid.ca/RRCAP3.5.pdf

It has been fifteen years since the RCAP report and the majority of Aboriginal youth still do not complete high school and those that do leave the school system without the language and cultural knowledge of their people. This is a key document in an examination of Aboriginal education in Canada as it is the federal governments' own statement of the situation and their own published recommendations to address past harmful policies created by the state. In the opening chapter of the RCAP, under the heading *A Word from Commissioners*, the vision for alliance building and hopes for a more socially just, and reconciled relationship between Indigenous and Settler peoples is evident.

> Canada is a test case for a grand notion - the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences. The story of Canada is the story of many such peoples, trying and failing and trying again, to live together in peace and harmony. But there cannot be peace or harmony unless there is justice. It was to help restore justice to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and to propose practical solutions to stubborn problems, that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established. In 1991, four Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal commissioners were appointed to investigate the issues and advise the government on their findings. The key is to reverse the assumptions of assimilation that still shape and constrain Aboriginal life chances - despite some worthy reforms in the administration of Aboriginal affairs. To bring about this fundamental change, Canadians need to understand that Aboriginal peoples are nations. That is, they are political and cultural groups with values and lifeways distinct from those of other Canadians. They lived as nations - highly centralized, loosely federated, or small and clan-based - for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. As nations, they forged trade and military alliances among themselves and with the new arrivals. To this day, Aboriginal people's sense of confidence and well-being as individuals remains tied to the strength of their nations. Only as members of restored nations can they reach their potential in the twenty-first century. We hope that our report will also be a

guide to the many ways Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can begin - right now - to repair the damage to the relationship and enter the next millennium on a new footing of mutual recognition and respect, sharing and responsibility. Retrieved from: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp#chp3

I have a vision where injustices perpetrated against the Indigenous populations are exposed in a most unlikely place: the public education system. In school, children learn about "explorers" setting out to find a "new world" and how people from other continents "settled" here. I would venture to state that most Canadians would agree that Indigenous peoples are over represented in negative social statistics, but why don't they ask: why? Who benefits from the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples? Do we really buy the indoctrination that the Indigenous populations needed to be "civilized"? How "civilized" was the Inquisition? We have come a long way at challenging and countering the myths that have supported social injustices like sexism, racism and homophobia; it is time to examine the myths perpetrated against Indigenous peoples.

Taiaiake Alfred (2009) takes a direct approach to naming the privilege that dominant groups enjoy at the expense of the Indigenous populations in the following statement:

> "Most Canadians are completely unaware of this history. This is lamentable, but not surprising, given that a common characteristic of colonial societies is the settlers' entrenchment in irrational notions of racial and cultural superiority. Canadian culture and dominant notions forming the Canadian nationalist self-perception are loaded with colonial privileges and the most ludicrous self-deceptive lies. ….The unquestioned normalcy of the set of uninformed and fundamentally racist beliefs and assumptions held by non-indigenous Canadians must be challenged for decolonization to begin in earnest" (p. 46).

Imagine the healing that can take place if the Greater Victoria School District can lead the way in making a commitment to understanding an authentic Indigenous perspective to

Canadian history. How would it help the Indigenous children in their classrooms to have

their perspectives presented in a mainstream classroom? How would it benefit the

Indigenous struggle for self-determination to have all students, Indigenous and Settler,

learn the truth about colonization and its impacts? As American author and activist, bell

hooks (1994) writes, "the classroom for all its limitations does remain a location of

possibility" (p. 206).

3. Education: Western and Indigenous Perspectives

> **"We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives, and property rights are considered more important than people, the great triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered". Martin Luther King Jr. (In Broom, 2007)**

The first public school in Victoria, Craigflower Schoolhouse, opened in March 1855

which means that the public school system has only been in existence for the past 154

years. In historic terms, this is not very long ago. The Canadian public school system was

just taking root in the Eastern parts of Canada where colonization had a stronger hold

because European contact occurred there earlier than in the west. Before the public

education system, families were responsible for the education of their children and in

settler culture that primarily revolved around agrarian teachings: how to run a house and

farm. As the industrial revolution gained momentum, trades apprentices became a form

of schooling. Canadian historian, Chad Gaffield (1987) writes of the founding purposes

of the public education system, as immigration expanded cities and social relationships

became more complex.

> The characteristic conviction of the school promoters was that mass schooling could be an effective instrument for instilling appropriate modes of thought and behaviour into children; in their minds, the purpose of mass schooling did not primarily involve the acquisition of academic knowledge, School systems were designed to solve a wide variety of problems ranging from crime to poverty, and from idleness to vagrancy. Educators related these potential and actual problems to 3 main causes: the impact of constant and substantial immigration; the transition from agricultural to industrial capitalism; and processes of state formation in which citizens came to exercise political power. While all 3 of these causes played key roles in the minds of school promoters across Canada, the relative importance that each educator attributed to them depended on the regional and cultural context in which the school promoter functioned (p. 249).

Gaffield points out that the foundational purpose to public education was social control. Certainly, it has evolved to address the needs of our market economy but the element of social control exists with the absence of authentic Indigenous perspectives. Non-Indigenous educator, Catherine Broom (2009), writes of the possibilities of shifting public education from mass schooling for the purpose of social efficiency to "a comprehensive education that aims at developing mind, body and heart in a positive and nurturing environment" (p.10). Gaffield and Broom both highlight the evolutionary reality of culture, and specifically the culture of public education. There are many possibilities within this movement

Certainly any research about Indigenous peoples in Canada and the public education system must include literature on the national assimilation agenda that was the residential school system. There has been much written about the history and impact that this system has had on Indigenous peoples who attended the schools, and those who had their children forcibly removed from their homes and communities including: Crey and Fournier, 1998; J.R. Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; & Haig-Brown, 1999, to name a few.

Also, the national Indigenous political organization, The Assembly of First Nations,

offers reams of information on their website www.afn.ca/residentialschools/history.html/.

All Canadians need to hear these horrific stories no matter how uncomfortable it may be

to face our "National Crime" as named by Milloy (1999). Canadians need to understand

the devastating impact that removing children from their families and placing them in

terrifying institutions would have on Indigenous peoples. And, as if that wouldn't be

trauma enough, add to that the stories of survivors who were beaten, humiliated, and

sexually abused. Public educators must know this information to have any understanding

of the Indigenous experience in Canada. William Mussell (2008) writes that:

> "…knowledge from First Nations' points of view must be incorporated into
> primary and secondary school curricula so that Canadians from an early age can
> learn to regard Aboriginal people with respect, become familiar with the
> historical realities of their lives, and grow to working together in building this
> multicultural country" (p. 337).

Public school administration and staff who know about this system, and are able to

empathize with the horror it inflicted, would not question why it seems difficult to engage

Indigenous parents with their children's school.

In the following excerpt from the Christian Aboriginal Infrastructure Development

website, there evidence of truth telling and alliance building. Acknowledgement and

alliances are healing to the Indigenous heart. This statement is also an example of the

discursive use of language identified by Coates and Wade in that it does not hide the

violence, blame the victims, or obfuscate the perpetrators. It is clear and honest.

> Canada was colonized at the expense of its Aboriginal Peoples. The British
> started the forced assimilation and cultural genocide of Aboriginal people in

North America but the federated Dominion of Canada continued the policy after Canada's 1867 confederation. Canada's official policy of forced Aboriginal assimilation started with its first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, and used four primary tools to destroy Aboriginal culture and infrastructure. They were: wardship, the Indian Act, forced relocation and forced residential schooling. Central in the Government of Canada's plan was the utilization of the Christian church. The Canadian Department of Indian Affairs oversaw Christian mission work to "civilize" Aboriginal people and mandated most of the residential school administration to Christian churches.

In the early 1900's, as many as 50 percent of the Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their parents and communities died each year in the care of Canada's Indian residential school system. There are conflicting reports as to when Indian residential schooling stopped in Canada, but they were all closed by 1996. Many Aboriginal people died at the hands of Canada and its religious groups as a result of forced assimilation policies and the Indian residential school system. There was no, and will never be an, excuse for atrocities committed by religious groups and non-Aboriginal Canadians against Aboriginal people. CAID is about facing the truth, reconciling Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rights, and rebuilding what was destroyed; Aboriginal societal infrastructure and a shared destiny in Canada. This can all be accomplished through a process of meaningful consultation. Retrieved from: Christian Aboriginal Infrastructure Development website: http://caid.ca/about_us.html

In historic terms Canada is a young country at 142 years. With initial contact of European explorers occurring within the 100 years before Confederation, it's safe to say that it's only been about two hundred years since Indigenous populations were completely self-determining. Michael Anthony Hart (2003) writes that, "Colonization is driven by a worldview that embraces domination, self-righteousness and greed" (p. 24). Colonizing nations such as England and France came with a mindset where the standards and norms were patriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy. Hart continues by stating that:

> As the economic and political control over the people forms and increases, the colonizers introduce their worldviews to oppress the Aboriginal peoples' cultures and act to destroy Aboriginal social institutions. The colonizers' desire to oppress Aboriginal cultures is based primarily upon two things. First, they hold a self-righteous stance that their views and actions are the proper and best ones to be held by all peoples of the world. In turn, Aboriginal worldviews are trivialized, our histories are rewritten

from the eyes of the colonizers, and our values are demeaned and manipulated. The second reason lies with the colonizers' need to legitimize their dominion over Aboriginal peoples' land. If the Aboriginal peoples' cultures keep them tied to the land, then this connection needs to be severed so that the colonizers' claim over the land and its resources can be confirmed (p. 25).

It appears that a distinct strategy of imperialistic nations is to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their land (colonization), and to impose their worldview (cognitive imperialism). Had the intentions been anything other than colonization, there may have been an opportunity for two vastly distinctive cultures to explore each other's worldviews. As pointed out by Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria Jr. in his article *Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples*, "the opportunity existed during the first several centuries in which the two groups encountered each other" (in Waters, 2004 p. 4). Instead of the portrayal of Indigenous peoples as inferior or primitive beings, the opportunity to discuss philosophical worldviews would have clearly identified the basic principle of Indigenous thought: that we are all related to all things. From this principle, family and community relations, environmental and economic perspectives could have been shared and much learning could have occurred.

Dr. Gregory Cajete (1994)'s book, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education,* speaks of Indigenous principles where relationship and context are key concepts. This scholarly work identifies dozens of foundational characteristics of Indigenous education and challenges the reader to create "new structures, new foundations, and new realities in contemporary Indian education" (p. 32). Cajete acknowledges the imposition of a Eurocentric education system as part of the overall colonial process and compares and contrasts it with these foundational characteristics.

However, he highlights the ever evolving process of Indigenous worldview when he invites the reader to take the information presented and create new realities for education theories. He writes: "The key lies in our collective ability to create the contexts and to erect a new expression of Indian Education in a twenty-first century world" (p.32).

A key figure in Indigenous theory and practice is American scholar, Vine Deloria Jr. His last publication, *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Man* (2006), speaks to the essential element of acknowledging spirit in Indigenous world view and theory. His work reminds us that Indigenous approaches to healing are holistic and that Indigenous norms in this context do not equate with mainstream culture's medical model approach to healing.

Aboriginal scholars such as Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett (2004), offer additional Indigenous perspectives to education.

> Aboriginal peoples have a history of studying all things around us that we interact with and relate to such as the earth, animals, plants, water, air and the sun. Traditionally, research has been conducted to seek, counsel and consult; to learn about medicines, plants and animals; to scout and scan the land; to educate and pass on knowledge; and to inquire about cosmology. The seeking of knowledge is usually solution-focused and has an underlying purpose of survival (p. 7).

Indigenous principles such as relationships, connectedness and balance could benefit the public education system. It's not enough to bring Indigenous cultural expressions into the public education system without understanding the foundational principles. The Aboriginal approach to education is more than a difference in perspective. At a fundamental cultural level, the difference between traditional Aboriginal and Western

thought is the difference in the perception of one's relationship with the universe and the

Creator (Mussel 2008). Goulet (2001) writes that, "effective Aboriginal education

addresses issues of culture and language, community values and norms, and power

relations" (p.70).

Cindy Blackstock (2004) also points out the reality that Indigenous peoples were a highly

functioning society pre-contact and education was essential to our survival. She also

speaks of the enduring spirit of Indigenous peoples as we continue to resist the imposition

of a foreign worldview.

> For thousands of years we have asked our own questions and found our own
> answers based on the great knowledge of our ancestors. For millennia, peoples
> of different generations held this knowledge in a sacred trust ensuring its eternal
> perpetuity. Our ancestors must have known that a time would come when many
> of our peoples would die as they did during colonization and others would be
> denied the cultural gifts of their ancestors as they were during residential
> schools because our ancestors ensured that the strength of the knowledge and
> values were so strong that they endured these troubled times to bless the care of
> Aboriginal children today (p.1).

A key book in the examination of Indigenous education research is *The Circle Unfolds:*

First Nations Education in Canada. Edited by Battiste and Barman (1995), this book

offers fifteen chapters from Indigenous and Non-Indigenous writers on the topic of

schooling Aboriginal children; redefinitions of essential subject areas like science; and

helps to define what Indigenous education could be. One author in this book, Eber

Hampton, "feels that Indian education must enhance Aboriginal consciousness of what it

means to be an Indian, thus empowering and enriching individual and collective lives"

(xv). He identifies that mainstream schools are "schooling for assimilation" and offers

that traditional educations by Indigenous peoples should be "schooling for self-

determination" (p. 9). It is clear that there are many authors who recognize that understanding Indigenous history is essential for any teachers working with Indigenous peoples. I offer that this background is essential for any teacher teaching any child in Canada, because the one commonality that Canadians have, regardless of their ancestral ethnicities, is that we are in the traditional lands of the Indigenous peoples of this country. There is a hidden history that needs to be told for all of us to find our collective peace.

Certainly there are many non-Indigenous organizations that understand that Indigenous perspectives in public education are necessary. The Canadian Society for the Study of Education is the largest organization of professors, students, researchers and practitioners in education in Canada. "CSSE is the major national voice for those who create educational knowledge, prepare teachers and educational leaders, and apply research in the schools, classrooms and institutions of Canada"(http://www.csse-scee.ca/csse). One of their associations, The Association of Canadian Deans of Education, has recently signed an Accord on Indigenous Education, developed under the leadership of Jo-ann Archibald; John Lundy; Cecelia Reynolds and Lorna Williams (2010). This accord is inspiring and supports Indigenous hopes and dreams of a different experience in the public education system.

> The time is right for a concerted and cooperative effort that creates transformational education by rejecting the "status quo," moving beyond "closing the gap" discourse, and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and their communities. At the same time, ACDE recognizes that it has a role and responsibility to expand educators' knowledge about and understanding of Indigenous education. The processes of colonization have either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture, and have contributed significantly to the low levels of educational attainment and high rates of social issues such as suicide,

incarceration, unemployment, and family or community separation
(http://www.cssescee.ca/docs/associations/acde/acde_indigenouseducationaccor
d_en.pdf).

The BC Teacher's Federation website also highlights this organization's understanding
that Indigenous perspectives in public education are necessary for student success. They
have a number of very progressive statements in their policies relating to Aboriginal
Education. They are supportive of local Indigenous involvement; hiring teachers with
Indigenous ancestry; bringing Indigenous perspectives into the classrooms; Aboriginal
Education Enhancement Agreements; and encourage members to arrange and partake in
professional development opportunities that would increase their understanding of
Indigenous issues. So, there appears to be foundational literature that supports the
development of a cultural safety agreement for the Greater Victoria School District. It
may be seen as an action piece to the policy already in place.

Another document examined for this literature review was The State of Aboriginal
Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success, by the Canadian
Council on Learning (2009). This document offers an Indigenous model for measuring
success as current measurement "focus on the discrepancies in educational attainment
…and often overlook the many aspects of learning that are integral to an Aboriginal
perspective on learning" (p. 4). The Canadian Council on Learning's Aboriginal
Learning Centre worked with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to represent models
of their learning in a national context. Common traits include a holistic and lifelong
framework.

It is clear that there are authors, advocates, activists, national and provincial efforts focusing on the issue of Indigenous peoples and public education. There are 615 First Nations across Canada, comprising 10 distinct larger Indigenous language families and speaking at least 60 different Indigenous languages. The information for public educators to become culturally safe is available and policies are already in place to support these efforts. I am hopeful that a cultural safety agreement can provide direction in School District 61.

4. Cultural Safety:

Cultural Safety is an educational framework for the analysis of power relationships between health professionals and those they serve (Ramsden 2002).

"Cultural Safety" was a phrase first coined by a Maori nursing student lamenting to her nursing instructor, Irihapeti Ramsden, that discussion and concern about legal safety, ethical safety, and safe knowledge, "were all very well to expect from graduate nurses, but what about cultural safety?" (Ramsden p. 93). Irihapeti Ramsden, a Maori nurse, educator and scholar, began developing the theory of cultural safety in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Her early publications in 1989 and 1990 legitimated the term Cultural Safety and admitted it to the nursing and midwifery lexicon. Her doctoral thesis *Cultural Safety and Nursing Education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu*, 2002, is considered a foundational document for this theory. In the introduction to her doctoral thesis, Ramsden presents the personal and political nature of her relationship to this theory.

> This thesis examines my personal history as an indigenous woman who became a nurse and my response to the educational process designed for students who did not, and could not, share my experience of the colonization of land and people and history (p. 2).

Ramsden argued for the need to address the ongoing impact of historical, social and

political processes on Maori health disparities.

> "The story of Cultural Safety is a personal story, but also a very public one. It is set in neo-colonial New Zealand, but has implications for Indigenous people throughout the world. It is about human samenesses and human differences, but is also a story about all interactions between nurses and patients because all are power laden. Finally, although it is about nursing, it is also relevant to all encounters, all exchanges between health care workers and patients" (Ramsden, iii, 2002).

The New Zealand National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) fact sheet on

cultural safety states that the theory of cultural safety upholds "political ideas of self-

determination and de-colonization of Maori people". Some of the key concepts of

cultural safety identified in the fact sheet are as follows:

- Cultural safety is an evolving term and a definition has not been finalized. However, the Nursing Council of New Zealand has defined culturally unsafe practice as "any actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual."
- Cultural safety moves beyond the concept of cultural sensitivity to analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and relationships with colonizers, as they apply to health care.
- Biculturalism is a key element and asserts the primary position of the original people of the land in relation to all subsequent arrivals. This differs from a multicultural approach that does not recognize power differences among various ethnic groups.
- Cultural safety is a political idea because it attempts to change health professionals' attitudes about their power relationships with their patients.
- Cultural safety education focuses on teaching students about colonial history and its impact on Indigenous peoples, rather than on increasing knowledge about Indigenous customs and health beliefs.
- Teaches health care students not to blame victims of historical processes for current plights.

Cultural safety has broader applications than just race. As Ramsden points out the "term

'culture' is used in its broadest sense to apply to any person or group of people who may

differ from the nurse/midwife because of socio-economic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, migrant/refugee status, religious belief or disability" (Ramsden, 1997). Ramsden also clarifies the use of the word "safety" in the term "Safety is a subjective word deliberately chosen to give power to the consumer" (p. 6).

Clearly, the theory has its roots firmly planted in the nursing theory, education and practice of New Zealand. It is an example of an Indigenous theoretical perspective developed to address the negative experiences of Indigenous peoples in a mainstream institution such as the health care system. The theory has garnered attention here in Canada and the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (ANAC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on February 4, 2010, with the Canadian Healthcare Association.

> "The MOU will form the basis for the development of courses, tools and resources that will serve to integrate cultural safety into health care workplace settings"
> www.nationtalk.ca/modules/news/article.php?storyid=40241.

"The first deliverable from this MOU will be the development and implementation of a new distance learning course for health care managers and professionals in the workplace. This new course builds on A.N.A.C.'s "*Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety in Nursing Education: A Framework for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nursing*". The nursing department at the University of Victoria has developed a free on-line course in cultural safety. It is presented in three modules. The modules are clearly designed to raise awareness of colonization and challenge practitioners to explore their own position in society. The modules are as follows:

- **Module 1** introduces the relationships between colonial history and health.

- **Module 2** explores power and privilege and the intersections of peoples' experiences in relation to marginalization, oppression, and dominance.
- **Module 3** explores the intersections of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in relation to health, health care, and healing. (UVic website).

There is a growing body of literature on the topic of cultural safety. Most literature relates to the nursing profession, yet one article explores the concept from an academic and research perspective to health. A group of nursing scholars explored the concept of cultural safety in the context of Canadian society (Anderson, et al 2003). Their findings propose how cultural safety might be rewritten to transport the concept into a Canadian "multicultural" context, which differs from New Zealand which they saw as more bicultural with two main groups: the Maori and the white settlers.

> "We argue that this concept prompts us to think critically about ourselves and our patients, and to be mindful of our own sociocultural, economic, and historical location. This critical reflection has implications on how we live, relate to one another, and practice in our various professional disciplines. On the basis of our findings, we discuss how the concept might be rewritten within a critical postcolonial and Postnational feminist discourse" (p. 196).

However, Brascoupe and Waters (2009) argue against the multicultural application as the need for cultural safety exists between Indigenous peoples of Canada and the dominant groups.

> "Multiculturalism pays scant attention to the historical path that has led to communities facing social, psychological and economic crisis as a result of colonization and discrimination, and to the government's own responsibility. By generalizing Aboriginal culture into the wider cultural mix of the modern Canadian state it diminishes and marginalizes the specific self-deterministic claims of Aboriginal people" (p.13).

I was not able to find literature that examines the concept of cultural safety as it would pertain to the public education system outside of the Brascoupe and Waters article. Clearly, the idea of education professionals undertaking a critical analysis of colonial

history would be welcomed. Ramsden approached the topic in her dissertation as she

presents a critical analysis of the public education system in the following passage:

> "In relation to the general public there were a range of issues concerning the
> state education system and the romantic mythology taught in schools regarding
> Maori and the colonial settlement of New Zealand which have and continue to
> persist. Alongside this, noticeably at the secondary school level, there were
> consistent reports of students, including significant numbers of Maori, failing in
> classes and in national examinations. A central issue here is that of professional
> responsibility, but this has seldom been raised. If the education system were to
> move away from a deficit theory towards processes of accountability and
> regular audit where performance indicators were built into the contracts of
> school principals and other education managers, what would be the outcome? I
> proposed that where specific groups of people were being failed by a service,
> and such failure can be clearly measured and demonstrated, then contracts
> should include a requirement to eliminate failure in service delivery by detailing
> an improvement in teaching skills which meet, in this instance, the specific
> needs of Maori students" (Ramsden, 2002 p. 102).

Certainly, the social statistics relating to Indigenous students and the public school

system indicate great concern and Ramsden's idea of accountability is interesting. I must

admit that I am often frustrated that more public educators don't expand their

understanding of historic facts, like the residential school system, that would provide

foundational learning about Indigenous issues with school systems. I am hopeful that a

cultural safety framework might provide incentive and direction in this area.

Steve Kopie's (2009) article in the First Peoples Child and Family Review, pays respect

to Ramsden as the founding mother of Cultural Safety and makes the following statement

about her thesis: "Her ultimately political meta-narrative to alter ignorance and arrogance

within education, government and society is one all Indigenous writers and scholars must

study and articulate across culturally unsafe places and spaces within Canada's colleges

and universities" (p. 30).

His article highlights a section of Ramsden's thesis that connects to my research topic as it makes the point that it is not just students with settler ancestry that need to understand our colonial processes, but many Indigenous children are also in need of decolonizing educational experiences as many parents will be mired by their impacts.

> Although the daughter of an historian, I had little knowledge of the political history or legislative manipulation of the ownership of Maori land and the social, economic, educational and legislative processes, which led to the poverty of Maori people … I did not understand why Maori were stereotyped as unintelligent, irresponsible and lazy. Why Maori were demonized in the media, filled the prisons and hospitals and were told that they had the same opportunities for successful social accomplishment as everyone else. My whole experience showed me that there were fundamental and brutal injustices in our society and I wanted to know how and why they got there, how they worked and how they were sustained (Ramsden 2003, in Kopie 2009, p. 30).

I particularly like how Kopie pays homage to the female spirit in his article. He writes: "Ramsden's efforts conjured up a deep appreciation for the strong women-spirit put in place to fight for the protection of cultural integrity in many Indigenous spaces" (p. 30). He also puts the concept into a Canadian context and asks Indigenous scholars to use Ramsden's concept to elucidate how "legislation like the Canadian Indian Act legitimized colonization of a naturally sovereign people" (Longboat, 2009 in Kopie, p. 33). Kopie sums up the attitude and action necessary for exposing colonial processes for both Indigenous scholars and those who ally themselves with social justice.

> It requires extraordinary good will to escape the enmeshment of historic errors, misconceptions and misinterpretations and urgent need to correct the ensuing injustices that marginalize and demean, diminish and destroy the lives of too many Indigenous peoples. Irihapeti Ramsden's movement towards a model of Cultural Safety is a superb road map to places of unity and collaboration for decolonization as well as equity of access for all of Creation's diverse richness especially within the human diversity (p. 33).

Diane Wepa (2005) is a Maori social worker and educator who edited a text on Cultural Safety for students, professionals and policy analysts. The text highlights key features of Cultural Safety including its history; terms; references and practice examples. The book offers input from a range of educators who are active in cultural safety education, research and practice. She dedicates the book to both students and educators. To students she writes, "My dream is that this text will assist you in your journey towards understanding and tolerating cultural differences in whatever field you choose to enter", to educators she "hopes that this text will be useful in your classroom and practice based teaching" (xi). Clearly the concept of cultural safety has application outside of the health care field. It is "primarily about difference, respect for difference, and power relationships between people" (p. 27). There are differences between Indigenous worldviews and settler worldviews; there needs to be respect for those differences and the differences need to be presented in the public education system. Cultural safety could be a guiding force to achieving this.

Chapter 4: Methodology

1. Research Design:

The range of research methods and methodologies to guide inquiry can be overwhelming to a novice researcher. I knew that I wanted my research to involve people who were interested in the topic of Aboriginal Education and I knew that I wanted to produce an actual document for the school district that could help guide decolonizing perspectives in public education. The purpose of this research was to define the key elements that should be included in a cultural safety agreement for the school district. This research is qualitative and is influenced by critical Indigenous and decolonizing theoretical perspectives that seek to make changes in society, not just describe them. While the primary method used in this research is an Action Research model, I used a mixed methodology that included Indigenous, decolonizing and grounded theory.

This study began with the intentions of carrying out an action research method that would result in a working document for the school district. It was altered to be more of a hybrid of action research where I largely acted on behalf of a community council to produce the document. I engaged a community group (AEC) on the topic of cultural safety and a segment of the group participated in two separate focus groups. I attended monthly AEC meetings and gave updates regarding the development of the research and in the end; the process resulted in a draft working framework for the school district. In general, with an action research methodology, the data collection, organization and analysis are done as a group. In this case, while the AEC contributed most of the data they did not participate in

the collection, organization and analysis. My intention is to continue to develop the framework with the AEC in the next school year. Data collection methods included use of two separate focus groups comprised of members from the Aboriginal Education Council; a key informant interview with the coordinator of Aboriginal Education in the school district; informal conversation with coworkers, family and friends, and research journaling. Information from these sources was analyzed using grounded theory methodology and resulted in a conceptual framework identifying key elements for a draft framework.

2. Methodological Paradigms: Qualitative/ Critical/Indigenous & Decolonizing with Anti-oppressive and Indigenous Feminist influences.

While quantitative studies are mentioned in this research to highlight the systemic issue of Aboriginal students and negative public education statistics, this research uses a qualitative research paradigm and methodology.

> The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. 13).

The public education system is socially constructed and a decolonizing perspective identifies assimilation policies and practices inappropriate for students with Aboriginal ancestry. A decolonizing research method elucidates colonial practices and identifies ways to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing. Critical theory is a social theory that focuses on critiquing and changing society with social justice as the goal (Kincheloe and

McLaren 2004). "Critical theory questions the assumptions that societies such as the

USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and nations in the European Union, for

example, are unproblematically democratic and free" (Kincheloe & McLaren, p. 90).

Critical theory does not merely describe or explore social theory, it seeks emancipatory

change.

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and
> justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender;
> ideologies; discourses; education; religion; and other social institutions; and
> cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren,
> p. 90).

As mentioned previously in this paper, cultural safety can be considered critical social

theory as it seeks to elucidate the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between

service providers and those they serve. In the case of this research topic, the imposition of

Eurocentric standards and norms in public education is the concern. A cultural safety

framework seeks to introduce other paradigms.

Indigenous research theory is still relatively new and yet is most appropriate when the

topic involves people with Indigenous ancestry. This research is done by a woman with

Aboriginal ancestry with the support of an Aboriginal-focused community council to

apply a decolonizing research paradigm to the school district's Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreement in order to bring decolonizing and Indigenous perspectives into

the public education system. As noted by Smith (2006):

> While it is more typical (with the exception of feminist research) to write about
> research within the framing of a specific scientific or disciplinary approach, it is
> surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *indigenous peoples*
> together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without
> understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply
> embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices (Smith p.2).

Further, she writes that Indigenous research is a "highly political activity" and can be

perceived as "threatening" to the research community (Smith p.140).

> While researchers are trained to conform to the models provided for them,
> indigenous researchers have to meet these criteria as well as indigenous criteria
> which can judge research 'not useful', 'not indigenous', 'not friendly', 'not
> just'. Reconciling such views can be difficult. The indigenous agenda
> challenges indigenous researchers to work across these boundaries. It is a
> challenge which provides a focus and direction which helps in thinking through
> the complexities of indigenous research (Smith p.140).

Smith identifies an Indigenous research agenda that stands out from other emancipatory

paradigms as "key words such as healing, decolonizing, spiritual, recovery" (p. 117) are

unique elements specifically essential in the Indigenous world. At the centre of the

Indigenous research agenda is the goal of self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

> Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a
> political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and
> across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It
> necessarily involves the process of transformation, of decolonization, of healing
> and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies –
> while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical
> elements of a strategic research agenda (Smith p. 116).

Self-determination and the right to quality and culturally relevant education are common

denominators in the Indigenous world that is impacted by colonial processes. I believe

that public education should present historically accurate perspectives on the Indigenous-

Settler relationship and I believe that Indigenous ways of knowing will benefit all

students. Ultimately, public education should provide cultural safety for students with

Indigenous ancestry as a matter of social justice. It is rather overdue.

In his book, *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008) writes that, "Research by and

for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together" (p. 8). He

presents an Indigenous research paradigm to guide all stages of the research process. The

book evolved from his doctoral thesis work and he pays homage to Indigenous scholars

in Canada and Australia for their contributions to the development of this paradigm. The

two key principles are:

- The shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to relationships.

- The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information (p.7).

This research method involves many different relationships. The focus is to create a

framework for cultural safety, which will be built into the district's Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreement (EA). The EA is a policy that theoretically guides practice in

the district in relation to how administrators and staff address Aboriginal education

enhancements. I have a relationship to the students I work with and their families. This

includes my own son who is currently in the public education system. I have a

relationship to my coworkers in both the ANED department and the general school

district. The Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) oversees all aspects of Aboriginal

education initiatives in the district and I have a working relationship with them as they

have agreed that I can focus my research on a way to bring the cultural safety paradigm

into the EA and have agreed to research participation with a subcommittee acting as a

focus group. My position as an employee in the school district and a member of the urban

Indigenous community in this area requires that I conduct myself with careful attention to

building relationships and being mindful that I am accountable to a wide range of groups.

A decolonizing and Indigenous research methodology is appropriate for this research

design. Decolonizing research theory challenges the superiority of Western Knowledge

and makes space for Indigenous Knowledge. Smith (1999) contests perspectives gleaned

through imperial eyes that stake a claim to what counts as knowledge, language,

literature, curriculum and the role of intellectuals (p. 65). She dismantles history, writings

and theory in order to elucidate the colonial goal of denying Indigenous presence. In a

society based on colonial processes, it is of benefit to all disciplines to maintain the

position of superiority. Colonial worldview is perpetuated in every discipline including

research.

> Informed by critical and feminist evaluations of positivism, Tuhiwai Smith
> urges researching back and disrupting the rules of the research game towards
> practices that are more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful versus racist
> practices and attitudes, ethnocentric assumptions and exploitive research
> (Lather in Smith, reviews on first page).

Smith points out how cultural superiority is maintained in the colonial process, via the

public education system.

> Colonial education came in two basic forms: missionary or religious schooling
> (which was often residential) followed later by public or secular schooling.
> Numerous accounts across nations now attest to the critical role played by
> schools in assimilating colonized people, and in the systematic, frequently
> brutal, forms of denial of indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures (p.
> 64).

The need for decolonizing perspectives in research is essential when social justice is the

aim. Colonizing perspectives are so intricately and tenaciously permeated in our culture

that the thread runs through virtually every public institution. Research done in Italy by

Italians about Italians may not require such essential attention to process. But, research

done in the colonized world demands an examination of any theory or action to elucidate

the oppression and make space for or centre Indigenous perspectives.

While the primary theoretical orientations of this research design are decolonizing and

Indigenous methods, anti-oppressive and Indigenous feminist theories also flavor the

approach. Potts and Brown (2005) state that "Being an anti-oppressive researcher means

that there is political purpose and action to your research work" (in Brown and Strega,

2005, p. 255). They identify three main tenets of anti-oppressive research practice and

propose that these tenets can be used to measure whether research is actually anti-

oppressive (p. 259). The three tenets identified are:

- Anti-oppressive Research is Social Justice and Resistance in Process and in Outcome.
- Anti-oppressive Research Recognizes That All Knowledge is Socially Constructed and Political.
- The Anti-oppressive Research Process Is All about Power and Relationships.

The authors contend that it's not enough to simply have good intentions in social research

endeavors. Anti-oppressive researchers are political activists that challenge the status quo

and our own processes and outcomes (p. 260). The tenet that all knowledge is socially

constructed requires an examination of research projects to determine whether they are

constructing a contribution to emancipatory knowledge or maintaining status quo

perspectives. With these tenets in mind, it is essential that research methods, the

relationships involved in the research, analysis, action, and evaluation of research further

the goals of social justice. Action research fits into the anti-oppressive method of inquiry,

but only if I am mindful of these tenets. The authors caution that while research methods

like action research can sound like anti-oppressive practices, an analysis of the process

and outcome requires tremendous self-reflection and honesty on the part of the researcher

(p. 281).

I am a feminist. It makes sense to me that a male dominated worldview is inappropriate

for women, and men for that matter, because it is imbalanced. I don't know whether

culturally, Anishinabe people were matriarchal or patriarchal in practice. My sense is that

the society worked and that must have meant a degree of harmony between the sexes.

Regardless, cultures naturally evolve and equality between men and women is a matter of

social justice. In Canada, colonially inherited patriarchy permeates all societal standards

and norms for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. For Indigenous women, it is

particularly brutal as the colonial oppression of patriarchy is an additional load. Colonial

laws that give more power to men have placed Aboriginal women in great danger in

many areas of the country. Further, patriarchal standards and norms in health science;

education; law; government; the economy; and in other societal structures, effects

Indigenous women in ways similar to what has been described as "colonizing of the

mind", I would say we have a situation of "patriarchy of the mind". It requires

elucidation, examination and reframing.

> Aboriginal feminism brings together the two critiques, feminism and anti-colonialism, to show how Aboriginal peoples, and in particular Aboriginal women, are affected by colonialism and by patriarchy. It takes into account how both racism and sexism fuse when brought to bear on Aboriginal women. While colonial oppression is identified, so too is oppression of women by Indigenous men and Indigenous governing practices. Aboriginal feminists are the clearest in linking sex and race oppression. They are identified as political adversaries not only by colonial society but also by male Indigenous elites whose power they challenge. And they are also criticized by some Aboriginal women, who deny their analysis and question their motives and authenticity (Green 2007, p. 23).

If anti-oppressive, decolonizing and Indigenous research methods challenge power in society; name colonial oppression; counters the superiority of Western Knowledge; and insists on authenticity in relationships; then, Indigenous feminism should be woven into the mix. The feminist theory of praxis is a key principle. In keeping with the alliance theme of this research, a male ally, Paulo Friere, (1986) defines praxis as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle for liberation" (p. 36).

3. Research Method: Action Research/ Focus Group/Key Informant Interview

This research project set out to answer the question: What elements would be included in a cultural safety agreement for school district #61? I initially thought that I would conduct a series of Community Circles involving specific groups such as teachers; students; parents; Elders and administrators. I realized that I needed to scale down the number of participants due to the sheer amount of data that would be produced and the time frames that I tried to work within. I decided to ask the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria (AEC) to participate in my research as a focus group.

As a previous member of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (EA) Review Team, I was aware that the current EA was due for renewal as they have a five year span and our district's EA "expired" in June 2010. I was aware that the Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) is the district team overseeing the work of the EA renewal process. The timing seemed right to explore whether a cultural safety paradigm could be

applied to the new EA. My interest in the concept of cultural safety in public education

was presented to the AEC and I requested their involvement as a focus group.

The "action" piece behind my interest in the action research method was to create an

actual draft framework for a cultural safety agreement for the school district as a way to

meet one or more of the goals of the district's EA. The action research method is a

process that alternates between inquiry and action, between theory and practice. Winter

and Munn-Giddings (2001) say that the purpose of action research is to "work towards

change not merely to describe a current situation "as is" (p. 18) and that it "is a form of

research that is organized around a process of action rather than a process of description

(p.19). McNiff and Whitehead (2006) identify a basic action plan as follows:

- Take stock of what is going on
- Identify a concern
- Think of a possible way forward
- Try it out
- Monitor the action by gathering data to show what is happening
- Evaluate progress by establishing procedures for making judgments about what is happening
- Test the validity of accounts of learning
- Modify practice in the light of the evaluation. (p. 8).

From this basic action plan my research concern fits as follows:

- Aboriginal perspectives are missing from the public education system and Aboriginal students are over-represented in all negative education statistics. Yet, Aboriginal curriculum and resources are plentiful.
- Eurocentric standards and norms persist in the public education system.
- The concept of Cultural Safety could provide a framework to guide the GVSD to consider ways to implement Aboriginal perspectives in public education.
- The Aboriginal Education Council represents a spectrum of Aboriginal stakeholders in Aboriginal education for the district and agreed to participate as a focus group to develop a Cultural Safety Framework for the GVSD.
- A sub-committee of the AEC is formed and meetings take place to discuss the concepts. Also, an individual interview takes place with the coordinator of Aboriginal Education in the GVSD.

- Transcripts of the focus groups and individual interview are analyzed and themes are identified.
- A draft of the Cultural Safety framework is presented to the AEC.
- Recommendations for further practice are identified.

McNiff and Whitehead point out that action research is distinctive in that it is done by practitioners rather than professional researchers (p. 8). I am a graduate student and an Aboriginal student counselor; therefore, I am a social work practitioner and not a professional researcher. As a long term employee for the GVSD, I have epistemic privilege in that I am able to work directly with both Aboriginal people and school district staff and have seen the gap between policy and practice regarding Aboriginal education initiatives. As a novice researcher, I have come to learn that the research process in not linear and not easily predictable. So, while the AEC supports this research and provided data through the with focus group participants, I acted as the researcher who collected the data and proposed a draft of a cultural safety framework. The action in this process is that I provided the research coordination and resulting draft framework from which further analysis can take place.

The action research model allowed me to introduce the idea that teachers will need guidance in how to engage with the EA. Awareness about Aboriginal issues can range from zero to quite knowledgeable. I believe that many teachers are still asking: How do I help Aboriginal students succeed in public education? Instead of asking themselves: How do I help make public education more appropriate for Aboriginal students? If a culturally relevant education were the norm, students with Indigenous ancestry may stay in school longer gaining skills they may utilize in their lives, with their families and communities:

skills that will assist in the quest for self-determination. This action research

methodology was a vehicle that allowed me to work with a community group to work

towards developing an actual draft framework that could help guide decolonizing

practices.

The further that I moved into this research method, the more I realized that I was not

following an authentic action research method as the participants were not acting as co-

researchers. Instead, the action and reflection cycle in this method is taking very large

loops in that the method is still in progress and will continue into the next school year. I

had not clearly mapped out this method before launching into the process and hence, will

be able to conduct the process with more awareness as I continue with the AEC and the

continued development of the framework.

In reality, I had interest and support from the AEC for exploring the development of a

cultural safety framework for the district and I had participation from two separate

subcommittees from the AEC for input via the focus group method, but in the end, I acted

as an individual doing work for a community council. I have no problem with doing this

work and actually really look forward to continuing the process into the next school year.

My intention is to bring the framework to the AEC in the fall and explore the next stage

of its development with the council. My hope is that I can find a small group of

individuals that will commit to working on the further development of the framework and

present ideas to the larger council at their monthly meetings. This process would unfold

until everyone feels we have a framework that can be utilized.

4. Focus Group Method & the Aboriginal Education Council:

The AEC meets monthly at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. As mentioned above, the AEC is currently working with the school district on the renewal of the district's AE and provides feedback and direction to the district on all matters relating to Aboriginal education. The AEC is an appropriate focus group for the purpose of developing a framework for a cultural safety agreement for the school district. The array of community representation on the council affords an authenticity to the process of community participation as the group includes parents, Elders, students, local First Nations, Métis groups, professionals in the Indigenous social service field and school district employees.

As a research tool, a focus group can help participants to explore their views in greater depth through group interactions. According to Krueger (1988):

> A focus group can be defined as a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment…The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable as participants share their ideas and perceptions (p.18).

There are other advantages of using focus groups identified in Krueger:

- One-to-one interviews do not capture the dynamic nature of group interaction; inhibitions are often relaxed in a group situation
- The format allows the moderator to probe and the flexibility to explore issues
- Focus groups can provide speedy results (p. 44).

A sub-committee comprised of AEC members acted as two separate focus groups for this research. Themes from the data collected from the focus groups provided key elements for the draft cultural safety framework. The AEC is aware that this is a work in progress

and further focus group work may be decided upon after the requirements of my graduate

studies are met. Participant letters of consent are attached as **Appendix A**.

5. Key Informant Interview:

Key informant interviews are designed to provide in-depth information from people,

usually identified as knowledgeable about a particular subject. Because this interview is

conducted in a face-to-face setting, they tend not to terminate early and they tend to allow

participants contemplation which provides more complete thought and ensures open-

ended questions (Creswell 2007; & Creswell and Plano Clarke 2007).

The key informant interview method allowed me to engage a principal representative of

Aboriginal education in the Greater Victoria School District, Ms. Nella Nelson. Ms.

Nelson is the Coordinator of Aboriginal Nations Education Division and has worked for

the GVSD for almost 30 years. She was a teacher in the district before taking up the

administrative position she has held for the past 21 years. While she has the broad

perspective of someone who has been in the classroom and in district and provincial

board rooms, she is also a very active community member, a culturally-centred person

who is fluent in her traditional language, a parent, a grandparent and relative to many,

many children in the public education system.

As noted in Wilson (2008), many conversations take place about research topics that are

not all recorded, transcribed and official. "In addition to the discussions that were

recorded, many more took place that I did not record. These informal talks greatly

improved the clarity of my thinking and expanded the relationships I was forming with an

Indigenous research paradigm" (p. 129). I have had many informal conversations with Ms. Nelson about this research topic that have influenced my work. She is interested in ways to incorporate respectful learning opportunities for district staff to engage with Indigenous issues. While she is careful to avoid overtly political conversation, she is an undisputed advocate of Aboriginal issues in her personal and professional life and she is a champion of her staff being "brokers" of Aboriginal issues in their schools. While Ms. Nelson is my district supervisor, she is also a mentor and friend. In this research process, she is a collaborator who supports respectful processes for bringing decolonizing perspectives into public education curriculum and practice. She completely supports the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in public education for all students.

As Ms. Nelson has held the role of coordinator of Aboriginal education in the district since the inception of the position, anonymity is not possible. The interview was recorded and transcribed with her permission and the interview data was approved by Ms. Nelson before being incorporated into the research analysis. The interview lasted approximately one hour and took place in her office at the GVSD Board Office.

6. Field Notes and Informal Participants:

Over the course of my thesis development, I have written in four separate journals. I had one in the car, one in my work bag, one by my bed and one near the computer. I had conversations with many people who are not "participants" in this research, but who had a keen interest and a very supportive role in the development of this work. The idea of

finding informal data gathering opportunities is supported by McNiff and Whitehead

(2006).

> "A certain amount of entrepreneurialism is called for in data collection. As well
> as planning to gather the data, you also have to on the lookout for opportunities.
> You might meet a colleague while walking the corridors, or in a park: These are
> wonderful times for quiet and relaxed conversations and reflections" (p.145).

I met with friends who are: teachers; a former school Principal; professionals; non-

professionals; those with Indigenous ancestry and those with Settler ancestry. They all

agreed to meet with me to specifically talk about this research topic in an informal way. It

was tremendously helpful to have feedback and support as I tried to describe this concept

and the process of action research. Sensitive issues that arose, and I chose not to include

in the body of this work, were discussed with these individuals. The topic of cultural

safety in public education is political, and group work can have its challenges, at times I

wrote about it in my journals, but other times I sought the support of informal

participants. It was a very helpful part of my research method.

7. Implementation of the Method:

In order to begin my research, steps needed to be taken to ensure that the process was

ethical and accountable. University and school district research protocols require an

application process to describe the proposal and ensure any ethical considerations are

addressed before carrying out the research data collection. Indigenous community

protocol requires that permission to do research in the area should be obtained from the

local First Nations Peoples, usually through the Chief. In this research process, the focus

is neither on the local First Nations people nor culture, but on the urban Aboriginal

population. The AEC oversees all aspects of Aboriginal education in the district and they

were deemed the appropriate agency to seek support for this research. However, I did

visit with a local First Nations person to outline my research topic as a matter of personal

protocol. I did not seek permission from this person; I had a conversation about my topic

and did not feel any resistance to the idea.

8. Ethical Considerations

- **University Protocol:** This study passed an ethical review with UVic's Human Research Ethics Board. A copy of the ethics certificate is attached as **Appendix B**.
- **School District 61 Protocol:** This study received approval from the Greater Victoria School District to conduct research in the district. A copy of the application approval is attached as **Appendix C.**
- **Indigenous Protocol:** I requested and received permission from the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria. Their letter of support is attached as **Appendix D**.
- **Participant Consent:** Focus group participants and my key informant interviewee signed consent form (see **Appendix A**) and were aware that their participation was being documented for this research study. Transcripts of the focus groups and individual interview were sent to each participant via email. I also offered to print out the transcripts for those who preferred to read a hard copy. Transcriptions were emailed back to me with minor alterations in colored font.

9. Recruitment: Focus Group and Key Informant

I asked for, and received, space on the AEC meeting agenda by emailing the AEC

secretary. I presented a power point description of cultural safety and my research topic

and explained the idea of developing an actual document for application to the EA. I also

requested the involvement of the AEC as a focus group. My power point presentation

was forwarded to all AEC members as many were not in attendance on the day that I

presented. All information was distributed to AEC members via the AEC secretary who

used an email list serve. While some AEC members showed enthusiastic support for the

research proposal at the meeting, it was determined that the secretary would distribute my

invitation for participation along with my power point presentation and proposed dates
and times for focus group meetings. Also, at this first meeting, the Chair supported the
idea of having a sub-committee of the AEC as the group membership is a large number of
people. We concluded that details could be shared via email, with the AEC secretary
forwarding my emails to the group as a whole. I received a letter of support from the
AEC as required by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Victoria. Members
who attended the focus group signed participant consent forms before the meetings
commenced.

The key informant interview with Ms. Nella Nelson was organized via personal dialogue
and email confirmation. Ms. Nelson is a key member of the AEC. She was supportive of
the idea of developing a cultural safety framework for the district for application to the
EA and verbally agreed to be a key informant with an individual interview. As the
coordinator of ANED, Ms. Nella Nelson is my supervisor. At the schools where I work,
my supervisors are the school Principals, however, I meet with Ms. Nelson at all ANED
staff meetings; school based ANED meetings; and ANED counselor meetings. We have
an excellent working relationship and I have tremendous respect for her as a person and
as an administrator. No ethical concerns arose during the research data collection. My
graduate supervisor was aware that I may need to engage her for advice if ethical
concerns arose; however, it was not necessary. The key informant interview took place in
Ms. Nelson's office, as it was most convenient for her. I brought my tape recorder to her
office and her secretary held her calls for one hour. The interview was mostly to get
background information about the history of Aboriginal Education in the school district.

Ms. Nelson has been interviewed many times for research students. She signed the consent form prior to beginning the interview. I emailed her the transcribed interview for her approval before using any of the data obtained.

10. Focus Group Participants and Meetings:

The AEC has their monthly meetings at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, so I arranged for the focus groups to take place there by emailing the Assistant Executive Director. I sent an email to the AEC secretary outlining two dates, the time and location of the meetings and requested that participants confirm their attendance. I hosted two focus groups and had a total of eight people, including myself, attend. I assumed that the same people, who expressed interest at the AEC meeting where I presented my research proposal, would attend the focus groups, but due to scheduling conflicts some were unable to attend. Some who said they would attend did not show up at either of the groups. An unexpected result was that different people attended each group and some people had not seen the power point presentation that I had given to the AEC as a whole. In keeping with Aboriginal community protocol, I made sure to have food and drinks available for my participants. Also, I bought small gifts to thank them for their time and participation. Each group lasted two and half hours and resulted in about forty pages of transcriptions. The transcripts were sent to each focus group participant for their perusal and approval, as stated in the participant consent form.

The research participants were all adults. While there is a seat on the AEC for a student voice, this seat is often vacant. I did not have any students participate in my research

mainly because the student seat on the AEC was vacant at the time of recruitment. If a student had been interested in participating, I would have had to seek parental and district approval for his or her involvement. I consider the participants in this research to be all professional people with a keen interest in issues regarding Aboriginal education. Two of the eight participants were male and they are both of settler ancestry. One participant is identified as having Métis ancestry; and the other five are identified as having Indigenous ancestry: one local, two local to BC; and two from visiting First Nations.

A major flaw that I made was in not forwarding the research questions to my focus group members before the group meetings. I had "packages" for each participant including a fact sheet on cultural safety, an article about cultural safety that identified key principles, the participant consent form, and the research questions. I liked the idea of "having a discussion" about the research topic and using the questions as a guideline if the conversation was off topic. For the most part, we covered all the research questions, but some point blank questions would have been helpful to the final analysis. For example, I didn't ask the direct question about how cultural safety could be applied to the EA and this should have been one of the guiding questions.

11. Reflection on the Action Research method:

The focus group method was appropriate for this research data collection method, yet the concept of action research may not have applied so well. In theory, a sub-committee from the AEC would be struck and an identified group would then commit to the process. In reality, a call for a sub-committee did not result in a confirmed set of members. It was

suggested that anyone interested should contact me. The AEC is made up of community representatives who volunteer their time to oversee Aboriginal education policies and initiatives. They are busy professionals and many members do not make it to monthly meetings due to overlapping commitments. There is a core of individuals who are in more regular attendance. I had assumed that all twelve people, who responded at the AEC meeting and through the email invitation, would come to both the first and second scheduled group. One participant in each group had not attended the AEC meeting where I presented my research proposal and I used some of the group time trying to give an overview of my research and clarifying the concept of cultural safety.

As a research method, I agree that action research has the capacity to contribute to new theory (McNiff & Whitehead 2007). A group of people who had never heard of the concept of cultural safety in public education now have a foundation to build upon. As the research data findings will show, it is not an easy concept to grasp. Its application to public education, via the Enhancement Agreement, is also unclear as of yet; however, the seed is planted for its potential growth. In reality, this group of people did not come together in order to further this theory; it was initiated by me, organized by myself, for my own main purpose of meeting my graduate study requirements to carry out a research project. However, they were gracious with their time and participation. McNiff and Whitehead say that, "research participants have the same status in your research as you. They are not objects of inquiry, or somehow subordinate. They are research equals" (p. 85). While I feel I was respectful of their time and input, to say that they were research

equals would be misleading as the initiation, organization, data collection and analysis, were not shared tasks.

McNiff and Whitehead write that the dual nature of action research means that "you are learning *about* the action and *through* the action" (p. 92). I certainly learned about the challenges and benefits of engaging individuals in a process for creating change by organizing this research method. I found an appropriate community group that was supportive and that had many members expressing interest in participating. They had background knowledge of the Enhancement Agreement and public education, and were interested in the concept of cultural safety. However, busy professionals often make choices to cancel appointments that are not essential. I have had to do it many times, so I completely understand how it happens. Cancellations or no-shows led to some reorganizing as seating for twelve turned into seating for four. However, the process went ahead and participants who showed were very gracious and engaged.

My status as a novice researcher presented certain challenges. I needed to prepare my participants better so that they would have background knowledge on the concept of cultural safety and also the concept of action research. In hindsight, I think that my concern that participants would not commit to "volunteer" work influenced my decision to not express the importance of making a strong commitment to the process. I assumed that people would be a bit reluctant if I asked them for firm commitments. The AEC is a very busy group of professionals and community leaders. They do a lot in the field of

education and I'm sure more than a few have been involved in research projects as participants.

In hindsight I would secure a commitment from a group of individuals and request that they present time frames of their availability. I would be sure to inform them that I would be available on weekends and or evenings, as I chose the focus group meeting time and did not offer options. I assumed that arranging the focus group meeting time at the same time of day and same location that the AEC met for their monthly meetings would be a familiar time slot. I would also use the first focus group to lay a stronger foundation for their understanding of the concept of cultural safety.

In the end, my graduate studies requirements needed to be met and while the process resulted in a draft framework for the AEC it was a process led by myself and is therefore not purely action research. That being said, as far as I'm concerned, the process is not over and has the potential to be more authentic when I am no longer involved as a student. I have a timeframe for completion of this graduate degree for both personal and financial reasons. Also, my status as a student versus that of an AEC member would also change the relationship between myself and other interested AEC members who may want to continue with this process. It is even possible that another AEC member may want to take over the process of further development of the framework. It will certainly be necessary to determine the strategies for putting the framework into action and as the concepts take shape authentic action research can continue as the cycle of inquiry, action, theory and practice takes another rotation with interested participants. As stated, I will

remain involved as I have developed a relationship with the vision of bringing decolonizing perspectives into the public education system. It has added a new purpose to my work that has visionary and far-reaching potential for addressing social justice.

Action research is a process of action and reflection (McNiff and Whitehead 2007; Stringer 1999) and while I kept journals of the process, my participants did not. I made the suggestion, but a few people said they would rather email me comments than keep a journal. I didn't feel it was appropriate to push this issue. Certainly, the action/reflection cycle can be frustrating, as theory and reality do not always line up. However, if the process was allowed a long term space for expression, I can see where the process can be not only effective, but exciting. The cultural safety framework may take many more months, or even into the next school year to be clarified.

12. Data Collection Method:

I used a voice recorder to tape our discussion, and then transcribed the recordings. I struggled with the idea of hosting more focus groups and trying to obtain a commitment from the same members to attend. However, when I began to see themes emerge from the existing data I realized that more data collection was not necessary and decided to conclude the focus group data collection after two groups. Transcripts were emailed to participants and they were given three weeks to read them and email back any revisions. Only two participants emailed back revisions. They changed the color of the font to indicate areas that were changed. The only changes I made were grammatical, where a participant used words common in verbal dialogue, like "umm" or "ah ha" I either

deleted the text, or clarified that "yes" was meant. I also deleted text that was unclear or repetitive. Some participants told me in person that seeing their words verbatim in a document made them more aware of speech patterns.

13. Relationality/ Relational Accountability & Catalytic Validity:

This research project has put me in relationship with an idea (cultural safety), with people connected to this idea (AEC, teachers, students, community), and with the hope and vision attached to this combination (decolonizing perspectives for all students in the public education system building a society able to support self-determination for Indigenous peoples). I also have a relationship to an academic community that may critique my work; a relationship with my family who have been incredibly patient and supportive during my graduate studies; and a relationship to myself for finding deeper meaning in my work and finding my voice to share this idea. Ultimately, I believe that Indigenous philosophies: we are all related; we are related to all things; there is more than one truth; we speak to our experiences; and we are vitally connected to place/land - will stop the devastation of our Earth and return us to our humanity and the more people who can learn them, the better for us all.

In western research theory, McNiff and Whitehead demystify the concept of validity by saying that: "A theory is a set of ideas about what we claim to know and how we have come to know. If we can show that what we know (our theory), stands up to public scrutiny, we can claim that our theory has validity (has truth value and is trustworthy)" (pg. 20). Catalytic validity is a category of validity related to research in the critical theory paradigm. Bailey (2010) writes that catalytic validity "strives to ensure that

research leads to action" (p. 139). She suggests that it is not enough to identify a concern, "for discussions of catalytic validity are substantive; like critical theory, catalytic validity suggests an agenda to help participants understand their world in order to transform it: The agenda is explicitly political" (p. 139). When evaluating an action research project, Bailey writes that, "Catalytic validity refers to the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms "conscientization," knowing reality in order to better transform it. This is by far the most unorthodox as it flies directly in the face of the essential positivist tenet of researcher neutrality" (p. 67).

The vision of the cultural safety framework for the school district is that it will engage public educators with decolonizing theory and Indigenous knowledge. The transformative potential is evident in that public educators hold a lot of power to alter a knowledge base for developing minds. However, theory and practice must be evaluated to ensure that the research design and process move towards emancipatory ends and not just make an attempt. The framework developed in this research is part only part of the action research rhythm of inquiry, action, theory and practice. It is a draft framework that will, in the very least, inform my practice as an employee in the public education system. The vision is larger than that, but the purpose is to move towards introducing theory that will support self-determination, which is also social justice.

Wilson offers that "rather than the goals of validity and reliability, research from an Indigenous paradigm should aim to be authentic or credible" (pg. 101). Wilson and the

Indigenous research scholars he engages in dialogue in his book, Research is Ceremony, challenge dominant system research criteria to also meet the Indigenous research requirements for relationality and relational accountability (pg. 101).

I am relationally accountable to the children that I work with and among whether they are of Indigenous or Settler ancestry. The colonization of Canada at the expense of the First Nations people is socially unjust and while adults make choices about whether they want to dismantle unjust social issues, children learn what they live. The public school system has children for thirteen of their most impressionable developmental years. We have an opportunity to build a society that is informed about our colonial history, and that can challenge myths and stereotypes, that can support reconciliation and embrace Indigenous ways of knowing.

14. Data Analysis Method:

Just as there are many different theoretical perspectives, research methods and designs, there are also a range of methods and procedures that can be used to analyze data. Data analysis methods are designed to refine the data so that users can obtain interesting or useful information without having to go through the entire data themselves. A sampling of data analysis methods include: metaphorical analysis; discourse analysis; content analysis; phenomenology analysis; narrative analysis; and constant comparison/grounded theory analysis. The variations of research designs and data analysis methods can boggle the mind; however, Bryman and Hardy (2009) make the point that there are common concerns in data analysis whether the focus is quantitative or qualitative and regardless of the chosen method. They identify the common concerns as: data reduction; answering the

research question; relating data to the research literature; and variation or variability.

They also make the point that theoretical concerns inform how researchers organize the

information they will use in their analyses.

This research is concerned with how to bring decolonizing and Indigenous Knowledge

into the public education system and asked the question: "What are the key elements that

would be included in the development of an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for

the Greater Victoria School District?" It does not ask if a cultural safety agreement is

necessary, it assumes that participants already agree that one is needed. Hence, the

critical and decolonizing theoretical framework that informs this research will be

evidenced in the data analysis as well. The grounded theory of data analysis method was

used to as a theoretical framework for analyzing the data collected in this research

project.

> Grounded Theory is a general research method (and thus is not owned by any
> one school or discipline) which guides you on matters of data collection and
> details strict procedures for data analysis. Grounded Theory is first and foremost
> a research method but the term 'Grounded Theory' is used in two ways; (1) if
> you adhere to the strictures of Grounded-Theory-the-research-method you will
> engage in a research process that will produce (2) a theory-which-is-grounded-
> in-data. Thus both the research method and the output of the research process
> have the same name! Information retrieved from:
> http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory

Ritchie and Spencer (2002) say that once the data has been gathered, the analyst attempts

to "identify the key issues, concepts, and themes according to which the data can be

examined and referenced…she or he sets up a thematic framework within which material

can be sifted and sorted" (p. 313). Firstly, data reduction involves paring down vast

amounts of data "so that capsule statements about the data can be provided" (Bryman and

Hardy p. 4). It would not be reasonable to put forty pages of full verbatim transcription into this document so I needed to break it down to make it more manageable and understandable. Bryman and Hardy say that most approaches to analyzing qualitative data comprise a coding approach that segments the textual materials in question (p.4). Some computer programs are available for qualitative analysis especially where coding is used and while I can appreciate that this is in keeping with our technological age, I chose to look for ways to code data that could be done with paper and pen.

As I have learned, the research process does not take a linear approach, no matter how hard I tried to make it so! With this in mind, I now realize that themes began to be evident even before the focus groups started because I had people at the AEC who stated that they liked the idea of developing a cultural safety agreement and who agreed that changes needed to happen in the public education system in order to increase the success of students with Aboriginal ancestry. So, in essence, the data began to flow at the AEC meetings. Hard data was collected during the focus groups which were audio-recorded. The audiotapes were transcribed and reviewed by the focus group members via email transmissions. I printed off the data which ended up being forty pages of full verbatim transcription. Some data also came from the journals that I kept throughout my research process.

In general, the purpose of this research was to engage a subcommittee of the AEC to identify key elements that should be included in a cultural safety agreement for the school district. The key elements would make up a framework of a theoretical document that

could help guide practice for public educators to become culturally safe to students, families and communities with Aboriginal ancestry. I realize that I used an action research design in my research method and proposal, however, as the process unfolded and as my understanding of action research methodology increased, I realized that while the "action" piece is the creation of a working document for the district, the process of analyzing the data has not been carried out by the subcommittee. If it were, action research data analysis would involve using a concept mapping method that would involve the subcommittee working with me to identify the emerging themes. In reality, the analysis of this project data has been a solitary activity due to my inappropriate or flawed research design.

15. Thematic Coding and Sorting of Data:

Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007) write that, "Qualitative analysis begins with coding the data, dividing the text into small units (phrases, sentences, paragraphs) and assigning a label to each unit. This label can come from the exact words of a participant; a term composed by the researcher; or a concept in the social or human sciences" (p.131).

I chose to exclude statements in the data that could be considered offensive outside of a deeper understanding of the person. I also agreed to maintain anonymity for participants and made minor adjustments to disguise identity. I could see that some participants had a great deal of data while others had very little. This is partly to do with protocol where stories were allowed to flow naturally. Hence, some people had more space for sharing than others. I invited the group to email me any other thoughts that percolated after our meetings, but did not receive any other input.

Kirby and McKenna (1989) call the data pieces from transcriptions, conversations, and journaling "bibbits" (p.134). I had a large sheet of blank paper on which I randomly wrote bibbits from the data. I used color coding and concept mapping to identify themes emerging in the transcription data and in other data sources of informal conversations and journaling. From there, the overall schema they identify is to group the bibbits into properties, then categories to form substantive theories and reducing it further to a grand theory (p.135).

Two of the broad categories suggested by McNiff and White for sorting data in the action research method includes: data that shows my learning and data that show other people's learning (p. 146). I returned to the research question (What are the key elements that would be included in an Indigenous cultural safety agreement for the Greater Victoria School District?) and the guiding principles in my research (social justice for Indigenous people and a desire to build alliances with non-Indigenous people) to identify the themes in the data and to evaluate my own learning. The data shows some learning of others with regards to understanding the concept of cultural safety, however, I reiterate that the framework is a work in progress and will continue into the next school year.

As mentioned previously in this paper, I organized the groups for the purposes of my research. While the AEC agreed with the topic of my research, and while some AEC members participated in the focus groups; organizing the meetings, collecting the data, writing the document and analyzing the data, have not been shared activities. What I

liked most about the action research method was the production of an actual working document at the end. If I had understood the action research process more fully before starting the data collection, I could have informed the AEC of the commitment necessary for action research processes. The people who participated in my focus groups were not informed of the commitment necessary to carry out an action research method. I was also worried that people who did not come to the first and second focus group would come to future groups, further complicating and perhaps stalling the process. Because I did not explain the process clearly from the beginning, I felt it would be less frustrating for everyone if I took over the process as more of an individual process. I perceived that my participants could feel frustrated with the process and I did not want to waste their time.

Chapter 5: Research Findings:

In this chapter I present the main themes that came out of the research data; a conceptual framework for the data; and an analysis of the data using the key concepts of cultural safety as identified by Ramsden. In the first section, main themes of frustration, worldview and ideas for change are identified and presented. These themes are then presented in a visual design that uses the metaphor of a canoe with paddles to represent the research findings. The final section connects the key concepts of cultural safety to the research data to further the application of the concept to the public education paradigm.

1. Main Research Themes:

- **Frustration**:

One theme that emerged from the data was some of the participants' frustration at the general lack of knowledge in the public education system and in society in general. Bibbits (Kirby & McKenna 1986) like: "never forgotten" "hidden history" "impact of colonization" "wrongs live forever" "denial" "entitlement" "invasion" "foreign worldview" "low level of awareness" and "land wasn't unoccupied" "our people are invisible" "cultural amnesia", speak to the frustration in some of the conversation in the focus groups. These are not unusual perspectives in most discussion about colonial processes and are in keeping with the critical and decolonizing theme of this paper and the literature reviewed.

This frustration is the tension that exists in a lot of discourse about Canadian-Indigenous relations. It's been less than fifty years since Indigenous people were even allowed to attend public schools and so peeling back the layers of entrenched colonialism will require vigilance and tension and some uncomfortable conversations. Some tension was in response to statements from one participant who suggested things like not using the term "colonialism" and "imposed" and instead of another member's term of "invasion" suggested the term "time of initial arrival". This participant's intention was to keep dialogue from raising defenses and to keep the lines of communication open with the end goal of making space for Indigenous ways of knowing; however, it's a tricky thing for a non-Indigenous person to de-politicize language. The following passages are examples of the political and frustrated tone of some of the data.

> A: There's this huge I guess, loss of memory, if you want to put it that way. We did have an indigenous political system in places well before we had colonialism being forced upon us. So what do we learn in school? We learn about the Canadian political system. We don't learn anything about what kind of political system was in place for indigenous people and how we governed ourselves and our own codes of conduct and our structures that were in place.

> A: So, one of the things as well is when we hear things like "discovered" and "discovery". I think those terms are incorrect when they are used and when we say that the settlers or the folks that came here, they're "explorers", really when you think about it it's more like an invasion! So to me they're invaders and I'm all for calling it what it is. We've created a society of people who feel they're entitled to be here. It's an entitlement and those are things we deal with on a day to day basis. When it feels like our people are invisible and there's just this sort of cultural amnesia that people forget what was here before the invaders came here. People forget!

> B: I know, exactly, there were people here and they had their values and they had their good lives.

> A: Sure and they came here and the land was given to them. And so we have a society that does very well, but they've forgotten that it's been on the backs of the indigenous people who were here first and whatever they used for their means of livelihood was taken away essentially.

C: I think the teachers should know about the contemporary issues that are happening right now. There's a low level of awareness out there and how those are rooted in very recent colonial history. I think that a lot of people, a lot of teachers, don't know about the ripple effects of the residential school compensation process which has been going on for the last 2 years and how that trickled down to affect students in the school. That just seemed like something that is contemporary that's still permeating our people and communities. I think a lot of people don't know that we're the only province in Canada that's still negotiating treaties and the impact that this has on our communities and just the way that history unfolded here in BC was so different to the majority of the rest of Canada and it's information that should really be common knowledge in BC but it's a lot of people don't have a lot of awareness about.

C: Also, I find if when we're trying to present information to teachers if we talk about colonialism that makes it sound like it was a long time ago. When we talk about something in a contemporary context that's rooted in a more recent history it feels more, more interesting and more relevant. It's easier to pique people's interest when it's current. And with the First Nation's history I have to use the word living history because the history books are still being written, certain chapters have been written, but there are things that are still happening right now that will be in these history books in the years to come because it's still unfolding. It's still evolving it's not resolved and it may not be resolved during our lifetimes. But just to see that it's not something that's history it's not… in terms of being over... it's just the next stage of a story that is still unfolding.

D: Which explains so much of the relationship piece we experience today because there is either no awareness or no regard on the part of the European person, you know, who has that kind of cultural background.

The tone of frustration is evident in many of the conversations I have had about this research topic and the topic of colonialism in general. In our age of technology, one only has to go online to find a plethora of information about Indigenous perspectives to Canadian history or any number of related topics: residential school; the Indian Act; traditional healing; Indigenous languages, and so on. Also, the vast number of books, DVD's, pod-casts, television shows, workshops and courses on the topic make the information accessible in a variety of ways. The issue is not just about political will as the

government, school district and teacher unions all have policies which support the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in public education. The issue is more directed at how to engage administrators and teachers so that they will include Indigenous issues their schools.

As the data shows, it can be frustrating to have a situation where we have ongoing over-representation of Indigenous students in negative education statistics and yet no connection made to the cause and effect outcomes relating to colonialism. There was also frustration at wanting to move forward and yet not knowing what to do. Bibbits such as "now what" "where do we go from here" "what do you do" "will there be a "how to" "a manual?" speak to a desire on the part of participants to want to move beyond identification of the issue and towards resolution. Some conversations I have had with friends and coworkers have involved a vision of having an Indigenous public school where the curriculum, teaching practices and theories are all centred on Indigenous worldview and local culture. The frustration comes from having to wait for mainstream public educators to come on board. Some coworkers have made the point that the majority of teachers they work with would not be able to explain what the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is, let alone being able to identify the goals. We have had the EA for six years now.

> D: Earlier, when we've done our enhancement agreement work, when we tried to create the buy-in at the district level for the importance of the enhancement agreement work and we get the question fired back at us, "why are we spending so much time on this? Why should I be so worried about this when I've got 2 kids or 5 kids in my school?" I was stuck giving a good answer or convincing them to come onside apart from saying "just bloody well do it because you have to"! This is a strategy for assisting vulnerable children.

As a theme, frustration identifies a problem and keeps attention on the issue. I struggle with wanting to, as the saying goes, "attract more bees with honey than vinegar" because it does get frustrating to have to make a very basic connection that Indigenous students don't do as well in the public education system because it's based on foreign standards and norms and yet, clearly it's not something we are taught in our own socialization in mainstream Canada. Regardless, frustration is the catalyst that will attract attention to the matter and hopefully further dialogue at the AEC will explore ways to engage allies without shutting down the process with too much frustration.

- **Awareness of Worldviews**:

Another key theme was "worldviews". The data flowed from the question "What do you think is the most important thing a teacher should know about his or her own culture?" There is an assumption in public education that the curriculum is neutral. Bibbits in the data that speak to worldview were "dominant culture" Indigenous knowledge" "differing worldviews" "we are guided by our worldviews" "British subjugation" "local protocols" "multiculturalism" "cultural enclaves" and "people from another homeland", speak to the awareness that there are Indigenous people and those who came from other countries and therefore two differing cultures each side with many different cultural expressions. The dominant worldview in Canada is that of British culture: the language is mainly English; our country has been referred to as a British "colony"; we still learn Eurocentric standards and norms in education, religion, economics and family structures. While some group members were very clear that it is appropriate that everyone in Canada should know the traditional Indigenous territory in which they reside, others were trying to make

sense of how to centre Indigenous knowledge in the public education system in light of

our multicultural status.

A: When first read this, I thought it meant, let's say a teacher has Italian ancestry, they would know about their particular ancestry and how that culture has affected indigenous people but when you explain about the dominant culture, that goes beyond what the ancestry is of that particular teacher.

B: Well, I think they should know everything about that. I think they should understand that when one culture impacts on another culture or one religion impacts on another religion or whatever it doesn't go away, you know, it's not something that says that was yesterday and today is today. There is no such thing as that, there is no such thing when it comes to culture.

A: But I think that someone that's come here from another homeland and comes here expecting to make a living as in teacher, who doesn't really have a good understanding of the cultural aspects of the indigenous people, that aspect of cultural safety would be part of their teaching background.

C: I think that each of us has a world view whether we're aware of it or not and I think a lot of us just aren't aware of it and we assume that there's just one world view until we start having conversations and realize that there are different ways of interpreting the world and culture and that a lot of the problems in the world are caused by world view and people thinking that the way they do things and view things is the "right" way.

B: Yeah, difference doesn't mean right and wrong.

C: A course I teach opens up with a discussion about world view and ethnocentrism and western versus Indigenous perspectives and lay the foundation of the course so we can look at this through a different lens. But really it's effective for the students that take it but unfortunately it comes at the end of their education at high school and it's not a required course. I think a lot of difference would be made if more students took the course.

B: The point is there was legitimacy in terms of the use of the land and ownership in the land and they had the political entities that existed on the land at the time. It wasn't unoccupied, it wasn't un-ruled and there were these same kinds of give and take situations both in strength and weakness that the so called "civilized" group brought and the civilized group wasn't civilized, there was nothing civilized about 15th century Europe! Nothing!

J: I like this idea that teachers will need to have a timeline that moves from contemporary to the past. Because it's easy to understand say, the impact of the influx of money a family because they got a residential school settlement, if you

understand why they got that settlement. They got it because there were wrongs being done in the schools. Why did they have to go to these schools in the first place? You move backwards almost to get to a point where you go okay, this school was imposed by a foreign system right? That's the importance of knowing the colonial history.

A: So I have a title for that course: contemporary issues in aboriginal history!

C: The context is really important. You know in looking at the local history to really look at the history that's unfolding in our part of the island here, its unique.

J: There are two different cultures to look at here. There's indigenous culture and the colonizing nations cultures because it's the influence of the dominant culture that came over and tried to wipe out the Indigenous cultures. The history has to start pre-contact. The opportunity existed at contact for incredible sharing: incredible meeting of two world views. So what was it about the dominant culture, the colonizing culture, what was happening? Well, why would you leave your ancestral homelands in the first place? And that's where I think cultural safety is asking service providers to look at structural issues in the dominant culture that aren't working for anyone- they weren't working for women in Europe, they weren't working for gay and lesbian people in Europe, they were getting burned at the stake with the women. It wasn't working for people of colour, not for poor people, so all of those structural issues that a lot of people were escaping from in Europe.

B: That's why I was saying to go to parallel history because there wasn't really any quote "civilization" per se there was a military dominance.

C: It helps students. Everything starts to make a little more sense when they see that the education system is just one education system its nothing like the traditional education system which is very different. And to know that this education system we're in now, First Nations people were only allowed to start attending public education in 1951 so it's recent and then to go okay, if I'm not being successful in this system, it's not necessarily the education, I'm a failure as a person. That maybe the system, you know, aspects of it don't work for me and that's not how we were taught traditionally. There are other ways of learning that might work better. So it becomes less personal, it's not about me being a failure it's about me being in this system that doesn't necessarily work for me.

J: I know that when I first started to learn about the residential school system and the sixties scoop and the child welfare system and the impact that it had, it certainly connected the dots for me in my own personal family and it became less personal.

C: you can see that you're trying to navigate a largely western based system which has its' own way of defining success.

F: I do believe biculturalism is very key because in Surrey, [the area] where I work is surrounded by blueberry farms and I know East Indian people, they're the greatest nieghbours, and we've heard them, their dances, their music all of their festivals and we can't help it, we're working outside and that's we're right in the middle of it practically. But as a group, as an enclave, it is impenetrable. What are we doing to make it that way? We are not transferring any of their cultural things into our culture. So we're not really multicultural. If you don't share with one another, it's just a sham.

D: Last night I went to see the game. There are 2 teams playing on the floor, 2 different schools, and 10 kids playing on the floor. Only three of those kids are Anglo Saxons. So in other words, Victoria is becoming *supremely* multi-cultural.

C: Everybody's guided by their own world view and it influences how they act and decisions that they make and judgments that they pass.

E: The question you get from non-Indigenous people is: why such a focus in Indigenous culture? To me, cultural safety would [help people] understand we are a founding nation of the country, no we're not founding, we *are* the nation, the ground floor of the country, the first peoples of the country and therefore an integral of the history of this land and country.

A: That's why our world view becomes distorted because many of us don't have a clue about what was there, what was here before colonial society.

Clearly this data set presents the theme that consciousness about our worldview is an important element to consider when building a framework for cultural safety. Critical consciousness allows for consideration of other perspectives and forges a path for conscientization where new levels of awareness foster alliances and inspire action. A discussion about worldview invites people to consider that there is a dominant worldview that has claimed superiority over Indigenous ways of knowing. Consideration of another cultural perspective is the beginnings of decolonizing theory. This data set speaks to a desire for the inclusion of Indigenous worldview in public education and that it should be

presented to all students. We are a multicultural country and while the dominant culture is based on Eurocentric standards and norms we have many different ethnicities in Canadian society. The one commonality that we share is that we all reside in the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples: we should all know that.

- **Ideas for Change:**

I think it's safe to say that most people recognize that Aboriginal students do not do as well in the public school system as non-Aboriginal students. The explanation for that difference might vary from blaming the families and students to blaming the system. There are many people who simplify the issue to a matter of attendance believing if Aboriginal students improved their attendance there would be an increase in graduation rates. Clearly, the issue is complex and will require attention from many different players. I don't think you would find many Aboriginal parents who would not want their children to have a quality education. Nor would there be many Aboriginal students who would say they would rather not graduate from high school. It has become a societal rite of passage, and a socioeconomic determinant. A final theme that presented itself in this data was that of "ideas for change". The discussion about personalized learning as a new educational concept has been started in our school district. Some participants saw this concept as a way to bring Indigenous knowledge forward. It can also be a way to engage staff as the understanding of colonialism and its impact on Indigenous students varies quite dramatically amongst district administrators and staff.

> D: Well the time is so right because there is a big attempt to get a conversation happening across the system that under the title "21st century learning" and as you start to talk about that, what you're really doing is reintroducing an old concept that has been around forever that is to emphasize personalized learning.

So to me now, there starts to be a real parallel here. Huge parallel you know the whole notion of personalizing is to me, is about relationship and it's about all the elements inside a relationship which are supposed to be all good or certainly creates the awareness as to when they're not, why they're not.

D: It changes the view as to a role of the teacher not being the sage on the stage, but somebody who facilitates learning and creates structure so students assume or undertake responsibility for their own learning. So then a teacher simply becomes a guide, not someone who's directing traffic all the time.

Another point was that, for students, learning about colonialism raises consciousness about their own families and their own experiences and the idea for change is in introducing Indigenous theory as a way to engage Indigenous learners on a more holistic level: emotionally as well as cognitively.

C: Well when learn about that stuff and we're finally able to connect the dots, when we have that knowledge, they can start to understand that okay my parents went to residential school and you know, they seem to have a distrust or mistrust of the authority or education system so they're not encouraging their son or daughter to go to school. You know that kind of thing can happen but if you a student that has that understanding at least they'll understand where it's coming from. When I teach about residential schools with my students and we talk about the intergenerational effects of residential schools they can see why there may have been family breakdown, addiction cycles in their family and all of a sudden it does come into context.

Other ideas for change had to do with the connection between different learning styles, Indigenous students and Indigenous ways of learning. This participant is a teacher who not only has an understanding of colonial processes, their impact on students, families and communities, but can also identify other ways of teaching that can engage students.

C: Maybe one First Nations student doesn't do well in a straight lecture, text book format, [but] they do well with guest speakers, they do well with contextualized learning outside of the classroom; hands on learning experiences. That's how they would have been taught not that many generations ago before the residential school system and just to know that as a culture we're still navigating a largely westernized education system and its difficult for a lot of

our students still and it was the same for parents and grandparents who were forced to attend residential school.

E: Robert Considine's teaching was that everybody has to learn about themselves no matter where they come from and then you bring everyone back into the circle it was an amazing process.

One participant shared a story about the tension created by a lack of understanding about cultural protocol. She was involved in a project that had school children make a huge button blanket and they were invited to present it at the Greater Victoria Art Gallery. Indigenous protocol is that you acknowledge the territory and open with a prayer. However, the gallery staff just wanted them to display the blanket. She felt really uncomfortable and ended up doing a drum song and acknowledgement and chose to see it as an opportunity to educate rather than a criticism of their lack of knowledge.

G: We had an exhibition at the Victoria Art Gallery. We had a group of 15 kids make button robes. They learned not just the manufacturing of it, like putting it together, making their design, we taught them about what the crests meant, the tradition and respectfulness and when you might wear them. Back east it might be a star blanket, right? But at the end we partnered with the art gallery and she had hastily drafted up an agenda and we got there and there was no space made for any of that and we had just come and it was like "this is, this is weird|! This is really awkward! So Peter was like um…and one of the parents there and I asked if he had a drum. He asked me, wasn't anyone doing a welcome to the territory? You know what, we need to do this and we need to do this properly and the dad had a drum so we did all that process and um, I think part of it is about education, it's not just about hanging the blankets up. One of the girls was from England and she had so many buttons to sew on and her fingers were getting sore so her parents stepped in and they sat there in the evenings and they sewed the buttons on and in the very end, she goes, this was a beautiful gift that you gave us, we've had so many wonderful conversations around the table sewing buttons and what a legacy your daughter will be leaving to her children and that was about opening up and sharing culture.

One conversation I have had with many coworkers in different schools surrounds a desire for a "guide" of sorts to explain cultural protocols. It is not mainstream knowledge, it's

not taught in schools or in the media, yet it's a sign of respect and it's culturally appropriate. For example, while a teacher may want to bring in an Elder as a guest speaker, knowledge of who to invite (Elders from the local territory first), how to invite them (in person preferably) and how to acknowledge them (honorarium) tends to be by trial and error or with guidance from staff who have knowledge of cultural protocols. While it's up to individuals to take up the challenge of decolonizing their knowledge base, available resources could help guide the process.

I like the idea presented by participant G, who acknowledges that as a multicultural society, we need to make space for Indigenous knowledge alongside other knowledges.

> G: That would be very cool, that filters down into curriculum development. You go for a medicine walk and you learn the traditional [First Nations] names as well as the Latin names and you integrate it and that can be totally shared, stuff like that. I agree!

The overall theory presented in this research is that public education employees will need to incorporate decolonizing perspectives in order to make their teaching practice culturally safe for students with Indigenous ancestry. The main themes of frustration, worldview and making space for new ideas, are key elements identified in this data to begin drafting a cultural safety framework for the school district. Frustration is the catalyst that can keep the issue current and move the system forward; an examination of worldview flushes out ethnocentrism and makes space for other ways of knowing; and making space for new ideas is the potential that can happen when creative dialogue occurs. The next section in this chapter is a visual representation of the key themes extracted from this data.

2. Conceptual Framework of Data:

The conceptual framework that has emerged from this data is a visual image with a canoe and paddles (see page 98). The canoe as a metaphor for this data envisions movement with paddlers. I like this metaphor because it pays homage to my ancestral homelands where the Anishnabe people fashioned canoes out of birch bark, and also to my chosen home on Coast Salish lands and they are well known for their ocean-going canoes made from cedar trees. Canoes carry people and packages and move across water, but can be portaged across land when necessary. As a metaphor, the portage denotes the ability to address obstacles on the path.

The canoe represents Indigenous knowledge. It is a knowledge base that will carry people towards social and environmental justice and reconciliation between Indigenous and Settler peoples. An Indigenous knowledge base reminds us that the Indigenous peoples of Canada had fully functioning societies with governance, medicine, spiritual practices, art, music, education, dance, community structures, all in relation to their land bases. This knowledge has been in these lands for time immemorial: a time period extending back beyond memory or record. This knowledge is still very much alive and while western knowledge swept into the Indigenous world like a hurricane, Indigenous knowledge still lives in the Indigenous lands where it belongs.

The paddles are a symbol for the many different players that will be needed on the journey towards Indigenous knowledge in the public education system. They include: parents, students, teachers, administrators, policy-makers, curriculum-writers, community

and unions. All paddlers must work together and when some need a rest, others keep going. When tumultuous waters appear, they portage to the next point. All paddlers know that Indigenous knowledge is most appropriate for Indigenous students and a basic knowledge base is appropriate for anyone living on Indigenous lands. For example, when we visit other countries, it is respectful to have a basic knowledge of the people and their customs.

3. Cultural Safety Framework: A Conceptual Design

The conceptual framework is a canoe with paddlers surrounded by double circles. The canoe is a vehicle that requires teamwork for movement and represents Indigenous Knowledges. The paddles represent the team needed to bring Indigenous Knowledge into the public education forum. The circle is a common symbol in Indigenous culture representing the connectedness of all things and the circle of life. In this design the double circle represents the ozone layer around the globe. The ozone layer connects our global community. It is my belief that the earth-centred philosophies of Indigenous knowledge are beneficial to all life forms on the Planet Earth. This conceptual image was designed by my son, Samuel.
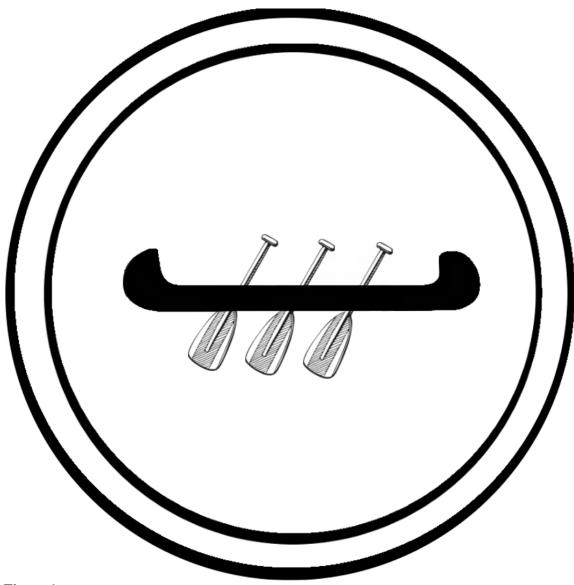

Figure 1

4. Analysis of Data Using Cultural Safety Framework:

As I read through the data, I also noted that some themes fit into the six key concepts of

cultural safety as identified in Ramsden's doctoral thesis. I decided to use these key

concepts as a framework to highlight the applicability of the cultural safety paradigm to

public education.

Key concepts of cultural safety identified in the fact sheet (**Appendix G**) are as follows:

- Cultural safety is an evolving term and a definition has not been finalized.
  However, the Nursing Council of New Zealand has defined culturally unsafe
  practice as "any actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity
  and well being of an individual."

- Cultural safety moves beyond the concept of cultural sensitivity to analyzing
  power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and relationships
  with colonizers, as they apply to health care.

- Biculturalism is a key element and asserts the primary position of the original
  people of the land in relation to all subsequent arrivals. This differs from a
  multicultural approach that does not recognize power differences among various
  ethnic groups.

- Cultural safety is a political idea because it attempts to change health
  professionals' attitudes about their power relationships with their patients.

- Cultural safety education focuses on teaching students about colonial history and
  its impact on Indigenous peoples, rather than on increasing knowledge about
  Indigenous customs and health beliefs.

- Teaches health care students not to blame victims of historical processes for
  current plights.

Using each concept as a heading, I found the data that applied to each concept to show

that the cultural safety paradigm could be applied to public education. I am a visual

learner and while I could cut and paste the data from the transcribed interviews into my

thesis document, to visually organize my research I created a workspace on my kitchen

table. I printed out the key concepts and cut them out as headings and taped them to the

table. Under each heading, I cut out sections of the transcriptions and placed them under

the most fitting heading. Below are the research findings with passages from the data.

Again, I have protected the participant's identity by naming them with a letter from A to

G. My dialogue is identified with J.

Cultural Safety Concept #1

> **"Cultural safety is an evolving term and a definition has not been finalized. However, the Nursing Council of New Zealand has defined culturally unsafe practice as "any actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well being of an individual."**

Research findings:

The definition of cultural safety was difficult for some people to come to terms with.

While it is a new concept in its application to public education, it is more common in the

fields of health care and child welfare. As you can see below, it was common for

participants to want to change the term to something that made sense to them. However, I

felt it was important to honour the term as it comes from an Indigenous woman who has

introduced a term that is political in nature, yet engaging, as it invites you to situate

yourself in the opposing position of being either culturally safe, or culturally unsafe. This

term goes beyond its counterparts of cultural awareness or cultural sensitivity, which do

not address power in relationships.

I felt it was important to ask people whether they had any questions on the concept

because it is relatively new. Research questions: Do you have any questions about my

research topic? Do you have any questions about the concept of Cultural Safety as an

educational framework?

B: I have no questions.

C: I don't have any questions either.

E: If you were to choose to use a different word from safety, it would be cultural what? - Cultural sensitivity? - Cultural awareness? See I don't get the word 'safe' because to me, you know I'm a wordsmith and I'm an editor and I work a lot with these things, and it seems to me there is something in there about, " I do not feel comfortable, I do not feel integrated, I do not feel valued", and you're calling all those things "safe"?

G: I think the safety piece is where a lot of people struggle, obviously culture is a core word, but the safety piece is where people struggle when people think of safety, it's in a physical sense and what we're really talking about is an intellectual or emotional sense as well. When you talk about safety issues, you go to your body.

This conversation is typical as I have introduced the concept to family, friends, and co-workers as it is a major focus of my research and find myself having to preface the definition with where it came from, and how it can be helpful. I appreciate that it is a concept that requires some examination before the complexity and applicability is made clear. As seen in the data below, I found myself using the literature and describing what cultural safety is "not".

J: Unsafe nursing or midwifery practice is defined as any action or omission which endangers the wellbeing, demeans the person or disempowers the cultural identity of a patient.

Further discussion clarified the concept to the groups and I found that people were able to make space for a new concept, especially when I provided the context where I identify that it is an Indigenous concept, born out of an Indigenous reality, examined and made public by an Indigenous scholar. As an educational concept, I have a lot of respect for this term and want to honor the person who developed it; however, I also need to take direction from the AEC if the term will be problematic to use in the school district.

E: Ah, okay, but there is a leap between the use of the word safety in that context and in the educational context, there is a leap there, you have to think outside the box to accept that "cultural safety" those words, to represent all of that. I was very impressed with your presentation and reported that to the Métis council and board members. And I've talked about it in ongoing terms so I've no issue with what you're doing or saying. I mean I'm here, it's just that when you said cultural safety at the very beginning of the meeting or somebody introduced you as addressing cultural safety, I immediately thought of all our kids in boarding schools. That's how narrow my definition is, so I'm the one that needs an education here. I'm not trying to contradict anybody, just understand.

I was able to talk about the concept as an evolving term, and the reality that it would need some tweaking to be applied to public education instead of nursing practice. However, it seemed that participants were accepting of the term, once the concept became clearer.

J: It's definitely a concept that's evolving, when she [Ramsden] started this, it was a really exciting idea for a lot of people and in the healthcare field it's really taken off.
A: It is exciting!

Recommendation:

A clear description of cultural safety as it relates to public education in the school district needs to be identified. It is sometimes challenging for a graduate student to use language that is not familiar outside of the academic world, and even "educational framework" can present as unclear. Further, cultural safety is a concept that is unfamiliar to the educational system, and very little literature exits to connect the two. However, as a new concept in public education, cultural safety defines the relationship between public educators and students with Indigenous ancestry. Defining the concept of cultural safety as it applies to the school district Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement can be considered a key element to be included in the framework.

Cultural Safety Concept #2

> **Cultural safety moves beyond the concept of cultural sensitivity to analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and relationships with colonizers, as they apply to health care.**

Ramsden made the point that cultural safety is an outcome. Cultural safety will be defined by the Indigenous students, their families and communities. For an Indigenous student to feel culturally safe in the classroom, my sense is that their school teachers and other staff will present Indigenous perspectives not only on special days, or on occasion, but on a regular basis. In order to do that, teachers and school staff will need to move beyond being aware of the difference and being sensitive to the difference, but will be able to present the difference in their curriculum and teaching practice. It has to start somewhere but it cannot stop at awareness. I tried to address this concept with next questions: What do you think the most important thing a teacher should know about Indigenous history? And, what do you think the most important thing an Administrator should know about Indigenous history?

> B: Well, I think they should know everything about that. That it's had a major impact. I think they should understand that when one culture impacts another, or one religion impacts another, it doesn't go away. It's not something that says that was yesterday and this is today. There is no such thing when it comes to culture.

> A: I think in this question, you know, someone's come here from another homeland and comes here expecting to make a living as a teacher but doesn't have a good understanding of the cultural aspects of the Indigenous people, then that aspect of cultural safety wouldn't be part of their teaching background yet.

> J: I called this research "Healing hearts and fostering alliances" because I think that if teachers undergo some sort of training where they understand the concept of cultural safety and move towards it. So if you're getting the idea that there's an Indigenous world view when you're in grade one in 2, 3 and 4, the kinds of topics you can talk about in grade 12 become more complex. Kids have often said, "how come we didn't know about this before"? "How come we're just

learning about this now"? They're ready for it, they're intellectually ready for it, emotionally for it, but they often feel a little bit duped that they didn't hear about it before

With questions 5 & 6: What other information should teachers and administrators know about Indigenous peoples? Participants B, C and E engaged in a dialogue that reflects the decolonizing quest to delve deeper into issues in the classroom. While there are some very progressive courses developed through FNESC that are supported and delivered in School District 61, there is a desire to have more Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum throughout the grades.

> A: There's this huge I guess, loss of um…memory, if you want to put it that way. We did have an Indigenous political system in places well before we had colonialism being forced upon us. So what do we learn in school? - We learn about the Canadian political system, we don't learn anything about what kind of political system was in place for Indigenous people and how we governed ourselves and our own codes of conduct and our structures that were in place. That's why our world view becomes distorted because many of us don't have a clue about what was there, what was here, before colonial society.
>
> B: There is an effort on the part of social studies curriculums to do something around aboriginal learning, some focus in grade four and five for example and later on but it doesn't view it in the same way. There are no parallel approaches like what you're saying and there has to be that parallel approach.
>
> A: Right we only learn about this when we go to university and want to learn more.
>
> B: You don't really get to the guts of the game, you learn about tribes and …
>
> C: There is First Nations Studies 12 but unfortunately doesn't come until grade 12 and is an elective course. The majority of students don't take that course but the students that do, the course opens up with a discussion about world view and ethnocentrism and Western versus Indigenous perspectives and lays the foundation of the course so we can look at this through a different lens. But it's effective for the students that take it but unfortunately it comes at the end of their education at high school and it's not a required course. I think a lot of difference would be made if more students took the course.

This concept clearly identifies the political nature of the term cultural safety. In an attempt to lead the focus group discussion about the political nature of cultural safety, I presented a question "what is the most important thing a teacher should know about his or her own culture?" with the preface below:

> J: Ok, so a basic overview of cultural safety is that it is an educational framework that has service providers' focus on their own culture and how their culture impacts the Indigenous people. It is how mainstream culture has impacted Indigenous people.

Participant B was able to offer the global issue of domination while participant A picked up on the issue of domination in terms of ancestry. These speak to political issues that are often difficult to talk about in a public institutional setting.

> B: Well, I think they should know everything about that. I think they should understand when one culture impacts on another culture or one religion impacts on another religion or whatever, along the way it doesn't go away. It's not something that says that was yesterday and today is today. There is no such thing as that, there is no such thing when it comes to culture. Historically, when there's been a wrong done, it lives forever and it didn't go on just in Canada, it went on in the United States, it went on in South America and it went on in Africa and you know, they tried to impose their will in China and on it goes.

> C: …when you explain about the *dominant* culture that goes beyond what the *ancestry* is of that particular teacher.

In my conversation with Ms. Nelson in the key informant interview, we discussed the difficulty of shutting people down with political talk. She was able to acknowledge that it is often difficult to have to be careful, as Indigenous peoples in a mainstream institution depend on alliances and are vulnerable to being shut down.

> N: That's definitely the political piece and then the other piece is how you put it out there in a way, again from my personal perspective I think that has been modeled to me from my parents and grandmother, is how do you create that bridge of understanding in a way that brings your issues forward that doesn't shut their hearts down. That's a key piece that's where the use of language is so powerful because the very reason you're doing this is, you know we live it

every day, but sometimes people are just on the brink of looking at our history. Even an analysis around the use of language is critical. For me, this is something I really work hard at. I've been there where I really want to just go there. It's a step process, you build your entry points you build their understanding, maybe it's about the journey of the different steps.

Cultural safety is a political term because it asks service providers in a dominant culture to look at how that relationship came to be where settler people are much more advantaged than the Indigenous peoples. It is important to identify the roots of the imbalance and that can only come from discussions about colonization. From there the political words like "institutional discrimination" "colonialism" and "power imbalances" follow. To me, there is no way around conversations that have a political nature. However, I do understand that politics can shut down communication.

Allies can feel overwhelmed with the challenges of decolonizing language and

perspectives. We have been programmed to deny our violent history and to view

ourselves as a peaceful nation (Regan 2010), however, colonialism is the elephant in the

living room, it needs to be acknowledged and analyzed. Some Indigenous participants

were quite comfortable with naming oppression and political talk.

A: When we hear things like "discovered" and "discovery" I think those terms are incorrect when they are used and when we say that the settlers or the folks that came here, they're explorers, really when you think about it it's more like an invasion so to me they're invaders and you know I'm all for calling it what it is. We've created a society of people who feel they're entitled to be here. It is entitlement and those are things we deal with on a day to day basis. When it feels like our people are invisible and there's just this sort of cultural amnesia that people forget what was here before the invaders came here. People forget!

B: I know! Exactly! There were people here and they had their values and they had their good lives…

B: sure and they [the settlers] came here and the land was given to them. And so we have a society that does very well, but they've forgotten that it's been on the backs of the indigenous people who were here first and whatever they used for their means of livelihood was taken away.

I made sure to acknowledge that the kinds of cultural oppressions that don't work for

Indigenous peoples, don't work for settler people either. An important feature of the

concept of cultural safety is in knowing what doesn't work about the dominant culture.

Participant C felt it was important to not just focus attention on historic issues relating to

contact, colonization and the imposed legislations against Indigenous peoples. She felt it

was important to also acknowledge contemporary issues:

> C: I think the teachers should know about the contemporary issues that are
> happening right now. There's a low level of awareness out there and how those
> are rooted in very recent colonial history. I think that a lot of people, a lot of
> teachers, don't know about the ripple effects of the residential school
> compensation process which has been going on for the last 2 years and how that
> trickled down to affect students in the school. Also here in BC I think a lot of
> people don't know that we're the only province in Canada that's still
> negotiating treaties and the impact that this has on our communities and just the
> way that history unfolded here in BC was so different to the rest of Canada…
> and it's information that should really be common knowledge in BC but a lot of
> people don't have a lot of awareness about.

There was certainly clear understanding that any discussion about Indigenous students in

the public education system will inherently be political. Yet, it's challenging to bring up

political topics in a mainstream institution. The concept of cultural safety is rather

courageous in this regard.

Recommendation:

The political nature of the concept of cultural safety should be presented in the district's

framework and applied to the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Indigenous

people appreciate it when a mainstream institution acknowledges their reality. Historic

and ongoing negative public education statistics for Indigenous peoples has roots in our

colonial history. It's political. There is no way around it.

Cultural Safety Concept #3

Biculturalism is a key element and asserts the primary position of the original people of the land in relation to all subsequent arrivals. This differs from a multicultural approach that does not recognize power differences among various ethnic groups.

During both focus groups and the individual interview, I reminded participants that

biculturalism is a key concept in cultural safety theory. Even still, conversations often

turned towards ideas of multiculturalism. One participant told a story about a community

in Surrey that has a largely East Indian population that she felt outside of and lamented

that we needed to do more to be more inclusive of other cultures.

> E: My son lives in Surrey and his office is entirely surrounded by blueberry
> farms with lots of east Indian people, they're the greatest nieghbours, and we've
> heard them, their dances, their music all of their festivals. But as a group, it's an
> enclave, it is impenetrable. And what are we doing to make it that way? What
> we are doing to make it that way, is we are not transferring any of their cultural
> things into our culture. So we're not really multicultural.

Another participant brought up how our schools are becoming more ethnically diverse

and wondered how the school district would respond to a cultural safety plan that focused

on one main ethnic group.

> D: Victoria is becoming *supremely* multi-cultural, so we've really got a
> diversity thing happening here which speaks to, we better be aware of who the
> people are that we're working with.

This brought up a discussion about Canadian culture and our version of multiculturalism

where we may have diverse ethnicities in our society but our cultural expressions,

government structure, standards and norms are mainly from England and France. While

biculturalism in New Zealand means the relationship between the Maori and Setter

peoples, here in Canada while the Indigenous populations are quite diverse, their

commonality is in the impact that colonialism has had in their communities. In contrast,

the one common denominator that all Canadians have is that no matter where you live, no matter what your ethnic ancestry is, and no matter how long your family has lived in this country, you are in the traditional territory of an Indigenous Nation. This is why biculturalism is a key concept in cultural safety theory. And, it makes sense and requires attention because no other ethnic group in the country is over-represented in any and all negative social statistics. As summed up by Participant C: "we have a society that does very well, but they've forgotten that it's been on the backs of the indigenous people who were here first".

Recommendation:

The district cultural safety framework should clearly spell out the bicultural relationship between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and Settler cultures. While there are many diverse cultures amongst the Indigenous peoples, the common experience is that colonialism has ravaged culture, dispossessed land and resources, and removed self-determination.

Cultural Safety Concept #4

> **Cultural safety is a political idea because it attempts to change health professionals' attitudes about their power relationships with their patients.**

This concept builds on the previous ones where Indigenous peoples are situated as the original peoples and settler populations acknowledge that they have ancestry that situates their culture in another country. Also, concept three and four acknowledge the power imbalances inherent in the Indigenous/Settler relationship. While it may be personally and professionally challenging to identify with a dominant culture that is being accused

of perpetuating an assimilationist agenda within the public school system, it is difficult to

deny.

> C: I think that it's important that each of us has a world view whether we're
> aware of it or not. And I think a lot of us just aren't aware of it and we assumed
> that there's just one world view until we start having conversations and realize
> that there are different ways of interpreting the world and that a lot of the
> problems in the world are caused by world view and people thinking that the
> way they do things and view things is the right way. Seeing that other cultures
> and people might do things differently that's when judgments get placed,
> problems can arise.

> B: Yeah, difference doesn't mean right and wrong.
> A: So you have different notions of success, of education, of wealth, of family
> C: Of religion, of belief…
> B: Everybody's guided by their own world view and it influences how they act
> and decisions that they make and judgments that they pass…

Clearly, when conversations emerge about worldview, it is difficult to deny that there are

many different worldviews and some that do not understand the concept of "different but

equal". It is only when the impact of one culture on another is elucidated that

consciousness is raised and alliances are sparked. There are many people working in the

school system who have strong social justice perspectives. I see it with teachers who are

working towards the safety of gay and lesbian students; food drives; and those who take

up anti-poverty or pro-environment causes within their schools and/or classrooms. It is

often during conversations about Indigenous issues that the strength of our colonial

socialization is expressed.

> B: When I teach about residential schools with my students and we talk about
> the intergenerational effects of residential schools they can see why there may
> have been family breakdown, addiction cycles and their family and all of a
> sudden it does come into context. But I'm talking more about different styles of
> learning. You know it's like maybe one First Nations student doesn't do well in
> a straight lecture, text book format, but they do well with guest speakers or with
> contextualized learning outside of the classroom, hands on learning experiences.
> That's how they would have been taught not that many generations ago before

the residential school system. Just to know that as a culture we're navigating still a largely westernized education system and it's difficult for a lot of our students still as it was their parents and grandparents who were forced to attend residential school.

E: I don't disagree with you, that's absolutely true and of course we don't do a good job of meeting the needs of anyone that learns differently.

B: It helps students and everything starts to make a little more sense when they see that the education system is just one education system its nothing like the traditional education system which is very different. And to know that this education system we're in now, First Nations people were only allowed attending public education in 1951 so it's recent. But they go "okay, if I'm not being successful in this system, it's not necessarily the education, I'm a failure as a person". That maybe the system, you know, aspects of it don't work for me and that's not how we were taught traditionally. There are other ways of learning that might work better. It becomes less personal.

This is the kind of dialogue that builds alliances. People who are conscious that we are a nation that colonized this land at the expense of the Indigenous people start to peel away the layers of colonialism towards a core where social justice can be realized. To rephrase the concept to fit the public education system: Cultural safety is a political idea because it attempts to change public educators' attitudes about their power relationships with their students and families.

Recommendation:

To claim that the public education system should be apolitical is a political statement in itself. The public education system presents and perpetuates mainstream standards and norms that are inappropriate for, and disadvantage, students with Indigenous ancestry. The bold statements made by cultural safety theory raise awareness of our colonial socialization and offer ideas to affect change. The district cultural safety framework should make bold statements that identify the issue and offer solutions.

Cultural Safety Concept #5

Cultural safety education focuses on teaching students about colonial history and its impact on Indigenous peoples, rather than on increasing knowledge about Indigenous customs and health beliefs.

As a country, we have a racist history. The horrors experienced by the residential school system are so incredibly far reaching that it is hard to comprehend by those of us who examine it, let alone those who were involved or who feel the intergenerational effects. A key principle in Indigenous worldview is that there is more than one truth (Waters 2004) and in the introduction to the Aboriginal Healing Foundations Research Series document entitled From Truth to Reconciliation, the authors offer insight into this principle. "Different experiences generate different perspectives on truth. Parallel histories and the world views they support can live comfortably side by side until they intrude on one another and require negotiation of a common understanding"(2008 pg. 1). It is true that Canada has a colonial history that has negatively impacted Indigenous Peoples. All participants were able to agree that colonial history needs to be taught.

> C: We did have political systems in place well before we had colonialism being forced upon us. So what do we learn in school? We learn about the Canadian political system. We don't learn anything about what kind of political system was in place for Indigenous people and how we governed and that's why our world view becomes distorted because many of us don't have a clue about what was here before colonial society.

Even people with some understanding of our colonial history are still uncovering information that startles and astounds them, as seen in Participant E's reaction to learning about forced migrations in Canada and United States.

> And so I started looking into that then it became very apparent to me some things I didn't know and I've been in the game along time and I didn't realize that Indian territory really referred to an area in the most godforsaken area in the United States for example where they just herded people. Culturally, these

people didn't have any ties to this particular area they just kind of herded them and we didn't learn in history about you know, the forced treks.

When adults uncover hidden truths, it sheds light on many complex social issues. It is nonetheless for students as decolonizing perspectives offer them a different view of themselves as learners as highlighted in the following passage from Participant B.

> And even First Nations people, I sometimes find that for some of the students I work with, just having the opportunity to talk about our pre-contact culture, our oral based culture, they think 'okay maybe that's why I struggle with reading and writing. I'm a good listener; I'm good at sharing what I know orally, but it's really hard for me to read something or to write or express myself in the written form because again, this is something that is quite new to our families and communities. In the grand scheme of things it's only been here for a few generations.

It's not enough to just present the few required units on First Nations peoples in curriculum; there are ways to incorporate local knowledge into any subject area. The ANED library has a myriad of resources relating to any subject and they are all available without cost, easily sent through the school mail, often with lesson plans and complementary activities. In order to counter our colonial history, decolonizing theory and practices will need to be employed. Key to cultural safety theory is the need to keep the lens on the theories and policies of colonization that have created negative social statistics. What is it about the structural issues in society that have created this situation? This is the question. It is less important to know what goes on inside a Big House, than it is to know that Big House season exists and students will miss school around that time. While this is important information to know, a deeper examination of our colonial history could uncover paradigm shifts that could be quite radical. For example, it is possible that our school district could design school breaks around Big House season. What is more appropriate: school breaks based on European religion traditions that have been here for a

few hundred years, or school breaks based on traditions that have been in this location for thousands and thousands of years? We might be far from doing something so boldly respectful to the local First Nations, but it begins with steps towards understanding the complexities of colonialism.

Recommendation:

School district staff will undertake personal and professional learning to explore historic and contemporary issues relating to the impact of colonization on the Indigenous population.

Cultural Safety Concept #6

Cultural Safety teaches health care students not to blame victims of historical processes for current plights.

Key concept number six can be adapted to fit teacher education programs and could read, "Cultural Safety teaches teacher education students not to blame victims of historical processes for current plights". Indeed, this is why the province has recently made specific courses on First Nations issues in teacher education programs mandatory. This is similar to schools of social work that understand that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children within provincial child welfare caseloads needs specific compulsory training in social work curriculum and teaching practices.

There were times during my research process that brilliant examples of cultural safety revealed themselves. One such example was in Teacher magazine, which is a newsmagazine of the BC Teacher's Federation. In the November/December 2010 issue, I came across and editorial by a nursing student, Courtney Swanson, who had made an

address to the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the

University of Victoria. Her statements struck me as I remember feeling similar: shocked,

not only at learning about such an atrocious hidden history, but also feeling a sense of

being betrayed by "the powers that be" (my parents, friends, family, media, school,

government & society) that let this horrible act go unacknowledged. Note that this young

woman graduated from a BC high school around 2000 or 2001.

> I am speaking today as a non-Aboriginal nursing student, to give my perspective of our education system. Approximately six months ago, I had a life-changing experience. I heard Samaya, from the Indian Residential School Survivor Society; speak to my class about the effects of colonialism and residential schools on the Aboriginal community. I'm not exaggerating when I say life-changing. This is not easy for me to explain, because in order for me to give context to what I'm talking about, I must first admit how ignorant I've been for the first 28 years of my life. My truth is that I am embarrassed and ashamed to admit that up until six months ago, I had no idea that residential schools ever existed. I was oblivious to the effects that colonialism had, and continues to have, on the Aboriginal people of this land. I thought that issues between Aboriginal people and European descendants were a part of a distant past, like something seen in the movies. What makes this twisted perception of Canadian history even worse is that the majority of my fellow classmates had similar levels of knowledge regarding this topic. **I graduated from high school within the BC public school system, but I had never come across the topic of residential schools and colonialism until my third year of nursing school**. How is this possible? Why is it considered necessary for us to learn about the histories of other nations' mistakes, such as Nazi Germany, but not about our own? I've looked back on my past to try to see how I managed to miss such a crucial aspect of our history - the history in which my own European ancestors would have played a role (Swanson 2010, pg. 5).

This is a nursing student who will go on to be a culturally safe nursing practitioner to

patients with Indigenous ancestry. She acknowledges this hidden history, and digs deeper

to increase her own learning and understanding. Further in the article, she acknowledges

her privilege at the expense of the Indigenous peoples. "I understand that

accomplishments have come easier to me in life because I belong to the dominant culture,

and I know that I don't feel right about that. I will never view myself, my culture, our

society, history, or this country the same way again". This is decolonizing thought

processing. Imagine what our future could look like if new generations of children are

brought up knowing our colonial history. Allies are welcome and needed in our quest for

self-determination, but yes, it's political.

Dialogue with the focus groups voiced similar feelings when, as adults, we learned about

the colonial forces in our society, supported by our governments that oppress(ed) the

Indigenous peoples.

> B: I teach [a First Nations focused course] but unfortunately it doesn't come
> until grade 12 and is an elective course. The majority of students don't take that
> course but the students that do, the course opens up with a discussion about
> world view and ethnocentrism and western vs. Indigenous perspectives and lays
> the foundation of the course so we can look at this through a different lens…
> but really its effective for the students that take it but unfortunately it comes at
> the end of their education at high school and it's not a required course. I think a
> lot of difference would be made if more students took the course.

> C: Well we learn about that stuff and we're finally able to connect the dots
> when we have that knowledge. They can start to understand that okay my
> parents went to residential school and they seem to have a distrust or mistrust of
> the authority or education system so they're not encouraging their son or
> daughter to go to school. You know that kind of thing can happen but if you a
> student that has that understanding at least they'll understand where it's coming
> from.

In order for public educators to teach decolonizing theory, they first must understand it

themselves. While this is the vision for many Indigenous people and allies, there are no

illusions that this will be an easy task. While the foundational support is in place with

provincial, district and union support for Aboriginal education initiatives, there is a real

need for public educators to increase their awareness and understanding as a personal

decision. It cannot be stressed enough that there is understanding that colonial processes

have ensured that our colonial history is not common knowledge as shared in the focus

group dialogue below. Question 6 asked: How would it help student if teachers and administrators knew this information?

> J: The assumption is that teachers are operating with a history that's been hidden from mainstream Canada.

> E: I think it's hidden from everybody. I was surprised as hell to hear about it.

> B: Also, I find when we're trying to present information to teachers that if we talk about colonialism that makes it sound like it was a long time ago. When we talk about something in a contemporary context that's rooted in a more recent history it feels more interesting and more relevant. It's easier to pique people's interest when it's current. And with First Nation's history I have to use the word living history because the history books are still being written… certain chapters have been written, but there are things that are still happening right now that will be in these history books in the years to come because it's still unfolding… still living it. It's still evolving it's not resolved and it may not be resolved during our lifetimes. But just to see that it's not something that's history it's not… in terms of being over... it's just the next stage of a story that is still unfolding.

Participants also noted that the lack of Aboriginal perspectives in curriculum about local culture. In Indigenous worldview, knowing where you live is essential education. From this perspective, children are taught everything there is to know about their immediate environment. It would have been essential knowledge in pre-contact times, to know where food and medicines could be gathered, but also knowledge of tides, weather patterns, how to construct housing, and so on. This cultural knowledge would be unique to the area, as different information would be taught to children with Inuit ancestry or Cree ancestry, for example. This challenges the pan-Indian perspectives that permeate mainstream knowledge about Aboriginal issues. Teepees and Pow-Wows are not expressions of west coast Indigenous culture; Long Houses and Potlatches are appropriate.

D: It confounds me that we'll study ancient Elizabethan literature but we'll never spend any time examining literature or you know yeah, literature or language around this place, around this world.

F: I think a lot of it has to do around education in just honouring and respecting the original inhabitants of the land.

Knowledge about colonial processes starts the inquiry and makes space for consideration of Indigenous perspectives. Participant C offers an example of how background about residential school would help them understand the contemporary issue of residential school compensation payouts and their effects on some of their students.

C: I think the teachers should know about the contemporary issues that are happening right now. There's a low level of awareness out there and how those are rooted in very recent colonial history. I think that a lot of people, a lot of teachers don't know about the ripple effects of the residential school compensation process which has been going on for the last 2 years and how that trickled down to affect students in the school.

Public educator knowledge about local First Nations issues would help them to understand the tremendous cycle of emotion attached to the residential school compensation process where families struggling with grinding poverty had traumatic emotional memories extracted and then were given large amounts of money. Many students would be sitting in classrooms distracted by their family's involvement with this process. A culturally safe teacher knows this information and finds a way to understand how this might affect the Indigenous students in her care, while at the same time educating all students about this process.

Recommendation:

Public educators understand the Indigenous issues specific to their region. Know the local territory, protocols, media issues and community resources.

Towards Cultural Safety in School District 61: Draft Framework

Cultural safety is a concept used to convey an approach to public education that recognizes the contemporary conditions of Aboriginal people which result from their post-contact history. The data findings and resulting conceptual framework together with the data analysis using the principles of cultural safety reveal key elements that can be included in the initial development of a cultural safety agreement for the school district. The data comes from a subcommittee of the Aboriginal Education Council and can be considered a starting place for further development. Data supports the idea that public educators will need to undertake personal and professional learning to understand an Indigenous perspective to public education.

The draft framework below was created from an analysis of the data using the key principles of cultural safety as a framework. The application of the cultural safety paradigm to public education is unprecedented and this analysis was an attempt to further the theory. The AEC may decide that the conceptual framework and the cultural safety framework may be combined to create the district's cultural safety agreement. My hope is that the finished framework, with either one or both pieces of this analysis chapter, will be included in the new Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement that is expected to be signed in the new school year.

Draft Framework for Cultural Safety in School District 61:

Cultural Safety is an educational framework for the analysis of power relationships between professionals and those they serve.

Foundational Statements

- Biculturalism is a key concept in cultural safety. It addresses the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Settler populations.

- Ethnicity is a key concept in cultural safety. All people regardless of where they were born, have and ethnic ancestry and an ancestral homeland.

- Culture is a key concept in cultural safety. Our ancestral homelands provide a connection to ancestral culture: language, foods, art, dress, music, architecture, religion, history, physical representation (where other people look like us) and worldview.

- From this premise, it is understood that the Aboriginal populations of Canada are in their own ancestral homelands and can look nowhere else in the world for connection to their ancestral culture.

- Cultural safety asks people to explore the impact that the Settler culture has had on Aboriginal peoples and culture.

- Cultural Safety upholds political ideas of self-determination and de-colonization.

- Cultural Safety teaches about colonial history and its impact on Aboriginal students, rather than on increasing knowledge about Aboriginal culture and traditions.

Goals

1. School district staff will undertake personal and professional learning to explore historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

2. School District Staff will understand local First Nations protocols.

3. School district staff will strive to bring authentic Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms and to the students they work with whether those students have Aboriginal ancestry or not.

4. School district staff will recognize that Aboriginal cultural safety is an outcome where Aboriginal students, families and communities feel that their culture is authentically represented in the public school system.

I added some ideas on ways to carry out the key elements of cultural safety under each of the following goals.

1. School district staff will undertake personal and professional learning to explore historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

   - Professional Development Days dedicated to Aboriginal issues.
   - Staff committees at each school dedicated to Aboriginal issues.
   - Aboriginal focused bulletin boards in schools.
   - Staff book clubs with Aboriginal themed books.
   - School libraries will have resources for staff on Aboriginal issues.
   - Maps and posters with this information in staff rooms

2. School District Staff will understand local First Nations protocols.

   - Acknowledgment of local territory at school functions and newsletters.
   - Honorariums and gifting: cultural awareness program.
   - Elders: Invitations, transportation, treatment, acknowledgment.
   - Guest speakers: class preparation; before and after care of guest.
   - School district staff will be able to name the local First Nations

3. School district staff will strive to bring authentic Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms and to the students they work with whether those students have Aboriginal ancestry or not.

   - Aboriginal specific courses are not just for Aboriginal students.
   - Aboriginal ways of knowing benefits all children.
   - Guest speakers, field trips and community resources.
   - Visual representations in common areas and classrooms.

4. School district staff will recognize that Aboriginal cultural safety is an outcome where Aboriginal students, families and communities feel that their culture is authentically represented in the public school system.

   - Acknowledgement of culture is respectful.
   - Students are not expected to be the experts of their culture.

This draft framework was presented to the AEC at their monthly meeting in May 2011 and has been distributed to all members via email as many members are not able to attend every meeting. The committee does not meet during the summer months and I will attend the meetings in the fall to answer any other questions about the framework and to seek guidance on a next step for its development.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I address the ways that this research has been shared in community, how it has been evaluated by the researcher, and review the research design. In the overview of the chapter, I reiterate that this research a beginning step in a process that it is not finished. There is intention to further the process with an aim to bring decolonizing and Indigenous perspectives into public education.

1. Dissemination of Research:

As mentioned previously, I presented the draft framework to the Aboriginal Education Council at the May 2011 meeting at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. I will continue to explore the development of this framework with this committee beginning in the new school year that starts in September 2011. My hope is that a framework can be built into the new Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement that will be signed in this next school year.

I also presented the draft framework to one of my schools at a staff meeting. I was given 20 minutes on the agenda of the staff meeting and presented information about my research and the cultural safety framework. It was received with interest and respect and a decision was made to strike a new staff committee to address Aboriginal education at the school. I have offered to present at another one of my schools, and will accept requests as invitations are extended. My supervisor has suggested that I prepare a workshop on my research topic and the cultural safety framework and present it at next

year's provincial Aboriginal Education Conference hosted by the First Nations Education

Steering Committee (FNESC) in Vancouver. In December 2010, I was invited to speak

on the topic of cultural safety at a teacher education course on First Nations issues in

public education, at UVic. I had not carried out my research and hence, had not

developed the framework, but the concept was still interesting to education students.

2. Limitations of the Research:

The main limitation on this study was the time frame and my role as a student researcher.

I am bound by personal and financial time frames for completing this research. However,

I do intend to continue the process as a volunteer community member on the AEC. I

began my graduate studies in 2008 and during this time I have continued to work for the

school district. The first two years I reduced my employment to four days a week, but in

the last year have returned to full time status. Evenings, weekends and holiday time is

absorbed by research, reading and writing. I needed to place a limit on the amount of time

that I took away from family and friends, for my own sake as well as theirs. Hence, the

participatory action process was not truly community driven. It was organized by the

researcher, who acted as the facilitator and set the time frames for the process. Other

limitations included the busy schedules of some of the AEC members who would have

liked to have been involved but who had conflicting commitments. And, of course, my

status as a novice researcher will have placed some limitations on the study.

Ideas for further research have presented themselves. A key area for further exploration is

that of how to engage teachers in the decolonizing process. If they are to be the brokers of

Indigenous knowledge, ideas for engaging their hearts in the process should be explored.

This could be committee work done by the AEC with the inclusion of key ANED staff

and representation from the BC Teacher's Federation. Mainstream socialization is

powerful and we are forging new ground to consider decolonizing perspectives in public

education. The groundwork is there, the resources are there; they just need to be

organized. Perhaps the next step for the AEC will be to identify strategies for action to

engage teachers and administrators in the vision of a more culturally safe public

education system.

3. Quality of Research:

The credibility of this research is determined by the comparison of the data to the key

concepts of cultural safety as defined by the academic literature. Prolonged engagement

with participants was not established, however, the continued involvement of the

researcher with the AEC will result in a more authentic approach to the development of a

cultural safety framework. Certainly, this topic has been discussed with many peers and

other interested parties. I presented stages of my research to the ANED staff at our

monthly staff meetings; at the Central Middle School staff meeting; in UVic Education

class by invitation of the professor with whom I had informally discussed my research.

- Transferability is established by describing the means for applying the research findings to other contexts. Fundamentally, the possibility of applying findings across settings is established though thickly detailed descriptions that enable audiences to identify similarities of the research setting with other contexts (McNiff & Whitehead p. 176).

Once the cultural safety framework is completed, as determined by the AEC, it is

possible that this framework my find application with other school districts. All 60 school

districts in B.C. are expected to have Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements. I

have searched online to review the goals of other district's enhancement agreements and

cannot find any that have goals specifically for public educators to consider decolonizing

perspectives in their practice.

- Dependability is provided though an audit trail that clearly describes the processes of collecting and analyzing data and provides a means by which the reader may refer to the raw data (p.177).

The introduction of the concept of cultural safety to the AEC can be proven in the

minutes of these meetings. The data of the participants' transcripts is not available to the

public. I will make the data available to my graduate supervisor for authenticity. The

draft framework produced in this document is in the possession of the AEC. I believe that

this research addresses the criteria of transferability and dependability. The proposal,

recruitment, and data collection methods are documented in the AEC minutes where I

was present. I will remain a member of the AEC to continue the work of developing the

cultural safety framework, as well as other agenda items of the council.

4. Making a Claim to Knowledge:

I don't think it was unknown knowledge that Indigenous people are over-represented in

negative public education statistics. McNiff and Whitehead state that, "when you make a

claim to knowledge you say that you know something now that was not known before"

(p. 149). Perhaps this research shed light on the importance of considering the issue of

cognitive imperialism, assimilationist agendas, and the legitimacy of Indigenous

knowledges. It can be overwhelming to consider that every subject taught in school has

an element of cognitive imperialism; that all knowledge is socially constructed; and, that

there is an opposing Indigenous perspective to consider. This is the nature of decolonizing methodology; it has to shake up the prevailing views.

It is possible that some participants thought that a cultural safety framework was a guide to support Indigenous students by bringing their culture into the classroom, but that is not the essence of this concept. It is about the teacher and not the student. The claim to knowledge is in making the need for decolonizing perspectives known, in a framework for the school district. The framework is developing from the cultural safety literature; the action research process; and from conversations with informal participants (coworkers, family and friends). The development of the cultural safety framework is a work in progress. The key elements may be identified in this work, but its application into the body of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will require further development. The framework is actually a guide for teachers on how they can achieve the goals of the agreement but how they act on the guide needs further exploration.

I remember advice given in one of my graduate classes, to choose a research topic that you really like because you will be with it for a long time. I think that I could study the concept of cultural safety and the public education system for many more years to come. It makes perfect sense to me that an analysis of the Settler-Indigenous relationship elucidates colonially inherited problems including cognitive imperialism. Settler culture arrived in Indigenous lands with an opposing worldview that was seen as superior, but was in fact, oppressive for even its own members. The imposition of that world view is inappropriate for Indigenous students.

5. Relationality and Relational Accountability:

I honour and respect the founding mother of this concept, Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden, by expanding the application of the concept to the public education system. As an educational framework for the analysis of power relationships between professionals and those they serve, cultural safety is a concept that can be applied to many Settler-Indigenous relationships where power is imbalanced: health care; child welfare; education; corrections; fisheries; etc. Using cultural safety as a framework for analysis leads one to question how it came to be that the Indigenous peoples of Canada have become dispossessed of land, resources and liberty in their own homelands; brutalized by assimilation agendas; controlled by an imposed legislation system; and then measured by foreign standards and norms. I like its courage and boldness. As a topic, it has been exciting to research and understand.

At times during this research process, I found myself feeling protective of Dr. Ramsden's concept when anyone would suggest toning down the politics, or changing the name. Cultural safety is developed by an Indigenous woman, from an Indigenous reality in neo-colonial New Zealand. I don't understand how toning down politics helps to reduce oppression. If suffragettes and early feminists had not been politically charged, the rights of women could still be grossly unequal. If the Indian Brotherhood had not stood up to the White Paper (1973), we could be in worse shape politically. The issue of cognitive imperialism in the public education system is directly related to the poor outcomes of students with Indigenous ancestry; it is political.

I chose the action research method because I wanted to utilize my graduate studies time and energy to do real work. Countering colonialism requires strategies that plant seeds of decolonizing thoughts. In regards to planting those seeds in the public education system, the Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria seemed like the appropriate group to work with as they are currently overseeing the development of a new Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement for the district. The timing was right for presenting the idea of a cultural safety framework for application into the new EA. The AEC was open to the proposal, interested in the concept, and agreed that a sub-committee of the council would work with me. They knew that my research proposal would have to pass school district and university ethics applications so they were aware that my research would pose no risk to community.

I have a relationship to my topic: the idea of cultural safety in the public education system. I work for the public education system, and I work specifically with students identified as having Indigenous ancestry. Some students and families with Indigenous ancestry are distracted by colonial processes like poverty and oppression and perhaps don't have the energy to consider the intricate processes of cognitive imperialism at work and how that can contribute to their dis-ease with the public education system. My research topic challenges public educators to become aware of those processes.

My topic also challenges me to be more courageous as I have had to find my voice around countering colonialism. My sometimes debilitating fear of public speaking has eased, somewhat. I am able to speak to issues that I feel need to be shared because I have

accountability to the students and families that I work with and work for. I am accountable to my son, who is still in the school system. I need his teachers to present him with historically correct information. He should not have to risk feeling ridiculed for offering that the Bering Strait theory, is just that, a theory, because the West Coast people who have been here for thousands and thousands of years have different creation theories: different and equal. Imagine if his teacher offered that perspective to the class.

I am also accountable to my Band, as I have made a commitment to present my research to them during my visit to my home town this summer. They have been financially supportive to my graduate studies and I am excited to share the concept cultural safety with the community. I am also giving the Band office library all the books that they funded me to purchase for my graduate studies.

Finally, I feel a sense of relational accountability to the spirit of Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden and other Ancestral spirits who have often given me inspiration and courage along the way. Cultural Safety challenges the status quo which is out of sync with our relationships: to each other as humans; to our air; our water; plant and animal beings; and our Earth. The planet needs Indigenous ways of knowing. My relationship to this framework is motherly as I helped give birth to an idea and have raised interest and awareness about cultural safety. My hope is that it has contributed to Indigenous and decolonizing research perspectives and that it finds its way into the practice of educators in the public education system. While I will stay connected to the framework, I am ready to let it fly.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Participant Consent forms

Appendix B: The University of Victoria Ethics Approval

Appendix C: Research Approval from GVSD

Appendix D: Aboriginal Education Council of Greater Victoria Letter of
Support

Appendix E: Cultural Safety Framework for Greater Victoria School District

Appendix F: Aboriginal Education Council Minutes

Appendix G: Cultural Safety Fact Sheet

Appendix H: Research Questions for Focus Group and Individual Interview

Participant Consent Form

January 10, 2011

Dear Nella Nelson:

My name is Joanne Mitchell and I am a graduate student from the University of Victoria in the School of Social Work. You are being invited to participate in a study that is being conducted by me entitled **"Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards a Cultural Safety Agreement for School District 61"**

I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for a degree in the Master of Social Work Indigenous Specialization Program. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jeannine Carriere. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-6452 or by email at carriere@uvic.ca .

The purpose of this research is to define key elements that would be included in the framework for an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District.

Research of this type is important because public education systems need the input from Indigenous peoples regarding the type of information they should know to help Indigenous peoples feel like the system reflects an understanding of their world view. Education statistics show that Indigenous students do less well in the public education system than do their non-Indigenous counterparts. I am hopeful that a Cultural Safety Agreement might help teachers actively educate themselves about Indigenous perspectives.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a key person in the field of Aboriginal education. As the coordinator of the Aboriginal Education Division of the Greater Victoria School District, you hold historical information on the development of Aboriginal education services in the district. Also, you have been involved in the development of the district's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. You are being recruited for this study by me, Joanne Mitchell.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include participating in one or two interview sessions. I will ask for your permission to audio record the interview(s). You may decline to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. The interview(s) will take approximately one hour and a half. We will do the interview(s) at a time that is convenient for you. If you need to cancel or reschedule the interview(s), please inform me by email or phone using the information provided at the end of this letter.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

A potential benefit of this research study could be achieved if the findings contribute to a document that will address one or more of the goals in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement for School District 61.

Your participation in this research study must be completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time. If you withdraw from this study, your data will not be included in the study and your data will be destroyed.

To make sure you continue to give consent to participate in this research, I will ask you at the beginning of the personal interview(s) if you continue to give your consent to participate in this study.

Anonymity will not be possible as there is only one Coordinator of Aboriginal Education in the school district. However, you will have a written transcript of our dialogue and can edit any information your do not want included in the research. As the interview(s) will be in person, you will not be anonymous to the researcher.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by storing printed transcripts of the interviews in a locked filing cabinet located at my work office at my home. I am the only person who has access to this cabinet. All digital audio recordings of the interviews will be saved on my personal computer which is password protected. Only I use this computer.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:
- The results of the study will be shared with the individual interviewees.
- The results of the study will be shared with the Aboriginal Education Council.
- The results will be presented at my thesis dissertation.

Data from this study will be disposed of once I have presented my research to my supervisory committee at my thesis dissertation at the University of Victoria, likely in May of 2011. All typed transcriptions of the interviews will be shredded in a paper shredder. Audio recordings and transcriptions saved in my computer will be deleted.

You may contact any of the following individuals if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study:
- The Researcher: Joanne Mitchell at jmmitch@telus.net or my cell 250-893-5908.
- My U-Vic Supervisor: Dr. Jeannine Carriere at 250-721- 6452 or carriere@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545 or by email at ethics@uvic.ca.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher and that you are interested in participating in this research study.

_____   _____   _____
ANED Coordinator   Signature   Date

Your signature below indicates that you give permission for the personal interview and the group discussion to be audio recorded.

_____   _____   _____
ANED Coordinator   Signature   Date

Please return your signed consent form to me or bring your form to the interview session.

Sincerely,

Joanne Mitchell – Researcher

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

Human Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
Administrative Services Building
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 2Y2 Canada
Tel 250-472-4545, Fax 250-721-8960
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

**University
of Victoria**

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Joanne Mitchell	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER:	10-470
UVic STATUS:	Master's Student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	20-Dec-10
UVic DEPARTMENT:	SOCW	APPROVED ON:	20-Dec-10
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Jeannine Carriere	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	19-Dec-11

PROJECT TITLE: Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for School District #61

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Modifications
To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals
Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures
When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

Dr. Rachael Scarth
Acting Associate Vice-President, Research

Certificate Issued On: 20-Dec-10

10-470 Mitchell, Joanne

Aboriginal Education & Community Connections

Camosun College, Victoria, BC

September 30, 2010

Joanne Mitchell (4-117 Simcoe Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 1K5)
c/o Paola Bell
Aboriginal Nations Education Division
Greater Victoria School District
P.O. Box 700
VICTORIA BC V8W 2R1

Dear Joanne:

Thank you for your letter requesting letter community support to conduct research in the Greater Victoria School District as part of your MSW work. Your letter, which expressed your request to engage the Aboriginal Education Council as a focus group to develop a framework for an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District, was circulated to members of the Aboriginal Education Council, School District 61. All Council members who responded did so positively and with enthusiasm. As Council Chair, I can now positively state that we support your research proposal. Thank you/miigwech for the work you are doing and the intentions you carry to improve Aboriginal student experience in this school district.

Sincerely,

Janice Simcoe, Chair
Aboriginal Education Council
Greater Victoria School District

OFFICE OF
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Greater
VICTORIA
School District

556 BOLESKINE ROAD, VICTORIA, BC V8Z 1E8 FAX (250) 475-4112
John Gaiptman, Superintendent (250) 475-4159 • George Ambeault, Secretary-Treasurer (250) 475-4106

March 25, 2011

Ms. Joanne Mitchell
#4-117 Simcoe Street
Victoria, BC   V8V 1K5

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

Thank you for your recent application regarding your research project, *Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for School District #61.*

Please be advised that your application has been approved and permission to proceed with this project is granted during the 2010-2011 school year.

I wish you success with your project.

Sincerely,

John Gaiptman
Superintendent of Schools

JG/mc

Cc: Nella Nelson, Coordinator, ANED
       Mandy Conrad

Draft Framework for Cultural Safety in School District 61:

Cultural Safety is an educational framework for the analysis of power relationships between professionals and those they serve.

Foundational Statements

- Biculturalism is a key concept in cultural safety. It addresses the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Settler populations.

- Ethnicity is a key concept in cultural safety. All people regardless of where they were born, have and ethnic ancestry and an ancestral homeland.

- Culture is a key concept in cultural safety. Our ancestral homelands provide a connection to ancestral culture: language, foods, art, dress, music, architecture, religion, history, physical representation (where other people look like us) and worldview.

- From this premise, it is understood that the Aboriginal populations of Canada are in their own ancestral homelands and can look nowhere else in the world for connection to their ancestral culture.

- Cultural safety asks people to explore the impact that the Settler culture has had on Aboriginal peoples and culture.

- Cultural Safety upholds political ideas of self-determination and de-colonization.

- Cultural Safety teaches about colonial history and its impact on Aboriginal students, rather than on increasing knowledge about Aboriginal culture and traditions.

Goals

5. School district staff will undertake personal and professional learning to explore historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

6. School District Staff will understand local First Nations protocols.

7. School district staff will strive to bring authentic Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms and to the students they work with whether those students have Aboriginal ancestry or not.

8. School district staff will recognize that Aboriginal cultural safety is an outcome where Aboriginal students, families and communities feel that their culture is authentically represented in the public school system.

I added some ideas on ways to carry out the key elements of cultural safety under each of the following goals.

4. School district staff will undertake personal and professional learning to explore historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

- Professional Development Days dedicated to Aboriginal issues.
- Staff committees at each school dedicated to Aboriginal issues.
- Aboriginal focused bulletin boards in schools.
- Staff book clubs with Aboriginal themed books.
- School libraries will have resources for staff on Aboriginal issues.
- Maps and posters with this information in staff rooms

5. School District Staff will understand local First Nations protocols.

- Acknowledgment of local territory at school functions and newsletters.
- Honorariums and gifting: cultural awareness program.
- Elders: Invitations, transportation, treatment, acknowledgment.
- Guest speakers: class preparation; before and after care of guest.
- School district staff will be able to name the local First Nations

6. School district staff will strive to bring authentic Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms and to the students they work with whether those students have Aboriginal ancestry or not.

- Aboriginal specific courses are not just for Aboriginal students.
- Aboriginal ways of knowing benefits all children.
- Guest speakers, field trips and community resources.
- Visual representations in common areas and classrooms.

4. School district staff will recognize that Aboriginal cultural safety is an outcome where Aboriginal students, families and communities feel that their culture is authentically represented in the public school system.

- Acknowledgement of culture is respectful.
- Students are not expected to be the experts of their culture.

Aboriginal Nations Education Council Meeting
Thursday, March 10, 2010, 3:30 p.m.
Victoria Native Friendship Center, Board Room
MINUTES

In attendance:

Janice Simcoe (Chair) Camosun College
Nella Nelson (ANED Coordinator)
Joanne Mitchell (ANED Staff)
Rebecca Mabee (Métis Community Services)
Dana Marchant, Behavioural Consultant (guest speaker)

Constance O'Leary (MNGV)
Dave Pitre (School Trustee)
Sabrina Williams (Surrounded by Cedar)
Paola Bell (ANED Assistant)

Regrets: Pat Duncan (Associate Superintendent), Randy Kaneen (District Principal), Monique Gray-Smith (Parent), Paul Stevenson (VP Shoreline MS), Benula Giasson (GVTA), Jim Young (School Liaison VNFC), Freda Shaughnessy (Elder)

Absent: Seneca Ambers (CEER @ VNFC), Jennifer Wickham (Parent), Butch Dick (Esquimalt Nation), Tara Ehrchke (GVTA), Charlotte Charlie, Alana Hopkins (VCPAC)

Minutes sent to: Georgia Dixon, Esquimalt Nation

Meeting commenced: 3:40 pm

1. Welcome and acknowledgement: by Janice Simcoe, Chair. Introductions went around the table.

2. Approval of December 2, 2010 Minutes:
   Approval of minutes passed.

3. Understanding Behaviour in the Classroom – presentation by Dana Marchant, Behaviour Consultant.

Action: Dana will send Paola a copy of her presentation.

Nella: Thank you Dana for presenting. It really helps to have a common understanding of the topic and how it affects students both in school and at home.

Janice: On March 16th there will be a gathering on the legislature lawns and an Aboriginal education presence will be there. Students are protesting high tuition fees.
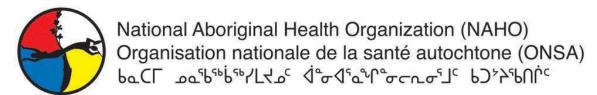
Joanne: Joanne updated the council on her research and distributed three handouts:
   1. Cultural Safety Fact Sheet
   2. A Framework – with 5 goals
   3. Action Research Process
Joanne also expressed interest in remaining a member of the council even after her thesis is complete to help write the protocols for the District. If you have any feedback or comments re: the handouts, please email them to Joanne at jomitchell@sd61.bc.ca

Action: Joanne to email Paola a copy of her handouts. Paola will forward handouts to council members when received.

9.

National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)
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FACT SHEET: CULTURAL SAFETY

Origins and Background

• The term "cultural safety" was developed in the 1980s in New Zealand in response to the indigenous Maori people's discontent with nursing care. Maori nursing students and Maori national organizations supported the theory of "cultural safety," which upheld political ideas of self-determination and de-colonization of Maori people.

• Cultural safety was controversial when first introduced to public health and academic communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Criticisms voiced in the media claimed that nursing schools, by adopting mandatory cultural safety curriculum, were "force-feeding culture" and "indoctrinating nursing students" with specific political views.

• In 1990, the Nursing Council of New Zealand incorporated cultural safety in its curriculum assessment processes, and nursing school examinations began testing student comprehension of the concept. The Council's current document outlining its position on cultural safety is entitled "Guidelines for Cultural Safety, the Treaty of Waitangi, and Maori Health in Nursing and Midwifery Education and Practice."

• Cultural safety is based within a framework of dual cultures and is congruent with the tenets of Aotearoa/New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi.

• "Transcultural nursing" is the most common theoretical approach to cultural skills education in Canadian nursing schools. It differs in a number of ways, including in origin, from the newer concept of cultural safety. Transcultural nursing was developed from the perspective of the dominant (European, white) culture, whereas cultural safety was developed by non-dominant Maori peoples reacting to negative experiences in the health and nursing system.

• The doctoral and other academic work of Irihapeti Ramsden, a Maori nurse, has served as this theory's foundation. Her early work includes "Kawa Whakaruruhau: Cultural safety in nursing education in Aotearoa," which was published for the Ministry of Education of New Zealand in 1990.

Key Concepts

• Cultural safety is an evolving term and a definition has not been finalized. However, the Nursing Council of New Zealand has defined culturally unsafe practice as "any

actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well being of an individual."

• Cultural safety moves beyond the concept of cultural sensitivity to analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and relationships with colonizers, as they apply to health care.
• There is much confusion and ongoing debate about how cultural safety differs from other concepts like cultural competency, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural appropriateness. Each of these terms has many definitions and it is difficult to gauge how they overlap.

• Ramsden is one of many health professionals who views these terms on a continuum of care. According to Ramsden, cultural awareness is the beginning step in the learning process, which involves understanding difference, while cultural sensitivity is an intermediate step where self exploration of the student begins. Cultural safety is the final outcome of this learning process. A nurse who can practice safe care interacts with patients in such a way that those who receive care define it.

• Biculturalism is a key element of cultural safety theory and asserts the primary position of the original people of the land in relation to all subsequent arrivals (Polachek, 1998). This is in contrast to multicultural approaches that do not recognize power differences among various ethnic groups.

• Cultural safety has been referred to as "Critical Social Theory," because it is argued that "it is no different from teaching people to be aware of the socio-political, economic issues in society and to recognize the impact that these issues have on people" (Ramsden, 133).

• Cultural safety requires that nurses become respectful of nationality, culture, age, sex, political and religious beliefs. This notion is in contrast to transcultural/multi-cultural nursing care, which encourages nurses to deliver service irrespective of these aspects of a patient.

• A key element of culturally safe practice is establishing trust with the patient. Culturally safe care empowers people because it reinforces the idea that each person's knowledge and reality is valid and valuable. It facilitates open communication and allows the patient to voice concerns about nursing care that he or she may deem unsafe.

• Care may be deemed unsafe if the patient is humiliated, alienated, or directly or indirectly dissuaded from accessing necessary care.

• Cultural safety involves recognizing the nurse as the bearer of his or her own culture and attitudes, and that nurses consciously or unconsciously exercise power over patients. Cultural safety is a political idea because it attempts to change health professionals' attitudes about their power relationships with their patients.

• Many academics maintain that cultural safety in the mainstream health care system cannot be achieved by individual interactions. Rather, it depends on meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in decision-making processes that allow transfer of power to Aboriginal governments
(Browne, Fiske, Thomas, 2001).

Cultural Safety Education

• Focuses on teaching students about colonial history and its impact on Indigenous peoples, rather than on increasing knowledge about Indigenous customs and health beliefs. Self-discovery: "Students need to learn to evaluate what they are bringing to the table in terms of their own invisible baggage; that is, attitudes, metaphors, beliefs and values" (Ramsden 1992: 23).

• Aims to identify attitudes that may consciously or unconsciously exist towards cultural/ social differences in health care transform attitudes by tracing them to their origins and seeing their effects on practice through reflection and action.
Cultural safety education enables students to respect client diversity, e.g., asking permission of their patients before acting. January 31, 2006 3

Cultural Safety Learning Objectives

Irihapeti Ramsden outlined the following learning objectives in her 2002 doctoral thesis, "Cultural Safety and Nursing Education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu":

• Educate student nurses and midwives not to blame victims of historical processes for current plights.

• Educate students to examine their own realities and attitudes that are brought to each new person they encounter in practice.

• Educate student nurses to be open-minded and flexible in their attitudes toward people who are different from themselves, to whom they deliver service.

• To produce a workforce of well-educated, self-aware registered nurses who are culturally safe to practice, as defined by the people they serve.

Example of culturally safe care
A self-aware nurse recognizes homophobia in her own personality and chooses not to work in the H.I.V. ward of a hospital where there is a higher chance of encountering homosexuals. This reduces the likelihood of the nurse providing demeaning, humiliating or unsafe care to a patient (Ramsden, 2000).

"Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District"

By Joanne Mitchell

Interview Questions for Sub-Committee of the Aboriginal Education Council

1. Do you have any questions about my research topic?

2. Do you have any questions about the concept of Cultural Safety as an educational framework?

3. What do you think the most important thing a teacher should know about Indigenous history?

4. What do you think the most important thing an administrator (Principal/Vice-Principal/District Administrator) should know about Indigenous history?

5. What other information should teachers and administrators know about Indigenous peoples?

6. How would it help students if teachers and administrators knew that information?

7. How would it help parents if teachers and administrators knew this information?

8. How would it help other students (non-Indigenous) to know this information?

9. How do you feel about non-Indigenous teachers bringing Indigenous perspectives into the classroom?

10. What kinds of information would be inappropriate for non-Indigenous teachers to bring into the classroom?

11. In what ways could teachers and administrators learn about Indigenous history and worldview?

12. Do you think that an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for GVSD would support the goals of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement? If so, what goals in particular?

**Healing Hearts and Fostering Alliances: Towards an Indigenous Cultural Safety
Agreement for the Greater Victoria School District**

By: Joanne Mitchell

Interview Questions for Nella Nelson

1. Do you have any questions about my research topic?

2. Do you have any questions about the concept of Cultural Safety?

3. How long have you worked for the GVSD?

4. What changes have you seen pertaining to Aboriginal Education?

5. What policies do you think would support bringing Aboriginal perspectives into the classrooms?

6. What is the most important thing that teachers should know about Indigenous history?

7. How would that help students with Aboriginal ancestry?

8. How would it help their families and communities?

9. In what ways could teachers and administrators learn about Indigenous history and worldview?

10. Would an Indigenous Cultural Safety Agreement for the district meet one or more of the AE?

11. Do you have any questions for me?