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Teachers' Professional Practice, Policy Enactment, And Indigenous Education In Ontario: A Case Study

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This qualitative case study investigates the research question: How do educators understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario? The case study examines the content of *The Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, the foundational policy document for Indigenous education in Ontario released by the Ministry of Education in 2007, in conjunction with a series of associated Ministry publications, and explores the responses of secondary school teacher participants to these policy efforts. In doing so, the case study draws on the scholarly literature about decolonizing education, as well as work on anti-colonial, anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy and employs the conceptual frameworks of policy enactment and professional knowledge landscapes to make sense of policy documents and interview data. Recruitment for the study took place in a single region of a geographically large school board in Southwestern Ontario, yielding four educators who took part in a series of three individual interviews each. Three of the four participants also took part in a final focus group interview. Interview data was considered alongside data gathered via an analysis of Ontario Ministry of Education policy documents. Data analysis demonstrated that the *Framework* has proven to be largely unavailing in the day-to-day practice of teacher participants as teachers revealed a disconnect between policy content and their classroom practice. Also apparent were participant understandings of the gaps that exist between policy intent and policy action at the systemic level. Teachers saw these gaps as responsible for the non-enactment of the *Framework* and related policies in their daily practice. Based on the research findings, specific and actionable strategies are recommended to support the enactment of Indigenous education policy in Ontario classrooms and schools. (Keywords: Indigenous education; policy enactment; professional knowledge landscape; case study; Ontario education policy)

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks to a number of people without whom I could not have completed this research. First, to my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Coulter, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for the guidance you have provided me, the patience you have shown, and the support you have given. My research and scholarship have been the beneficiary of your strength and wisdom and for this I am so thankful. To my committee members, Dr. Claire Crooks and Dr. Jerry White, I want to express my sincere thanks for the feedback and assistance you have provided through this process. To the participants I express my gratitude for the time you dedicated to this research and the knowledge you shared.

To my husband, Craig, I want to express both my love and emphatic thanks. I could not have done this without your support, your humour, and your encouragement. To my mother, Claudia, I want to thank you for the countless hours you put in to this dissertation work as you cared for my children, enabling me to pursue my dreams. To my daughters, Emily, Margaret, and Abigail, your presence in my life has motivated me to continue the pursuit of knowledge and research, your laughter has kept me grounded, and your love has kept me going.

To my peers and colleagues, your impact can be felt throughout this dissertation as the conversations we have had and the times we have spent together have helped me grow as a scholar, a student, a researcher, and a teacher. To all of the wonderful scholars, teachers, activists, community members, education professionals, and graduate students I have had the opportunity to meet, to listen to, to talk with at conferences, symposiums, and beyond, I extend my gratitude for the work you do and the passion you share. Such experiences have proved invaluable in my own development as both a scholar and an educator.

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**List of Acronyms
(in order of appearance)**

ONAS	Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
FNMI	First Nation, Métis, and Inuit
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
CCL	Canadian Council on Learning
NAHO	National Aboriginal Health Organization
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
OSSLT	Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
NCTR	National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
TCPS	Tri-Council Policy Statement
OCT	Ontario Certified Teacher
NMREB	Non-Medical Review Ethics Board
FIPPA	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
MFIPPA	Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
PD	Professional Development
AQ	Additional Qualifications

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2005, the Government of Ontario claimed to be “charting a new course for a constructive, co-operative relationship with the Aboriginal peoples in Ontario” (Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat [ONAS], 2005, p. 1). This new approach, it was suggested, would be based in mutual respect, collaboration, and action in order to provide “improved opportunities and a better future for Aboriginal children and youth” (p. 1). Education was identified as a priority within this effort, and a goal was set to “improve educational outcomes among Aboriginal children and youth” (p. 12) attending provincially funded schools. In response to this commitment to a new relationship and improved educational outcomes the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) issued *The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter the *Framework*) policy document. Signalling the intent of the Ministry to strengthen its focus on Indigenous education in Ontario, the *Framework* has two stated objectives: improving the academic performance of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students and increasing the understanding of all students about FNMI histories, knowledge systems, and cultures (OME, 2007b).

As the Auditor General of Ontario (2012) noted, the policy was launched without a detailed implementation plan, but with the expectation that the burden for change instigated by the *Framework* would largely be assumed by school boards, administrators, and classroom teachers, who would receive support from the OME through additional personnel and resources available to each school district. In 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Education responded to the Auditor General’s call for a specific implementation plan for the *Framework*. In the *Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter *Implementation Plan*) the need to support teachers through professional development and resource sharing opportunities was acknowledged. However,

nothing was said about the lived realities of educators who experience large workloads, time constraints, and anxieties related to teaching about Indigenous people, cultures, and histories to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike. While the launching of the *Framework* without an implementation plan was seen as problematic by the Auditor General of Ontario, it is important to recognize that such an approach could be interpreted as one which acknowledges local expertise and difference. Indeed, it can be argued that the lack of a centrally determined implementation plan allows for school boards and schools to work flexibly with the policy in a fashion which takes account of their local context. I will return to this interpretation later in the dissertation.

Research Questions

My research asks: How do educators understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario? Initially I had sought to address this question by examining the perspectives of teachers using a sub-set of questions specific to and organized around the objectives of the *Framework*. These questions focussed on the ways the policy had been enacted to support efforts to decrease the “attainment gap” and to ensure all students developed an understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives through discussions about challenges and opportunities, as well as the roles and responsibilities of teachers as understood in relation to the *Framework*.

As the research progressed it became clear that my original research questions were, in some ways, inappropriate. The questions made assumptions about the impact of the *Framework* and about teacher practice. I had assumed that the *Framework* had influenced in a concrete manner the daily practice of teacher participants. The ways the teacher participants spoke about the *Framework*, and policy more generally, however, indicated a tension between the intent of the policy, as teachers understood it, and their professional

knowledge and daily practice. Thus the stories of daily practice and professional knowledge that the teachers communicated to me required that I reconsider the questions I was trying to answer.

The main research question remained the same: How do teachers understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario? However, the sub-questions were modified and asked:

- 1) How do teachers understand and describe the purpose and role of Indigenous education policy as it relates to their practice?
- 2) How do teachers describe their relationship to Ontario's Indigenous education policy?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Teachers play an important role in the academic development and achievement of youth (Kyriakides, Creemers, & Antoniou, 2009; Moore Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2011; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oorta, 2011; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). As well, teachers and teacher-student relationships play an important role in the education of Indigenous students (Goulet & Goulet, 2014; Kanu, 2011). It is, therefore, not surprising that educators in schools would be seen as central to the successful implementation of the *Framework* but we know little about how teachers are enacting FNMI policies. The majority of teachers in provincial schools are non-Indigenous (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Kanu, 2011) and, as a study conducted by Dion, Johnston, and Rice (2010) in the Toronto District School Board discovered, teachers often feel anxious about engaging Indigenous students and offering Indigenous content within their classrooms. Studies conducted by People for Education¹

¹ People for Education is a not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates for public education in Ontario. They carry out independent research which is non-peer reviewed. As well, their research is available publicly and so is used throughout this dissertation as it represents an important element of public discourse on the topic of Indigenous education in Ontario.

(2015; 2017) have shown that teacher anxiety remains a persistent issue in Ontario schools despite an increase in professional development opportunities focussed on Indigenous issues in Ontario, with 80% of secondary school respondents offering such opportunities in 2016 as compared to 49% in 2013 (People for Education, 2017, p. 23). Though the increase in available and varying professional development opportunities being offered is certainly important, questions remain. To whom is this professional development offered? Who makes this decision and what criteria are included in their decision making? Do teachers understand these professional development opportunities as contributing to their professional knowledge? The persistent discussion in the literature of teacher anxiety and the limited efficacy of professional development opportunities suggests that a gap remains between the goals set out in OME Indigenous education policy, specifically the goal to ensure that Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives are reflected in the curriculum, and teacher practice. Furthermore, the ability to reach these goals is hindered by a lack of “on the ground” resources available to educators (People for Education, 2015, p. 3).

The reliance on educators as instruments of change in Ontario schools necessitates continued research about their perspectives on the *Framework*, teaching Indigenous students, and teaching Indigenous histories, cultures, and knowledge systems to all students. Research has indicated that Indigenous students often do not view teachers as a functional support system (Richmond & Smith, 2012). Furthermore, Indigenous scholars such as Anishnaabe educator Sheila Cote-Meek (2014), have made clear arguments outlining the ways colonization is ongoing with violent, and traumatic repercussions for Indigenous students in the formal spaces of education. As the *Framework* passes a decade of presence in the policy environment of public education in Ontario, this dissertation research seeks to explore the extent of its impact on educators and their classrooms and, by extension, students.

My study investigates the experiences and perspectives of educators in order to understand how Indigenous education and Indigenous education policy is enacted within Ontario classrooms and schools. The research is built from an epistemological position that both understands that there are many paths leading to knowledge *and* values the expression of knowing through many mediums and approaches. Closely connected to this is a pedagogical position that views educational success as more than standardized testing results and credit accumulation. Instead, educational success is understood as the development of capacities in all areas of a student's intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, and cultural life through critical engagement with curricular content, both overt and hidden. In this view, support for all students must occur within efforts to decolonize educational spaces, thus allowing all students to thrive academically, culturally, socially, and spiritually. Indigenous scholars and community leaders have long advocated for education which reflects these views. Mi'kmaw educator Marie Battiste (2013) talks of the damage done by discourses of achievement, diversity, and inclusion arguing they "have not been successful because educators have assumed that the problem resides in Aboriginal students" (p. 33). Thus formal institutions of education have understood Indigenous students through "discourses of lack of capacity rather than on the operating assumptions and structures of the Eurocentric system that hides its power and privilege in whiteness, and ignores complicities with dominance, difference, and disadvantage" (p. 33). Held against the objectives of the *Framework* two things become clear. First, that in order to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students, educators must be able to look beyond the discourses which promote a simple version of knowledge acquisition and a linear progression through school. Educators must come to question the ways that the education system has, and continues to, marginalize and oppress Indigenous students. Second, educators must take up this difficult history with their

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in order to provide them with an education that recognizes Canada's colonial heritage and condition as a settler-state.

I wonder, though, how prepared teachers were/are to take up these roles. The 2016 Environics Institute for Survey Research report, *Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal People*, indicates that many non-Indigenous Canadians do not understand the legacy of residential schools and colonialism. Specific to the context of public education, People for Education (2016) has identified a “knowledge gap” arguing that a “lack of knowledge about the history, cultures, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples in Canada” permeates the formal education system (p. 1). Acknowledging these findings, it is necessary to consider the ways in which a policy, in this case the *Framework*, supports work to overcome this “knowledge gap” in order to serve the broader goal of improved relations and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Ontario. As well, it is necessary to consider what actions the policy must support in order to have teachers effectively enact it to achieve improved Indigenous student outcomes and increased understandings of non-Indigenous students.

The existing circumstances necessitate research specific to the aims of understanding the role of educators in Indigenous education, addressing questions about how to enhance the professional and content knowledge of teachers and strengthen their confidence related to teaching about our colonial past and present. Thus, education research must explicitly investigate the intersection of *policy intent*, which is created by and set up to operate at the institutional level of the Ministry and school boards, and *policy action*, as lived in schools through the daily practices of teachers. Investigation in this area yields important information about how teachers understand their relation to the policy content and stated vision. It is to these matters that my research turns.

In this research, I work to uncover how teachers position themselves in relation to both Indigenous education and Indigenous education policy in order to reveal the ways their understanding supports, or is at odds with, the aims and information relayed through the *Framework* and its series of associated support documents and progress reports. The *Framework*, as the guiding policy document on Indigenous education in Ontario, is meant to “provide the strategic policy context within which the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools will work together” to reach the policy goals (OME, 2007b, p. 5). As provincial policy, the *Framework* should be taken up by all schools boards and schools and, ultimately, all teachers. In carrying out this research I sought to hear from teachers about their experiences, or lack thereof, with the *Framework* – the ways the *Framework* has supported, hindered, changed, or improved their practice in the area of Indigenous education. In doing so, I explored the ways the rhetoric in the *Framework*, and in documents related to the policy, aligned (or not) with the experiences of teachers, if teachers saw the *Framework* making a difference in their practice and thus the lives of their students, if teachers were receiving the necessary support and training, and if they thought the *Framework* could assist in moves towards the decolonization of Ontario schools and/or efforts towards reconciliation.

Broadly defined my research is designed to help address Canada’s colonial past and present as well as assess attempts at decolonizing education. In Ontario there is a growing body of research which purposefully seeks out the opinions, perspectives, and experiences of teachers (Burleigh, 2016; Burm, 2016; Cherubini, 2014; Milne, 2015; 2017). My research, is another such effort and makes contributions to the study and practice of Indigenous education in three distinct ways. First, it provides some insight into the content and delivery of Indigenous education policy in Ontario, identifying areas of strength and weakness in both the content and delivery of the policy as it relates to teacher practice. Second, it contributes

to the ongoing and robust discussions currently being had around the (im)possibility of decolonizing education and the potential role of education in moves towards reconciliation. Third, and perhaps most importantly, this research seeks to instigate a dialogue around the first two areas of contribution and the practical and professional context of formal education in Ontario by providing specific and actionable suggestions for professional development, policy development, delivery, and implementation.

Terminology

The remainder of this chapter provides further insight into the rationale underlying this study, the value of the study, my own positionality, and the theoretical perspectives which inform my work. As such, a note on terminology is necessary. The terms Indigenous peoples, Aboriginal, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit are used throughout this dissertation. Reflecting the international standard set by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007), Indigenous is increasingly the preferred term in scholarly work and I adopt this practice here. I do so with full acknowledgement that Indigenous peoples is an umbrella term for a large group of people who identify on an individual and/or community level in a number of ways, and where possible, and ethically appropriate, specific community names, titles, and terms are used. Aboriginal has specific meaning under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and “includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada” and so is used here when talking about documents and issues relating to the constitutionally recognized rights of Aboriginal people in Canada as well as the obligations of Canada’s government. When discussing the works of specific authors, associations, or government ministries or agencies, I adopt the terminology used by them. For this reason FNMI is used when referring to the content of Ontario education policies, when quoting, paraphrasing, or explicitly referring to OME documents and/or when quoting participants.

However, it should be noted that the OME has also recently shifted their language to increasingly use the term Indigenous peoples and Indigenous education. As such, when discussing OME documents the language similarly shifts from FNMI to Indigenous in order to reflect this change where applicable.

It is also valuable for me to provide a definition of Indigenous education specific to this dissertation. Chartrand (2010) notes that the term “Aboriginal education” is in itself a socially constructed term based in Westernized understandings of both “Aboriginal” and “education” (p. 3). There is, then, a potential to “institutionalize” Aboriginal education through the process of creating and presenting a definition. Definitions run the risk of distancing locally specific and relevant content, pedagogy and practices from education research, formal teaching and learning (Chartrand, 2010, p. 3). Definitions of Indigenous education must necessarily vary across time and space in ways that make it relevant to the local context and content of discussion. Despite this understanding, I do put forth a definition of Indigenous education as it relates to my dissertation research. I do this in an effort to provide clarity for the reader. I suggest that this definition is relevant and necessary within the context of this research and wish to make clear that I make no suggestion that it is the “correct” or only definition. Within this dissertation, Indigenous education in Ontario refers both to supporting Indigenous students to secondary school success and completion *and* encouraging Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to explore and understand Indigenous contexts and the implications of living in a settler society. This definition reflects the *Framework’s* vision. In providing this definition I also wish to acknowledge its limitations. This definition positions Indigenous education, and the consideration thereof, in the spaces of formal education and at a broad (provincial) level. However, it is through the interactions with the teacher participants in this research that this definition is extended to consider the

local and specific context. Lastly, it is also important to recognize that Indigenous education is different from educational attainment in that the first addresses the education students receive and the latter is specific to success in reaching benchmarks such as credit accumulation and graduation.

How Did I Get Here? Acknowledging my Positionality

When I talk to my family, friends, and, at times, even colleagues about my research, I am often asked why this work? Why is Indigenous education important to me? I share below a story which, through a telling of part of my own history, reveals the ways my positionality and experience have contributed to leading me to this work.

My education journey has been a long and winding process and every teacher and learning experience, both good and bad as well as formal and informal, has had an impact on me, and helped to create me as an individual curious about why we learn what we do, where we do, and how we do. As I moved back and forth between Southwestern Ontario and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia while in grades three to eight, I became aware that not all classrooms were created equal and teaching and learning were highly subjective and political processes. Of course, I didn't know that then. I just knew that some things that were valued in Ontario seemed less important in Cape Breton and vice versa. Throughout my public education I came to understand the ways the opinions of teachers manifested in their treatment of me and thereby my educational experience. Some felt I was smart but lazy, others thought I was oppositional and difficult, several remarked that though I was curious, I was aloof. All of these perceptions, foisted on me at a young age, left me questioning the form and value of my education. It was not until a particularly perceptive secondary school teacher noticed that perhaps it was not that I was unable but rather that I was unwilling to do the work, that I began to actively and critically reflect on the processes of education I had experienced.

Through discussions with that teacher I began to understand the powerful role education could have in my life.

As I progressed through secondary school, I became passionate about learning and the prospect of teaching. Upon graduation I found myself accepted to the concurrent education program at Brock University. During my fifth year, the year of the bulk of my pre-service professional studies, the OME released the *Framework*. One day I found a copy on a dusty table labelled “free resources” at the back of our isolated Hamilton campus building. Noting it was the most plentiful pile on the table I took the document home that evening and read through it in its entirety. I quickly became interested in the *Framework*’s “Vision” which acknowledges the need to support FNMI students and the importance of teaching all students in Ontario about Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives (OME, 2007b, p. 7). My interest was piqued as I quickly realized how unprepared my own education from elementary through my undergraduate degree had left me to accomplish such a vision as a teacher. As I entered my first practicum placement, a grade 10 history class, I asked my associate teacher about the ways Indigenous content was integrated into the curriculum and proposed a lesson about the residential school system. The response displayed, at best, indifference, and, at worst, disdain for my inquiry and suggestion. I pursued the lesson despite the lack of enthusiasm and support from my associate teacher. The process of planning and researching for this lesson was a time of personal disruption and sparked in me a desire to engage in a process of self-directed inquiry into Canada’s past and present relationship with Indigenous people. It quickly became apparent to me that my own education was inadequate. I began to develop an awareness of the powerful messages sent through the absence of particular content and perspectives in schools, of that which is not taught, or the *null curriculum* (Eisner, 1985). With this new, and admittedly partial and

flawed, knowledge I began to question what I was not taught in my public school education and the ways these voids continued to manifest in my pre-service training. I wondered if my associate teachers had similar gaps in knowledge and training and if these gaps contributed to their reaction to my questions. Again, I was left considering the value of formal education which I now understood as a deeply flawed process that continued to serve to assimilate Indigenous people within the larger “body politic” through ongoing systemic marginalization of their knowledges, experiences, perspectives, and cultures.

As I have moved through my pre-service education and graduate work I have always kept these experiences in mind. They impact my identity as a teacher, a student, and a researcher. More importantly, however, they have influenced my identity as a settler-Canadian and non-Indigenous woman interested in issues around Indigenous education in Ontario schools. It had become clear to me that my learning, in both formal and informal spaces, failed to consider or address the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, the impacts of colonialism, or its ongoing legacies. Moreover, my education *had not required me* to acknowledge or question the privileges afforded to me as a white, middle-class Canadian. During my pre-service and professional work I was struck by the apathy regarding issues of Indigenous education revealed by my friends, colleagues, and employer. As I think about this apathy, I am reminded of the words of Flannery (2002) who states, “[o]ur knowing is deeply intertwined with our world views, with our histories, our families, our social groups, our experiences” (p. 112). I consider often that such apathy may be understood as a consequence of the continued privileging of colonial structures and efforts of settler futurity and reflect on what such a state means for education in Ontario.

I provide this autobiographical story to you, the reader, because it is implicated in every step of my research. I have embraced this research as an opportunity to seek out the

perspectives of teachers, who, as O’Sullivan (2008) notes are usually a highly successful product of the education system in which they now teach, to try to understand the ways Indigenous education, and the *Framework* impact the daily lives and professional practice of teachers. My story is also intimately connected with the following section of this chapter wherein I discuss the theories and scholarship which guide me as a scholar broadly, and in this research specifically. This story grounds my positionality as a settler-Canadian who is currently engaged in the work of “unsettling” myself by working towards addressing the important question posed by Regan (2010): “How can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settler – the colonizer who lurks within – not just in words but by our actions” (p. 11)? This story helps me to consider, and critically reflect on, the ways settler colonialism has impacted my own education journey and assists me in working towards thinking and action which moves beyond understanding and positioning decolonization “as metaphor” (Tuck & Yang, 2012). My purpose is to shift the inquiry from one which attempts to solve what Canadian government officials termed the “Indian problem”² to one which more appropriately considers the settler-problem (Epp, 2008).

Towards a Theoretical Framework

In this section I address the scholarship that has helped me make meaning from participant interview data as well as scholarly writings which influence my research. I begin then by outlining two conceptual frameworks: policy enactment (Ball, 1994) and teachers’ professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). I describe these conceptual frameworks and highlight the ways in which they help me to understand

² I use the term “Indian” here with full acknowledgement of the problematic nature of such a homogenizing word. The use of the term here is done in an effort to reflect the language used within the social and political climate of Canada’s past, particularly relating to the education of Aboriginal peoples in the Indian Residential School system.

participant data. These conceptual frameworks and the ways they influence *how* I interrogate the perspectives put forth by teachers are also influenced by broader scholarship around decolonizing education, anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive education, and critical pedagogy. As such, I feel it necessary to include some discussion here on these influencing bodies of scholarship. This is accomplished through a thematic discussion. The organizational structure I adopt and the themes identified within, reveal the ontological claims and epistemological positions which underpin both my life and research. My approach reflects my belief in the inability of humans to objectively, and without bias, represent the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and acknowledges that knowledge is *not* neutral. The themes presented here also reflect my positionality, as described above, and my ongoing journey as a student and scholar.

In the pages that follow then I provide a description of policy enactment and professional knowledge landscapes. From there, I move to discuss the influencing scholarship mentioned above, then shifting to a discussion that addresses the influencing scholarship across the following themes: questioning the purpose of education, recognizing the potential of education, and making connections across pedagogy, practice, and research.

Components of the theoretical framework. For me, the components included in this section are interconnected. The conceptual frameworks I draw upon to make sense of teacher perspectives operate in a synergistic relationship with the scholarship I have identified as holding significant influence in my life and work. Thus, all of these components – both the conceptual frameworks that help to make sense of research data and the critical education scholarship which has shaped my own knowledge around education and research – are necessary to one another in order to support productive thinking and action around improving Indigenous education in Ontario schools. They come together to form a

theoretical framework which informs the way I understand the research data and guides my interpretations in the context of this co-constitutive set of ideas and scholarship. The critical education scholarship which I identify here as influencing me as both an educator and researcher is, as Gottesman (2016) outlines, part of a “contemporary landscape of critical educational scholarship [which] encompasses a wide variety of intellectual and political traditions, methodological approaches, and subjects of inquiry” (p. 138). I recognize this complex contemporary landscape and acknowledge that it is not enough to merely label one’s work as critical (Ladson-Billings, 2014). I also recognize that there may be no singular definition of “critical” but that “however we choose to define critical, we should do so thoughtfully and purposefully” (Gottesman, 2016, p. 146). And so, while I work to provide an overview of policy enactment and professional knowledge landscapes before exploring the elements of critical education literature which operate as an influencing context, namely anti-oppressive education; decolonizing education; critical pedagogy; and anti-colonial theories, I caution readers that the order of presentation is in no way meant to suggest a hierarchy of importance. Instead, the sections aim to make clear that I have read and thought deeply, and that I acknowledge this critical education scholarship and the way that it impacts my thinking. Moreover, I wish to make clear that the critical scholarship which forms the intellectual context for this dissertation research demands significant, transformative, and substantive change in the structures and processes of formal education in support of equity.

Conceptual framework: Policy enactment. In conceptualizing and carrying out this research I have spent a significant amount of time thinking about policy in education: what policy is, what policy means, and how and why the goals of policy do or do not manifest in the spaces of formal schooling. I agree with the argument made by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997) that policy is more than a specific text and that policy is not static

or singular but rather an ongoing process. In this view policy is understood and examined as a collection of living documents adapted through their enactment in social context(s). This conceptualization also calls into question normative views on education policy that position policy as a tool to problem-solve by government(s) which identify a problem and prescribe a set of actions intended to solve said problem (Colebatch, 2006a). The work of policy is much more complex than this normative description recognizes. Colebatch (2002; 2006b) and later Maquire, Braun, & Ball (2015) make strong arguments calling into question such normative policy descriptions and advocate convincingly that there is significant value in comprehensively considering the “messiness” of policy activity. Considering the “often jumbled, sometimes ambiguous, messy process that is experienced on the ground by policy actors” brings to the forefront the “moments in the processes of policy and policy enactments that go on in schools, and other organisations” which risk “becom[ing] marginalised or go[ing] unrecognised” (Maquire, Braun, & Ball, 2015, p. 485). In thinking and learning about policy in this way, policy enactment (Ball, 1994) has come to have an important place in my analytic toolkit.

For Ball (1994), policies “create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set” (p. 19). Thus, policies do not dictate behaviour and are not simply implemented (Braun, Ball, Maguire, and Hoskins, 2011). Rather, policies and the actions taken to put them into practice, or the enactment of policy, is a creative process during which those involved with the policy interpret, translate, and enact it within their specific context (Braun, Ball, Maquire, & Hoskins, 2011). Educators, then, are in a position where they experience policy as done *by* them and *to* them (Ball, Maquire, & Braun, 2012). In other words educators are both policy subjects, those who produce and consume policy (Ball, Maquire, Braun, & Hoskins,

2011) as well as policy actors, those who interpret and effect the policy process (Braun, Ball, & Maquire, 2011). Teachers' policy actions, as noted by Rizvi and Kemmis (1987), involve interpretations of interpretations, or as Ball, Maquire, and Braun (2012) explain, involve the creative and iterative "processes of interpretation and recontextualisation – that is, the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices" (p. 3).

Policy enactment reminds us that the taking up of policy is a complex and sophisticated process. As well, Ball, Maquire, and Braun (2012) call on us to take into account that "policy is only ever part of what teachers do" (p. 6). As practitioners, educators are not naïve actors (Ball, Maquire, & Braun, 2012), but conscientious professionals who enact policy within the material sites of their practice (Braun, Ball, Maquire, & Hoskins, 2011). These material sites, the context of policy enactment, matter greatly and should be understood as an active force in policy action (Braun, Ball, Maquire, & Hoskins, 2011), at times operating to support enactment and at other points hindering it. The context of policy enactment has significant impact on the degree to which educators may engage in the interpretive process, as teachers interact with the policy in relation to the processes and apparatuses of power they work within (Ball, Maquire, & Braun, 2012). Thus, the professional context in which teachers engage with, interpret, and ultimately translate the policies set before them may provide possibilities and/or constraints (Ball, 2003; Ball, Maquire, & Braun, 2012; Braun, Ball, Maquire, & Hoskins, 2011).

It is also important to note that "[education] policies often have strikingly unforeseen consequences. Reforms that are instituted with good intentions may have hidden effects that are more than a little problematic" (Apple, 2008, p. 243). Policy enactment as analytic tool

helps to uncover the hidden effects about which Apple talks. It requires us to consider and critique not only the content of policy documents but also, and perhaps more importantly, the way this content is understood by and made manifest in teacher practice. Acknowledging, and indeed seeking out information about, the complexities of policy activity in the environment(s) of formal schooling provides opportunity to come to understand the impact, if any, of the *Framework* on the participants in this research.

Conceptual framework: Professional knowledge landscapes. The second theory which assists me in making meaning of teacher perspectives on Indigenous education policy in Ontario is that of professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Making inquiry into “how the embodied, narrative, relational knowledge teachers carry autobiographically and by virtue of their formal education shapes, and is shaped by, their professional knowledge context,” led Clandinin and Connelly (1995, p. 3) to craft the metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape. This explanatory metaphor describes the epistemological and moral context of teachers’ lives and work in education and acknowledges that teacher knowledge is shaped by their choices, their circumstances, and their actions (Philpott & Dagenais, 2011). The professional knowledge landscape can be understood as the “different geographic and social locations of teachers’ work...” (McCaughtry, 2006, p. 163) and is a valuable conceptualization which supports analysis of the ways the work of teachers occurs in various spaces and in relation to various people and materialities.

Important to the research presented in this dissertation is the capacity of the professional knowledge landscape metaphor to assist in explicating the tensions which manifest as teachers travel across the professional locations of their work, namely in-the-classroom and out-of-classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; 1996). Clandinin and

Connelly (1995) have referred to this tension as teachers experiencing a “split existence” as the knowledge, experiences, and skills from in-the-classroom and out-of-classroom come into (at times) conflict with one another (p.5). For Clandinin and Connelly (1995) three types of stories are crucial to this metaphor: the “sacred,” the “secret,” and the “cover” story.

The professional knowledge landscape, and the stories that emerge from teachers working and travelling on this landscape, provides valuable capacity to contribute to the interrogation, and understanding of, the ways theory and practice interact within formal education. On this, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) pay attention to what they call the “sacred story,” that is, information “funneled into the [professional knowledge] landscape, as well as to the funnel itself” (p. 6). The sacred story, then, is that knowledge which is funnelled down to teachers from educational authorities via a funnel, or conduit, with the expectation that it will be integrated into teachers’ knowledge and practice. In the context of this dissertation the sacred story is that information which is shared by the OME about Indigenous education through the *Framework* and related documents. This sacred story is problematic, however, as it often is a “rhetoric of conclusions,” or theoretical and policy knowledge removed from, and presented without clarity around, its intellectual development (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 9). Sacred stories “reveal the broader discursive movements and influences on teachers’ work” (Charteris & Smith, 2017, p. 605) as the knowledge funnelled to the professional knowledge landscape operates to authorize what can and should be said/thought by teachers and who can say it (Phillips, 2001). Sacred stories in this manner, and here Clandinin and Connelly (1995) borrow from Crites (1971), have an impression of universality, as being “so pervasive they remain mostly unnoticed” (p.8). A sacred story, however, as delivered through the conduit is at no time “merely theoretical knowledge to be known and understood: it always comes as an implied prescription for teachers’ actions” (p.

14). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest that this circumstance, the funnelling of such knowledge as sacred story, creates epistemological and moral dilemmas for practicing teachers, as they experience tension between the professional knowledge developed in their practice and the theoretical knowledge and information passed to them via the conduit by government officials, education administrators, and researchers.

The sacred story exists amongst other stories in the professional knowledge landscape of teachers. The “secret story,” reveals accounts of teachers’ work done in-the-classroom. The classroom, in Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) view, is understood as a safe professional location where teachers often work with a sense of privacy from other educators. In the secret story, then, teachers talk of the “lived, relational and context-specific stories of what is best for individual children, what works practically in their classrooms...They are often secret because they can run counter to a school’s sacred story” (McCaughtry, 2006, p. 163). The third story type, the “cover story,” works to bridge that of the sacred and the secret story. In doing so the cover story operates to express a sense of “expertise” by teachers as they discuss themselves as educators whose actions conform to, or at least operate within the range of what is envisioned and communicated in the sacred story via the conduit (Charteris & Smith, 2017; McCaughtry, 2006). Together these stories provide a way to make sense of the multiple spaces of teachers’ work and help to expound the complexities of teachers’ professional knowledge landscapes and the relationship among educational theory and policy (i.e., information that is funnelled into the professional knowledge landscape) and teacher practice.

Though I draw upon the professional knowledge landscape to help me make meaning of the words of teacher participants and though I organize my findings with the varying story

types in mind later in this dissertation, it is important that I also make clear the ways I diverge from Clandinin and Connelly's work and theorizing. I agree that it is both necessary and valuable to interrogate the ways teachers receive information about education via policy, curriculum, and other directives. I question, however, the positioning of the sacred story as seemingly unquestionable and unassailable. On this I agree with Roulet (1998) who in his review of *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes* critiqued the work done by Clandinin, Connelly and their co-authors as removing, or at least ignoring, the individual and group level agency of teachers. The attempt to position sacred stories, or the directives distributed by education authorities to teachers as responsible for shaping the knowledge of teachers discounts both the willingness of teachers to challenge the information delivered to them as well as their professional judgement. Moreover, this positioning of the sacred story as indisputable knowledge delivered from university researchers and educational bureaucrats and administrators seems to, unnecessarily, work to simplify any tensions or conflicts which may arise between practitioners and those doing education research.

As well, the description of a cover story as one which teachers use to suggest they operate in accordance with and with full knowledge of the information of the sacred story delivered via the conduit suggests that teachers feel the need to "cover" when outside the relative safety of their classroom. I would like to push back against this notion and suggest that the notion of the professional knowledge landscape instead benefits from conceptualizing the cover story as one which arises through and in the liminal professional spaces of teaching, that is the spaces of work that exist in-between or amongst the formal in-classroom and out-of-classroom work and the informal contexts of teachers' professional lives, for example the staff room. The cover story, then, may provide insight into the ways teachers reconcile the professional knowledge of the sacred story and the secret story. By this

I mean through the cover story teachers may come to interrogate both the information of the sacred story and their own secret story. This liminal space, and the stories that arise from it, may at times work to “cover” as Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe, to suggest teachers’ assimilation of and compliance with the sacred story. In other instances, however, these liminal space stories may work to question or push back against the sacred story.

In many ways the stories of the professional knowledge landscape overlap. They talk to, and are co-constitutive of, one another. Thus the sacred, secret, and cover stories come together in a complex, messy, and relational way to assist in the conceptualization of teacher knowledge and practice. The application of the professional knowledge landscape in this dissertation, and the sacred, secret, and cover stories which arise therein, has helped this researcher to make meaning of teacher perspectives by making connections between the kinds of stories teachers tell and the context of their practice and professional learning. Going forward I do not use the term “sacred,” story to represent the knowledge being passed through the conduit to teachers. In an attempt to consider, and be respectful to, the notion of what is “sacred,” I instead use the term “institutional stories” to describe what I understand as the stories told to and received by teachers which relate to the knowledge being funnelled to the professional knowledge landscape by education authorities.

Critical education scholarship. As indicated above my analysis of the data collected in this research is guided by the theories of policy enactment and the professional knowledge landscape. This analysis, however, simultaneously occurred within an intellectual and professional context, an epistemological positioning, centred in critical education scholarship. Thus, I provide discussion of these academic traditions here.

Anti-oppressive education. Anti-oppressive education and research seeks to locate, understand, and alter the structures and content of an education systems which serves to marginalize particular groups of people. Anti-oppressive education, Kumashiro (2002) argues, is an effort to constantly question and expand what is known about education. Kumashiro (2000) suggests that anti-oppressive education can be engaged from a variety of entry points. For Kumashiro (2000), these points of entry and action can be organized through four categories: education for the other, education about the other, education that is critical of privileging and othering, and education that changes students and society. Kumashiro (2000) reminds us, then, that while scholars can agree that oppression manifests in education through the ways certain views and “ways of being” are privileged while others are marginalized, there remains no consensus around “the specific cause or nature of oppression, and on the curricula, pedagogies, and educational policies needed to bring about change” (p. 25). Thus, anti-oppressive education and education research does not align with a single theoretical approach (Center for Anti-Oppressive Education, 2005). This flexibility allows for anti-oppression education and education research to engage with, question, and find value in relational thinking across a variety of theoretical perspectives. In doing so, anti-oppressive theorizing can create many pathways towards the goal of “transforming national and international hegemonic structures of discrimination and marginalization” (North, 2007, p. 92).

Critical pedagogy. As an educator, I am guided by a belief that education is most effective when practitioners embrace and adopt the principles of critical pedagogy within their practice. Though many scholars have contributed to the literature of critical pedagogy, I focus, in this discussion, on Paulo Freire’s (1968/1972) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire, education represents an opportunity for both the oppressed and the

oppressor to experience “man’s vocation” – humanization (p. 28). Presented in opposition to the dehumanizing aspects of society such as injustice, exploitation, and violence, humanization allows individuals to recover their humanity, agency, and ability to transform the world in which they live. In this process individuals may awaken a state of critical consciousness or *conscientização* through which they become aware of and engage with the processes which serve to oppress certain individuals and groups in society (Freire, 1968/1972). Thought alone, however, is unable to create liberatory circumstances. For Freire, liberation is praxis – the actions through which people engage with the processes of oppression and seek to transform them. Critical pedagogy promotes a deep critique of the self and identity as well as the social, political, economic, cultural, and spatial contexts in which we live and carry out our daily lives as students, teachers, citizens, and researchers.

It is important to acknowledge that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been criticized for its inclusion of colonial, sexist, discriminatory language and more. While the language of the text is problematic the messages that underlie the language remain important in both my own pedagogy and research. To support my position I draw upon hooks’ (1994) argument that the nature of critical pedagogy invites critique and while criticism of Freire can motivate continued theoretical and pedagogical development, it does not require us to dismiss critical pedagogy entirely. The discussions around critical pedagogy in the rest of this chapter reflect the possibilities and limitations presented in critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy remains, however, a valuable theoretical tool to conceptualize anti-oppressive approaches to education which acknowledge the worth of learning through difference and multiple ways of knowing.

Moreover, it must be recognized that the theories of critical pedagogy evolved in the years following *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Indeed, in *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994), Freire reflects upon his earlier writing in a way which reveals, acknowledges, and works to

overcome its flaws and respond to critiques, such as those mentioned above. In doing so, Freire acknowledges, and apologizes for, the sexist and colonial language present in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and focuses on creating critical pedagogy as a means of educational hope through his continued commitment to the power of dialogic learning and praxis. In *Pedagogy of the Heart* (Freire, 1997) and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Freire, 1998), Freire returns to discussions of oppression and the potential of education to push back against neoliberal forces which perpetuate the marginalization of certain groups of people. A focus emerges in these texts on the importance of teacher preparation and professional ethics. Indeed, in later years Freire made clear the need for critical pedagogy to evolve and change stressing that the processes and actions of critical pedagogy, as described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, cannot be simply applied to any circumstance of oppression. Instead, he acknowledges the need for both himself and critical pedagogy “to be reinvented and re-created according to the demands – pedagogical and political – of the specific situation” (Freire, 1997, p. 309).

Decolonizing education. Education has long been used to support efforts to assimilate the Aboriginal population in Canada. As Battiste (2000, 2013) demonstrates, education can be understood as a tool of cognitive imperialism, privileging the English language and Euro-Western³ notions of literacy to the detriment of Aboriginal languages. The effects of cognitive imperialism continue to impact education today as policies often draw upon deficit models to describe Aboriginal students. These deficit models rely on discourses of inclusion and achievement which place the “problems” of low educational

³ Here, I use the term Euro-Western to describe the discursive “norms” created through colonialism and normalized through research, education, law, politics, and economy, although I acknowledge the theoretical inconsistency discussed by Lazarus (2011) who stresses the incongruence of advocating for the recognition of the diversity of colonial experiences while simultaneously positing an essentialized and unitary experience for the “west.”

attainment within the student without addressing issues related to systemic privilege and oppression within the education system (Battiste, 2013). In order to overcome the ongoing effects of cognitive imperialism a process of decolonization must occur. Battiste (2013) describes decolonization as a two-pronged effort. It begins with the critique or deconstruction of education's status quo, including curriculum, school structures, and relationships (Battiste, 2013). This deconstruction is concerned with how these aspects of education relate to colonial processes, both past and present. Accompanying this deconstruction is the reconstruction of these same structures and curriculums in a way that recognizes past injustices, current oppressions, and seeks to create a space where education nourishes the learning spirit, the “entity within each of us that guides our search for purpose and vision” (Battiste, 2013, p. 18).

Anti-colonialism. Battiste (2004) reminds us that a “post-colonial” state has yet to be achieved; rather, it is “an aspiration, a hope” (p. 1). The Canadian context offers further complications in that Canada is a settler nation, one which the colonizers never left. This setting requires that we consider and address the ways contemporary politics of place and identity are “enmeshed with the legacies of imperialism” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 4) and the ongoing processes of colonialism. Essential to this work is the argument put forth by Tuck and Yang (2012) that post-colonial theory fails to adequately address the issues of settler colonialism. Rather, as Dei (2012) argues, it is anti-colonial thinking that addresses the inequities created through colonization via academic engagement and seeks to transform current circumstances through action.⁴ Thus, the goals of anti-colonial theorising include the interrogation and upsetting of, or resistance to, power relations created and sustained through

⁴ The overview provided here is focussed on the ways anti-colonial theory may operate in the context of education. For a broader overview of the characteristics of anti-colonial theory see Dei (2010); Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001); and Simmons and Dei (2012),

colonial relations, both past and present (Dei, 2012). In the context of education anti-colonial thinking represents a call to action for teachers to recognize and question the ways in which education has been used as tool of oppression and dispossession against colonized peoples (Dei & Kempf, 2006; Simmons & Dei, 2012). Moreover, anti-colonial theory assists in the development of anti-colonial pedagogy whereby teachers look beyond the dominant curriculum and resources in order to allow for and support the creation of knowledge that recognizes the learner as an agent of both history and contemporary experience (Dei & Kempf, 2006).

Anti-colonial theory and discussions of anti-oppressive education and efforts to decolonize education, advocates for the thoughtful critique of both the self and the context in which one operates. These theoretical perspectives aid in the deconstruction of contemporary education structures. This deconstruction and critical pedagogy's focus on critical thinking and self-analysis allow for, and encourage, a space for the voices of teachers in the decolonizing process. In the following sections of this chapter I explore the ways these perspectives come together to provide a relational critical lens for this work. The themes presented below are constructions indicative of my journey and experience. The words and knowledge within the scholarship discussed often overlap and travel across the themes which, are themselves, fluid and iterative in nature.

Questioning the purpose of education. The four areas of scholarship which influence this research have commonality in that they all encourage educators and education researchers to question the purpose and form of formal education. This questioning process is of particular importance for Indigenous education and education research in Canada. As Battiste (2013) tells us, the experiences of colonialism for Aboriginal communities differed depending on geographical, economic, and temporal factors. Despite the different

experiences, however, the disruption of traditional ways of life, the dispossession of land, and the attempted destruction of culture and language can be understood as a consistent experience of communities across Canada (Battiste, 2013; Miller, 2000; 2009; Milloy, 1999). Historically, education played a significant role in this disruption as it was intimately connected with efforts to assimilate the Aboriginal population as it was positioned as a permanent solution to dealing with the “Indian problem” in Canada through the residential school system⁵. It is important to recognize that our education system continues to fail both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by perpetuating the historical myth of Canada’s ‘two founding nations’ as France and Britain. Such teachings marginalize the position of Aboriginal individuals and communities in Canada’s history and contributes to ongoing issues of low educational attainment by Aboriginal students.

Decolonizing theories implore us to consider the ways historical and contemporary institutions of education have contributed to the assimilation project, and the ways that Indigenous students continue to endure ongoing colonial violence in their education (Cote-Meek, 2014). Moreover, Cote-Meek raises a crucial question in wondering whether classrooms can truly become safe spaces for Aboriginal students to explore Canada’s colonial history. Dion (2007) suggests that damage continues to be done as teachers’ position and understand themselves as “perfect strangers” to Aboriginal people in Canada, a position in which they suggest they know nothing of Aboriginal people in Canada. Dion argues that this may only be overcome when teachers acknowledge the dominant, and often damaging,

⁵ The Residential School system is now understood as unsuccessful. The schools often failed to adequately educate children or to provide the requisite level of personal care for students as many experienced emotional, physical, and sexual abuse during their residential school tenure (Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 2012). The residential school system is one example of the damaging effects of Canada’s colonial history. Residential schools were accompanied by other processes of attempted assimilation including formal legislation and economic pressure which continue to have significant impacts (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; TRC, 2012).

discourses about Aboriginal people present in society and their own relation to them. Doing so, Dion argues, requires teachers to challenge “[t]he fear of offending, the fear of introducing controversial subject material, the fear of introducing content that challenges students’ understanding of the dominant stories of Canadian history” which “all support the claim for the position of the perfect stranger” (p. 331).

Critical pedagogy and anti-oppressive theorizing can assist in the working against of oppressive and ongoing legacies of colonialism. Critical pedagogy, and the actions that seek to realize it, operate in opposition to the prominent banking system of education. This banking system of formal instruction positions teachers as the holders of knowledge who then deposit this information in the minds of passive student recipients (Freire, 1968/1972). Education, carried out through this banking system model, serves to maintain the status quo (Freire, 1968/1972). For Freire, and other critical pedagogues, meaningful education – that which creates the circumstances for critical thinking – is based upon dialogue between teacher and student and creates opportunities for students to be active participants in their education and to share their personal knowledges and experiences.

Discussions of anti-colonial and decolonizing education and critical pedagogy, then, come together to encourage – *nay require* – us to question the purpose of formal education, through both its form and content. This is a learning process for all of those involved in education including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and education researchers. A learning process, which hooks (1994) argues “comes easiest to those of us who believe that there is an aspect of our work that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (p. 13). Indeed, Indigenous scholar Iseke-Barnes (2005) argues that it is the responsibility of society to educate *all people* that any portrayal of history is situated, and that particular views and

versions of that history are privileged to the disadvantage of others. Similarly, critical pedagogy scholar Apple (2011) tells us that “[c]ritical educators have been guided by an abiding concern with the role of education not just in producing dominance, but also in its role in challenging dominance” (p. 25). In questioning the purpose of education through the theoretical perspectives discussed here, we may move towards the goals of addressing systemic oppression and the decolonization of education.

Recognizing the potential of education. The potential of education to promote fairness and equity (Kumashiro, 2000) through the transformation of marginalizing processes and structures is a persistent theme in all of the components of this theoretical framework. Freire continued to write and speak about the emancipatory potential of education in the years after his seminal work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974/2013) Freire reflects upon the relationship between teacher and student and its potential to effect change in the processes and societal structures that dehumanize both the oppressed and the oppressor. In this work there is a continued focus on praxis or action, with particular attention paid to the role of reflection in the process of enacting critical education theory.

The task of the educator is to present to the educatees as a problem the content which mediates them, and not to discourse on it, give it, extends it, or hand it over, as if it were a matter of something already done, constituted, completed, and finished... Problematization is so much a dialectic process that it would be impossible for anyone to begin it without becoming involved in it (Freire, 1974/2013, p. 134).

Critical pedagogy, in this area, aligns closely with anti-oppressive education which calls on teachers and students to *un-learn* what they already know or believe they know (Kumashiro, 2002). Important to this discussion is the acknowledgement that educational spaces operate as microcosms of larger society (Wason-Ellam, 2001). So while critical pedagogy promotes the valuing and encouraging of student agency, as well as student engagement in critical reflection in place of rote learning (Giroux, 2011), it remains essential, in the Canadian context, to consider the ways critical pedagogy intersects with efforts towards anti-colonial and decolonizing action. Kumashiro (2002), drawing on Butler (1997), stresses the power of repetition, where having to experience marginalizing practices again and again is a significant aspect of the oppression of certain individuals and groups in society. As Butin (2002) warns, through anti-oppressive thinking, critical educators can also engage in repetitive oppressive actions through a reliance on “a rational discourse of overcoming, and the myth of the autonomous individual as an agent of self-transformation” (p. 14). In Canada this is particularly relevant to Indigenous education as it relates to the perpetuation of the false notion that public education is a neutral multicultural space (St. Denis, 2011).

The potential for education to contribute to transformative efforts to decolonize society becomes clear when we recall the role of schools in identity building, as places where students “spend a very large part of their lives” and where “they come to grips with authority relations, with the emotional labour both of managing one’s presentation of self and of being with others who are both the same and different” (Apple, 2011, p. 27). This potential, however, requires complex thinking and action achieved only through critical engagement with multiple theories while also acknowledging the ways these theories intersect with Canada as a settler nation.

Connections: Pedagogy, practice, and research. Education is not a neutral process, nor are schools neutral sites. Rather, schools exist as complex places in which students can experience oppression *and* empowerment simultaneously. Borreo, Yeh, Cruz, and Suda (2012) have explored this phenomenon and concluded that schools have the potential and capacity to operate as contexts for the marginalization of students. Marginalization can occur as a result of both overt teacher behaviour as well as teacher inaction in response to instances of racism, microaggressions, and discrimination (Borreo et al., 2012). However, Borreo et al. also argue that schools can *simultaneously* operate as places in which students engage their cultural resources through peer and social networks in response to marginalizing experiences. Such an understanding emphasizes the need to recall Kumashiro's (2001) argument that “[a]nti-oppressive education that aims to change students and society cannot do so without addressing the ways student and society resist change” (p. 8), as well as Butin's (2002) caution to scholars and educators that change must happen both at the structural level and in the content of instruction.

In their discussion of decolonization Tuck and Yang (2012) also highlight the importance of action, stressing that “[t]he too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor)” (p. 3) supports settler moves to innocence⁶ which “ultimately represent settler fantasies of easier paths to reconciliation” (p.6). Clearly, we must take seriously Giroux's (1996/7) argument that Freire's “educational theories and experiences cannot simply be transposed unproblematically from their original Latin American context and applied in a gridlike fashion” (p. 79) to other areas of the world. Instead, critical pedagogy must be taken up with particular contexts and struggles in mind. In

⁶ See Tuck and Yang (2012) for a detailed discussion on settler moves to innocence, a series of “strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (p. 10).

Canada, a settler nation where the majority of teachers in provincial schools continue to be non-Indigenous (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008), the potential of transformative pedagogy (hooks, 1994) as it relates to anti-colonial action and reconciliation becomes critical. Transformative pedagogy is an approach to educating that promotes both teachers and students to critically scrutinise their beliefs and values and promotes the valuing of multiple knowledges (Ukpokodu, 2009). Friere (1968/1972) tells us that dialogic learning is essential to transformative education. Similarly, Giroux (1996/7) sees dialogue as essential to transformative education as it requires learners to “critically engag[e] through dialogue and debate the historical, social, and economic conditions that both limit and enable their own understanding of knowledge and power” (p. 84). Critical dialogue allows and empowers students to question and challenge power relations in the classroom and society (Shor, 1992). In Canada we must consider the ways the potential benefits and limitations of critical and transformative pedagogies intersect with the political and social realities of our settler nation and the important moves currently underway to work towards reconciliation and a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Battiste (2013) reminds us that schools can work to either “sustain colonization in neo-colonial ways” (p. 175) through operation as a site of cultural and social reproduction or as sites for change. Thus, a transformative pedagogy in Canada must also take into account the ability/potential to contribute to the two distinct and separate processes of decolonization and reconciliation. As Regan (2010) explains decolonizing efforts require non-Indigenous teachers must go beyond “researching, analyzing, and interpreting Indigenous experience” while remaining ignorant of the ways they benefit from colonialism (p. 33). For many teachers this will require an uncomfortable process of un-settling actions, of acknowledging the importance of addressing the problem of focussing on understanding their place in

colonial Canada and their “experiences as descendants of colonizers and the primary beneficiaries of colonialism” (Regan, 2010, p. 33). In other words Regan argues, non-Indigenous teachers (and researchers) as “settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing;” rather “we must experience it” both as individuals and “morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society” (pp. 23-24). This process, Regan suggests, can be realised through the “re-story[ing]” of Canadian history, by “talking about the burden of history” despite the fact it makes us “feel frustrated and overwhelmed” (p. 19). In Canada, then, a transformative pedagogy must take into account the ongoing legacies of colonialism and settler presence.

In this chapter it has been made clear that formal education offers a complex site for study. Education research requires us to consider the ways that knowledge is situated and co-constituted through personal circumstances, ontological beliefs, and epistemological positions, but also through socio-political processes. With this in mind, my research seeks to examine these intersections with a focus on Ontario’s Indigenous education policy as I call on teachers to share their perspectives, knowledge, and voices. As hooks (1994) tells us “[t]heory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing to this end” (p. 61). The theories and scholarship discussed here hold incredible potential in allowing educators and education researchers to examine the ways marginalization and oppression continue to manifest in Ontario schools. More importantly, this scholarship can come together to form a framework which, when combined with the analytic toolkit described in chapter three on methodology, promotes important critique and praxis through the provision of specific and actionable strategies for the improvement of Indigenous education in Ontario.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. In this first chapter I outlined the research problem and the research questions for this work. I also provided the rationale for this study and discussed my positionality. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the theories and scholarship that guide my research. Here I explained the ways that the concepts of policy enactment and the professional knowledge landscape help to make meaning from participant data. As well, I discussed the influence of four bodies of scholarly work, namely anti-colonial theories, decolonizing education, anti-oppressive education, and critical pedagogy. In chapter two, I review the literature relevant to this research. This review provides a historical overview of Indigenous education in Canada, examines research specific to Ontario and to the *Framework*, and, finally, attends to scholarly discussions regarding teachers and change, teacher practice, and the role of relationships in Indigenous education. Chapter three details the methodological considerations of this research. Chapter three includes an outline of the research design, discussing the approach and rationale of case study research, detailing the data collection, data sources, and explaining the data analysis processes. As well, a discussion of ethics is included. In chapter four, I present the findings of my textual and discursive policy analysis, or the institutional story. Here, I provide a description of the *Framework* and its associated documents. I identify the discourses that became evident through my analysis of the *Framework* and trace their existence across subsequent related OME publications. Chapters five and six present the findings of the interviews with educators. In chapter five I share the secret and cover stories of teachers which explore teacher understandings of Indigenous education and the *Framework*. Chapter five also highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Ontario's efforts in the area of Indigenous education as understood by teacher participants. Chapter six operates to provide a

space to synthesize the findings which emerged through my own analysis of the institutional stories and that of the voices of teachers, as shared through their secret and cover stories. As such, this chapter includes both teacher voice and the findings of the social analysis – the final level of critical discourse analysis. Lastly, in chapter seven I reflect on the major findings as presented in chapters four, five, and six. This chapter also provides a series of recommendations, based on teacher voices, aimed at improving the relationship between teachers and the development of education policy in Ontario. I consider the ways these findings, as well as the suggestions and conclusions drawn from them, might assist educators as well as school, school board, and OME officials develop and enact Indigenous education policy moving forward. In this chapter I also consider the strengths and limitations of this research. I end this dissertation with some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature on Indigenous education in Canada is robust and growing. It includes discussions about the ways in which education has been used as a tool in the attempted assimilation of Indigenous people in Canada as part of the larger colonial project. There is a specific body of literature which addresses Indigenous education in Ontario including several studies on the *Framework*. As well, there is literature that pays particular attention to the role of teachers, teacher practice, and relationships in Indigenous education and selected works that consider teachers and educational change, particularly with respect to policy, equity, and curriculum. Both the refereed academic literature and what is known as the grey literature, the reports and other documents produced by Indigenous, community and non-governmental organizations, government agencies and ministries, privately funded policy research institutes (the think tanks) and the like are reviewed in this chapter. It is important to note that Indigenous education is an area of study which receives significant attention internationally (see, for example, Borreo, et al., 2012; Cajete, 2000; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Cross-Townsend, 2011; Dei, 2012; Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000; McKenzie et al., 2013; Rahman, 2013; Salaün, 2009). While there is much to learn from this body of work I have not addressed it in detail in this chapter. This decision is premised on a belief that it is important to understand this research as occurring in, and operating as co-constitutive of, the particular historical, socio-political, economic, and cultural context of Canada and Ontario and thus necessitates a focus on literature in this area.

Throughout this chapter I review the literature in two ways: as historical record and as critical education research. As historical record, most of the recent literature on Indigenous education in Canada, identifies the part state education played in the deliberate and institutionally sanctioned cultural genocide of Indigenous people in Canada (Miller,

1996, 2000, 2009; Milloy, 1999; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015). The literature continues to excavate evidence of the ongoing systemic marginalization of Indigenous peoples, cultures, languages, and knowledges and demonstrates the often devastating consequence in contemporary Canada (Battiste, 2013; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015). Thus, the literature, unpacks the historical record to make clear the role of education in attempts to disrupt and eradicate Indigenous world views, ways of knowing and being. More recently, this literature also explores efforts to make improvements in the area of Indigenous education and considers the (in)effectiveness of these efforts (Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), 2009; National Panel of First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve, 2011; Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2011; White & Peters, 2009). This literature is brought together in this chapter in a way that both reviews its content and simultaneously compiles a brief overview of the history of Indigenous education in Canada. This historical component draws academic work alongside grey literature and is placed in this chapter as it is imperative to any understanding of research and scholarship concerned with issues of Indigenous education in Canadian schools.

This chapter also identifies some of the current discussions and debates occurring in the field of Indigenous education in Canada. In bringing the lens of critical education research – that which seeks to challenge the status quo in pursuit of equity - to the literature, I work to connect the historical record to the scholarship that drives my research-decolonizing and anti-colonial education, anti-oppressive education, and critical pedagogy- to create a productive dialogue. Through such a dialogue it becomes possible to work towards understanding the ways critical education research can contribute to decolonization and reconciliation efforts and the role research might take up in developing actionable strategies to facilitate such moves.

Aboriginal Education in Canada

The impact of colonialism has been (and continues to be) felt by Indigenous communities and individuals across Canada, albeit in different ways and at different times (Battiste, 2013; Miller, 2000; 2009; Milloy, 1999). Colonialism has, and continues to, operate as a systematic form of both physical and symbolic violence perpetrated against Indigenous educational, cultural, social, linguistic, health, and spiritual institutions and structures (Battiste, 2013; National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO), 2008; RCAP, 1996; Simpson, 2004; Smith, 1999/2012; TRC, 2015). Indigenous people and communities have, in the face of this violence, organized and engaged in processes of immense resistance and resilience and continue to do so. These acts of resistance and resilience have been documented by many scholars including, but not limited to, Graham (1997), Knockwood (1992), and Miller (1996, 2000), and by the many voices of survivors documented in the final report of the TRC (2015). However, education remains an important area where the impacts of historical and ongoing systemic marginalization have led to a state of inequity.

Education is recognized as a fundamental human right (United Nations, 1948). The United Nations has recognized that Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their systems of education (United Nations, 2007) and, in Canada, education is recognized as a treaty right acknowledged by the *Constitution Act*, 1982. In Canada, however, formal schooling has long been intimately connected with efforts to assimilate the Indigenous population as it was positioned as a permanent solution to the “Indian problem” in Canada. Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill (1986, 1987) provide a detailed overview of the history of education for Indigenous peoples since contact with European colonists and settlers. Throughout the two volume text it is made clear that education, as related to Indigenous peoples in Canada, has been viewed by colonizer and settler governments as a means to

impose Euro-Western views of morality, progress, economics, religion, and politics. From the outset formal education has been set up in a way which, at best, disregards Indigenous belief systems, and, at worst, actively seeks to destroy and replace them. Leroy Little Bear (2000), a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, has identified this clashing of world-views as a fundamental factor contributing to the tempestuous relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Understanding this tension is essential to understanding the historical development of formal, colonial education for Indigenous peoples in Canada and the damage it has caused.

The Indian Residential School (IRS) system is one particularly devastating historical iteration of Indigenous education in Canada. The impacts have been clearly demonstrated across the literature on the subject. The IRS system was developed from the desire to assimilate Aboriginal youth through education and separation from their families, communities, languages, and cultures (Haig-Brown, 1988; TRC, 2012, 2015). The residential school system has been recognized as an effort of cultural genocide (TRC, 2015). The schools often failed to adequately educate children or to provide the requisite level of personal care as many students experienced emotional, physical, and sexual abuse during their residential school tenure (TRC, 2012, 2015). Recent research by Mosby (2013) documents that students in six residential schools across Canada were subject to nutritional experimentation without their, or their parents', knowledge or consent. The schools often had fatal consequences for students. Research has demonstrated that the schools were poorly built and often maintained through student labour, becoming locations where malnutrition and inadequate ventilation combined to contribute to the rampant spreading of illness, such as tuberculosis (Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; TRC, 2015). Estimates from the final report of the TRC suggest that the death rate for students attending residential schools was "4.90 times

higher than the general death rate” (TRC, 2015, p. 93). The IRS system is now understood as a failed and exceedingly violent effort to fundamentally disrupt the cultural, familial, linguistic, economic, and political lives of Indigenous families and communities. Central to this violence was the separation of Indigenous people “from their land, thereby disrupting their economies and their food supplies” (TRC, 2015, p. 95). The impacts of this concerted effort of government sanctioned cultural genocide continues today through intergenerational impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Residential schools are just one example of the injurious effects of Canada’s colonial history. There is an expansive body of literature that discusses the other processes of attempted forced assimilation which accompanied residential schools, including formal legislation such as the *Indian Act*, 1867, and economic pressures which continue to have significant impacts (Blackstock, 2008; Daschuk, 2013; Lawrence, 2004; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2012).

The twentieth- century brought about significant changes for Indigenous education in Canada, which has seen extensive study. The closure of the residential school system was a long and complex process, with the last federally operated school closing in the 1990s (TRC, 2012). The dissolution led to the integration of some students into provincial schools (Milloy, 1999) as well as to the creation of federally supported on-reserve schools across the country (Carr-Stewart, 2006). The creation and operation of federal day-schools and the moving of Aboriginal students to Canadian public schools represented a policy of integration (Kirkness, 1999). Integration, according to Kirkness, kept the efforts of assimilation alive through the continuing control of formal education for Aboriginal youth by the federal government. The integration of Indigenous students into public schools was also viewed as a way to transition the costs, obligations and responsibilities of Aboriginal education from the federal government to provincial and territorial governments (Milloy, 1999). There remains a

critical spatial element to the federally-run day-schools as well as they continued to operate in ways that sought to sever people from their land through the privileging of Euro-Western education norms.

The 1960s saw more efforts at altering not only the education of Indigenous youth in Canada, but also an attempt to fundamentally and irrevocably change the relationship between Indigenous people and the federal government. Under the leadership of Jean Chrétien, at the time Minister of Indian Affairs, the federal government introduced the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, what would become known as the White Paper, in 1969. In the White Paper, it was proposed that, through the abolishment of the *Indian Act*, Indigenous people in Canada would come to exist as “*citizens like all other citizens*” (Paquette & Fallon, 2010, p. 74, emphasis in original). This meant that the federal government was attempting to unilaterally and wholly extinguish both the legal distinction of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and, with that, the fiduciary responsibilities and obligations of the federal government which were historical precedent and treaty-entrenched (Paquette & Fallon, 2010). Ultimately the White Paper was abandoned but not before it had incited Indigenous communities to come together in protest and action on a scale larger than had been seen before in the Canadian context (Paquette & Fallon, 2010).

The result of this unified protest was the formation of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), now known as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and the release of *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB, 1972). The *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy paper advocated “for a radical change in Indian education. Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of Indian people” (NIB, 1972, p. 2). Though affirmed by Chrétien in 1973 and despite his instigation of a process of devolution designed to move control over education to local Indigenous communities, the federal government,

through successive leaderships, has failed to adequately support or finance context-specific education to a level commensurate with that provided to non-Indigenous Canadians (AFN, 2010). Research has demonstrated that community-based schools have been impacted greatly by what Paquette and Fallon (2010) identify as the outcomes of “diseconomies of scale” (p. 82) where the running of schools in First Nation communities is made difficult by their small size. The operation of small schools, and the accompanying restricted budget levels, limit the ability to pay competitive teacher salaries and benefits, contract for ancillary services or purchase supplies in bulk to effect savings. As well, the small size of such schools makes it difficult to offer varied course options, as well as additional supports, resources and opportunities for students. Paquette, Fallon, and Morgan (2009) extend this discussion in their argument that the

INAC [Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada] policy on devolution of control brought forward in time and applied to education a fragmented governance dynamic that led to dysfunctional diseconomies of scale and to paralysis and stagnation of First Nations education “systems.” In a further irony, it did so even as it presented, then justified, such fragmented governance dynamics within a discourse of community empowerment and capacity building. (p. 286)

Thus, by the late twentieth-century, many schools became band-operated although they remained under the *de facto* control of the federal government which retained control of the funding and regulated elements such as curriculum. However, in recent years some communities have also established school authorities and have been able to achieve more meaningful control over the education of their youth (see, for example, Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey, 2013). The historical development of Indigenous education has led to a current circumstance which has been described as a “non-system” (Mendelson, 2009;

National Panel of First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve, 2011). This non-system, with a lack of clear and legislated responsibilities, creates a circumstance where Indigenous students experience significant under-funding, infrastructure deficits and resource access barriers (Montour, 2010).

Indigenous education has continued to be an area of discussion, debate, and contention. Recognizing that a significant number of Indigenous students attend provincial schools through tuition agreements or by living outside of reserve communities and in provincial school catchments, provincial ministries of education have joined the discussion creating policy documents, resource kits, self-identification policies, and professional expectations for teachers in the public system (see, for example, Alberta Education, 2005; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2004; Manitoba Education and Training, 2018). As well, work is being done at the national level by both the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) (n.d) and the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) (2010) to enhance and support teacher learning and student experience in the area of Indigenous education. Ontario, then, is not alone in attempting to create and implement a policy aimed at improving Indigenous education. In the following section, attention is paid to the *Framework* and the literature related to its content and implementation since its release.

Indigenous Education in Ontario

The *Framework* has been acknowledged as an important step taken by the OME to improve Indigenous education (Cherubini, 2014; Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017; Kearns, 2013). However, the policy is not without its critics. Soon after its release Cherubini and Hodson (2008) noted a discord between the principles of the *Framework*, including increased achievement and awareness of Indigenous culture and language for all students in Ontario schools, and the focus on measuring achievement through standardized assessment. They

also identified contradictions within the *Framework* policy document itself, noting that the policy suggests that Indigenous student success requires culturally sensitive pedagogy but educators remain constrained in their ability to provide such programming due to a focus on measuring success through standardized testing. This focus on standardized assessment as a means of evaluating students learning is supported by the expectations of the Auditor General of Ontario (2012, 2014, 2016) and in the progress reports published by the OME which repeatedly reference the results of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing and self-identification data as integral to the production of benchmark data against which the “progress” of Indigenous students will be measured (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017). Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir (2010) argue that the OME policy continues to marginalize Indigenous students by maintaining these biases towards “Western” priorities of education, that being what is measured through standardized assessment tools, such as EQAO testing and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Furthermore, Cherubini et al. argue that the notion of an educational “gap” is, in itself, culturally insensitive as it privileges the standards of achievement which align with capitalist-oriented education paradigm that sees achievement as something that is standardized and can be measured statistically. Such a focus, Cherubini et al. suggest, risks “widening the void” while trying to close the “gap” meaning it may well lead to the increased social, cultural, and political marginalization of Indigenous students (2010, p. 329). This focus on measuring success through literacy and numeracy scores has been identified by People for Education (2017) as operating in direct opposition to the advice of Indigenous stakeholders.

As provincial policy, the *Framework* is expected to be taken up actively in every school and school board in Ontario. As Burm (2016) argues, “[i]t is the responsibility of

school boards and schools to breathe life into this document, to ensure it is in fact alive and working in schools to meet the province’s goals for improving outcomes of FNMI students” (p. 149). Research has shown, however, that there is significant variability in the ways that school boards and schools are engaging with, negotiating, and putting into practice the *Framework* (Anuik & Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2012; Burm, 2016). Burm (2016) notes that there is some dissonance between the values and aims of the OME as advocated by the *Framework* and the ways the policy is taken up by school board and school administration. In Burm’s (2016) research, former Aboriginal education leads and administrators talked about a wide variety of factors influencing how, when, and in what ways the *Framework* was being enacted in their practice including, but not limited to the number of self-identified students, proximity to local First Nation communities, and availability of support services. Similarly, a study by Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2012) found that while some boards were actively and enthusiastically taking up the vision of the *Framework* in their work, others were doing less, and some nothing.

Cherubini (2010) has called the *Framework* a “self-declared solution” (p. 13), critiquing the OME as having positioned itself throughout the document as “benevolent and conciliatory providers of educational services” while “subtly reproduc[ing] a depiction of Aboriginal peoples from a deficit perspective” (pp. 14-15). Elsewhere, I, along with a colleague, have written about the *Framework* (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017) and identified four discourses which arise within the *Framework*, namely: achievement, increasing capacities, the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives, and absence. After tracing the discourses throughout a series of documents associated with the *Framework* (e.g., progress reports), our findings indicated that the *Framework* is unlikely to upset the status quo of education in Ontario (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017). Furthermore, the

Framework, in not requiring students and teachers “to critique the ways the current education system continues to operate in ways that uphold cognitive imperialism” (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017, p. 77) limits the ability of the policy effort to support the decolonization of education in Ontario. Our conclusions align closely with the critiques put forth by Cherubini (2010), Cherubini and Hodson (2008), and Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir (2010) as outlined above and are consistent with the views of Abawi and Brady (2017) who suggest that policy making is another tool of colonialism and that the *Framework* can and should be understood as part of a neoliberal agenda which again seeks to deal with the “Indian problem” through education.

Despite these criticisms, Kearns (2013) notes that policy efforts such as the *Framework* do represent important potential learning opportunities for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education professionals, and an occasion to delve deeply into Canadian history and acknowledge our colonial past and present. Cherubini’s 2014 book, *Aboriginal Student Engagement and Achievement: Educational Practices and Cultural Sustainability*, provides important insight into one school’s successful effort to enact OME policies through their Indigenous programming. Through this narrative research, Cherubini acknowledges the ways ongoing colonialism remains pervasive in the structures and curriculum of Ontario schools but then, in drawing on the voices of students, Elders, and educators involved in an Aboriginal Student Program, also highlights the ways programming which considers and actively works to include Indigenous students, their experiences and perspectives, can facilitate positive experiences and improve student success. Research done by Crooks et al., (2015) has also shown positive connections between culturally-responsive programming and student success in Ontario schools.

The OME has continued to follow up on the *Framework* by developing additional policy and support documents. For example, the 2012 annual report from the Auditor General of Ontario emphasized that the *Framework* was released without a detailed plan for implementation. In response the OME released the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan* in 2014. While agreeing that the *Implementation Plan* was a necessary step, the Auditor General of Ontario then criticized the document for not providing enough detail regarding how school boards and schools were to put the *Framework* into action (Auditor General of Ontario, 2014). Criticism has also been aimed at the *Implementation Plan* by Butler (2015) who argues that there is too great a focus on the accumulation of self-identification data and its connection to literacy and numeracy scores and credit accumulation. The focus, Butler (2015) argues would be better aimed at altering the content and structures of Ontario's formal education system. To date, there has been no response to these later suggestions for OME action. However, following the 2012 study by Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns demonstrating that schools boards employing Aboriginal Education Lead teachers experience much greater success in putting the *Framework* into action, the Province of Ontario, in the fall of 2016, mandated every school board employ an FNMI Education Lead, a step which may well assist in developing more consistent interaction with, and action specific to, the *Framework* across Ontario.

In reviewing this literature it becomes apparent that a tension exists between the stated intent of the policy to improve Indigenous student outcomes and increase the knowledge of all students, and the outcomes of the policy (in)action. That the policy can be understood as both a positive step forward in the work of Indigenous education while it is simultaneously complicit in reproducing deficit perspectives about Indigenous people,

reveals the complexity of Indigenous education planning and provision in Ontario's public schools and the continued prominence of the settler-colonial state.

Indigenous Education: Teachers, Teacher Practice, and Relationships

Having reviewed the literature related to the historical development of Indigenous education in Canada and the policy efforts of the OME, I turn now to a discussion of the relevant scholarship on teachers, teacher practice, and teacher-student relationships. This discussion provides both context and insight into the ways teacher practice mediates, intersects with, and translates the assumptions, perspectives, possibilities, and limitations presented in the *Framework* through the actions carried out in its name. Importantly this literature also provides ways to think about and understand the messages of achievement, the achievement "gap," and Indigenous content for all as presented through the *Framework*. This literature comes together to reveal the messiness that occurs when policy and change-making efforts interact with the lived experiences of teachers and students and the socio-political and historical context of Canada and Ontario.

Central to this discussion is the fact that Canada is a settler nation, with both a colonial past and a settler-colonial present. Teachers in Ontario schools, then, practice within an ongoing, and often tense, Indigenous-settler relationship. In enacting the *Framework* teachers are charged with the responsibility of acknowledging and working within this relationship and it is no easy task. Scholars have noted that despite increasing language of cultural inclusion and calls to acknowledge Canada's colonial past, there remains a sense of apprehension amongst educators related to translating this into practice (Cherubini, 2014; Cherubini, et al., 2010; Dion et al., 2010). Furthermore, incorporating Aboriginal perspectives is an incredibly complex task (St. Denis, 2011). Moreover, Dion (2007) notes that often teachers understand and position themselves as "perfect strangers" to Aboriginal people, a position in which teachers suggest they know nothing of Aboriginal people in Canada. Dion argues that this may only be overcome when

teachers acknowledge the dominant, and often damaging, discourses about Aboriginal people present in society and their own relation to them. Further complicating the situation is the fact that awareness about the ways Indigenous students learn and about Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives, cannot be understood as synonymous with teachers having the capacity to translate this knowledge into effective practice (Kanu, 2011; Kennedy, 1997). Important to both research concerned with Indigenous education policy, and actions taken in response to it, then, is the literature discussing settler colonialism and reconciliation in Canada.

Verancini (2010, 2011, 2014) has, in recent years, pursued a scholarly research agenda which promotes an exploration of settler colonialism as distinct from colonialism. Drawing on Wolfe's (1999) observations that settlers come to stay and bring with them an exogenous political and social sovereignty accompanied by a desire to replace Indigenous ways of life, Cavanagh and Verancini (2010) define settler colonialism as a “global and transnational phenomenon, and as much a thing of the past as a thing of the present,” noting that settlers are founders of political orders who carry with them a distinct sovereign capacity.

And settler colonialism is not colonialism: settlers want Indigenous people to vanish (but can make use of their labour before they are made to disappear). Sometimes settler colonial forms operate within colonial ones, sometimes they subvert them, sometimes they replace them. But even if colonialism and settler colonialism interpenetrate and overlap, they remain separate as they co-define each other. (p. 1)

Settler colonialism can be understood as different from colonialism through its aim to replace Indigenous populations. Thus, while colonialism seeks to establish and exert control over Indigenous people and their land, settler colonialism seeks to extend this control in ways which facilitate the complete erasure of Indigenous people. Understanding settler colonialism as an ongoing circumstance which is performed by people, not empires (Verancini, 2010), promotes a deep and ongoing critical self-reflection for Canadian settlers, one which Regan (2010) suggests

might prompt people to acknowledge the ongoing violence perpetrated against Indigenous people in Canada and, more importantly, take steps against complicity in it. This complicity has been described by Regan as, at least partially founded in, the “peacemaker myth,” a view which positions violence as only occurring through physical confrontation. As such, Regan (2006) argues that Canadians are “disturbed” by violent conflicts, such as Oka and Ipperwash,⁷ because they run counter to the narrative that Canada was founded through non-violence as well as the idea that violent conflict is not the norm in Canada. This “peacemaker myth,” Regan argues, reinforces the conceptualization of Canada as a peaceful nation while simultaneously suggesting Canada as having “moral and cultural superiority” over Indigenous people, as “demonstrated by willingly negotiating with Indigenous peoples over time” (p. 11). These settler colonial narratives are central to both the identity of settler Canadians (Barker, 2009; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Mackey, 2016; Regan, 2006, 2010; Steinman, 2016) and the continuing predominance of settler colonial logics of elimination (Wolfe, 1999, 2006) which support the domination of Indigenous people with the continued intent of erasure through assimilation.

With the conclusion of TRC events in 2015, the release of the final report of the Commission, and the opening of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), discussions about reconciliation are necessary to any research concerned with Indigenous education in Canada. Indeed, in the 94 *Calls to Action* presented by the TRC in its final report, approximately one-fifth are related to education (Siemens, 2017). As the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair made clear, “reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one” (TRC, 2015, p. vi). Reconciliation, as defined by the TRC, is “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. A critical part of this process involves

⁷ Both the Oka and Ipperwash crises were physical confrontations between Indigenous activists and Canadian armed forces and police. In both instances the confrontations were the result of ongoing tensions around land ownership and use. For a comprehensive discussion of these confrontations see Bressette (2003) and Miller (1991).

repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change” (TRC, 2015, p. 16). The TRC final report stressed that reconciliation must occur through action in every part of society.

The concept of reconciliation in Canada, however, is not without critique. Haudenosaunee scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2012) has warned that reconciliation, understood as relationship building, is a strategy aimed at the assimilation and pacification of Indigenous people without truly addressing the injustices of the Canadian government’s actions (as cited in Freeman, 2014). Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, Leanne Simpson (2011), has also cautioned against reconciliation in positing the (im)possibility of reconciling when the majority of Canadians simply do not know, and/or do not want to know, about the systematic attempts made by colonial and settler-colonial governments to eradicate Indigenous people in Canada. Freeman (2014), in her article *In Defense of Reconciliation*, acknowledges the threat of ineffective reconciliation constructed through a top-down approach by government: “An overemphasis on an increasingly irresponsible federal government as a means to decolonization and reconciliation also risks leaving out citizenry, surely a mistake in what is supposed to be a democracy” (p. 219). This, Freeman argues, is a continuation of a long-standing tradition of leaving settler-citizens out of treaty agreements and land negotiations, thus perpetuating settler ignorance around the responsibilities of the treaty relationship. Thus, for reconciliation to be successful, education is central.

As the TRC report (2015) makes clear, improvements in the structure, content, and delivery of education to Indigenous people warrants significant attention, funding, and improvement to support reconciliation. Important here, as well, is the position taken up by Freeman in her suggestion that “without settler education and the development of alliances,

government action may only lead to settler backlash” (p. 219). If decolonization is to occur in the spaces of formal schooling in Ontario, education and reconciliation need to be interconnected moving forward. Actions taken up in the name of both education and reconciliation need to be purposefully co-constitutive, collaborative, and relational in nature in order to support decolonization.

It is important now to confront the way the literature discussed above intersects with two important observations in education. The first is that teachers have an important role to play in the lives of their students. And the second, as shown by Steinman (2016), is that settler colonial education provides inadequate preparation for teachers to collaborate in anti-colonial and anti-racist action (Lawrence & Dua, 2005) or to act as progressive activists with an eye towards social justice (Barker, 2015). Research demonstrates that the student-teacher relationship plays an important role in the academic development of students (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). As well, research has indicated that caring teachers, those who engage in ongoing relationships with students where listening and discussion are of a high priority, have positive impacts on their students’ learning (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Kanu’s (2011) research has shown that teacher capacity, including content knowledge, attitude, instructional style, and commitment, is the most critical factor impacting student achievement. Goulet and Goulet (2014) have also emphasized the importance of building teacher capacities in the area of content knowledge and relationship building with Aboriginal students in order to help facilitate student success.

This literature, when considered against the context of settler colonialism and reconciliation discussed above, bears out important questions about how teachers can be expected to take up Indigenous education, with the intention of confronting, if not actively working towards a decolonizing pedagogy and practice. As teachers are often successful products of the system we now ask them to critique, O’Sullivan (2008) reminds us “it is not self-evident

that even a critical minority of 21st Century Canadian teachers can be expected to assume the role of classroom-based social change agent” (p. 96). As well, Lowman (2007) reminds us that the practice of teaching cannot be separated from the wider political and power structures at play. Though talking specifically of teaching history, Lowman’s point is necessarily applicable to considerations of teaching across subject matter and grade level. We are reminded through the work of Lowman, O’Sullivan (2008), and Regan (2010) that the decisions and attitudes of teachers matter greatly and are intimately connected to the ways students are, or are not, socialized in manners which reproduce and/or challenge racism and oppression in society.

In a settler nation such as Canada, teachers have an important role to play in efforts to decolonize education. I do not mean to suggest that all teachers understand, or care to think about, the potential of their actions to contribute to the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous students. Indeed, Orlowski’s (2008) research seems to indicate that many teachers, in fact, do not understand their individual role as agents for curricular change and may view race cognizant teaching as problematic to both their practice and student learning. Orlowski’s findings also suggest that, despite the presence of discourses recognizing and extolling Canada as a multicultural country, classrooms remain persistently places where the race or ethnicity of students remains a potentially marginalizing factor. The teachers in Orlowski’s research largely subscribed to the notion that the most appropriate way to teach social studies is through a single “colour-blind” curriculum. Based in a belief of the efficacy of a curriculum derived from discourses of liberal multiculturalism, teachers are able to ignore calls to make formal education structures and curriculum more relevant to Indigenous students (Orlowski, 2008). The unique relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, their histories, and their position as the first peoples of the territories now known as Canada become irrelevant in the discourses of liberal multiculturalism. This, Orlowski argues, creates a circumstance where even well-meaning teachers ignore the systemic and historical circumstances contributing to the

struggles of Indigenous students in Canada's public schools. Instead, teachers continue to draw upon dominant discourses which rely on a cultural-deficit perspective and place the blame for Indigenous students' struggles on their culture, parents, and Indigenous communities (Orlowski, 2008).

Here, it is important to remind ourselves of several important arguments made by scholars such as St. Denis (2011) that the official political strategy of multiculturalism in Canada has, in operation, worked against the "meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspectives into public schools" (p. 307). Multiculturalism has been critiqued for inciting social division, maintaining the "cultural other" as decorative and temporary, and lacking the capacity to encourage conflict negotiation and anti-colonial action (St. Denis, 2011). Operating in a formal education system which extols multiculturalism, then, limits the opportunities for teacher capacity building in the areas of anti-colonialism and decolonization. Recall the argument made by Kanu (2011) and discussed above that knowledge of Indigenous histories and perspectives does not necessarily translate into the capacity to teach these things. Finally, remember O'Sullivan's (2008) argument that teachers cannot be expected to teach critically subject matter that they do not understand and may actively resist. By grasping these concerns it becomes apparent that teacher education, and in-service training, are crucial components for improving Indigenous education in Ontario. In following Battiste's (2013) model of decolonization through *deconstruction* and *reconstruction* and in understanding teachers as central to student development, it seems axiomatic that teacher education, teacher understandings of Indigenous education policy, and how both of these elements relate to professional practice must be important to any change initiatives.

Also necessary to this consideration is the emphasis that scholars have placed on the fact that Indigenous students in Canada, both historically and contemporarily, experience epistemic discontinuity in their lives (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; CCL, 2009; Cherubini, 2014; Piquemal, 2005). This discontinuity manifests in two ways in the formal schooling of Indigenous youth. The first, as noted by Castellano, et al. (2000) and Cherubini (2014), occurs when content related to Indigenous world views is absent from the educational experiences of students. The second, discussed by Cherubini and Hodson (2008) occurs as a conflict between policy/curriculum language and the lived schooling experiences of Indigenous youth. While the language of policy and curriculum calls for diverse learning experiences and inclusion, the lived experiences often remain focussed on standardized testing and statistical accountability (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). Iseke-Barnes (2005) argues that this circumstance of epistemic discontinuity occurs in a societal context which perpetuates myths and misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and devalues Indigenous knowledge through public discourse and in educational institutions. Indigenous scholars have stressed that to overcome both epistemic discontinuity and persistent marginalization, education needs to take a holistic approach that reflects the cultures and identities of Indigenous students and acknowledges the complexities of the colonial experience (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2000; Battiste, 2013; Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

The significant body of literature discussing the teaching of minority students in public schools must also be acknowledged. This literature includes discussions of culturally responsive education. As explained by Gay (2000/2010), culturally responsive instruction is validating of students' cultures. It is comprehensive, as it attempts to teach the whole child by acknowledging, displaying respect for, and building upon their cultural resources. Culturally responsive instruction is also multidimensional in that it teaches concepts across several subjects. The results of culturally responsive instruction, for Gay, include the empowerment of students through

success, the transformation of students through the development of a wide range of skills, and student emancipation facilitated by the development of empathy and critical thinking skills. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) argue that such an approach does not require that educators abandon their own culture, nor the epistemologies associated with it. Rather, culturally responsive education is about understanding, and appreciating, that there are multiple epistemologies present within the classroom (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Culturally responsive teaching operates as an attempt to improve the educational experiences of minority students. Culturally responsive pedagogies represent a distinct effort to acknowledge and redress the cultural marginalization of students in school policies, structures, and curriculum. In the context of Canada and specific to Indigenous education, culturally responsive education requires that we move beyond the discourses of multiculturalism which allow for the continued marginalization of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (St. Denis, 2011).

Successful Indigenous education is based on the inclusion First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives and provides epistemic continuity across learning sites in a student's life. Overcoming the teacher anxiety and apprehension around the inclusion of FNMI perspectives, as noted above, also requires that non-Indigenous teachers acknowledge and address their systemic privilege and positionality. Thus, to offer successful Indigenous education also requires continued professional learning. It is important to consider, then, the literature concerned with translating professional development learning into education practice and the relationship of teachers to education change.

Teachers and change making. As outlined above, my work aims to investigate and understand the ways teachers construct and envision their relationship with Indigenous education policy in Ontario. It is necessary then to provide a review of literature concerned with the ways teachers participate in, react to, and relate to change in policies that have an impact on their teaching work. In this final section of the literature review I do this through a

discussion of literature concerned with professional learning and the relationship of teachers to change and change making in their profession. Attention is paid to studies of policy enactment; teachers and equity work; the stories teachers tell; and teachers and curriculum change.

Riveros and Viczko (2012) note a persistent disconnect between professional learning and classroom practice, a circumstance that educators may overcome through the recognition that their knowledge is enacted through practice. Such a recognition reflects some of Hunziker's (2011) characteristics of effective professional development, particularly positioning professional development as job-embedded, ongoing, and collaborative. Also important to consider is the argument put forth by Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) that not enough attention is paid in professional development research and practice to content knowledge. Such an emphasis is clearly important to Indigenous education as a lack of knowledge is cited by teachers as an impediment to the incorporation of Aboriginal content in their classrooms (Dion et al., 2010; Orlowski, 2008).

Teachers have long been the recipients of policy efforts aimed at improving education or solving problems in education as identified by various stakeholders. Policy enactment studies, particularly the research carried out by Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012), shed light on the ways policy is *enacted*, not *implemented*, in schools. In their case study research in four secondary schools in the United Kingdom Ball, Maguire, and Braun share results which stress that policy work and policy processes in schools are comprised of three “constituent facets...*the material, the interpretive, and the discursive*” (p. 15, emphasis in original) and thus policy work as done by educators involves multiple and at times contradictory processes of interpretation and action within the opportunities and constraints of a school’s material context. Utilizing the work of Ball and his colleagues, Segeren’s (2016) work in the area of equity policy enactment discusses the ways that the material and situational context,

alongside the professional culture, mediated the enactment of equity policy by educators at the site of her research. Coburn's (2005) work has stressed the importance of acknowledging and interrogating the ways educators adapt and transform policy via enactment. Coburn offers insight into the ways school leadership influences the ways teachers enact education policy by "shaping access to policy ideas, participating in the social process of meaning making, and creating substantively different conditions for teacher learning" (2005, p. 477). Although the relationship of school administration and teacher policy enactment is not the focus of this dissertation, it is an important consideration and something participants did discuss, albeit briefly, in interviews. The literature on policy enactment, as discussed both here and in chapter one's theory section, highlights the complex nature of the relationship between policy intent and policy action warranting further research.

In considering the ways policy becomes enacted in schools and classrooms, it is important to also look at the literature which focusses on teachers and education change, and, relatedly, the stories teachers tell when discussing such change. Teachers have been discussed in literature as agents of change in regards to curriculum and education policy (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015; Goodson, 2003; Priestley & Biesta, 2013; Priestley, Edwards, Miller, & Priestley, 2012). Priestley and Biesta (2013) have argued that viewing teachers as agents of change represents a shift away from rigid and prescriptive curricula towards an understanding of teachers as professionals with agency within the contexts of their work. Teacher agency has been the subject of significant academic scholarship (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015; Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Campbell, 2012; Priestley & Biesta 2013; Priestly, Edwards, Miller, & Priestley, 2012; Robinson, 2012). In an editorial for *Curriculum Inquiry*, Campbell (2012) identifies agency in the realm of teachers and practice as the "capacity of teachers to use professional discretion in their pedagogical and curricular

practices” while noting that such capacity exists, often, in a state of tension alongside teachers’ accountabilities to the state (p. 183). Others have examined the topic of teacher agency from alternative perspectives. Priestley et al. (2012) question the role and purpose of teacher agency, examining the complexities around the expression of agency via the support and/or challenging of normative education structures and discourses. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) as well as Campbell (2003), have considered teacher agency in relation to teacher morality. For Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) teachers are moral agents whose work is inherently a moral activity wherein teachers must consider the needs and interests of others. For Campbell (2003) the moral agency of teachers is both related to the standards of morality teachers are held to, or hold themselves to, as well as the role teachers play as moral exemplars for students. Priestley et al. (2013) argue that teacher agency, a quality they define as action-based and influenced by the “temporal-relational contexts-for-action” in which teachers engage in professional activity, is not merely an individual capacity. Instead they argue agency is the outcome of a series of complex interactions between socio-material, cultural, and structural factors that both enable and limit teachers’ abilities to interrogate curricula and policy and act according to their professional knowledge and experience. Robinson’s (2012) study of teachers in an Australian non-government school similarly identified that teachers constructed and acted out their professional agency through the interrogation of policy directives. Such action, Robinson found, enabled teachers to adopt and adapt policy directives in their practice and was supported through the presence of strong reciprocal professional relationships within their work context. In studying teacher relationships to curriculum change, Kirk and MacDonald (2001) identified the importance of including teacher voices in curriculum change processes, arguing that the inclusion of teacher voice in policy and curricula is integral to teachers feeling a sense of ownership in

curriculum change. Bascia, Carr-Harris, Fine-Meyer, and Zurzolo's (2014) research affirms the notions presented by Kirk and MacDonald through the investigation of three cases in Ontario in which teachers took on ownership of curriculum by participating in the development of secondary-level courses which then became formalized through board and/or provincial policy. For Bascia et al. (2014) these cases highlight that

teachers' curriculum work , in other words, is neither wholly constrained by structures and circumstances; nor are teachers entirely free agents; the limitations of the formal curriculum propelled teachers to develop new course content at the same time that opportunities to get new courses approved made expansion and formalization possible. (p. 243)

What becomes clear through this literature is that teachers, despite their positioning as front-line workers responsible for putting into practice changes directed through policy and curricula, grapple with the complexities of enacting their professional agency through interrogating policy and curricular according to their professional knowledge whilst also being accountable to the expectations of the state through measures such as standardized testing results, credit accumulation metrics, and graduation rates.

That teachers are challenged by the complexities of enacting policy and professional agency is also made clear in literature concerned with the stories teachers tell. This literature, and here I focus on studies which draw upon the professional knowledge landscape and Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) categorization of sacred⁸, secret, and cover stories (as described in chapter one), demonstrates that the stories teachers tell are inextricably linked

⁸ In this literature review I return to the language of "sacred stories" because this is the language used by the scholars whose work I discuss. Moving forward through the results and discussion of my own research I use the term institutional story.

with teacher experiences with change, policy, and curriculum. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) consider the ways the stories of educators intersect with the issue of school reform. Through the telling of two stories, one from an administrator and the other from a teacher, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) show that reform is experienced and understood differently by different parties. Stories of reform can help us understand that in the context of a school, change can be understood as a site for negotiation in which professionals come to imagine, and reimagine, their relationship to an identified “problem” and the role they play in making change possible. A process of this nature can lead to an improved educational environment.

Safety, however, is not inherent in the professional knowledge landscape. This is demonstrated through the work of Craig (2004) who sought to extend the conceptualization of how knowledge communities come into being and how they operate as safe places on the professional knowledge landscape she earlier presented (Craig, 1995). Through a narrative-inquiry investigation Craig (2004) came to distinguish between teacher knowledge communities and other teacher groups. The stories teachers told within her study led to Craig identifying how the boundaries between these groups can, and do, shift with the outcome being that teacher interactions become less safe. Huber and Whelan’s (1999) research considers the role of story for a single teacher negotiating their story in relation to an institutional story of inclusion. Huber and Whelan conclude that story-telling, for their participant, may have “enabled her to dwell within an in-between positioning, gaining the courage to name the lack of spaces for differing ways of knowing to exist on her school landscape” (p. 396), thus positioning story as more than a (re)telling of experience but also a strategy for existing and challenging difficult situations on the professional knowledge landscape.

Studies drawing upon the stories of teachers in the conceptual model of the professional knowledge landscape have also shown how teachers interact with and react to efforts of change. In McCaughtry's (2006) study a teacher participant drew upon both cover and secret stories to challenge the sacred story around gender which she found pervasive and problematic in her school. By describing the competing stories of this teacher participant's professional landscape, McCaughtry cohesively demonstrates the ways teachers question the sacred story, operationalize a cover story which suggests assimilation of the sacred story, and enact a secret story, a series of practices, which they believe to be the most appropriate pedagogical strategies in their classrooms. Work done by Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) similarly shows that teachers can, and do, draw upon the knowledge supported by their experiences and told through the secret stories to justify actions which may seem to run counter to policy directives, highlighting that

teachers do make a difference. They do know their situations. They are not mere screens who translate others' intentions and ideologies into practice.

Teachers' knowledge is an essential component to improving educational practice. (p. 674)

Though the research done by McCaughtry (2006) and Connelly et al. (1997) showcases the ways teachers are able to draw upon their professional experience to challenge dominant discourses presented in the sacred story, it is important to also be aware that such actions are connected with relations of power teachers experience in the professional knowledge landscape. As was demonstrated by Huber and Whelan's (1999) research, teachers can, and do, experience varying levels of marginalization and privilege within their professional contexts. Such marginalization and privilege may be connected to one's level (perceived or real) of expertise, or to gender, race, socio-economic status, sexuality and

more. Thus, the capacity to enact one's agency or to challenge the sacred story is intimately connected to the power relations in which teachers are embedded. This is evident in the study by Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) who considered the stories and reasoning of teachers who left the profession. Clandinin et al. (2009) posit that "teachers who leave teaching early, like youth who leave school prior to graduation, know that from within the dominant institutional narrative, they will be seen as 'deficient', as having something wrong with them" (p. 146) and so they create cover stories to explain their reasoning behind leaving. Rarely, however, do these cover stories illuminate the complex reasons teachers have for leaving the profession including the difficulties they experience attempting to "compose lives that allow them to live with respect and dignity in relation with children, youth, and families" (Clandinin et al., 2009, p. 141) or managing the tensions between the professional and personal lives of teachers. The stories present in the literature discussed here provide intimate insights into the lives of teachers, their interactions with school policy, curricula and change as well with others who work within the professional knowledge landscape.

Last, I turn to literature which discusses teachers, equity, and the pervasive whiteness of education in Canada. Doing so adds yet another essential element for consideration when exploring the ways teachers interact with change in their professional context. As was discussed in chapter one and earlier in this chapter, the work of teachers is complex. When considering the relationships between teachers and equity in the professional context the complexities of education become even more evident. Here I remind the reader of the work of O'Sullivan (2008) who questions how teachers who are often the successful products of a school system in which they now teach can be expected to act as agents of social change concerned with upsetting and challenging the status quo of which they are a product.

Likewise, I remind you of the work of Orlowski (2008) whose work interrogated the discourses of liberalism, inclusion, tolerance, and equality against the realities of practicing teachers who advocated for “colour-blind” pedagogy and curriculum as fair and appropriate. Picower’s (2009) research with pre-service teachers in the United States critically examines the “Whiteness of teaching.” In so doing, Picower identifies three hegemonic understandings presented by participants: fear, deficient constructions of students and communities, and Whites as victims. These hegemonic understandings, Picower argues, are defended by three tools of Whiteness, which, when operationalized, serve to support the status quo and the insidious marginalization of “urban schools” and racialized students. The three tools of Whiteness, emotional, ideological, and performative, “facilitate in the job of maintaining and supporting hegemonic stories and dominant ideologies of race, which in turn uphold structures of White supremacy” (Picower, 2009, p. 204-5). In the Canadian context Schick (2014) has written about the ways “the inclusion of counter stories [in curriculum] can meet with resistance and resentment” by settlers who bemoan their commitments to multiculturalism as excessive generosity. Schick notes that the “little amount of Aboriginal history and culture that finds its way into the schools is used in white discourses of resentment as evidence that equity has been achieved” (p. 100). For Schick, this creates a circumstance which highlights the way white resentment of inclusion works to reassert white supremacy. This Schick argues, and here she draws upon Ahmed (2007), allows considerations of equity in policy to be enough – a circumstance where you do not have to actually carry out the diversity, where “knowing enough to put in the policy is one example of white racial knowledge. Doing nothing about it is another” (p. 100). The pervasiveness of whiteness in curriculum and teacher resources is also addressed, in the Ontario context by Van de Kleut (2011) who criticizes the resources supplied by the OME for literacy teachers.

Van de Kleut specifically criticizes one picture book and an accompanying DVD resource for its romanticized portrayal of Indigenous people and notes its uncritical recommendation by the Ministry while arguing that such presentations work to reinforce the whiteness of literacy practice in Ontario. Insight on the effects of pervasive whiteness, and colonialism, can be gained by returning to the notion of the “perfect stranger” as put forth by Dion (2007). Dion’s conceptualization of the perfect stranger describes a circumstance where educators claim with confidence that they have no knowledge of, or relationship with, Indigenous people. Such a conceptualization assists in the denial of the ways whiteness impacts educator practice and acts as a protective measure supporting colonial norms (Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2015).

Tuters (2017) has examined what happens when teachers actively engage in work that challenges the status quo and the pervasive whiteness of formal education. In her study Tuters explores the reasons teachers give for becoming involved in equity work. What becomes clear through Tuters study is that teachers who engage in equity work connect their motivation to their personal and professional experience. Thus, teachers noted critical incidents which obliged them to engage in equity work, they talked about the emotional struggles which accompanied their equity work, and they noted that the nature of their equity work was directly related to the nature of inequity/equity with which they had experience (Tuters, 2017). The conditions of teaching have also been cited as having significant influence over whether or not new teachers are able to actively and explicitly work towards equity through their practice (Philpott & Dagenis, 2011). Relatedly, work done by McGregor (2013, 2014) has highlighted the importance of teacher learning, for non-Indigenous teachers in particular. Professional learning can disrupt colonial mindsets and thus lead to

transformative learning and teaching that supports inclusive learning opportunities in the area of Indigenous education.

Indigenous Education Literature as Guiding the Development of Research

I take seriously the argument made by Cote-Meek (2014) that Indigenous students endure ongoing colonial violence in their education. I also believe Cote-Meek raises a crucial question in wondering whether classrooms can truly become safe spaces for Indigenous students to explore Canada's colonial history. In my research I explore this question through the perspectives of teachers and expand its ambit in wondering how teachers are engaging, or not engaging, their practice in a culturally responsive manner but also in a way that may facilitate decolonizing education and moves towards reconciliation. I also explore the ways the policy may or may not contribute to this effort.

As evidenced by the literature, the current state of Indigenous education in Canada offers a number of complex areas for research. The literature reviewed here indicates that attention is being paid to issues of Indigenous education in Canada and in Ontario specifically, but it also indicates that there is still much work to be done. It also makes clear that there is no simple or "one-size fits all" solution for the issues that plague Indigenous education. Instead, locally-specific and context responsive solutions must be created and supported by equitable levels of funding in order to allow for the development of culturally-appropriate and relevant programming and services. The literature makes clear that there is not a single or simply solvable problem with Indigenous education in Canada. Rather, the current state of Indigenous education exists as a result of the historic mismanagement of education, and the violence, both symbolic and physical, of the institution of formal education (Milloy, 1999; Neeganagwedgin, 2013) alongside problems of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1986; 2000; 2013), racism (Cote-Meek, 2014), structural inequities

(Harper & Thompson, 2017; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003) and cultural barriers (Battiste, 2000, 2013; Wishart, 2009). Through the literature reviewed here it becomes clear that efforts to improve Indigenous education must also be efforts to acknowledge, address, and alter the structures which perpetuate the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge and maintain settler-ignorance in support of settler futurity. Only through structural change, will teachers and other front-line education workers gain the necessary professional capacities, training, and institutional backing to practice in ways that support the decolonization of public schools in Ontario and education's role in moves towards reconciliation.

As historical record the literature shows that there has been and continues to be significant mismanagement of Indigenous education by settler-colonial governments in Canada at both the federal and provincial level. This highlights the need to create a system of funding whereby both local schools run by First Nation and Inuit communities *and* Indigenous students attending provincial and territorial schools are able to access relevant and appropriate curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, as well as have consistent access to second and third level services at a level commensurate with their non-Indigenous counterparts. The literature also makes clear the dire need for formal education systems to do a better job at making non-Indigenous students aware of Canada's status as a settler-colonial nation, our colonial history, and the perspectives, histories, cultures, and current vibrancy of Indigenous people and communities across Canada. Considering the literature through a lens of critical education research, with its aims to upset the status quo, it becomes clear that we remain, in many ways, stagnant within the first prong of Battiste's (2013) model of decolonization. That is to say that we remain focused on *deconstruction*, on critiquing the system but, thus far, have remained unable to make a large-scale overhaul of Indigenous education in Canada in a way that would allow for the "designing of meaningful and

honourable education for Indigenous people in the 21st century” (Battiste, 2013, p. 32). This would involve recognizing “the need for an adequate and relevant educational program that recognizes, first and foremost, cognitive imperialism and its multiple strategies and replaces it with reconciliation through affirmation of the diverse heritages, consciousnesses, and languages of Aboriginal peoples” (Battiste, 2013, p. 32-33). The literature also offers many areas where continued research is necessary to support moving in the direction of *reconstruction* informed by critical education research. My work aims specifically at addressing one part of the work to be done. In understanding the ways teachers perceive, negotiate, and enact Indigenous education policy in their daily work a light may be shone on actions which would assist us in moving towards the second prong of Battiste’s model, substantive change through reconstruction.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

I came to this research with a belief “that people are the experts of their own lives...” (Kanu, 2011, p. 201) while also taking in to account Denzin’s (2013) view that “language and speech do not mirror experience,” and so understanding that “meanings are always in motion, incomplete, partial, contradictory” (p. 2). How, I wondered, can data, gathered through inquiring conversations, the stories of teacher perspectives and experience alongside the critical reading of policy texts come to make meaningful contributions in the area of Indigenous education in Ontario? In the discussion that follows, I address this question by revealing the methodological considerations and decisions that have arisen throughout this research. I do so through the provision of a detailed explanation of the research design from initial conceptualizations, through recruitment, data collection, and to analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations of the research and some comment on the limitations of the study.

Research Design

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue there “must be an appropriate fit between research problem and methods adopted, together with an historically informed reflexivity” (p. 51). The research presented here lies at the intersections of policy content, intent, and action. Attempting to interpret this relationship calls for a qualitative multiple methods case study investigation. Though the details of this investigation are provided in the pages that follow I believe it necessary to, at first, give a general overview of the data sets. I provide this overview as the need for, and use of, these data sets is mentioned at several points in the descriptions provided below. Reflective of my ontological understandings and epistemological positions which acknowledge the inability to reflect participant experiences impartially so, too, is it impossible for me to present this research experience as a simple or

linear practice of data collection followed by a process of analysis and description of findings.

Two data sets were collected and analyzed within this research. The first data set includes an analysis of the *Framework* and relevant policy, curriculum, and resource documents. The second data set includes a series of three individual interviews with each of the four participants and a concluding focus group interview with the three informants who agreed to participate. The analysis of relevant policy, curriculum, and resource documents provided an understanding of the context in which teacher participants practice. The policy and curriculum documents outline expectations for educator practice while the resource documents provide insight into some of the practical realities, both opportunities and constraints, of daily teaching. Document analysis was completed ahead of the individual interviews, and returned to during later research stages. Data collection with participants concluded with a focus group meeting with all willing volunteers.

A case study. Case study research has been defined in many ways by many scholars (including Bassey, 1999; de Vaus, 2001; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Across these discussions, however, Simons (2009) has captured the commonality as all scholars understand case study as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real-life’ context” (p. 21). What becomes apparent here is that case study research is a design frame, not a method (Simons, 2009; Thomas & Myers, 2015). Thus, researchers are left to determine appropriate methods for investigation of the case study. It is vital that this methodological decision making is carried out carefully in order to gain understanding of the “complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2) that is the case.

I follow Stake (1995) in describing case study research as the “study of a particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Stake goes on to describe three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study, according to Stake (1995; 2003), intends to better understand the details of the localized specific case. The intrinsic case study aims to develop understanding but does not have generalizability as its goal; however, this does not preclude the possibility that theories may arise, inductively from case data (Stake, 1995). In the instrumental case study the researcher investigates a case in order to provide insight to a problem (Stake, 2003). The case in this instance is used to study something else (Stake, 1995). Finally, the collective case study operates with the aim of investigating a condition or problem through the study of a number of cases (Stake, 2003).

Drawing upon these definitions I describe my research as both an intrinsic *and* instrumental case study. This research was, early in the research design phase, described as an intrinsic case study. As the work explores the experiences and perceptions of secondary school teachers in a single school board in Southwestern Ontario, this description seemed fitting. In exploring teacher perspectives I sought to uncover the ways the *Framework* was being enacted in the practice of these educators who work in similar contexts and serve similar student populations. As I progressed through this work, however, I was reminded of what Stake (1995) calls the prominent “interpretive role of the researcher” (p. 43) in qualitative case study research. My ongoing document analysis which critically assessed the *Framework* had indicated that there was a problem in the structures, content, and delivery of the policy document. As such, I began to also conceptualize this work as instrumental in that it seeks the perspectives of teachers regarding the problems that arise from the *Framework* through both action and inaction on the part of the Ministry, the school board, and teachers

themselves. Through this development I have come to embody my role, the “case researcher as interpreter,” as I have recognized “a problem, a puzzlement” and studied it in an effort to locate new connections and make them “comprehensible to others” (Stake, 1995, p. 97).

The research site and participant recruitment. My research was carried out at schools within a single school district in Southwestern Ontario. This school board was selected because it serves an Indigenous student population from both on- and off-reserve communities as well as a local non-Indigenous population. The school board is geographically large. Because of this, I narrowed my recruitment focus to a single region within the school board. This was done because the schools and teachers within the region have similar geographic characteristics (e.g. rural/urban, population density, etc.) and so serve similar student populations. The schools within this board, and the specific region of focus, provide a quality site in which to conduct research that explores educator understandings of Indigenous education policy as well as schooling within the settler context of Ontario.

Following ethical approval from both Western’s Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) and the local school board, my recruitment strategy began by reaching out to the principals of the four secondary schools within the region of focus. I requested permission from each principal to attend a staff meeting in order to present my research and solicit volunteers for participation. I then travelled to the schools who had granted me permission and presented a short information session about my research. During these presentations I highlighted the purpose of my research, the content covered, the methods used, and the possible benefits of participation. After the presentation the principals indicated they would distribute the recruitment flyer (see Appendix B), with my contact information, to each of the teachers in their schools in their staff mailboxes. Teachers were then left with the option of contacting me directly via email or phone to indicate their interest in participation. After initial contact, prospective

participants were sent the Letter of Information via email. If teachers were interested, or if they had any questions about the Letter of Information, they had the opportunity to contact me via email or phone. In all, eight potential participants reached out to me for further information. Four participants volunteered to move forward in the three one-on-one interview sessions. Participation in the focus group interview was at all times indicated as a voluntary additional research activity and was discussed and planned around the time of third and final individual interview.

Data collection and analysis. As Maquire and Ball (1994) suggest, policy enactment studies are concerned with “the interpretation of and engagement in policy text and the translation of these texts into practice” (280). Teachers, as front line workers responsible for much of the day-to-day action around the goals of the *Framework* are important people with whom to explore the engagement and translation of policy texts in order to assess the impact, if any, of policy documents on their practice. As discussed above there are two data sets included in this research: document analysis of the *Framework* and associated policy, curriculum, and resource documents and interviews with participants.

Document analysis: Exploring the context. My research began with a document analysis. As the focus of the case study is the enactment and understanding of the *Framework*, my document analysis began with the policy itself. From there, documents were selected for analysis according to their relation to the *Framework*. Document selection criteria thus included being created and distributed by the Ministry and being related to the goals of the *Framework* and to the progress and work on the *Framework*. Nine documents, including the *Framework*, were analysed. Table 1 provides some pertinent information about the documents analysed including the document title, year of publication, and a brief description. No school board documents related to the *Framework* or related board initiatives were publicly available.

Table 1: Documents analysed

Document Title	Publication Year	Description
<i>The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>	2007	Policy document outlining the Ontario Ministry of Education vision for FNMI education, actions to be taken, and performance measures to assess progress.
<i>Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students</i>	2007	Policy guide for boards to create voluntary and confidential self-identification policies for FNMI students. This data is intended to provide “a critical foundation for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to support the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (p. 3).
<i>Teacher’s Toolkit</i>	2007	A series of online resources, specifically lesson plans, for teachers to use in their practice. Lessons are available for subjects from grades 1 to 12.
<i>Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to the Teacher’s Toolkit</i>	2009	A support document for the <i>Teacher’s Toolkit</i> resource the guide provides information for teachers about how to use the online resources provided by the OME.
<i>Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead: Fall 2009 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>	2009	A progress report, authored by the OME, in order to provide an overview of the actions taken by the OME, school boards, and schools to implement the <i>Framework</i> .
<i>Continuing the Journey: Preliminary Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>	2012	An interim progress report, authored by the OME, after failing to make public a progress report on the three year schedule originally promised in the <i>Framework</i> . This document is not currently listed on the OME website.
<i>A Solid Foundation: Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>	2013	A second formal progress report highlighting progress made in implementing the <i>Framework</i> and the first baseline data for FNMI student achievement tracking. This progress report also identifies the key priorities and next steps of the OME moving forward.
<i>Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>	2014	As promised in the 2013 progress report, the <i>Implementation Plan</i> “identifies] strategies and actions to support ministry

		and school board implementation of the Framework for 2013 through 2016” (p. 6). This <i>Implementation Plan</i> also provided an expectation for the release of a third progress report in 2016. This report was published in March 2018.
<i>First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Connections: Scope and Sequence of Expectations</i>	2016	The <i>Scope and Sequence</i> documents identify the areas in Ontario’s curriculum that include FNMI histories, cultures, and perspectives. These documents are intended to assist teachers in bringing Indigenous content into their classrooms through the identification of curricular opportunities to do so.

This document analysis involved critiquing the social production of the documents as well as engaging in a direct analysis of the text of the documents for meaning (Punch, 2009). In considering the social production of the documents I sought out information related to the creation of the documents. I looked for information about who was involved in the creation of the documents, their relation to Indigenous education, when and where the documents were created, and what motivated their creation. For Ministry documents this information is, at times, included in the document itself, or available through press releases and supplementary information packages. At times, no such information was accessible. I am limited to information relating to the production of documents that I can access without having to seek interviews with Ministry and board personnel. Such in-depth research in this area was outside of the scope of this project. In investigating the social production of documents I follow Punch in arguing that studying documents in isolation from their social context deprives them of meaning.

I also analyzed the texts directly in order to investigate the meanings presented therein. In completing this direct investigation, I engaged in a critical discourse analysis (CDA). I follow Fairclough (2013) in understanding CDA as an examination of the “dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as the analysis of the ‘internal relations’ of discourse” (p. 4). Thus, a CDA necessarily considers discourse in relation to other

elements. In my research, education policy, curriculum, and resources are considered in their relation to educator practice. Fairclough indicates three dimensions or levels of analysis: textual analysis, discursive practices, and social practices. Importantly Fairclough highlights the value in an analysis of the “external relations of texts” (p. 36) whereby researchers investigate the relations between text and social events and social structures. In advocating for the contemplation and exploration of these three dimensions Fairclough’s analytic framework requires researchers to consider both the form and content of the documents included in analysis and their relation to society.

It is important here to make clear that the term discourse, in this research, reflects a Foucauldian understanding (1972; 1980). In *The Archeology of Knowledge* Foucault (1972) describes discourse as “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (p. 80). In other writings, however, Foucault uses discourse to refer to a statement, or set of statements, combined with others in ways that enable the distribution of specific utterances while hindering the transmission of statements that do not align with the approved utterances (Mills, 1997/2003). In all cases, discourse is related to issues of power and power relations. Here, then, discourse represents a particular representation of the world promoted as true and reinforced through the power that the speaking individual or group has to promote it.

Fairclough (2013) makes clear that a CDA can occur through a multitude of approaches, that there is no single correct way to carry out this work. Though conformity is not necessary, a CDA generally will have the following characteristics: the analysis of text occurs in relation to other elements, the analysis of text is not merely a commentary but systematic, and the analysis of texts considers the relation to social wrongs (Fairclough, 2013). In carrying out my systematic analysis I began with Benford and Gough’s (2006) description of steps. The texts were first

described in various ways in order to observe areas of concordance across texts. I then identified and itemized elements within the texts paying close attention to the documents' social context. Next, the organization of language was explored, paying attention to areas of contradiction and agreement in and across the text. From there, terminology was developed to describe the identified discourses and to examine their operation. The texts were then examined for the presence of counter hegemonic signs and discourses. I found, however, that Benford and Gough's description offered little in the way of explicit instruction on addressing the second and third level analysis of broader discursive and social practice as advocated by Fairclough (2013). Here I expanded the process to include a practice of "tracing the discourses" (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017) as I examined the ways the discourses emerged through the document analysis relationally, exploring their presence, their consistency, and their difference, across time and purpose of the documents studied. Through this process a picture emerged of the ways the discourses have changed and adapted since the release of the *Framework*, giving insight into the possibilities and constraints facing teachers in their enactment. This document analysis assisted in the creation of the semi-structured interview schedules which were used in the next stage of research.

Interviews: Educators as participants. All Ontario educators are the target audience of the *Framework*; thus, all teachers and school administrators employed at the schools in which recruitment took place were eligible to participate in my research. All participants went through the process of informed consent as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) (2014). A series of three semi-structured individual interviews were carried out and, with the permission of participants, digitally recorded. I entered each interview encounter with a list of interview topics and themes I aimed to cover. Time was spent at the beginning of each interview returning to the informed consent process and

participants were encouraged to ask any questions and provide confirmation of ongoing willingness to participate in this research. As well, time was spent at each interview establishing rapport. I recognize that establishing rapport is an important element of the interview process and helps build a comfortable and safe interview environment (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) which is necessary in order to provide in-depth exploration of teacher perspectives.

As discussed in chapter one my research questions were initially organized around the vision of the *Framework*. This vision sets forth the dual goals of improving FNMI student education outcomes, thereby closing the attainment “gap,” and ensuring all students in Ontario schools are made aware of, and gain an appreciation for, the cultures, histories, and perspectives of Indigenous communities in Canada (OME, 2007b, p. 7). As the research questions were organized around these two goals, so too, was the interview schedule. Thus, the first interview asked about participants’ professional experience, their understandings(s) of FNMI education broadly, and explored participant understanding and enactment of the *Framework* as it relates to improving FNMI student outcomes. The second interview was focussed on exploring teacher understandings and perspectives regarding the aim to ensure all students develop an understanding of FNMI histories, cultures, and knowledge systems. In the third interview, we focussed on teacher views regarding their social and professional responsibilities with respect to decolonization and reconciliation, both in relation to the *Framework* and more broadly. A research journal was kept throughout this time and I made notes both during and after interviews. Each interview was transcribed after its completion and ahead of the subsequent interviews. This enabled an initial stage of coding, discussed below, which impacted the ongoing process of interview schedule development.

The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews is premised in the belief that teachers, as experts, are best suited to dictate the specific content and form of the interview. The interview had an explicit purpose, and I was prepared with a list of topics or themes to cover and potential questions/discussion prompts connected to these themes. The semi-structured approach allowed for the asking of open-ended questions around the themes of the interview. Relatedly, the semi-structured approach provided flexibility in that participant responses influenced the ways in which interview themes were addressed. This approach allowed for, and even encouraged, teachers to provide in-depth data in a way that was respectful of their knowledge and experience. The semi-structured interview allows participants to share their stories and perspectives with focus on the topics and themes that are important to them (Rabionet, 2011). This semi-structured, and thus flexible, approach allows participants to provide depth of discussion in areas they deem important, and is thus well suited for the exploration of complex and sensitive issues (Seidman, 2012). Conducting research in this manner provided flexibility and allowed me to react to the knowledge that teachers were sharing and acknowledge that my initial research questions were too specific and made assumptions about the level of interpretation and enactment happening in teacher practice around the *Framework*. By meeting for three interviews, across a single school semester, participants were also provided an opportunity to engage in a process of reflection related to the ongoing challenges and opportunities of Indigenous education and their professional practice.

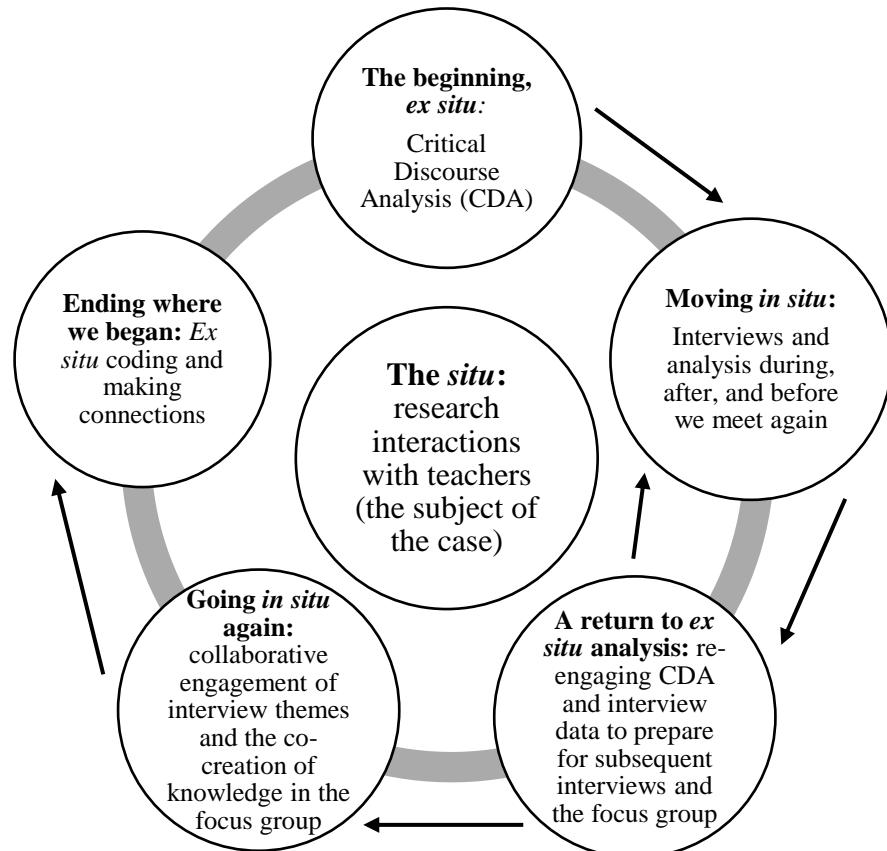
At the conclusion of the individual interview process all participants were provided the opportunity to volunteer for a concluding focus group interview. This focus group was intended to function as both data collection method and learning opportunity for myself and, I hoped, participants. The themes and topics discussed in the focus group interview were

based on the initial coding of interview transcripts which revealed a set of emerging themes as well as the initial findings of the policy analysis. The decision to carry out a focus group interview goes beyond the desire for a quick method to collect lots of data (Morgan, 1988). Instead the focus group interview was undertaken and understood as an interactive research experience where collaborative research performances occur and knowledge is generated by both participants and researcher (Bosco & Herman, 2010). The purpose of the focus group interview was to engage teacher participants in a concluding activity for the research through collegial discussion related to the *Framework* and Indigenous education. Because I acknowledge the focus group as a collaborative research process between researcher and participants, the focus-group, like the interviews before it, was a semi-structured encounter. While I introduced the themes and topics I did not seek to direct or limit the conversation through attempts to enforce an adherence to a rigid interview schedule. In carrying out the focus group in this manner I attempted to “minimize the distance” (Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011) between participants and myself in order to create an environment where the co-construction of knowledge was clearly valued. With the permission of participants the focus group was both audio and video recorded to aid in transcription and analysis.

Data analysis. In order to describe the formal processes of data analysis I use the terms: *in situ* and *ex situ*. *Situ*, from the Latin word *situs*, translates to situation, site, or position (Morwood, 2012). Thus, *in situ* can be understood to mean within a situation or site, while *ex situ* describes being outside of the same situation or site. As the subject of this case study is the perspectives of teachers regarding the enactment of Indigenous education policy in Ontario I have categorized the *situ*, or site, of this work as the meaningful and data-rich research interactions with teachers. In the practice of this case study, data analysis occurred

at all stages of this research. Every theoretical and methodological decision was a result of analysis, interview schedules were created and adapted based on research encounters with both people and text from the recruitment process and throughout the entirety of the research. I describe, then, my analysis as occurring in these two distinct, though closely related, intellectual sites. The formal data analysis, then, began with the *ex situ* analysis, described above in the outlining of steps undertaken to carry out a CDA and then moved towards an *in situ* analysis as I engaged in and reflected on the interviews with teachers, then moving *ex situ* again by carrying out transcription and initial analysis ahead of our next interaction. I include below (see Figure 1), a visual representation of the movement between *in* and *ex situ analysis*, which depicts analysis as both iterative and ongoing, as it seems the best way to convey the information.

Figure 1: A visual description of data analysis



As indicated in Figure 1 the processes of data collection and analysis in this project have been intertwined, iterative, and complex. It remains necessary, at this point, to provide some further information on the final *ex situ* process of coding of interview data. After the conclusion and transcription of the focus group interview, I returned to the individual interview transcripts. I had initially coded these transcripts inductively, searching for emergent themes which were then used to inform the subsequent individual and focus group interview schedules. With a clean or bare set of transcripts I listened, again, to the audio recordings of the interviews of each participant's three interviews while reading the transcripts in their entirety. I then repeated this process, stopping to write the notes and descriptions which would later be organized into the themes discussed here in the findings chapters. In order to move from descriptions to themes I visited and revisited the descriptions and considered them in relation to both the individual interviewees perspectives and then across all the participants. I then engaged in the same process of listening/reading and (re)listening/(re)reading to the focus group interview transcript in order to describe and identify the themes present. I concluded this process by exploring the areas of overlap and distinction amongst the perspectives of interviewees individually and as a group.

Interview themes were analysed in relation both to one another as well as the results of the CDA. This analysis sought to locate and explore areas of congruence and difference across the themes as they has emerged from teacher voice and CDA. In doing so I was able to analyse the ways policy intent and the institutional story was understood by teachers as well as the ways teacher participants understood and talked about policy intent in relation to policy action and their own practice. Ultimately this approach allowed for an interrogation of the rhetoric of the *Framework* in relation to teacher perspectives and experiences.

Ethical Considerations

This work, like any research, is at once an activity that is complex, both ethically and as inquiry. It is imperative that some space is dedicated to unpacking the ethical considerations, actions, and ultimately decisions that I undertook. As discussed in chapter one, this research is rooted in my belief that the deconstruction of colonial discourses and structures alone is not enough. Rather, I follow Smith (1999/2012) in her argument that deconstruction must be part of a larger intent to transform the structures it critiques in order to bring about change. Closely connected to this is the argument put forth by Tuck and Yang (2012) who caution that decolonization needs to be taken up in ways that do not allow it to be relegated to a position of metaphorical goal aimed at assuaging settler guilt. Thus, the relationship between critical reflection, knowledge and action is paramount to decolonization. Decolonization is not aided by “simply acquiring knowledge and reflecting” on it (Regan, 2010, p. 22). Instead, and I repeat an earlier quote from Regan (2010) here to emphasize its importance in this work, decolonization requires a consideration of “how we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settlers – the colonizer who lurks within – not just in words but by our actions” (p. 11). This research, for me, represents an effort to move beyond theorizing and towards action in support of decolonization and reconciliation. It is important to note, however, that this work represents one small, but important, piece of a larger agenda for work in education and education research needed to support the building of new respectful and reciprocal relationships between teachers and Indigenous communities in Canada.

On conducting research with teachers: Critical friendship. Like the educators who chose to participate in this study, I am an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT), and until taking a leave of absence to pursue my PhD, I taught in Ontario secondary schools. This

places me in a somewhat ambiguous position related to “insider/outsider” status in relation to the educator community with whom I carried out this research. I am an “insider” in the sense that I am aware of, and have some professional experience with, the lived realities of being a teacher employed in the Ontario public school system. However, I was employed by a different school board than the participants and so am not familiar with the complexities and experiences of the board or schools in which these participants teach. Throughout this research, from design through collection and analysis, I was aware of the importance of facilitating dialogue with participants in ways that explored and represented their perspectives, as much as possible, without them feeling as though I was/am passing judgement on their professional capacities. As Kanu (2011) notes, it is important that researchers make clear their intent is not to devalue the work of teachers, but to understand it.

In the planning phase, I anticipated the possibility that some research participants might be misinformed about Indigenous (and Canadian) histories, Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and current relationships and circumstances as well as FNMI education policies. I was aware of the implications of Orlowski’s (2008) research which indicates that such misinformation impacts teachers’ willingness to address FNMI education issues within their classrooms. I also considered the possibility that participants may express racist views through their comments, through subtle (suggesting “colour blindness”) or overt ways (making obviously racist commentary). It became clear during my research planning that such circumstances would require me to probe, and in some instances even challenge certain assumptions and claims. I thought a great deal about how to balance productive critique and professional respect. Ultimately, the concept of critical friendship emerged as a valuable tool within this work. Critical friendship is described as “a supportive yet challenging relationship between professionals...” (Swaffield, 2007, p. 206). Such a relationship operates as a form of

external support that is both flexible and functional for teachers in that the form of the relationship is varied and aimed at helping teacher's improve their practice (Swaffield, 2007). The critical friend, according to Costa and Kallick (1993), "asks provocative questions, provides data to examine through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work" (p. 50) while simultaneously striving to support the success of the person's work through meaningful discussion and critique. Watling, Hopkins, Harris, and Beresford (1998) make clear that in order to function as a supportive mechanism the critical friend must ensure a balance between challenge and support. Through this challenge and support, critical friendship can provide opportunities for reflection, learning and professional development (Golby & Appleby, 1995).

In this research, critical friendship represented an approach which is sensitive to, and considerate of, the professional lives and identities of teachers. Hedges (2010) has discussed the potential value of critical friendship in research ventures, arguing that it allows for the integration of learning opportunities within research design and promotes the co-construction of knowledge by positioning research participants as research partners. For these reasons, critical friendship appeals to me as a methodological position, part of a larger analytic toolkit, which functions to help me both understand and operate in my roles as researcher, student, and teacher (Currie-Patterson, 2016). Moreover, critical friendship requires me, in my role as researcher, to move beyond the passive recording of people's perspectives in order to facilitate a more active and participatory approach to research (Brinkmann, 2015) enabling me to explore difficult questions with participants.

Taking up my research in a manner where both I and participants were actively engaged in a way that modelled the attributes of critical friendship creates a potential circumstance where I could exercise undue influence on the data collected. This may be

particularly problematic in the circumstance of a focus group where participants confirm and scrutinize one another's understandings. I acknowledge this potential and wish to detail here some ways in which I would respond to such criticism. I acknowledge that epistemologically I do not believe I can, at any point, be removed from the interconnectedness of my positionality and my research. As such, the ways I respond within the context of a research interview are inherently shaped by my positionality. Despite this interconnectedness consistent efforts were maintained throughout this research to ensure that the research encounters were respectful of participants' knowledge and experiences. Thus, being guided by the principles of critical friendship in this research primarily signified continued efforts to ask difficult questions and address difficult topics in a way that promoted reflection without seeking to correct or chastise participants.

Critical friendship also requires that I, as researcher, remain keenly aware that teachers must also see some benefit as I ask them to critically engage in difficult questions, to reflect on their practice, and to speak to their perspectives and enactment of Ministry policy. That participation in academic research can, and should, lead to benefits for teachers in the areas of professional learning and development has been noted by Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010). Undertaking to design research which has a "professional learning dimension" (Hedges, 2010, p. 299) carried out through the actions of critical friendship, in my mind, offers an important strategy to bridge the gap which persists between critical education research and professional practice (Apple, 2011; Vanderlinde & van Brak, 2010).

I also position critical friendship within this work as essential to my overarching goals of performing research which contributes to the processes of decolonization and reconciliation. Battiste (2013) and Smith (1999/2012) make clear that the deconstruction of colonial processes, institutions, and artefacts is not, in itself, enough. Therefore, it is

necessary, that I, through this research attempt to be an instrument of change. Here, I recall the words of bell hooks (1994) who reminds us of the importance of and value in *talking* as a component of action, suggesting it is “crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates space for intervention” (p. 129). Critical friendship, operating in concert with the research design and data collection methods described above, can work towards these goals.

On the complexities in the lived practice of ethical research. The ethical work of this research began well before I submitted the required application and paperwork to the University of Western Ontario’s NMREB. During both my master’s and doctoral work, I have immersed myself in the literature on Canada’s colonial past and present as well as the history and ongoing legacies of the residential school system in Canada. In doing so, I have become aware that “research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized” (Smith, 1999/2012, p. 8). The potential of research, as carried out in and supported through colonial institutions, to perpetuate damaging and marginalizing discourses regarding Indigenous people, thereby reinforcing the structures and systems which support cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013), remains high. Being aware of this potential, and indeed centering it in my thinking and methodological decision making was, and remains, crucial to the development of this project and my desire to avoid contributing to this legacy of damaging research.

As I continued to progress through the necessary milestones of the PhD program, I became increasingly driven by the questions: *What is my role here? Is there a place for me in Indigenous education work?* By this I mean I questioned whether it was ethical for me to move forward with research focussed on improving Indigenous education. In order to unpack these questions I returned again to the literature on Indigenous education and was reminded

that the majority of teachers in Ontario are non-Indigenous (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008) and that many of these teachers felt anxiety and fear (Dion, Johnston, & Rice, 2010) or a misguided belief that race-cognizant education is detrimental to teaching and learning and thus embrace a pedagogical stance of “colour-blindness” (Orlowski, 2008). As I struggled with defining my place in Indigenous education, Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was coming to a close. As the final report (TRC, 2015) was made public, it became even more evident to me that education was central to the processes of reconciliation. As a teacher, I embraced this responsibility but as a researcher I wondered if the messages of decolonization and reconciliation were similarly affecting those in my profession and what role the *Framework* might play in these efforts, if any, in the eyes of educators. Ultimately, I created a project which, through its focus on educator perspectives and practice, was ethically comfortable for me. In no way do I mean to suggest that this ethical comfort gave way to ethical complacency for I continue to question and consider my role and my work through reflexive journaling and discussion.

The formal ethical requirements of this work were met through the completion of the NMREB process at the University of Western Ontario (see Appendix A) and subsequently the ethical review protocols at the school board in which this research took place. It is important to note that this research was not conducted with a specific Aboriginal community. The work is, at its core, concerned with investigating teacher perspectives and practice as related to Indigenous education (as defined in chapter one) in Ontario. Throughout this research process I have remained focussed on carrying out this work in a way that is relevant to the lives of teachers who seek to improve their practice in this area and (hopefully) those who have not yet accepted their professional responsibility to do so.

This work is concerned with the impact, if any, the *Framework* has had on Indigenous education as it relates to teachers' professional knowledge and practice. The research has developed, however, as centrally focussed on the practice and perspectives of teachers who are charged with the enactment of the policy in their classrooms and schools. As the recruitment of participants progressed it became clear that non-participation would become an important element in this study. The final number of participants for this case study is four. The details of participant recruitment, retention, and attrition are discussed below. Relatedly, understanding (non)participation or considering the number of participants raises ethical considerations as well.

As indicated in the Letter of Information (Appendix C), participant information would be kept confidential wherever possible. It was noted that in choosing to participate in the final focus group interview participants would be identifiable to other research participants. Despite this, it remained imperative that I, as researcher, take every precaution to ensure the anonymity of participants, their schools and school district. As such, I have decided to exclude descriptions of the research participants beyond the number of years taught and a broad description of their experiences as teachers. These descriptions are located in the results chapters and are made clear when relevant to the discussion at hand. More detailed descriptions of participants or research sites would risk their identities becoming known. Because I presented a recruitment presentation to all teachers in the schools at a staff meeting and I met with teachers, according to their preference, in their schools to perform the interviews such descriptions would be too revealing. Furthermore, I have assigned what I consider to be "gender neutral" pseudonyms to all participants in order to further protect their anonymity.

Limitations of the study

I acknowledge that the number of participants in this study is small at four. Expanding the recruitment area to other regions within the board would likely have yielded more participants. Unfortunately, due to financial and time constraints this was not possible. Detractors of this work, and case study research more generally, might suggest that such a participant pool will not yield meaningful results. They might argue that such work holds little value because it cannot yield generalizable results which they view as necessary to theory building. I, like Flyvberg (2006), argue these are misconceptions about case study research. To such arguments I respond with a counter-position which places value in the “closeness of the case study to real-life situations” which allow for the development of understandings around the “nuanced view of reality” (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 223). Furthermore, I would argue that the multiple interview format, triangulated with data from the document analysis, has provided an in-depth, robust, and meaningful data set which provides valuable insight into the daily practice of participants. From these data I am able to make connections between this case and broader trends in Ontario education, I am then able to make contributions to both the theoretical and practical literature on Indigenous education.

I would also draw attention to the *Framework* itself, which indicates that “the strategies identified here are meant to be a starting point only” (OME, 2007b, p. 9) as implementation will vary from board to board and school to school in order to support context specific program development and relationship building. This work, through its four participants, captures a significant amount of data concerning the impact, or lack of impact, the *Framework* has had in two schools, which are close in geographical proximity and serve similar student populations. This research aims specifically and purposefully to make recommendations based on teacher voice. These recommendations can be found in chapter

seven. It is acknowledged that these recommendations arise from the knowledge, stories, and perspectives of four teachers and are positioned, then, as areas that warrant further discussion with teachers and further inquiry. I move now to share and discuss the findings of the case study research described here. In chapter four, I present the institutional story, an analysis of the content and information funnelled to teachers from the OME to teachers via the *Framework* and associated documents. Following this, chapter five is focussed on sharing the voices of teachers through, their secret and cover stories, as they relate to their professional practice and Ontario's Indigenous education policy. Chapter six offers a synthesis, a bringing together of the institutional, secret, and cover stories to offer commentary on the *Framework* and its life in Ontario's education system. The recommendations based on teacher voices are made to improve the relationship between policy intent and policy action in teacher practice are presented and discussed in chapter seven.

Chapter 4: The Institutional Story

In this chapter I discuss what I have identified as the institutional story of Indigenous education in Ontario; that is, I examine the information and knowledge funnelled onto the professional knowledge landscape of teachers from government sources via the conduit of policy documents. The conduit for this institutional story is the *Framework* and the related series of associated documents. Together the *Framework* and associated documents communicate to school board personnel, school administrators, and teachers, information about how the OME understands, prioritizes, and seeks to improve Indigenous education. The documents also inform teachers about expectations for behaviours and standards of professional competencies including threshold knowledge in the area of Indigenous education.

I present the institutional story first because the analysis of documents was carried out first. Consequently, the results of the analysis were central to the development of many of the questions, topics, and themes I discussed with teachers. Ultimately, in analysing the institutional story first, I was seeking to understand the institutional story, its form, its strengths and weaknesses, and its priorities in order to investigate with teachers whether their experiences aligned with the rhetoric of the *Framework* and associated documents. In undertaking the analysis of the *Framework* and associated documents first, I was able to gain a fundamental understanding of the policymakers' intent and efforts. This knowledge informed the course of action taken during the research encounters with teachers (e.g., setting themes and questions for the interview schedules). This initial analysis of the policy allowed me to come to understand the intent of the policy and explore the governing level processes in order to inform the case study work with teacher participants. Thus the findings of this chapter, the institutional story, have operated in a co-constitutive relationship with the

findings discussed in the following chapter, teacher voices, both being informed by and informing one another through the research process. Moreover, if the goal of an Indigenous education policy is to create possibilities and support moves towards decolonization and reconciliation, and I agree with Indigenous scholars such as Battiste (2004, 2013), Dion (2007), and Iseke-Barnes (2008), to name but a few, who make a variety of arguments in support of decolonization via the transformation of education as penultimate goal, we must assess the ways the policy, through its language, form, and content might support or hinder such efforts.

As a non-Indigenous, settler educator and scholar seeking a path towards participation in reconciliatory education, my relationship with Indigenous education is also complicated, and leads to many questions: Do I have the right to speak on this? In what ways will/might my words contribute to the marginalization of Indigenous perspectives? In what ways might my words be able to work alongside and in cooperation with Indigenous perspectives? Thus, I do not wish to suggest that the analysis provided here should, or could, be understood definitively; instead, I offer my analysis, understanding its value as but one version of an investigation and practical explanation. I put this work forth with full honesty about the ways that my positionality has impacted its development. I do this in hopes that my words may work alongside the words of others, especially Indigenous students, educators, and scholars, to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of Indigenous education policy as it relates to teacher practice in Ontario.

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I address two of the three levels of analysis identified by Fairclough (2013) and discussed in chapter three, the textual and the discursive. I first provide a

description of the documents analysed and then discuss the discursive relations across the texts. Based in a Foucauldian understanding of discourse (as outlined in chapter three and revisited below), I have organized the findings which emerged through my textual and discursive analysis into four discourses: achievement, developing capacities, community consultation, and the integration of FNMI cultures, histories, and perspectives. These discourses operate to present a particular representation of the world, in this case Indigenous education in Ontario, as well as the remedy for “solving” the problems of the attainment gap, student success, and increased knowledge of all students around Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives in Ontario schools. Importantly, the Foucauldian understanding of discourse calls on us to examine the ways such discourses function as ways of constituting knowledge and to consider the relations of power that exist across and among the discourses. I have undertaken such an examination in this chapter by tracing the discourses which emerge through the *Framework* across the series of related documents in order to understand the ways these discourses have changed and/or remained the same in subsequent publications related to the *Framework*. The third level of analysis identified by Fairclough, that of social practices, is presented in the synthesis of chapter six.

In the following section I return to two definitions key to the policy analysis presented here: discourse and policy. I then include a description of each of the documents analysed (as outlined in chapter three, Table 1), their content and medium. The chapter ends with a section of critique as I present and interrogate the discourses which emerged in the *Framework* and associated documents. Because it is the cornerstone of Ontario’s Indigenous Education Strategy, I focus my critique on the *Framework* in order to explicate the messages sent through the policy to educators. I then follow these messages across subsequent policy

documents and in doing so, I work to compile the institutional story and interrogate its messaging.

Terminology

It is useful to now briefly return to some key explanations of terminology and process. I do this because terms like policy and discourse have many definitions, both colloquial and academic. As I am employing these terms within this work in very specific ways, there is value in reiterating the relevant definitions in order to assist in providing clarity for readers. Discourse, in my research, draws on the work of Foucault (1972; 1980) and Mills (1997/2013), and refers to the ways language constructs and reinforces a particular representation of the world. Discourse is closely connected with issues of power and privilege. The distribution of particular discourses can, and do, operate to support the continued oppression of marginalized individuals, communities, and institutions. Representations of the world, as distributed through discourses and various mediums, including policy, are ascribed a position of truthfulness by the power of the individual or institution promoting them.

A complex, and at times contested term, policy, has been subject to many definitions since the emergence of policy studies in the middle of the twentieth century (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Definitions have ranged from fairly basic, such as Dye's (1992) explanation of policy as the actions which governments do or do not do, to more nuanced descriptions such as that provided by Rizvi and Lingard (2010), "the actions and positions taken by the state, which consists of a range of institutions that share the essential characteristics of authority and collectivity" (p. 4). Both of these descriptions are focussed on what is understood as public policy. Public policy is policy developed by governments, or branches

of government such as the OME. In their article, *Towards an Anthropology of Public Policy*, Wedel, Shore, Feldmen, and Lathrop (2005) note that the word, policy, is commonly used to describe “a field of activity” around specific government proposals and legislation, as well as a program seeking a “desired state of affairs” (p. 35). In all of these uses, Wedel et al. remind us that policy and society are active in shaping one another operating in a co-constitutive relationship. For the purposes of my analysis I bring these descriptions together to define policy as the actions, and inactions, taken by government and/or government sanctioned bodies, to address identified issues or areas of concern, in this case Indigenous education in Ontario.

The Framework and Associated Documents

This section provides information about the content of the *Framework* and its associated documents and the medium of communication.

The policy. As the core document of the OME’s Indigenous Education Strategy, *The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* is described as the “strategic policy context” (OME, 2007b, p. 5) which exists to support ministry personnel, school boards, and schools in their work towards improving Indigenous education in Ontario. As such, my policy enactment research necessarily begins with the *Framework* itself.

The *Framework* is a relatively short document at 38 pages. Despite its brevity it seeks to set up Ontario’s education system for a period of significant change. The document begins with an introduction, outlining the OME’s commitment to “excellence in public education for all students, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” and providing information about the “estimated 50,312 Aboriginal students who attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario” (OME, 2007b, p. 5). As well, the introduction sets forth a

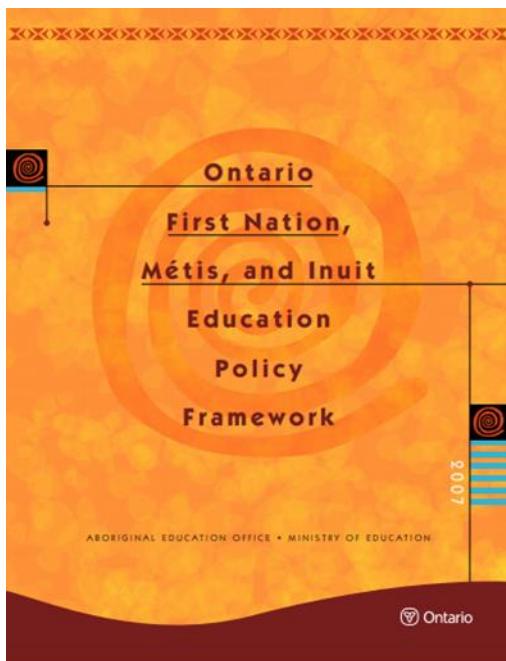


Figure 2: The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)

goal year, 2016, by which time the OME sought to meet two main challenges: “to improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to postsecondary studies” (OME, 2007b, p.5). The introduction is followed by the *Framework* vision, which sets forth the dual objectives of improving FNMI student achievement, and the teaching of all Ontario

students about Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. The policy statement then commits to the development of strategies that will:

- increase the capacity of the education system to respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- provide quality programs, services, and resources to help create learning opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students that support improved academic achievement and identity building;
- provide a curriculum that facilitates learning about contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives among all students, and that also contributes to the education of school board staff, teachers, and elected trustees, and;

- develop and implement strategies that facilitate increased participation by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, students, and communities, and organizations in working to support academic success. (OME, 2007b, p. 7)

The policy statement is supported by four “Framework Principles”: excellence and accountability; equity and respect for diversity; inclusiveness, cooperation, and shared responsibility; and respect for constitutional and Treaty rights. Next, the goals of the *Framework* are outlined, including: high levels of student achievement; a reduction of the gaps in student achievement; and high levels of public confidence. These goals are not specific to the *Framework* but rather are the goals set “to address the objective of improved student achievement and engagement for all students and to meet the expectations of Ontario’s diverse society for a quality public education system” (OME, 2007b, p.9).⁹ The remainder of the body of the document is committed to addressing the “strategies and activities for achieving the framework goals” (OME, 2007b, p. 9), outlining what the ministry “will do,” and what school boards and schools “will strive” to do in relation to the *Framework*. As well, the qualitative and quantitative performance measures used to assess the progress of the policy are detailed (see Figures 3 and 4 on the following page). The concluding pages of the *Framework* include four appendices which provide important information to educators on Indigenous education in Ontario, educational initiatives relevant to Indigenous education, demographics, and terminology.

On self-identification. Following the release of the *Framework* a number of documents related to the policy have been published by the OME. In 2007, this included

⁹ These goals were revised in a document titled *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (OME, 2014a) to include: achieving excellence; ensuring equity; promoting well-being; and enhancing public confidence, although the *Framework* has not been updated to this.

Framework Summary

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. High Level of Student Achievement	1.1: Build capacity for effective teaching, assessment, and evaluation practices. 1.2: Promote system effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.	1. Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics 2. Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario
2. Reduce Gaps in Student Achievement	2.1: Enhance support to improve literacy and numeracy skills. 2.2: Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student outcomes.	3. Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students 4. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement 5. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem 6. Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools 7. Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively

Figure 3: Framework Summary including performance measures (part 1)

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3. High Levels of Public Confidence	3.1: Build educational leadership capacity and coordination. 3.2: Build capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees. 3.3: Foster supportive and engaged families and communities.	8. Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children 9. Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education 10. Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples

Figure 4: Framework summary including performance measures (part 2)

Building Bridges to Success for First



Nation, Métis, and Inuit

Students (hereafter

Building Bridges).

Building Bridges is a

document intended to assist school boards in

the development and

implementation of

Indigenous self-

identification programs

for students (OME,

2007a). Published

shortly after the

Framework, Building

Bridges details the need

for comprehensive self-

identification programs

to be developed in all

school boards in

Ontario. The document

provides four examples

of successful practices

carried out by school boards in the creation and implementation of self-identification programs. The *Building Bridges* document emphasizes the need to collect data, presenting it as the solution to the “challenge facing the ministry in assessing progress” which “is the absence of reliable student-specific data on the achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students across Ontario” (OME, 2007a, p.7).

The *Building Bridges* document emphasizes the importance of community consultation and involvement. The involvement of Indigenous communities is communicated as vital to the development of voluntary self-identification policies in school boards in Ontario through *Building Bridges*. The OME outlines three steps necessary for the development of board-level self-identification programs: foundations, consultation, and implementation. Creating foundations ensures that those working to develop the self-identification policy recognize Indigenous peoples, and are familiar with the Ontario Human Rights Commission guidelines for data collection, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) as well as the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), and the *Education Act*. These foundations allow for those working on the board-level policy development to enter the consultation stage, with Indigenous parents, students, and communities, prepared to discuss the ways in which data will be used and how “Aboriginal children and youth will benefit from the collection of data” (OME, 2007a, p.12).

Resources and curriculum. The OME has also published documents in the areas of resources and curriculum information for teachers. The *Teacher’s Toolkit* (OME, 2007c) contains lessons plans designed to assist teachers in achieving the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. *Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to the Teacher’s Toolkit* (2009a) was created to assist teachers in navigating the resources in the *Teacher’s*

Toolkit. Together these documents were developed and released with the aim of supporting teachers and helping them to “enrich teaching and learning in Ontario schools through the introduction of Aboriginal themes, topics and perspectives” (OME, 2011). At the elementary level the resources provided span grades one through eight but are focussed on lessons in the areas of language, history, and social studies (OME, 2011). Resources are available for secondary school content in grade 10 careers and history, grade 11 English, geography, law, and politics, as well as grade 12 business and economics (OME, 2011). The *Toolkit* resources, then, are a first step, though an incomplete effort. There are no concepts, lessons, activities, or ideas listed to assist in the integration of Indigenous perspectives in sciences or maths. There is also a notable absence of material which would assist teachers in confronting and teaching about the uncomfortable truths of colonialism, residential schools, systemic discrimination and oppression, missing and murdered Indigenous women, and inequitable access to resources.

The OME has also released, and updated for the 2015 revised curriculum, two *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Connections: Scope and Sequence of Expectations* (hereafter *Scope and Sequence*) documents, one specific to the elementary curriculum and one for secondary subjects (OME, 2016 a,b). The *Scope and Sequence* documents are “designed to assist teachers with the incorporation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into the classroom by highlighting where there are opportunities for students to explore themes, ideas, and topics related to Indigenous peoples in Canada...” (OME, 2016b, p. 4). These documents highlight opportunities for teachers to integrate Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives into their classroom curriculum by identifying curriculum expectations, both elementary and secondary, that directly provide opportunities for such integration. The *Scope and Sequence* documents “are only a sample, including only the most direct opportunities

available in the existing secondary [and elementary] curriculum” (OME, 2016ab, p.5), although they do address every subject area and each discipline. Teachers are encouraged to recognize that “[e]ven where the subject matter of a discipline or course does not lend itself explicitly to making First Nation, Métis, and Inuit connections, educators can draw on Indigenous cultures and realities for scene setting in examples and lessons wherever possible” (OME, 2016ab, p. 5).

Progress reports. In the *Framework* the OME committed to providing reports on the implementation of the policy and its progress every three years (OME, 2007b, p. 10). The first progress report, *Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead: Fall 2009 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter *Sound Foundations*) was released in 2009, while the second official report, *Solid Foundation*, was not released until 2013. A preliminary report appeared in 2012. *Continuing the Journey: Preliminary Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter *Continuing the Journey*), a short eight paged publication, was only released only after the Auditor General of Ontario’s 2012 *Annual Report* noted that, as of May 2012, no draft of the second progress report was available to them. This preliminary report is no longer listed on the OME’s Indigenous Education Policy website.

The first progress report, *Sound Foundations*, released by the OME in 2009, is described as “an overview of the steps the ministry, school boards, schools, and community partners have taken to implement the strategies outlined in the framework” (OME, 2009b, p. 3). The report, however, “is not intended to be an evaluation or an assessment of individual boards” but instead “offers an update on the progress made to date, and shares recommendations on ways in which all partners can work together effectively to reach every

student, build capacity, and raise awareness” (OME, 2009b, p.3). There is a focus in *Sound Foundations* on the development of voluntary self-identification programs and the use of this data as necessary in supporting FNMI student achievement, stating “[t]he availability of data on Aboriginal student achievement in Ontario’s publicly funded school system is critical in order to build a foundation for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs that support the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2009b, p.10). This data, the OME suggests, is vital in order to “establish a baseline for tracking student achievement performance measures” (OME, 2009b, p.10).

Similarly, the content of the 2012 preliminary report, *Continuing the Journey* focuses on the accumulation of student data. Listed as the first of four categories under the OME’s identified “Highlights of Activities and Key Accomplishments” (p. 2), data collection and use is again positioned as integral to the successful implementation of the *Framework*. Significant here is the return to discussions of voluntary self-identification and data collection/use in the final pages of *Continuing the Journey*. In these pages additional and specific attention is paid to the ways such data will contribute to tracking “achievement” levels of FNMI students as they relate to EQAO and OSSLT standardized testing, credit accumulation, and graduation rates.

The progress report released in 2013, *Solid Foundation*, continues to emphasize the need for and value of data collection. The collection of student data is prioritized as a means to evaluate *Framework* progress and student achievement is again reinforced. In *Solid Foundation* a significant amount of space, 12 pages, is dedicated to the *Framework* performance measures connected with student “achievement.” Another two sections and eight pages are dedicated to detailing the need for FNMI student data collection, highlighting the benefits of the first baseline data on FNMI students presented within the *Solid*

Foundation, and describing the ways such data will support student achievement. The other performance measures, seven of the ten, receive markedly less attention in *Solid Foundation*, having a cumulative 14 pages dedicated to exploring achievements and activities connected to performance measures focused on supporting students more broadly, supporting educators, and engagement initiatives.

On policy implementation. The OME also committed to the development of a “framework implementation plan” which would “include specific targets in connection with

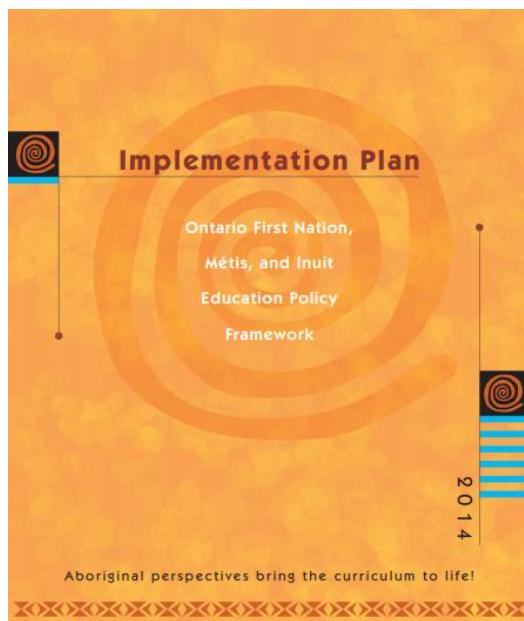


Figure 5: Implementation Plan: The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework

the performance measures to aid in assessing system effectiveness and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement” (OME, 2007b, p. 10).

Despite this commitment, the *Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter *Implementation Plan*) was not released until 2014. The *Implementation Plan* suggests that the

education system in Ontario has “achieved many successes on the road to fulfilling key commitments identified in the *Framework*” while

acknowledging that “there is much more work to do in the next phase of implementation” (OME, 2014b, p. 4). The *Implementation Plan* also stresses that the action on the *Framework* by school boards, using OME funding, supports the development of locally developed relationships and partnerships between school boards and First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities in order to acknowledge and respect local context and perspectives.

The stated purpose of the *Implementation Plan* “is to identify strategies and actions to support ministry and school board implementation of the *Framework* for 2013 through 2016” (OME, 2014b, p. 6). Outlined within the document are strategies for implementation. The OME first focussed on the 2013-2014 academic year by connecting strategies, such as “mobiliz[ing] existing research, including research by Aboriginal researchers, and identity[ing] new research priorities” (OME, 2014b, p. 10) to the performance measures outlined in the *Framework*, including, for example, “significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Student achievement” (OME, 2014b, p. 9). Strategies and performance measures for 2013-2014 are connected in four themes: using data to support student achievement; supporting students; supporting educators; and engagement and awareness building.

For the years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 the OME suggests that the ministry and school boards will continue to implement the strategies and actions outlined for the 2013-2014 year alongside additional strategies including “annually assessing progress in reducing the gaps in student achievement” and “continu[ing] to identify and fund targeted initiatives based on evidence gathered throughout the implementation of the plan and assessment of practices” (OME, 2014b, p. 16). In the final pages of the *Implementation Plan* the OME reiterates its commitments to improving Indigenous education in Ontario, to the collection of FNMI student data as a means to support achievement, and to the release of a third progress report in 2016 (OME, 2014b, p. 18).

Communicating policy. All of the documents discussed here, except for the *Preliminary Report*, remain accessible to teachers and the public via the Ministry of Education’s Indigenous Education Strategy website. The documents, currently available as downloadable pdfs, communicate information in a predominantly written form with

supporting tables, figures, and graphics. The important note here on the medium of communication is the heavy reliance on the OME website as a source of information, a passive dissemination strategy. I acknowledge that school boards and schools may be making teachers aware of these documents through staff communications. However, during the analysis of these documents it occurred to me that, perhaps, teachers may not be aware of the *Framework* or subsequent publications. I wondered what teachers had to say about the efficacy of this conduit and the ways such an approach may, or may not, infiltrate their professional knowledge landscape. Teachers did, in fact, make comment on the medium of the communication, the ways knowledge about Indigenous education and curriculum is delivered to teachers, and this is discussed in chapter five.

Analysing the Institutional Story

I now consider the ways the documents described above come together to form the institutional story and the ways this story can be understood as flawed and partial through a textual and discursive analysis. In doing so I return to my overarching research question: How do educators understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario? At this point, I wish to remind readers that Indigenous education, as defined in this dissertation, and based on the *Framework*, is about *both* educating FNMI students in Ontario schools and providing education to non-Indigenous students about Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. The choice to begin with the analysis of the policy documents and the ways they come together to form the institutional story as performed *ex situ*, that is to say, outside of the research interactions with teachers, was made with the express intent of exploring policy intent and action as constructed and communicated via the institutional story told through the words of the OME. Through this approach, the macro-level policy events and messaging were interrogated ahead of the pursuit of the micro-level experiences

of teachers. I did this with an understanding that the *Framework* is a policy which is not entirely applicable to teacher practice in the same sense curriculum is; instead, it represents a particular representation to teachers of both the problems and potential solutions related to Indigenous education. It is akin to an OME mission statement on Indigenous education. With the understanding that the intent was for boards and schools to take up the policy through decentralized practice, or as Burm (2016) describes it, “to breathe life into the document” (p. 149), I was then able to go in situ, meeting with teacher participants in order to explore the ways the rhetoric of the institutional story, as communicated through the *Framework* and associated documents, related to their experience. Moreover, understanding this institutional story allowed these research interactions to operate as explorations of the ways the policy intent and actions had meaning for teachers and the ways it impacted their practice.

The *Framework*: Discourses. As I carried out the policy analysis, four discourses emerged as permeating the *Framework*. These discourses are: achievement; developing capacities; the integration of FNMI cultures, histories, and perspectives; and community consultation. These discourses are foundational in the construction of the *Framework's* strategies as well as the performance measures which are intended to aid in the gathering of “reliable and valid data” to “assess progress towards the goals of improved student achievement” (OME, 2007b, p. 10). It is important to note that the findings presented here reinforce findings of earlier work conducted around the *Framework* (Butler, 2015; Cherubini, 2010; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010; Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017) as discussed in the literature review found in chapter two.

Discourses arise. In the *Framework*, the concept of achievement is described as “closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduate rates, and advancement to postsecondary studies” (OME, 2007b, p.5). Achievement is constructed as the most important aim of the policy as early as the second introductory paragraph. That achievement is of utmost concern is also indicated through statements which relegate the development of strategies which pay attention to the “particular educational needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2007b, p. 5) as serving the primary objective of achievement rather than student well-being, culture, and/or language. This is not to suggest that the very idea of seeking to support high rates of credit accumulation and graduation is wholly or simply problematic; rather, it is the assumption that achievement is to be solely identified through easily quantifiable academic actions such as credit accumulation and standardized testing success, a matter which provides cause for concern and critical attention.

The discourse of achievement as the most important objective of the *Framework*, is continued in the “Framework Summary” (OME, 2007b, p. 21-22), a concise review of the policy’s contents achieved in just over a page of text and located at the end of the document. In the summary, a full seven of the ten policy strategies and seven of the ten performance measures are directly tied to the broader OME goals of “high levels of student achievement” and the “reduc[tion] of gaps in student achievement” (OME, 2007b, p. 21), with three of those seven aimed at improving FNMI student test scores and accelerating graduation rates as measures by which to demonstrate improving achievement levels. Positioning achievement in this way operates to reaffirm achievement through a narrowed focus on credit accumulation and standardized testing results. This positioning also works to affirm the persistent “gap” between FNMI and non-FNMI students as one of achievement outcome

discrepancies only. This approach to achievement fails to address the systemic disadvantages which face FNMI students, including inequitable access to resources and services (Harper & Thompson, 2017). These disadvantages and oppressions have a role to play in low graduation rates of Indigenous students (Harper & Thompson, 2017) and need to be addressed through policy in order to support meaningful change.

The construction of a narrowly defined improved achievement of Indigenous students as the primary goal connects the *Framework* to neoliberal reform agendas more than it works towards social justice and equity. A focus on achievement in education policy positions the need for change in economic terms (Levin, 1998), as it makes clear the intent to provide students with the skills to be “economically prosperous” (OME, 2007b, p.7). Moreover, it extolls competitive demands (Abawi & Brady, 2017) and neoliberal ideals through its emphasis on “standards, accountability and testing” (Levin, 1998, p. 133). In this way, achievement, throughout the *Framework*, is constructed in a way which aligns with and is set to be measured against indicators which serve to reinforce colonial socio-political and economic structures and settler futurity. In doing so, the *Framework* supports a narrow, and incomplete, vision of what achievement might mean in Indigenous education.

The second and third discourses to emerge were those of capacity development and the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives into the curriculum. Building teacher capacities around Indigenous education is presented as integral to the success of the *Framework*.

The overriding issues affecting Aboriginal student achievement are a lack of awareness among teachers of the particular learning styles of Aboriginal students, and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First

Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives. (OME, 2007b, p.6)

A clear message is relayed in this language: that teachers knowing the learning styles of FNMI students will solve the problem of low Indigenous student achievement. This position, in connection with the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives, attempts to construct learning styles as a simply applied method of integration and thus a solution to the problems of Indigenous education and the “gap” in Ontario schools. That there is value in drawing upon Indigenous learning styles and pedagogies in the classroom has been made clear by educators and scholars (see, Bell & Brant, 2015; Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, Burns, & Camillo, 2010; St. Amant, 2014; Toulouse, 2011). Important to this discussion, however, is the motivation underlying the move to include and support FNMI student learning styles. The OME recognizes that having teachers capable of integrating Indigenous learning styles and perspectives in their classroom is one contributing factor to the creation of academic environments which “promotes the development of positive personal and cultural identity, as well as a sense of belonging to both Aboriginal and wider communities” (OME, 2007b, p. 8). Cherubini’s (2014) work supports this claim as he observes educational relevance can be created for FNMI students by “connecting them to their culture, which, in turn, reinforces and (in some instances) creates a positive self-image that speaks to their everyday realities. It further suggests that this positive self-image is connected to academic success” (p. 119). The “Framework principles” link capacity building and integration as connected to identity building in order to support student achievement. In the *Framework*, then, identity building, supported through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and learning styles, are made possible through teacher

capacity development, but ultimately this is subsumed under the priority of achievement and more specifically achievement as defined by credit accumulation and standardized test performance.

The integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives is, in the *Framework*, closely connected with the directives related to increasing teacher capacities. The integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives is repeatedly presented throughout the *Framework* as crucial to improving Indigenous education in Ontario schools. The OME identifies “teaching strategies that are appropriate to Aboriginal learner needs” and “curriculum that reflects First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and perspectives” (2007b, p. 6) as factors which contribute to Indigenous student success, alongside “effective counselling and outreach, and a school environment that encourages Aboriginal student and parent engagement” (p. 6). Milne’s (2017) research has shown that the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives is a complex undertaking. In many cases teachers remain anxious (Dion, 2014; Dion et al., 2010; Milne, 2017), a circumstance complicated by the lack of opportunities for critical introspection connected with the capacity development directives of the policy. However, when attempted, research has indicated that efforts made to integrate this content are largely well-received by both students and community members (Anuik & Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2012; Cherubini, 2014; Milne, 2017).

The fourth and final discourse arising from the *Framework* is that of community consultation. Encompassed in the *Framework* as strategies to create and maintain high levels of public confidence, community involvement is framed through phrases including: “build strong positive connections” (p. 18), “engage in shared planning” (p. 18), “strengthen Aboriginal voice and involvement” (p. 17), and “facilitate intercultural dialogue throughout school communities” (p. 19). Indeed, research by Cherubini (2014) and Milne (2017)

supports the notion that where school boards and schools have taken the call to community consultation seriously because it has positive impacts on the school environment, teacher engagement with Indigenous education, and student development.

Considering what is absent. The *Framework* is marked as an effort to improve, albeit imperfectly, FNMI student education. This effort is displayed through the discourses presented in the *Framework* in its form and content. However, equally telling of the OME's priorities are the discourses presented without words, but evident through their conspicuous absence. Three of the most alarming absences which arose from my analysis are those of requirements for teachers, lack of teacher voice and the failure to include opportunities for critical and transformative education.

As this dissertation is a policy enactment study, the absences which became most glaring to me within the *Framework* is that of teacher requirements (e.g. professional learning) and voice. Though community consultation was, rightfully, presented as a high priority for the OME and school boards throughout the *Framework*, the voices of teachers (and students) are largely absent. The *Framework* lists what the OME “will” do as well as what the school boards and schools “will strive” to do to decrease the achievement “gap”. In doing so, the *Framework* offers no specific guidance to teachers and limited opportunities for teachers to take an active role in the policy outside of integrating Indigenous content through curricular reform. I do not wish to suggest that the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives, nor the differentiation of instruction to support FNMI student learning styles, have no role to play in the improvement of Indigenous education in Ontario for they certainly do. However, such integration, in order to be effective and to have a role in supporting Indigenous student achievement through credit accumulation, identity formation, and well-being needs to be carried out in a way that recognizes students’ cultural locations

and within a larger agenda and practice of critical reflection and learning for teachers (Dion et al., 2010). As noted in Cherubini's (2014) study of a single high school's Indigenous education programming, “[i]f all faculty members are invested with a sense of ownership in the scope and design of the program, they may more readily buy into its mandate and objectives” (p. 118). Here, I make a similar argument about provincial level policy; that the incorporation of teacher voice at all levels of policy development and implementation is one way to promote teachers becoming more directly connected to not only the mandate and objectives of the policy but also the directives sent via the policy. Moreover, speaking directly to teachers via policy directives makes clear that they have an important role, indeed a responsibility, to respond to and enact the policy in their classroom. Here I will draw on the work of Bascia, Carr-Harris, Fine-Meyer, and Zurzolo (2014) whose work on teacher-driven curriculum change makes a compelling argument for the role of teacher agency in the policy-making process. Though surely complicated from a logistical view, offering opportunities for teachers to take an active role in policy development helps to ensure that they are directly called upon through the policy language to consider and understand their professional responsibilities as they relate to Indigenous education *and* that relevant opportunities are made possible through the policy to support teacher capacity development in these areas. Noting this absence led to important questions during my research encounters with participants. I wondered what impact the absence of references to educators, aside from brief mentions of capacity development through professional development opportunities, had on the ways educators understood their responsibilities as they pertain to Indigenous education and the ways it impacted, if at all, their daily practice.

Closely related to the need to consult teachers on, and speak directly to teachers through, policy is the absence of a call for critical and transformative education experiences

in the *Framework*. This is an absence for both students and teachers. By this I mean that the *Framework* positions learning as important to the both students and teachers. For students, it is the intention that FNMI students will develop the skills and knowledge necessary “to be socially contributive, politically active, and economically prosperous citizens of the world” (OME, 2007b, p. 7) but also that all students in Ontario schools will have an awareness of Indigenous perspectives. For teachers, and my focus lies here as teacher practice is the primary site of inquiry for my dissertation, the call to learn is constructed through the aim to improve instructional proficiencies by “develop[ing] awareness among teachers of the learning styles of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” in order to “employ instructional methods designed to enhance the learning of all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2007b, p.12) and the integration of cultures, histories, and perspectives. The *Framework*, through the privileging of capacity development in the area of learning styles and Indigenous “content” positions Indigenous education in a way that aligns with what Kumashiro (2000) has called "teaching about the Other" (p.33). In this way, the *Framework* directives encourage school boards and schools to facilitate the integration of “Otherness throughout the curriculum,” whereby teachers work to integrate lessons and topics throughout the school year, semester, and day and across the curriculum instead of presenting information in the form of “one-off” lessons (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 33).

This focus in the ministry documents on the development of capacities as related to the learning styles of Indigenous youth and the integration of cultures, histories, and perspectives does not encourage, much less mandate, opportunities for critical and transformative education. This represents a missed chance, for as Kumashiro (2000) argues, it is inappropriate to wholly dismiss teaching about the “Other” as without value. Instead,

the uses of such lessons should be reconsidered. Learning about and hearing the Other should be done not to fill a gap in knowledge (as if ignorance about the Other were the only problem), but to disrupt the knowledge that is already there (since the harmful/partial knowledges that an individual already has are what need to change) (Luhmann, 1998)... changing oppression requires disruptive knowledge, not simply more knowledge. Students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all.

(p. 34)

Here, it is also important to acknowledge that research done by Milne (2017) has shown that many educators in Ontario remain unaware of both Canada's colonial past and the *Framework's* call to integrate Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives across the curriculum. Consideration must be paid to her argument that “[t]ypical professional development raises awareness but does not necessarily change classroom practices” (Milne, 2017, p.7). The consultation of teachers, as I advocate for it here, should address how best to deliver policy directives and content knowledge *to teachers* in a way that will support knowledge development and classroom changes. As well, I draw attention to Orlowski's (2008) research which indicates that many teachers, in fact, do not understand their individual role as agents for curricular change and may view race cognizant teaching as problematic to both their practice and student learning. Orlowski's findings also suggest that, despite the presence of discourses recognizing and extolling Canada as a multicultural country, classrooms remain persistently places where the race or ethnicity of students remains a potentially marginalizing factor. The teachers in Orlowski's research largely

subscribed to the notion that the most appropriate way to teach social studies is through a single “colour-blind” curriculum. Based in a belief of the efficacy of a curriculum derived from discourses of liberal multiculturalism, teachers ignore calls to make formal education structures and curriculum more relevant to Indigenous students (Orlowski, 2008). The unique relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, their histories, and their position as the first peoples of the territories now known as Canada become silenced in the discourses of liberal multiculturalism. This, Orlowski argues, creates a circumstance where even well-meaning teachers ignore the systemic and historical circumstances contributing to the struggles of Indigenous students in Canada’s public schools. Instead, teachers continue to draw upon dominant discourses which rely on a cultural-deficit perspective and place the blame for Indigenous students’ struggles on their culture, parents, and Indigenous communities (Orlowski, 2008). I draw extensively on Orlowski here in order to emphasize that the implementation of policy efforts which aim to increase teacher and student knowledge in the areas of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives in Ontario schools will be impacted by (mis)understandings and assumptions held by teachers. Thus, the development of capacities around content and learning styles are only part of what needs to happen through Indigenous education policy in Ontario. The *Framework* puts forth a laudable vision, and a series of necessary aims and directives. It is valuable, but it is not encouraging/requiring critically reflexive practice in education in a way that works towards instilling a belief/knowledge/awareness in all teachers about their responsibilities around Indigenous education and living in a settler-state.

Taken together, these absences highlight a lack of critical reflection and attention paid by the OME to its own role in creating and sustaining the achievement “gap” it seeks to close. The *Framework* fails to conceptualise the ways colonial education structures are

implicated in the ongoing problems around Indigenous education, instead leaving the complex, difficult, emotional, and necessary work of negotiating education in a settler-state largely out of the policy. The *Framework*, through these absences, largely writes teachers out of the policy process, a phenomenon Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) emphasize is problematic because the expectation is that teachers will simply implement that which is delivered to them through policy directives. Moreover, these absences work to actively support the ongoing normalization and maintenance of discourses which support deficit thinking about Indigenous students and communities, and which falsely prop up “teaching about the Other” as enough, in place of supporting and requiring schools boards, schools, and teachers to take up a role in the difficult and taxing work of decolonization and reconciliation.

Tracing the discourses. Achievement remains a priority, and a focus, throughout the documents associated with the *Framework*. This is made clear through the *Building Bridges* document which, through its explanation of the need for self-identification programs, constructs self-identification as a means to collect and classify data in order to improve Indigenous student achievement. *Building Bridges* emphasizes that the collection of Indigenous student data is the solution to problems the OME faces around assessing Indigenous education progress (OME, 2007a, p. 7). In *Building Bridges*, the OME centers the EQAO’s agreement to “report on the achievement of Aboriginal students to boards” (OME, 2007a, p. 8) in 2006 as a rationale for the development of voluntary self-identification programs in all school boards across Ontario. The perceived inability to move forward without data persists across the progress reports and the *Implementation Plan* released by the OME. In *Sound Foundations* the OME notes that “the availability of data on Aboriginal student achievement in Ontario’s publicly funded school system is critical in order to build a

foundation for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs that support the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2009b, p. 10). The importance of data for the OME continues to be stressed through the *Preliminary Report* of 2012, the *Solid Foundation* progress report of 2013, and again in the *Implementation Plan* of 2014.

Within the *Implementation Plan*, data is presented as the preeminent means for supporting Indigenous student achievement. Across the components of the *Implementation Plan* data is inserted where it had not been referenced in the original policy, the *Framework*. For example, in the *Framework* the reaching of the goal of high levels of public confidence is linked to the following performance measures: increased involvement of FNMI parents, increased collaboration with Indigenous communities, and the provision of education opportunities which would improve the knowledge of all students in the areas of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives. The strategies listed in the *Framework* and connected to these performance measures display themes of “coordination” (OME, 2007b, p. 17), “leadership” (p. 17), “shared planning” (p. 18), and integration through community consultation. In the *Implementation Plan*, these performance measures are associated with strategies which now advocate for “boards to engage with local Aboriginal partners and/or communities to explore opportunities for data use and data sharing” and “engage with local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, communities, and organizations to build understanding of Aboriginal student self-identification and to increase the number of students/families that choose to self-identify” (OME, 2014b, p. 15). The shift towards data collection and management has been noted by Butler (2015) as well who has argued that the “belated emphasis on self-identification” moves Ontario’s Indigenous education strategy away from the aims set forth in the *Framework* and in doing so problematically acts as symbolic policy in place of facilitating meaningful change.

The second and third discourses described above, those of capacity building and the integration of Indigenous content, are positioned as integral to reaching the vision set forth via the *Framework*. Early on in the life of the *Framework* these areas received much attention. *Building Bridges* shifts the focus and positions the development of teacher capacities and voluntary self-identification policies as important. It is made clear that front-line workers, such as teachers and office staff should, “have a good understanding of the [self-identification] initiative and the issues and concerns related to it” (OME, 2007a, p. 14). In 2009 the OME also released a series of resources which provided lesson plans and activities for use in the classroom and an accompanying guide to assist teachers in putting them into practice (OME, 2009a). Together these documents make up the *Toolkit*, as described above, and are intended to assist in facilitating the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives by teachers in Ontario classrooms.

Both the *Toolkit* and the *Scope and Sequence* documents offer some valuable information for educators. Despite this, it is necessary to reflect on their medium and presentation in order to consider the ways this might impact their (non)use by classroom teachers. Available electronically, via the OME website, the *Scope and Sequence* documents (at the time of writing) are not listed on the Indigenous Education Strategy page. Instead, they are presented alongside a list of digital downloads in the “other policy and resource documents” list. Moreover, the *Scope and Sequence* documents are not mentioned in the *Framework*, the 2009 or 2013 progress reports, nor the *Implementation Plan*. The presentation of these documents as digital-access only (at the time of writing these documents could not be ordered through Service Ontario Publications), and as seemingly unrelated to the province’s Indigenous education strategy, led me to question if they are viewed by teachers as valuable resources. In what ways are they used, or not, to support the

goals of the *Framework*? I anticipated that teachers would either be unaware of the documents or that they would identify them, as I do, as part of the problem, a demonstration of a disjointed effort in the area of Indigenous education in Ontario. I was keen to explore this through my interviews with participants.

The fourth discourse identified, community consultation and involvement, remains at the forefront of the policy documents which follow the *Framework*. Community consultation and involvement is identified as integral to the development of voluntary self-identification programs in *Building Bridges* (OME, 2007a) and remains a prevalent discourse across subsequent publications. In the *Scope and Sequence* documents readers are reminded that the relationships between the OME, school boards, and Indigenous communities “have become stronger” (OME, 2013, p. 6 as cited in OME, 2016b, p.3). As well readers are told that “a wide range of Indigenous partners, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Elders, Senators, knowledge keepers, educators, cultural advisers, and community leaders, are engaged in the curriculum review process” (OME, 2016b, p.3). The progress reports also consistently refer to the importance of community consultation and collaboration. *Sound Foundations* (2009) opens with list of partnerships, programs, and activities that support work towards achieving the vision of the *Framework*, providing some insight into the ways Indigenous students, communities, and organizations were involved in these processes. In the 2013 report, *Solid Foundation*, these descriptions remain but are placed in the sections describing the ways students and educators are being supported as well as in the comments on engagement and awareness building. The *Implementation Plan* continues to place high importance on community consultation, communication and collaboration. Considered together, these documents make clear that the continued community consultation and relationship building

is central to the development of locally relevant and appropriate programming and policy strategy development.

Last, the discourses noted through their absence, namely teacher voice and transformative education opportunities, were found to remain absent in the publications associated with the *Framework*. I have previously discussed the ways in which the absences which persist across Ontario’s Indigenous Education strategy operate to support cognitive imperialism and, in doing so, actively works against decolonization (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017) and would like to make further contributions to that argument here. These areas of absence can, and should, be the starting points for ministry, school board, and school personnel to develop meaningful programming, at all administrative levels, to support the vision of closing the achievement “gap” and ensuring an awareness among all students. The lack of specific and purposeful transformative education opportunities for educators ensures that the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives will not move beyond “teaching about the Other” (Kumashiro, 2000, p.33). Similarly, the exclusion of teacher voice eliminates the possibility for a clear understanding of what teachers need support with, and what they feel capable of, as related to Indigenous education in Ontario. Moreover, the lack of attention paid across the *Framework* documents to the role teachers have to play in enacting Ontario’s Indigenous education strategy, and, indeed, making a requirement that teachers understand this role creates the potential for the policy to have little, or even no, impact on teacher practice. In locating and tracing these discourses across the *Framework* and associated documents it became evident that the policy does not work to facilitate the deconstruction and critique of Ontario’s publicly funded education system and also displays little effort to reconceptualise education in a manner that can, and would, support both decolonization and reconciliation.

I end this chapter with a brief discussion of the most recent OME publication concerned with the *Framework*, the 2018 progress report titled *Strengthening our Learning Journey: Third Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. The progress report is the final progress report released under the former ruling Liberal provincial government (Ontario transitioned to a Conservative majority in June, 2018). The third progress report is a more comprehensive look at the *Framework* and its impact than previous reports. The document, at 79 pages in length, incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data to assess the progress of the *Framework* implementation and “shares perspectives and insights gained from Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents, communities, and education partners” (OME, 2018c, p. 1). This purposeful engagement strategy was based in a community-centred approach to “ensure that many voices would be heard and included” in the discussion of Indigenous education in Ontario (OME, 2018c, p. 8). Efforts to make explicit connections between the policy efforts of the OME and the TRC as well as attempts to address issues of equity and the deconstruction of Ontario’s normative education structures are apparent. The report is frank in its acknowledgement that while some achievements and progress have been made in the *Framework*’s implementation, there remains much to do to “support and strengthen Indigenous student achievement and well-being and to increase our shared understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions” (OME, 2018c, p.1). This brief overview is presented separately from my analysis as the document was released after both my document analysis and the conclusion of my research encounters with research participants. Nonetheless, I include the description of the document because it remains important to considerations and interrogations of the *Framework* and its impact on Indigenous education in Ontario.

In this chapter I have presented the findings from my textual and discursive analysis of the institutional story, the information presented to teachers from the OME via the conduit of policy documents, progress reports, resources, and associated directives. I began the chapter by providing some necessary information about the content and presentation of each document analysed. I then organized the discussion into two sections. The first outlined the discourses which emerged through my analysis. In doing so I identified four discourses that prevail throughout the *Framework* and associated documents: achievement/closing the “gap”; developing capacities; integration; and consultation and collaboration with community. Additionally, I discussed the ways in which absence manifested throughout the *Framework* and associated documents, noting that teacher voice and requirement are largely absent from the policy documents as well as opportunities for meaningful deconstruction/critique of Ontario’s education structures thus limiting opportunities for transformative education. The second section focussed on tracing these discourses across the documents which were released in relation to the *Framework* as I discussed the ways the identified discourses remained the same, or were changed in subsequent OME publications. In the following chapter I focus on the voices of teachers; I examine their perspectives on their relationship to both Indigenous education and the *Framework* in order to understand how the intent of the policy as outlined through the institutional story interact with the actions borne from the policy as experienced by teachers.

Chapter 5: Teacher Voices

In this chapter I share the voices of teacher participants. These voices outline the ways teacher participants talk about their professional knowledge and the sites of their professional practice alongside the ways they understand both Indigenous education and the *Framework*. Communicated in this chapter, and based on the descriptions of Clandinin and Connelly (1995), are the “secret stories,” the stories teachers tell about their practice, their in-classroom work, and the “cover stories,” the stories teachers tell that portray them as experts and individuals whose actions operate within the acceptable range of behaviours prescribed by the institutional story presented in chapter four. While the secret stories emerge from the private in-classroom experiences of teachers, cover stories arise through discussions in the liminal spaces of teaching – that is to say the spaces of the professional knowledge landscape that exist in-between and alongside the in-classroom and out-of-classroom work. While Clandinin and Connelly (1996) make clear that they “do not wish to imply that either secret stories or cover stories are necessarily bad” (p. 25) it is important to remain cognizant of whether or not teachers feel such portrayals as experts on the institutional story are good, bad, or even necessary. Through the telling of these secret and cover stories findings have emerged that indicate the *Framework* has been largely unavailing in the lives of teachers; that these teachers interact with, interpret, and enact the policy in very limited ways through their practice. As such, the teachers’ stories make clear that they have seen little impact resulting from the *Framework*. Moreover, the teacher participants in this case study actively push back against the institutional story, questioning its content, medium, and relevance to their professional knowledge and experience. Before turning directly to the teacher voices, let me remind readers that all participants have been assigned what I consider to be gender neutral pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. Accompanying these pseudonyms is

the use of gender neutral pronouns throughout (they/their/them) to further protect the anonymity of my participants.

Chapter Outline

In the following section of this chapter I focus on the information teacher participants communicated about their classroom practice and personal pedagogy. These secret stories reveal the ways teachers understand Indigenous education, success, and their classroom practice. Through these discussions teachers also consider their classroom practice in relation to the *Framework* producing four main themes: recognizing teaching as political; identifying persistent gaps between policy intent and policy action; revealing the feeling of “going it alone”; and expressing problems with professional development. In our research encounters teachers also talked in ways that worked to reconcile and interrogate their experiences as they related to the rhetoric of the *Framework/institutional story*. These I present as the cover stories. I must reiterate, however, that for research participants in this study there seemed to be little interest in covering. Instead, teachers made clear that they integrated elements of policy that they deemed valuable and questioned that which they did not. Thus, in our research encounters teacher participants questioned the OME’s motivations for creating the *Framework*, critiqued the follow up, and made suggestions for improvements moving forward. In this chapter I work to present the voices of teachers in a way that highlights the complex, personal, and practice-driven ways they develop and talk about their professional knowledge landscape. In chapter six I offer a synthesis of the findings presented through both this chapter as well as the institutional story in chapter four.

The “Secret” Stories

In order to ground the research encounters firmly in the relationship among teachers’ professional knowledge, their practice, the *Framework*, and Indigenous education, I began

the series of interviews by exploring what Indigenous education meant in the professional practices of participants. Participants defined Indigenous education in a variety of ways but consistently did so in ways that were removed/distant from the language and intent of the institutional story as communicated through the *Framework* and associated documents. Instead participant definitions were guided by, and displayed intimate connections with, their professional knowledge and practice as well as their professional and personal experiences. For Rory, a seasoned teacher with over 15 years of experience, one who has worked as a classroom teacher, student success teacher, and guidance counsellor and who is a First Nation community member, the definition was inextricably connected with issues of legal status and the funding and jurisdiction of Indigenous education.

Well, I think that the three, the three different groups, identity groups [First Nation, Métis, and Inuit]...they fall into subcategories as we know, status and non-status, etc. But in terms of the student group we deal with we look at them as all First Nation that live on reserve versus First Nation students that live off reserve. Then Métis and Inuit, we deal with those groups of students far less, but so in terms of how they fall or are impacted by the Ministry of Education I think that the First Nation students that live off reserve, the Métis and the Inuit students, they are definitely, they fall under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Education policy just like any other student. However, those students, First Nation students that live on reserve they seem to be in this grey area. And that does have a negative impact on them in terms of how they are serviced, that has been my observation over the years. (Rory, Interview 1)

For Cameron and Casey, non-Indigenous educators, each with over 15 years of experience in the field of education, Indigenous education is intimately connected to the relationships they seek to foster with Indigenous students within their daily classroom practice. These relationships, Casey explained, were carefully crafted through trust-building: “building the trust and building that connection with them is probably the most important, as it is with any students, but particularly First Nation students...[students] knowing and understanding that there is trust built there, from a leadership standpoint, I think, is very important” (Casey, Interview 1). Non-Indigenous educator Blair, however, was more cautious in discussions of their understanding of Indigenous education, and their role in it. For Blair the definition of Indigenous education reflected their lack of experience with issues and considerations of Indigenous education. Despite having taught for over a decade, Blair made clear that they “don’t have experience in it myself” going on to note that “I do know that when I was teaching here [informant references specific school at which interview occurred] kids that were coming from reserve schools and coming to the provincial school were lagging. Like there were some gaps obviously, something was missing from their education” (Blair, Interview 1). What becomes clear through these discussions is that teacher participants’ understandings of Indigenous education and their roles and responsibilities with it is a personal one – connected to their daily work and professional knowledge. There was little indication that these understandings were guided, or greatly impacted by, discussions of Indigenous education as provided in the institutional story which clearly connect it to the education of both

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. I quote the *Framework* vision here again at length as it makes this intent clear,

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario will have the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to successfully complete their elementary and secondary education in order to pursue postsecondary education or training and/or to enter the workforce. They will have the traditional and contemporary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be socially contributive, politically active, and economically prosperous citizens of the world. All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives. (OME, 2007b, p. 7)

Instead, teachers developed their own understandings based in their professional practice and independent of the messaging communicated through the institutional story.

Likewise, participant understandings of success were highly personalized, displaying intimate connection to participant experiences, both in their classroom and outside of it. Participants were guided by the work, both academic and personal, done in their classroom communities. Here again, it became clear that teachers' professional knowledge, their secret stories, operate in tension with the institutional story. More specifically, they exist in tension with the *Framework*, the *Implementation Plan*, and the progress reports of 2009 and 2013, which focus on standardized testing and credit accumulation.

Both Casey and Rory emphasized that while content is important and necessary, the work teachers do to help their students become successful is about much more than that. Casey's notion of student success is tied to considerations of helping students prepare for the next stage of their lives, whatever that next stage might be. Rory also emphasized that success must be considered according to the individual student, "I always try to stress the importance of personal stories...I think success has to also be about how the student feels about themselves in terms of their learning and the confidence level they have in their ability to obtain their goal, even their ability to set a goal" (Rory, Interview 1). Teacher voices, then, align closely with literature which calls for more holistic learning and assessment models which center and value the various social, cultural, personal, and material facets of student life (see CCL, 2009 for discussions on holistic learning models and Indigenous education).

Teacher participants consistently highlighted that their classroom practice - from classroom layout, to behaviour management, and instruction - was connected with their understandings of Indigenous education and their definitions of success and founded in the relationships they seek to develop with their students. Cameron noted that placing the building of relationships and trust at the forefront of their practice is an action that relies on a teacher's individual pedagogy and it is not something that can be described by policy: "My kids come first, I have their back first, and a lot of the time that makes things go against the grain but I don't care because you gotta' look at them as the whole being." For Cameron and Blair, who currently both work in classrooms that primarily service an Indigenous student population, building relationships was viewed as a top

priority. Blair works to accomplish this by connecting with students through food.

“We make lunch, I make lunch for them, that is part of learning things, they are learning to trust me through me feeding them basically” (Blair, Interview 1).

Casey made clear that their professional knowledge landscape extended beyond the school campus, noting that they attend events in the communities of their students, frequent restaurants, and that they “take the extra time in getting to know their culture also taking extra courses...” (Casey, Interview 1). In our focus group encounter teacher participants’ efforts to build their classrooms as spaces of trust and relationship were discussed as explicit pedagogical approaches within their practice.

Cameron: My philosophy is they are people first and students second. The student is a separate entity and you have to see the people first.

Blair: And that is the whole program I was in this year. It is therapeutic...we want to show them good relationships, good role models and stuff like that before we get into the books and the schooling.

Rory: ...I base my classroom management on, if I establish a solid rapport with my students, mutual respect, that is the basis for my classroom management. Not the fact that I am the teacher.

Teacher participants made clear that despite working within a system which prioritizes credit accumulation and standardized testing results, their professional knowledge indicated a need to focus on building relationships founded on trust, care, and respect before attending to content-based curriculum instruction.

Students were at the heart of these early discussions with teacher participants, reflected in teachers' concerns with student well-being, and the ways their practice contributes to both the academic and emotional wellness of students. The centrality of students, as shown in the word cloud below, (see Figure 6), persisted across our research encounters as teachers worked to reconcile the institutional story and their own experience and knowledge with their aspirations for their classrooms and students.



Figure 6: Word cloud representing data from interview 1

Beyond exploring teacher participants' understandings of their role in Indigenous education, their definitions of student success, and the ways these elements of teacher practice play out in their daily classroom life, four significant themes emerged through the research encounters:

- 1) understanding teaching, curriculum, and formal education as inherently political;

- 2) identifying and questioning perceived gaps between the intent of the *Framework* and associated policy action;
- 3) experiencing isolation and individuality in teacher practice, “going it alone”; and
- 4) advocating for more plentiful and different professional development in the area of Indigenous education.

Education, and teaching, as political. Though research has identified that teachers may feel the profession to be an apolitical one (Orlowski, 2008), participants in this case study made clear that they understood education, and teaching, as a fundamentally political act embedded in a system that is simultaneously guided by politics and affecting politics. By this I mean that participants understood that the priorities of government and the electorate (to an extent) are transmitted via education policy, including curriculum and systemic organization. Likewise, those involved in education—stakeholders such as teachers, students, and parents—can impact political decision making at the local and provincial level.

Teacher participants discussed education as political at both the personal and system levels. At the level of personal pedagogy, professional knowledge, and classroom practice, participants displayed an understanding of the ways personal life experience intersects with teaching with Rory stating, “Well, we like to think teaching is an objective thing but it is not. You bring your own values, beliefs, and biases into the classroom. Even though you try not to present it, you do, it does come out even if it is not in words” (Rory, Interview 2). Similarly, Casey made clear the importance of evaluating their own biases while also recognizing the problems of colour-blind pedagogies: “You are who you are because of your experiences, the bigger picture, and that is something we need to embrace and be proud to

speak about. As an educator I think you can promote that, but when you're promoting you have to be very culturally sensitive" (Casey, Interview 3).

At the system level teachers were aware that the political climate impacts the system of formal education in Ontario. During the focus group interview Rory stressed that education operates as the training ground for "how people are going to think as adults" and noted the power of the hidden curriculum.

I think there is a lot to be said about silence, about omission. That in itself sends a message, not only to FNMI students, but to all students. So about the place that group plays in our society and in our history as a country and until that is addressed attitudes aren't going to change.

Rory continued "I do think that government and education really kind of goes hand in hand. We like to think education is objective and it is not political but that is a bunch of garbage" (Focus Group Interview). Acknowledging that politics influence the education system Cameron calls the *Framework* a "band-aid" arguing, "It is really just bogus, I see it as a way for them to say they're doing something, so it looks like they're doing something, but it's not a whole lot of anything" (Cameron, Interview 3). These discussions of education and teaching as political led to teachers repeatedly stressing that the curriculum is not prescriptive. By this I mean, that the curriculum does not prescribe, or require all teachers to teach the exact same content. There are often many ways to reach a curriculum expectation and how teachers reach these expectations is decided through their professional judgement, but also guided by their experiences. Thus, teacher participants advocated for the inclusion of mandatory Indigenous content for both students and teachers through professional development – themes returned to across the interviews and the focus group meeting.

Participants wanted mandatory content, arguing it was the only way some people will encounter and/or address the content. Teacher participants talked about the ways their own professional knowledge landscape included Indigenous content but often suggested this was due to their specific experiences, the population of their schools and classes, as well as their proximity to First Nation communities. They acknowledged that continued silence around issues of Indigenous education may be perpetuated in circumstances where teachers do not encounter such student populations or have the opportunity to develop relations with local communities.

The decision to lead with this theme of education and teaching as political stems from its persistence throughout the stories, both secret and cover, as discussed by teachers and because such discussion is conspicuous in its absence from the institutional story. Through their recognition of education and teaching as inherently political, teacher participants make clear that they are aware of the deficits in the institutional story and demonstrate that OME information is received with a critical mind.

Policy intent and policy action: Gaps emerge. Teacher participants talked about the gaps they perceived between the policy intent and action related to the policy, particularly as it impacted, or not, their classrooms and practice. They noted a scarcity of resources and provisions stemming from the *Framework*. Specifically, Cameron argues that “the Ministry, I think, doesn’t give enough to help people to be able to implement [the *Framework*]” (Cameron, Interview 1). Blair echoed this sentiment, stating that time to compile resources on their own would be helpful or “even a list of resources like for me to not have to go out and try to search them out on my own, it would be nice...” (Blair, Interview 1). When resources are made available, such as the *Toolkit*, teachers indicated they held little value in their classrooms, questioning their efficacy and value: “Again, great for somebody who

needs a start maybe with something but it's not very comprehensive. And it's the same thing, ya okay we want to embed all this stuff in our curriculum but here is only one lesson that you can put here" (Cameron, Interview 1). Again, these discussions made clear that teachers' perspectives were connected with their experience. Casey, however, indicated that the responsibility for resource locating and vetting lies with teachers themselves.

But there is the *Toolkit*, there is a specific link or file on our website in our portal that is Aboriginal education. So there are resources and access if people want it...And there is a bunch of other networks, consultants, resources, and people and you need to be really interested in doing it. Again, you have to make the choice. Like there are always resources and opportunities available if you want to. I would never put that on the board, generally speaking. (Casey, Interview 3).

Participants also noted gaps between policy intent and action as they related to communication about the policy and its intended impact in their classrooms. The communication gaps which impacted participants' interactions with the *Framework*, were perceived by teachers as occurring primarily between school board personnel and front-line teaching staff. Cameron, when discussing the arrival of some unsolicited resources at their school, remarked, "Once in a while we'll get some resources sent to us free of charge which really don't help because no one asked me what exactly I need anyway" (Cameron, Interview 2).

Cameron returned to this experience in interview three, displaying frustration that there was no effort to communicate about what they needed in their classroom but instead teachers get sent a supply of books which they ultimately found of no use in their classroom. "I have no idea who sent them to me. I have no idea, they are

brand new books” (Interview 3). This lack of communication between board staff and teachers, participants noted, extended to correspondence about training and course materials, as Rory explains.

One thing I see in our board, it is not just students who are – how can I say it...so we have Native Studies courses and there seems to be this perception that Native Studies courses are for Native students, well it is even happening amongst the staff. So the board gets information about some First Nations training that is happening, well they automatically send it to the First Nation staff and suggest they go. Well, that is not who needs the training [*laughs*] necessarily, I mean sometimes we might I guess. It is the non-Aboriginal staff that needs the training, so why aren’t you sending it to them and encouraging them to go? (Interview 2)

These gaps, participants indicated, resulted in the next theme to be discussed, teacher feelings of “going it alone.”

Isolation and “going it alone.” These perceived gaps in resources available to teachers and in communication, as described above, are related to what teachers have described in their secret stories as “going it alone.” Casey and Cameron both talked about the efforts they made to provide quality, culturally responsive education through their practice, an effort they found to be bound with the materialities of their work – the daily physical spaces of teaching and learning. For Cameron, this meant ensuring Indigenous culture had an explicit and physical presence in their classroom, “I think space is huge, I really do. And again, as you can see I have reflections of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit culture up on my walls. I have students who have painted...who have been able to paint on the ceiling and

those students who, are First Nation, reflected in their paintings...They had the ability to put their own touch on the environment in which they are learning as well" (Interview 1). Casey also notes the importance of classroom spaces and explains their efforts to organize their classroom in a way that facilitates collaboration, remains flexible and adaptable to student needs, and reflects the cultural and societal norms of their students: "We don't work at individual desks, they are round tables. Four chairs around round tables, and there are 20 tables in the room. It is a very large room. There is breakfast there for them, so there is food" (Interview 1). Both Casey and Cameron noted, however, that such efforts occur as a result of their individual learning and pedagogical approach to teaching and learning, noting that such considerations are not present in the *Framework*. For Blair, who was new to their position during this research process, the isolation of teaching did not seem to give way to creative classroom organization in the same way it did their colleagues. Instead, Blair found the experience of "going it alone" as it pertains to Indigenous education and the *Framework* overwhelming, "I don't know how to fix it...I guess, the longer that I am [in this position], the more people I am going to get to know and figure out how they can help me" (Interview 1).

Related to these feelings described as "going it alone" were conversations about the lack of impact the *Framework* and associated efforts have made in the classroom lives of teacher participants. Participants connected the lack of a requirement around reading and enacting the *Framework* as problematic: "The problem with the policy is that is has no teeth. It is not required reading for educators. There are not measures of accountability in it..." (Rory, Interview 3). All participants discussed either not having read the policy or having not looked at it recently. For three of the four participants in this study this lack of interaction with the *Framework* and associated documents did not lessen their interest in, or pursuit of,

culturally relevant and responsive content and strategies for their classrooms and in their daily practice.

Rory made clear: “I became an educator because it is my passion to work with First Nation students. So that has always been my passion. I did not need the *Framework* to make me do it” (Interview 1). For Rory, however, the *Framework* provided “ammunition” when they work to gain access to resources and supports for individual Indigenous students in Rory’s role as a guidance counsellor (Interview 1). The need to teach all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives seemed self-evident for Cameron and Casey. Cameron stated, “So yes, I have looked at the *Framework*. I am of the school of thought that ‘duh’ everybody should be doing this. I don’t see why we have to have a policy” (Interview 1). The fourth participant, Blair, found that the *Framework* held increased importance in professional practice when accepting their new role in alternative education programming that required knowledge and skills about Indigenous education that had not been developed in their previous practice. “I don’t know enough about it [the *Framework*] to even understand it, like I haven’t been immersed in it enough, do you know what I mean? I need to go back [and look at it]” (Blair, Interview 1). And so, for teachers in this study the *Framework* held limited value in relation to their pedagogical practice and in-class instruction.

Professional development and the professional knowledge landscape. Teacher participants discussed the view that a bridge between policy intent and policy action may be made through effective and accessible professional development opportunities. The “increased satisfaction among educators” (OME, 2007b, p. 14) in regards to professional development focussed on Indigenous education is discussed in the *Framework* as a performance measure or indicator of progress. In contrast, the participants in this case study

research stressed that they often felt the form and content of professional development was of limited value and the availability was inconsistent.

Most prominent in our discussions of professional development was the idea that teachers desired a place to learn that was safe, flexible, and collegial. Teachers stressed that they desired professional development opportunities founded in collegial relationships and support, and they suggested that a mentorship model would be beneficial to their professional practice. In their individual interviews both Cameron and Blair made clear that they sought a safe place to learn, ask questions, and discuss their relationship to Indigenous education. Cameron's experience with professional learning in the area of Indigenous education offered little opportunity to discuss, and at times challenge the ideas they were presented:

They were more lectures...[telling us] that this is how we need to teach these [Indigenous] students. You can't tell me how to teach those students because they are individuals. Just like the Ministry [of education] trying to say this is how you teach – you just can't do it. You're discriminating against your own people again, saying this is how you need to teach them. Well no, I need to figure out how that kid is going to learn best in my classroom. Which may not be the way that you tell me, which has happened. (Cameron, Interview 3)

Participants returned to this concept during the focus group interview noting that the commonly experienced lecture format of professional development (PD) sessions may function to repress questions while a relationship- centered mentorship model encourages professional learning and development and promotes questioning.

Rory: Like this [*holds up an advertised PD session*] is very formal and who is going to ask real questions. But when you have somebody in your

building who you can go to, who you trust, maybe that is a better way for the government to spend money on training.

Cameron: So even like Rory and [mentions another staff member], like before Rory came there was another person. I never feel like my question is stupid, I can ask them and they are never going to say “you teach Native studies, you should know what you are talking about.” Like I don’t feel intimidated you know what I mean, like I know that I will get a good conversation or resources or whatever.

The value of mentorship became an important finding from the focus group discussion and so I quote an excerpt at length below. This excerpt of the focus group discussion highlights the potential for mentorship relationships to encourage learning and creativity. Participants stressed the need for opportunities to meet and spend time with teachers in their subject areas and outside of them in order to learn from one another, collaborate about resources, and create new knowledges that can translate into teacher practice.

Rory: And I do think that providing current teachers, not just with PD, but with mentor opportunities. Whether that is a mentor in the school, or staff support that comes in and works with teachers in schools on – well Aboriginal teacher consultants – around how do you incorporate Aboriginal education, topics, practices, whatever into your classrooms.

Cameron: Even getting subject teachers together, I think we had talked about this, too. But not just, like I had said getting all the Native Studies teachers, I would love to get together with all the Native Studies teachers in the board, but not just that.

Blair: So valuable.

Cameron: And get all the science people together and say it is about Indigenous education and content, right, how are you going to do it. And maybe get someone who knows and who is doing it to be the mentor for that and to brainstorm the ideas. It is that sort of stuff that is more valuable than sitting there.

Rory: Right, like in a workshop where you're just being told.

Interviewer: It was one of the things that has come up, the value of subject councils across the interviews, so that call has been consistent. So how do you think those councils would increase teacher capacities, through mentorship?

Blair: The mentorship, but also the relationships we already have with people who are teaching the same things as us. I don't know – when we had our French subject association we all knew each other because we met regularly. It was so comfortable. Resources would fly across the table – I don't know why they got rid of them.

...

Rory: The idea of [subject] councils, like our board does not really provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate on anything. So it is such a – there is such a value in it – so I know we tried with our alt ed, we do try to give them a few opportunities to be together to collaborate. We just started that in the last couple of years and hope to do more of that because I think it has been valuable.

Blair: But it has been hard to find these days.

Participants also noted the importance of and need for locally relevant professional development opportunities. Cameron noted that there was a professional development day specific to the Syrian refugee crisis and questioned its validity for their practice as “we still have no confirmation of having Syrian refugees within our board. Yet you know we have a large Indigenous population and truth and reconciliation really was not on the radar” (Cameron, Interview 3). Similarly, Casey discussed a disconnect between their professional learning opportunities and their daily practice. Casey noted that they relied most heavily on independent learning as a means for professional development. For Casey, the most valuable PD came from experience, not through content delivered in formal education spaces traditionally associated with professional learning. When asked about the nature of professional development they have participated in, Casey noted the most valuable professional learning they had done was “through my lived experiences, and again the difference is this. I took an AQ [additional qualifications] course and there it was very generalized and they are talking about learning circles” (Casey, Interview 1). Learning circles, however, Casey notes are not relevant to all Indigenous communities and so developing relations with local communities offers more meaningful opportunities to “connect and relate” knowledge to their daily practice (Interview 1).

Recent research by People for Education (2018) has indicated increased access to professional development in the area of Indigenous education is desired by teachers. When asked to explicitly consider and discuss the learning opportunities connected to the *Framework*, teacher participants said few opportunities that had been made available to them, and wondered how the policy could be effectively integrated into teacher practice without teacher learning on the policy, its content, and its intent. Participants discussed how

they felt disconnected from the PD process as they either were not receiving information in order to have access to learning opportunities or they felt the content was not relevant to their local and daily practice.

Thus, teachers, through their stories of practice, advocated for communication across the professional knowledge landscape, a bringing together of teachers to discuss their secret stories as well as their understanding of, and relationship to, the institutional story. In doing so they could interrogate the relationship between the secret, cover, and institutional stories on the professional knowledge landscape. Rory, for example, questioned the way Indigenous education PD is presented to teachers noting that while the *Framework* received no specific PD sessions, they had recently received communication about an opportunity to attend an Indigenous education PD activity over the summer holiday. Rory noted that the opportunity “implied it’s about learning to work with FNMI students in a more...like more effectively. So it still missed that point, well Aboriginal education is for all students not just FNMI students” (Rory, Focus Group). Rory continued “So you know maybe something in [the] letter clarifying that – like what is the purpose of the training. It should be to broaden the scope of Aboriginal education throughout our curriculum. Not just how do we work with FNMI students” (Rory, Focus Group).

“Cover” Stories, Teacher Knowledge, and the *Framework*

The “cover” stories communicated by teacher participants operated, in many ways, at odds with the descriptions provided by Clandinin and Connelly (1995). The notion of cover stories, as presented by Clandinin and Connelly (1996), despite their attestations that cover stories are not necessarily bad, can be accompanied by seemingly condescending connotations which suggest that teachers are working to cover up deficits in their own understandings as they pertain to the institutional story. In my research, however, teachers

rarely understood themselves as having a deficit in understanding – even when they acknowledged they had not read or considered the policy explicitly. Thus, instead of talking in ways that attempted to describe themselves as being accepting of and conforming to that which is communicated via the institutional story (Charteris & Smith, 2017; McCaughey, 2006), the voices of teachers questioned the content, medium, and relevance of vast portions of that which has been communicated via the institutional story. As such, I present cover stories as a term used to describe the efforts teachers made, and the stories they tell, which attempt to reconcile the content of their secret story and the institutional story. In doing so, teacher participants shared their knowledge by reflecting on their practice and working to interrogate it against the rhetoric of the *Framework*. It should be noted that the capacity to provide a cover story which really does not “cover” for anything at all is, in itself, a product of the complex power relations which exist in schools. That teachers exist in the formal spaces of education as simultaneously in positions of power (in relation to students, junior colleagues, para-professional staff members) and in marginal positions (in relation to school administration, department heads, board staff/members) is axiomatic. Participants in this study, however, were all secure in their employment (i.e. not supply or tenuous labour) and had significant experience and knowledge in the field of education. Thus, their capacity to deliver a cover story which, in reality, serves to question and critique the institutional story can be understood as originating from their privileged positions within *some* of the power relations existing in their professional knowledge landscape.

When asked directly how the *Framework* and its associated policy directives and documents have influenced their practice and their relationship to Indigenous education more broadly, teachers made clear that they felt the impact was minimal. Across the cover stories of teacher participants two themes emerged:

- 1) teacher participants offered critiques of the *Framework*, and the follow up action;
- 2) participants commented on how Indigenous education policy and in some ways policy more broadly – could be made more meaningful for teacher practice.

Each will be discussed in turn here.

Critiquing the policy and policy action. For Blair, the *Framework* seemed to be distinctly disconnected from their practice – the policy was positioned as the responsibility of others: “I think it’s just not being enforced by whomever. I don’t know who’s slagging, but (trails off)...And I don’t think they [the *Framework* goals] are being achieved, I don’t think anybody, well I do think some people, I don’t know – I don’t know how to say it. I just think it is not out there enough” (Interview 1). Teachers also noted a lack of curricular change since the *Framework* release.¹⁰ Relatedly, participants discussed the limitations of curriculum based efforts, returning to the notion that curriculum is not prescriptive and as such one can reach many of the expectations without the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. Rory notes that is comes down to individual teachers and decision making.

If, I mean obviously a teacher – they have, they can use professional judgement to change courses. The curriculum doesn’t prescribe activities and assignments though the booklets do that. It just depends on the teacher. If a teacher just wants to give a student the booklet and have them do it, then that is just what is going to happen. Then there won’t be any

¹⁰ Between the time of interview and the writing of this dissertation parts of Ontario’s curriculum did see significant revision in the area of Indigenous education, in specific response to the Calls to Action from the TRC. In 2018 the Ontario Ministry of Education released updated curriculum documents, specifically the *Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6/History, Grades 7 and 8* and the *Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies*. The incoming Conservative provincial government, however, made the decision in the summer of 2018 to cancel further curriculum and resource writing sessions. At the time of writing, Education Minister, Lisa Thompson has not provided comments on if, and/or when, the sessions will resume.

FNMI content in the course unless it is already embedded which is rare.

But then there are teachers out there who will invest the time and effort to re-write some of the courses, or all of a course. (Interview 2)

In the focus group participants explicitly questioned the actions of both the OME and their school board in relation to PD and follow up action on the *Framework*.

Cameron: But it wouldn't be that hard – really – if you took a PD day and said OK, all the English teachers meet at [school 1], all the French teachers meet at [school 2], all the science at...like we have enough high schools and enough spaces to do that.

Blair: We did used to do that.

Cameron: Not very often but we used to go to [school]. But people used to gripe there was no gas money.

Rory: Every PD day should have part of the day committed to that. I mean how long can you talk about literacy and numeracy really?

Cameron: How long has it been, 10 years now?

Rory: And almost all of our PD is committed to that.

Cameron: And it is always the same stuff over and over. Or the only thing we do collaborate on is our school plan for next year. The school plan which never really changes. Which is still literacy and numeracy.

Blair: Right

Rory: [laughs] Ah, the school plan

Interviewer: And that is an interesting thing as well because literacy and numeracy...

Cameron: Actually do we even have any FNMI in our school plan?

...

Rory: It is part of the board improvement plan. But these are our PD days: numeracy, numeracy, interviewing and reporting to parents, reporting program planning, improving student achievement, staff PD day - which is the last day of school which is typically a staff meeting and cleaning up.

Rory put forth an argument that this focus on literacy and numeracy happens to the detriment of Indigenous education learning and practice.

Of course, the push is always credit accumulation and graduation – and, I mean, that is what we want but it can't be at the cost of ignoring everything else... I think the danger when that is your only focus, the danger is kids get pushed through. And I am not saying that is happening, but I do think sometimes we are close to that in some areas and we get kids coming through the path of least resistance. (Interview 3)

These observations, Cameron explained, lead to a belief that the policy action following the *Framework* is inadequate.

Fundamentally, it comes down to it is not about the lip service, it is about the doing. If you want to make a change than start showing you want to make a change. If you want things to get better than you need to help take the initiative to get things better by listening to what we have to say. We can't do it on our own. (Interview 3)

Teachers, however, agreed that the *Framework* did bring about some positive changes and noted that they took what they deemed valuable and drew upon it in and for their practice in ways they viewed appropriate. For Rory, the *Framework* did have some positive impact in their practice as a guidance counsellor who, at times, needs to advocate for access to resources for Indigenous student and who takes seriously the need for Indigenous education for all students. For participants this meant that they reminded themselves that Indigenous education in Ontario must reach all students – they did not see this reinforced through the messaging of the OME or school board:

You know, we do have other students in the building and I think that that is definitely an area, that is part of my professional responsibility, too – to help educate, inform the broader community, both students and staff. So how I think the *Framework* has helped to legitimize Aboriginal education for all students, because prior to that and I think it still exists, we have lots of work to do, there is this thinking that Aboriginal education, Native Studies courses – that is for Native kids. *But it is not – it is for all kids, it is for all students and so that is the real work that needs to be done now I believe.* And I do think the *Framework*, it helps in that but it doesn't really address that specifically.

(Rory, Interview 1, emphasis by interviewer).

Suggestions for improvement. Participants acknowledged that while the *Framework* was having little impact on their day-to-day teaching practice it seemed to be operated as one of the high-level factors leading to the increased consideration of Indigenous education issues and action within their schools. All participants in this case-study positively commented that their school administration was making concerted efforts in the areas of Indigenous education. Casey gave an example of their administration's actions specific to PD

in their school: “I think that during PD sessions there has been a greater effort, for example, our last PD session, there is a greater effort to involve and educate the teacher population here on it. And not just the outer shell piece which is what traditionally happened, a 45 minute segment ‘Here ya’ go [name of Indigenous community near to school], this is their beliefs, don’t do this, here it is’ that is it” (Interview 2). Casey noted that the administration at their school had made an Indigenous education PD session mandatory: “We had the 4 or 5 people, when it was optional, come, this was all 60 or 65 of the staff, which was great. Whether or not they agree or disagreed or lended a serious ear to it, there was still the opportunity there to educate and provide it” (Interview 2). Such efforts by administration were noted by participants as being necessary actions to work towards improving Indigenous education, and teacher “buy-in” in their schools.

When prompted to consider the relationship between Ontario’s Indigenous education policy, their practice, and efforts of reconciliation in Ontario, teacher participants communicated a perceived disconnect between Ontario’s policy efforts and reconciliation efforts. Rory told a story which questions the place of reconciliation in Indigenous education policy in their professional context, and I quote it at length here.

Minimal, so we have in our board a Native Advisory Committee and that is a committee that is mandated to service the needs of one group of FNMI students particularly. But it is at least a voice where we have two trustees from the board and the directors. And at that table in September, our first meeting, the Director did bring forward the recommendations as they related to education. That committee has worked through this year how this is going to translate this year into policy for our school board. So at our meeting two weeks ago, they are finally prepared to put it into the policy in draft proposal and it will be posted, I

believe, on our school website for everyone – staff and community to have input. Which is really great, but do staff know about that? Do staff know that the TRC put out these recommendations, do they know what they are, that the board is working on a policy around that, will staff know the policy, will the policy be implemented? Well, this year do they know –no. Has it been put out there in a real form, communicated to teachers, mandated as a PD session on one of our PD days, no. So, still that communication gap exists. So when it comes out in policy form will there be communication? I suspect no. It will be on the board website so whatever teacher takes it upon themselves to go look at it – but in all honesty who does that? Like unless you are told “this is what we’re doing” so that is something I would like to see: a) each year we have so many PD days and we are, I believe by the Ministry, told what the topics of the day (or most of the day anyway) – why isn’t Aboriginal education ever on that list? And that is something that can come from the Ministry. So our school board can do it during the times we have some flexibility but it has never happened. (Interview 3)

The voices of teachers, as shared in this chapter, have shown that the teacher participants of this case study approach their professional practice with critical reflexivity. Moreover, they are not simply recipients of the institutional story, communicated through policy documents and OME and/or school board sanctioned professional development activities. Instead what becomes clear through the voices of teachers is that their relationship with the institutional story, and in this case specifically the *Framework*, emerges from their individual practical experience and pedagogical beliefs/priorities. Thus, teachers’ stories made clear that they receive the institutional story, in this case the *Framework*, with a critical mind guided by the professional knowledge they developed through their experiences and

work across the professional knowledge landscape. In the following chapter I offer a synthesis of the findings presented in both this chapter and the preceding chapter on the institutional story. In bringing together these findings—the institutional, secret, and cover stories—I make an argument that the *Framework* has been a largely ineffectual policy in the lives of teachers.

Chapter 6: Bringing the Stories Together

This chapter provides a space to synthesize the institutional, secret, and cover stories presented in chapters four and five. In bringing these stories together I consider the results presented in chapters four and five and, while continuing to centre the voices of teachers, work to explicate the ways the stories can be understood in relation to one another. In doing so, what becomes clear is that when we consider the ways these stories intersect and interact, a tension arises between the institutional story (that which conveys policy intent) and the experiences of teachers, the knowledge they discuss as having been developed across the spaces of the professional knowledge landscape (that which conveys policy actions). From this tension recommendations arise (presented in chapter seven) based on teacher voice that may operate to encourage a more productive and purposeful relationship between the Indigenous education policy of Ontario and teachers.

Chapter Outline

This chapter begins by attending to the ways teachers worked to understand the institutional story in relation to their experiences as they had communicated them through the secret and cover stories. This happens across four main areas. First, that teachers view the *Framework* as a “first” and incomplete step. Teacher perspectives on this matter align closely with my own analysis of the institutional story which notes a series of missed deadlines related to *Framework* reporting as indicative of a policy languishing with a limited life after publication. Second, teachers discussed and questioned the notion of making Indigenous education mandatory. Participants contemplated whether Ontario’s non-prescriptive curriculum structure offers an out for teachers struggling to understand and integrate Indigenous perspectives and content in their classrooms. In doing so, participants discussed the potential benefits of mandatory training and learning in the area of Indigenous education,

cultures, histories, and perspectives for both teachers and students. Third, prioritizing in a complex policy environment. Of course, the *Framework* is not the only policy teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of and use to guide their classroom practice. Thus, the institutional story should not be understood in the singular. Instead the *Framework* represents but one story in a multitude of institutional stories which all communicate a specific policy intent and elicit varying levels of policy action(s). Fourth, I work to synthesize the positioning of the *Framework* and its associated documents in relation to the social context in which it is situated.

Towards Synthesis: Exploring the Relationship between the Institutional, Secret, and Cover Stories

I move now to provide a synthesis, a coming together of, the institutional, secret, and cover stories from this case study. In doing so I first provide the voices of teachers related to each of the themes discussed. I also provide supplementary analysis on the institutional story with attention paid to the ways my own policy analysis intersects with the things teachers talked about.

The policy as a first and incomplete step. The first theme I present is one which teachers described and emphasized across all of the research encounters, both individual interviews and the focus group meeting. It is that of understanding the *Framework* as both a first *and* incomplete step towards improving Indigenous education practice in Ontario schools.

Teacher voices. Participants noted that the *Framework* was, in some ways, a good first step. Rory commented that “certainly Aboriginal education is a buzzword in our board and that is good” (Interview 1). Similarly, Blair noted that the *Framework* had “opened eyes,

the policy did, and drew attention but didn't change everything" (Interview 3). Indeed Rory went on to comment that the efforts connected to the *Framework* do not seem to be filtering down to front-line workers, including teachers:

But when, how it filters down to front line workers does not seem to happen. Because it is not enough to have a staff meeting, for example, or a PD day and say here is this FNMI Framework – read it, this is what we gotta do now because educators don't – they haven't had, well first of all they went through a school system that did not teach them anything about FNMI culture and history, that history was mostly excluded from the curriculum, so they have no knowledge of this and to expect them to go into a classroom and teach it I think – and they haven't had any PD around it, they haven't had any training, any teaching around it, they don't have supports that they can call on to come in. (Rory, Interview 1)

This commentary on the need for accessible and meaningful training for teachers in order to ensure that the *Framework* was being taken up in ways that would support the growth of teacher competencies in the area of Indigenous education permeated both the individual interviews with participants as well as the focus group discussion. Cameron noted that they continued to see students arrive in their grade nine and ten classes with little, and at times no, insight into the Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives which the *Framework* seeks to integrate into classroom learning. For Cameron, this was a scary experience and one which indicated the limited efficacy of the *Framework* in the realm of teacher practice: "So that has been over nine years so these kids are grade 9 they've already been eight years in elementary school, how do they not know what residential schools and the treaty making process are? Under the *Framework* like that in the years they've been in school, that frightens me." (Interview 2)

Comments such as the one from Cameron were echoed by other participants which ultimately led to an agreement among participants that the *Framework*, though an important and necessary effort, had little impact on the front lines of education, particularly in supporting efforts towards equity. Rory, in the first interview, told a story which highlights this circumstance well. Describing the struggle to access transportation for a First Nation student living on reserve, expressing deep frustration at a process which took two and a half years to accomplish and was fraught with the complications that arise from a student under federal jurisdiction attending a provincial school, Rory noted that this story “is proof that there are inequities in the system and really in spite of the *Framework*” and acknowledged that “even though the board has taken steps forward” through the creation of a board position to support the implementation of the *Framework*, there remains significant struggles for those on the front-lines of education practice.

It always comes back to those kids that fall under federal jurisdiction. If it is something a little bit difficult or challenging then the board kind of – no one wants to deal with it, no one deals with it. “Oh that is someone else’s responsibility, that is that person’s responsibility,” you know, it is a lot of its no one’s responsibility. (Interview 1)

Such commentary continued through the focus group discussion as teacher participants made clear that the way the *Framework* was “rolled out” was inadequate, resulting in participant perceptions of the *Framework* as a placeholder for real and sustained action. When the group discussed what they believed the purpose of the *Framework* to be, the response focussed on the policy as an incomplete effort.

Cameron: I know that I said I think it happened this way just so the government could say, look we’re doing something ...

Blair: [interrupts] To cover their butts

Cameron: ... ya' covering our butts without actually having to do a whole, [without] actually doing a whole lot of anything that is gonna' cost a whole lot of money.

This critique continued to arise, albeit through different contexts, throughout the interviews and focus group. Participants made clear that the *Framework* was understood as a first and incomplete step forward with Cameron going so far as to suggest that the messaging intended through the institutional story, via the *Framework*, has missed the mark entirely, “and it is not the point of the *Framework*, the point of the *Framework* is to put First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content into courses whether you have the Indigenous students or not. And that message is not getting out there at all” (Focus Group).

Participants were, for the most part, disenchanted with the institutional story and expressed little anticipation of meaningful follow-up action on the part of the OME. Teachers suggested repeatedly that the OME needed to “put their money where their mouth is” (Cameron, Focus Group) in order to create an educational context which can create opportunities for meaningful, transformative, and sustained change. Blair suggested that the *Framework* was, perhaps, too ambitious noting that a more appropriate approach would start with a narrow focus accompanied by realistic goals: “If they were going to write a new policy based on the things they are actually going to follow through with, it would be four pages long. So don’t write this stuff that is never going to happen” (Focus Group).

Relation to policy analysis and discussion. The policy analysis which preceded these interviews yielded results which were found to align closely with the perspectives and stories shared by teachers. That the institutional story of Indigenous education in Ontario is also framed by the actions and inactions taken by the OME was clear through the policy analysis. The *Framework* vision which presents the dual goals of closing the achievement “gap”

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Ontario schools *and* ensuring all Ontario students are made aware of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives, is a challenging one and one that requires locally relevant planning and programming to achieve. This seems to have been recognized, at the time of publication, as the OME states that

[t]he strategies identified [in the *Framework*] are *meant to be a starting point only*. All parties are encouraged to identify additional measures that would contribute to meeting the framework goals, particularly strategies that reflect local circumstances (north/south, rural/urban), as they implement the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. (OME, 2007b, p. 9, emphasis added)

The commitments made to create an implementation plan and complete and release progress reports every three years suggest that the OME was positioning the *Framework* as a policy that was indeed a first step. These commitments suggested that the policy would see consistent activity, reflection, and reconsideration within Ontario's education landscape. These commitments position the *Framework* as a policy document which would experience consistent activity, reflection, and reconsideration within Ontario's education landscape, a life after publication. These commitments also suggest that the OME understood that the *Framework* would need to be adapted by school board and school personnel to fit the local socio-political context, community desires and discussions, school board/school, educator, and student needs.

The OME wrote the policy in a way that describes Indigenous education as a priority and suggests that the *Framework* is merely the first step in a long effort toward improving Indigenous education. These concepts filter through *Building Bridges* (OME, 2007a). In

Building Bridges, much as in the *Framework*, the OME creates an understanding that Indigenous education is a priority and that the policy, and the programs connected to it, will be subject to ongoing consideration, research, reflection, and communication. The creation and release of the teacher's *Toolkit* guide (2009a) and the first progress report, *Sound Foundations* (2009b), also supported the argument of Indigenous education as a priority for the OME and the idea that the *Framework* would see regular attention in order to ensure progress towards its aims.

In the years since there has been a dearth of activity around the *Framework*. Certainly there have been research programs supported by the OME (Dion, 2014, 2017) concerned with improving Indigenous education in Ontario and some school boards and schools note activity specific to the *Framework* (Dion, et al., 2010; Cherubini, 2010, Milne, 2017; Kearns, 2013). At the OME level, however, a trend of missed deadlines and inactivity has become apparent. In the years between the 2007 release of the *Framework* and 2018 only two formal progress reports have been released, in 2009 and in 2013. Considering that 2016 represented the “goal year” whereby the OME had aimed to make significant progress towards the aims of decreasing the achievement “gap,” thereby increasing achievement for FNMI students, it is troubling that no progress report was made publicly available at that time.

It is also important to consider the ways the OME has continued, or not continued, to be active in regards to the *Framework* as it relates to curriculum, resources, and capacity building opportunities. In this area some disconcerting trends emerge. Despite positioning the *Toolkit* as “an evolving resource” (OME, 2009a, p.5), the online resource page has not been updated since April of 2011. As well, the OME held three biennial conferences in 2007, 2009, and the last in 2011. These “Circle of Light” conferences presented materials concerned with developing school board, school, and educator capacities around the

enactment of the *Framework*.¹¹ Though these conferences are listed in both progress reports as evidence of ongoing efforts to offer professional development and relationship building opportunities, there has been no mention of the role the conference might take in future work around the *Framework*; indeed, there is no mention of them at all in the *Implementation Plan*.

At the time my research was conducted, the most recent publicly accessible publications related to the Indigenous education in Ontario were the *Scope and Sequence* documents. These documents are certainly valuable and necessary. However, it is important to think about the likelihood that these documents will be called upon by educators in order to inform their practice. As noted above, the *Scope and Sequence* documents are not mentioned in the *Framework* itself, nor are the progress reports or *Implementation Plan*. Instead they are found online amongst other policy and resource documents. Considering the fact that curriculum is not prescriptive, in that it offers a range of ways to achieve the expectations set out via curriculum documents instead of requiring specific content and strategies, and taking into account the online placement of these documents, one is left to wonder how many teachers, who are not already invested in achieving the goals of the *Framework* and in bettering Indigenous education, will find and/or make the time to access these documents in order to better integrate Indigenous perspectives in their classrooms. In considering the policy's life, it is also necessary to note the silence manifested through a lack of a 2016 progress report or even a commentary, a silence which persisted well past the goal year of 2016 until the release of a 2018 progress report.

¹¹ Information on these conferences can be found here: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/>

As we move further away in time from the release date of the *Framework*, a marked decrease in detailed and specific language around the development of programming and resources is visible. This shift, when scrutinized against the increasing concern for data collection and management, reveals a troubling move away from substantive action and change and towards reification of the “gap” as something external to the structures and systems of formal education in Ontario. Taken together this lack of activity calls into serious question the place of Indigenous education as the priority the OME has claimed it to be. The trends noted in activity, namely the absence of a 2012 progress report, the lack of *Toolkit* updating and no Circle of Light conferences since 2011, position 2011 as a benchmark year where concern with reaching the *Framework* goals seems to have decreased. But we may also consider that this decrease in activity may well be evidence that the OME was happy with the ways activities related to the *Framework* were playing out and that the intention was for the *Framework* to operate as a decentralized policy – taken up and adapted by school boards and school in locally specific and relevant ways. The data presented in my research, however, note the troubling presence of increasingly ambiguous language that takes the place of specific references to resources and programming. This language is accompanied by a shift to data, achievement, and standards. A transition is made clear in the nature of the policy from a combined exhortative and imperative policy to one focussed on the aims of accountability assessed through standardized measures and primarily focussed on the achievement “gap”. This shift in focus, though, must be explicitly and critically reflected on. Gillborn (2008) offers a compelling argument around the ways that talking about “gaps” often conceals large-scale, or systemic inequality: “The repeated assertion that the inequalities are being reduced fails to recognize the scale of the present inequality and how relatively insignificant the fluctuations really are” (p. 68). In referring to the argument of

Gillborn, I do not wish to suggest that working towards improved education outcomes for Indigenous students is not necessary and that the celebration of improvements is not appropriate. I do, however, wish to stress that the focus on data collection and management in lieu of specific and pointed programming and resource development operates to inflate the effectiveness and value of Ontario's Indigenous education strategy to the detriment of the work towards meaningful change and towards both decolonization and reconciliation. A living policy offers opportunities to re-vision, re-order, re-conceptualize its content, its medium, and its format. The *Framework*'s life, unfortunately, seems to have faltered as none of these opportunities have come to realization.

Making it mandatory: content and professional development. This second theme arose through teacher discussions which considered mandatory content, teacher competency, and professional development.

Teacher voices. Although previous attempts to make PD mandatory and heavily monitored have been unpopular (for an extensive breakdown of such efforts during the years of Conservative Ontario premier Mike Harris, see Kerr, 2006), teachers talked in our research encounters about the potential for mandatory Indigenous content to operate as a catalyst for real and sustained change in Ontario schools and classrooms. Teacher participants talked of mandatory content in two ways. First they discussed mandatory PD for teachers in the areas of integrating Indigenous perspectives, cultures, and histories and relations between the Canadian government and Indigenous groups including local First Nations communities. Then they considered the wisdom of a mandatory course for all secondary school students.

When discussing the ways mandatory training efforts for teachers might operate to support meaningful change in the area of teacher capacities in Indigenous education, teachers made connections with their current perceptions around why the *Framework* may not be seeing as much enactment as intended. For Rory, there was a direct connection between a lack of teacher buy-in and available training.

And so, it's not happening in the classrooms. Because the time has not been put in to train the teachers, to support them if they want to go and take courses, to make them aware of the supports that are available to them and to encourage them or require that they do the PD or the training, that they bring the supports into the classroom.

(Interview 1)

Participants made a connection between this lack of required training and the potential for a teacher's professional knowledge (that knowledge which is developed in and through professional practice) to act as an out in terms of making decisions to integrate Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives into the classroom. Participants talked about the ways curriculum operates in their practice, that curriculum is not prescriptive (in that it does not dictate exactly how teachers will reach expectations through content and instruction) and thus allows for and requires teachers to interpret curriculum expectations and then act upon those interpretations. For participants in this study this seemed to create a potential for tension between the policy directive of integration of Indigenous content and their professional experience. Casey discussed this and placed the emphasis on teachers as needing to have the desire for action in the area of Indigenous education.

Naturally teachers have the opportunity and the capability, and that is what the ministry and the boards would say, that they have the opportunity to build that into

any course. So it is really a teacher wanting too, again the will and the desire to take it upon themselves to build it into their curriculum practices. (Interview 1)

Cameron similarly made connections between teacher practice, teacher knowledge and a desire to integrate Indigenous perspectives into one's courses.

I looked over the grade 11 college-level English curriculum. There is nowhere that said, you know, put this in as Indigenous content. Again it's just the brackets with suggestions. ... They are only suggestions, it is not saying you have to do it. That is part of the problem, too. There is not a unit in English for Native literature.

Sometimes I think they just do this so it looks like they're doing something. So they take the expectations, reword them and rewrite them a little bit. (Interview 2)

Overall, teacher participants in this study made clear that they understood mandatory PD in the area of Indigenous education as appropriate and necessary to enable meaningful improvements around teacher capacities in Ontario schools. For Rory this seemed obvious. "I do think there is the voluntary part which we have relied on until now. Obviously that doesn't work for everyone, there has to be a requirement for everyone put in place" (Interview 1). Rory continued, stressing the importance of having more than basic content knowledge, a process Rory believed would be aided through the requirement of PD participation, "that you have to know this and you have to be able to teach this. It is not just about the knowledge piece...but also to be trained in how to present the information because it will make all the difference in how it is received..." (Rory, Interview 1). The importance of this for teacher participants was made clear by the fact that three of four participants returned to this topic multiple times across the individual interviews and expressed agreement in the focus group session regarding the need for mandatory PD.

At some point across our research encounters, and often more than once, all

participants discussed the need for, and potential benefits of, creating a mandatory Indigenous perspectives course for students. Casey described this need across all interviews.

Every student that attends an Ontario secondary school should have, the Ministry should develop a course, if we have to take French, everyone should take, in probably grade eleven maybe grade ten, an Aboriginal perspectives course that is mandatory for everyone...it should be mandatory there is no if, ands, or buts about it, you should have to take a class. (Interview 1)

They returned to this discussion in both subsequent interviews suggesting that such a course is essential to creating circumstances within Ontario's formal education system which would support increased understanding of Indigenous perspectives for students, stating, "education is power, knowledge is power. People are sometimes unfortunately not going to make that choice, unless you make the choice for them, and that is one that should be made" (Interview 3). Cameron provided a similar rationale arguing that in order for students, and teachers, to understand themselves as treaty people, such a course is essential. "I think the first step would be to make every high school student take a Native Studies course...If every kid understood and had knowledge of what happened, understood why things are how they are now, which is all based in history, I think we'd have a totally different mindset..." (Interview 2). Rory, impacted by professional practice as a guidance counsellor, extended the conceptualization of the benefits of a mandatory course as ensuring teachers and school personnel understand that Indigenous courses are not just for Indigenous students. For Rory, such a course also provided an opportunity for the OME to have a firmer hand in ensuring the objectives and visions of the *Framework* and follow up planning such as the *Implementation Plan* were being enacted in secondary schools in Ontario. Participants returned to this discussion again in the focus group session. In this discussion participants

made clear that while they viewed an essential course as a necessary action, it should not be understood as a solution. This exchange highlights many of the complexities which teachers discussed across the research encounters and so is quoted at length below.

Rory: It is all about desire, to broaden scope of Aboriginal education, so make it a required course as a starting point. But the ultimate goal, I think, should be. I don't know where I land on Native Studies courses, in terms of – I think there was a place for them, but it should not always be ...like we should have a bigger vision than that.

Blair: That it is in everything.

Rory: That is in everything, like you said, from the start. To have these separate courses...

Cameron: ... and I agree with you there, too.

Blair: And the backlash of making it a compulsory course, I taught French for 20 years, there was backlash from people not wanting their kids to take French. So imagine it would be a whole new, "I don't want my kids taking that course."

...

Rory: Like anything there is a time of transition but ultimately people accept. It is just the government has to be willing to embark on that difficult transition time and hold to it. (Focus Group)

The discussions around mandatory content made clear that the participants in this case study desired increased requirements around Indigenous education, for both teachers and students. Though the expression of this desire was strongly expressed across the data, participants acknowledged the complexities, opportunities, and constraints of mandating Indigenous education training for teachers and course work for students. One such example of this came through discussions of local expertise, and so while participants made clear

pleas for increased OME direction and follow-up, they also stressed that such efforts would need to consider, respect, and be engaged with local knowledge and expertise. Another consideration discussed by two participants brought up issues of hiring and representation in teaching staff and school personnel. Both Rory and Casey lamented the lack of hiring of Indigenous, and specifically local First Nation community staff into their schools.

Prioritizing in a complex policy environment. For teachers participating in this study the *Framework* was said to exist in a complex, and at times overwhelming, policy environment. They described the current environment as one where teachers were supplied a host of policies, or institutional stories, and one in which they found themselves necessarily prioritizing some institutional stories over other material. They noted that every institutional story they receive comes with additional work to read, interpret, and work towards integrating the content in their already busy days of educator practice. Casey described this environment. “Everything, a policy of a policy of a policy of a policy” and went on to question a perceived lack of integration across the policy directives of the OME, observing that “... we have all of these distinct and separate but why are we not linking them? Or why are we not having something where they are all interconnected or one document that can speak to them all on some sort of a level...” (Interview 2). Blair echoed the sentiment that there are simply too many policies that teachers are expected to be aware of and incorporate into their daily work, stating they are “overwhelmed, it’s not like I can sit and read through the policies and follow them every day. It is basically a common sense thing and being professional and hoping that I’m not breaking any of the policies” (Interview 2). For Cameron, and others, it seemed axiomatic that in such a complex policy environment certain policies become prioritized based on both the level to which integration into practice is required of teachers and their own professional experiences as guided by their socio-material contexts. Ultimately

it was suggested strongly that many policies, or institutional stories, simply do not get attention from teachers whose professional lives are already extremely busy.

Nobody is reading it. I'll tell you that right now. Well maybe they are, I mean *Growing Success* I read because I know that is part of my practices and I know some of that stuff around professional judgement. I want it to cover my own ass...(Cameron, Interview 2).

The way teachers necessarily prioritized certain institutional stories was also connected with the ways policies were being prioritized by school administration, school boards, and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Participants in the focus group discussion talked extensively about the ways they perceived different policies being rolled out by the OME. Relatedly, they discussed how policies received different levels of take-up following their release and that they are enforced in different ways and with different levels of accountability requirements. Pointedly, they remarked that until policy efforts, such as the integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives, are presented within curriculum documents themselves (a move which had begun under the previous Liberal government as commented on in chapter four), they are unlikely to result in significant teacher action. Participants discussed this in relation to the *Framework* and the release of the 2015 Health and Physical Education curriculum.

Rory: Like the way that the sex ed[ucation] new curriculum was enforced basically, even though there was lots of backlash and people didn't like it. "No this is what we are going to do." I think it is a great example. But for Aboriginal education, for the FNMI *Framework* did you see that? No. It was pretty much just booklets handed out

to certain people, this would be interesting reading. Here is some good ideas for you.

But certainly not the same kind ...

Blair: Forced down everyone's throats.

Rory: Saying this is what you are going to do.

Interviewer: And not the same dialogue in public?

Blair: No, no public people outside of education know that the *Framework* exists.

Cameron: I can't see too many people outside of this school that know it exists.

Blair: Even in education. (Focus Group Interview)

The notion of curriculum documents versus the rest of policy was also taken up in individual interviews where teachers questioned the efficacy of the current OME approach to policy creation, organization, and distribution. Casey commented that they strongly believed many teachers, themselves included, simply don't "know enough about the policies. I think they come into the classroom, they know their curriculum booklets, they know their expectations, they know what they need to know and they have done it" (Interview 2). Going on, Casey described a disconnect between the non-curriculum based policy efforts and teachers' daily practices, "they know how to teach, they are gonna' give their assessment, formative/summative as/of/for, however you want to describe it. But they don't really know the policies and they haven't invested their time in the policies" (Interview 2). Time, then, became an important element of these discussion around prioritizing and navigating in a complex policy environment. Participants discussed how the environment, populated with what they perceived to be too many policies, simply did not allow for the opportunity for meaningful, iterative, and sustained interaction with policy directives in their daily practice.

Participants made clear that the different mediums through which the OME communicates institutional stories, and the accompanying goals and priorities of the Ministry of Education, significantly impacts the level of interaction teachers undertake in relation to their practice. They speculated heavily that this would be true of their colleagues as well and so advocated for a more integrated policy system delivered by the Ontario Ministry of Education in order to provide increased opportunities and requirements for the consideration of Indigenous issues in relation to teacher practice.

On policy relations: policy and society. The final theme of this synthesis chapter considers the ways the *Framework* exists and operates within a set of socio-political relations. For teachers the *Framework* seemed to elicit little connection between the policy (and its relevance to formal education in Ontario) and the broader socio-political discussions, efforts, and issues happening in Canada. In particular, time was spent discussing the lack of relationship between the *Framework* and efforts towards both reconciliation and decolonization.

Teacher voices. During the individual interviews, participants were asked about their understandings of the relationships among reconciliation, decolonization, the *Framework*, and their professional practice. What became clear through these discussions is that teachers understood the *Framework* and its related documents/follow up work as having little connection to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, the final report of the TRC, and subsequent efforts to acknowledge and act upon the TRC's 94 Calls to Action. Though the *Framework* was released before the work of the TRC had begun, it should be noted that teachers remarked on a lack of adaptation of the policy in subsequent publications in relation to the work of the TRC (e.g., the *Implementation Plan*). Thus, participants indicated that the *Framework* did little to support reconciliation and indeed does little to support teacher

understanding of reconciliation. This was evident in comments such as Casey's which described the *Framework* as political and distanced from the work of reconciliation.

I think that reconciliation is a separate entity from what the document focusses on.

The document doesn't truly, I don't think it focusses on truly wanting to necessarily truly, honestly make it better for FN people. I think that it is political. I think that increasing literacy rates, yes will lead to other things. But I think that it is more statistically based, than it is based on the social aspects and what is there. (Interview 3)

Rory similarly located the *Framework* as operating at a distance from the work of reconciliation and questioned if it is even possible for a policy to support reconciliatory work without explicitly addressing what that means and looks like. For Rory, explicitly addressing reconciliation is directly related to the increasing of teacher capacities in Indigenous education but, "educators, staff aren't really informed what it is and what it means – they are not providing opportunity to learn the information or even just basically build an understanding around it" (Interview 3). They continued this discussion again returning to the notion that formal, required training, is essential to this process and commenting on the ways such work must be prioritized by decision-makers in schools and school boards.

And we haven't been given that opportunity, staff haven't been given that opportunity in a formal way, directed from the board. So if they don't get that, because of all these competing priorities on their time than that falls by the wayside. Like I say, it is not because they don't care – it is just competing priorities on their time. (Interview 3)

Another perspective discussed by Blair indicated that reconciliation will emerge on the radar of their own professional practice once it is integrated into the curriculum. They stated that they did not think reconciliation has “hit yet, I think once the curriculum rolls over there is going to be a lot of new resources...but it is about implementing them and making sure everyone is implementing them” (Interview 3).

Though all teachers acknowledged that there is a role for formal education to play in efforts of reconciliation in Canada, the concept itself, for most participants, seemed to remain abstract. They had not been required to conceptualize what their professional relationship with, and responsibilities to, reconciliation would look like in practice. Some participants offered descriptions or definitions of reconciliation which seemed to remove the responsibility from the classroom and teacher practice. For example, Casey suggests that reconciliation efforts needs to happen at the federal level, as that is where they identified the origins of most of the historical and contemporary system marginalization of Indigenous communities and individuals.

I think that has been done at the federal level and I think that is where it has to be done, more so than the provincial, I mean at that point with everything that happened it was the federal government that was responsible for all of these shortcomings and the inadequacies, the tragedies that took place. (Interview 3)

Positing such a distance between reconciliation and the day-to-day spaces of education inherently also distances it from teacher practice as indicated in interviews with both Casey and Blair. For Rory and Cameron, however, the place of reconciliation in their daily practice was discussed as necessary to broader efforts of reconciliation. For Cameron this meant

engaging in educative processes that confront and interrogate biases both inside the classroom and out.

My personal role is to just educate. You know like I will, obviously my classes for sure, if I'm out I have made a few enemies by confronting people with very biased attitudes who think I'm insane. But again it's because they don't understand the history and don't understand the truth. I get it. I'm hoping to start working on creating people through our education system that are going to understand that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. An ongoing problem for all of us. (Interview 3)

Reconciliation was a concept Rory discussed extensively, indicating that they had clearly spent time considering what reconciliation is or could be and what it would look like in practice. They described reconciliation as more than acknowledging a wrong-doing and offering forgiveness, instead describing it as “a step beyond that where there is a new relationship built” and making clear that this requires “new actions towards each other, and I think that in education that means that we have to do things differently” (Rory, Interview 3). For Rory, the relationship between reconciliation and education was of clear importance but also only one part of the solution; “But I don't think that reconciliation, like true reconciliation, can happen unless injustices are addressed through our, in our society, not just in education. Education is just one part of it” (Interview 3). Rory suggested that education around reconciliation is made more meaningful when accompanied by meaningful and sustained system changes;

So things have to be dealt with, like land claims have to be dealt with, kids in care have to be dealt with. And I don't mean totally resolved but at least there has to be, the general population has to see that the powers that be are showing leadership are

going to the table, talking in good faith, trying to move forward on these issues. Not what we have seen in the past. That is what will give real legitimacy to those conversations we will start to have in staff rooms and in classrooms with students, yes reconciliation is important, it is real, it is going to happen. Without that happening out there in the broader world, kids see right through it and staff do too – they are like “we are just talking about this, it is not real or really happening.” They don’t take it seriously. (Interview 3)

Throughout the interview process it became clear that reconciliation was not understood by participants as part of the efforts associated with the *Framework* and its related subsequent publications and actions. Instead teachers made clear that they were attempting to reach understandings of reconciliation and to navigate their relationship with it on an individual basis. This resulted in teachers advocating, again, for opportunities which allowed for collegial, collaborative, and safe environments for professional learning in the area.

Though I was confident that participants would have at least been aware of the TRC and had at least some opportunity and/or motivation to consider what reconciliation might be or look like to them, I was less sure if the ongoing, deep, and important conversations being had in academia around decolonization would be present in the learning or practice of teachers. In exploring this concept, decolonization, with teachers in the individual interviews it became clear that there is a gap which exists between these vibrant academic discussions and the professional lives of teachers. Teachers all worked to offer a definition of decolonization in our discussions when asked to explain how they understand decolonization. These definitions or descriptions varied significantly. Rory described colonization largely in a manner consistent with current work in the area.

I guess in a nutshell if you say colonization is where you know the powers that be control it and dictate what it is going to be, what it is going to say, how it is going to work and they set the standards for success and all of those things. Then decolonization is the opposite. (Interview 3)

Essential for Rory, however, was that decolonization would be centered on a characteristic of meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities.

And it is not up to the colonizers to say what gets included and what gets excluded, it's a shared discussion and agreement – like they both, I don't want to say both sides like a conflict, but all parties including FNMI community have a voice and they are real partners. It is not just consultation in terms of listening to you say but we're going to do it our way anyway. (Interview 3)

For others, though, decolonization seemed again an abstract concept and one which they had considered in only a limited manner previously. Blair admitted openly that they really did not know what decolonization meant or what it would look like.

I don't know. I don't know – it is like, um I don't know if I understand it – are you talking about like having the rez schools that we have now?... Ya, what I think when you say decolonizing education I think of, like, intermingling more but I don't know if that is what it is.

Eventually Blair returned to the idea that decolonization would be made possible through curriculum change. "Ya it is going to have to filter down and I guess it is common sense. We are teaching the truth, we have to teach the truth, we haven't been apparently - little did we know" (Interview 3). Cameron hinted at decolonization being connected to the interrogation and restructuring of systems which contribute to marginalization of Indigenous people. "Like

I don't know, ultimately for me decolonization for me again would be that point where we're all equal in the sense of fundamental human rights and access to resources that we need" (Interview 3). Cameron acknowledged that they had not spent a great deal of time considering the issue, remarking, "Do you have any idea how big that question is? You know what, I don't know how, unless there is a real shift in thought and allowing everyone to be part of the process, I don't know if you can decolonize..." (Interview 3). Casey's comments on decolonization perhaps best exemplify the gap between academic scholarship in education on decolonization and teachers' professional practice. Initially, Casey's definition suggested decolonization as a negative thing.

Decolonization to me means that we are moving away from inclusive practices and if we are moving away from inclusive practices we are moving in the wrong direction. I think we have to, we have to find ways to appreciate one another and to live in the same space. (Interview 3)

When encouraged to consider some of the ideas around decolonization in current education scholarship Casey challenged the efficacy of such concepts.

And I guess if that is how, if scholars are choosing to see it that way and if that is the definition in its entirety than sure I mean those are perspectives that we obviously want to highlight. But I think that any time, and I guess this is where I am going with the entire conversation, any time you use the word whether it be – scholars always love to throw words around and they come up with a new word, then that's the fad for a while, then they change it... (Interview 3)

When asked for clarification Casey suggested the word itself was problematic, “yes, because it has an association with it. Just throw it out – there is another word that you could probably use that would cover the same basis” (Interview 3).

Consistent across the discussions of decolonization was the need for increased opportunities to make connections across academic scholarship and the professional knowledge landscape of teachers. The teacher voices presented in this section indicate that participants understand there is a disconnect between the *Framework* and the OME’s efforts in relation to Indigenous education, and the broader socio-political context. They also recognize that there is a gap between the discussions being had in academic spaces and those being had in professional spaces of teaching and professional learning.

Relation to policy analysis and discussion. Examining social context is a necessary act; as Punch (2009) argues, analysing documents without consideration of their social context deprives the documents of meaning. Moreover, Braun, Ball, Maguire, and Hoskins (2011) make clear that any study of policy enactment must consider various levels of context, as school-specific factors also greatly impact the ways teachers understand and enact policies. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to the broader, or macro-level, sociopolitical contexts in which a policy is created and presented to educators and the context of their daily work, the micro-level. After attending to the ways this macro-level context influences, or in some cases, does not appear to have influenced policy development, I was able to investigate the ways these macro-level happenings intersect with the day-to-day practice, or micro-level context, of teachers through our research encounters. I also want to recall the argument made by Shore and Wright (1997) that policies arise out of particular contexts and in many ways “encapsulate the entire history and culture of the society that generated them” (p.7). Thus, while policies may be veiled in language that attempts to portray neutrality, policies are, at

their core, fundamentally and inescapably political (Wedel, Shore, Feldman, & Lathrop, 2005). The political and historical nature of policy often leads to the “masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality” as a “key feature of modern power” (Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 8-9). At the level of policy enactment this macro-level context operates in a co-constitutive relationship with the micro-level social and structural context of teachers’ daily lives and practices. At times the macro and micro-level trends intersect, at times they are in concordance with one another, while at other times at odds with one another. It is important then, as Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) remind us, to assess education policy and investigate policy enactment through an exploration of context, that we take context seriously. Teachers’ practice within material and professional contexts which significantly impact not only their decisions around policy enactment but also their ability to do so.

As noted above, 2011 can be understood as a benchmark year, where activity around realizing the vision of the *Framework* seems to have been de-prioritized and momentum towards change lost. The year 2011 was, perhaps relatedly, also a year of political change in Ontario. Despite retaining his position as Ontario Premier, then Liberal party leader Dalton McGuinty saw his party’s hold on provincial parliament decrease to 53 seats, thereby creating a minority government. At the federal level, 2011 also saw the re-election of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper with a winning majority government mandate. These political shifts occurred alongside the ongoing activities, research, publications and processes of the TRC, which was created in 2008 and concluded its mandate in December of 2015, releasing its final report (TRC, 2015). Since 2011 Ontario has seen the re-election of a Liberal majority government in 2014, led by Premier Kathleen Wynne as well as a federal level election of a majority Liberal party government headed by current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. I remind the reader of these political changes because they are undoubtedly

related to the attention and support the work of the *Framework* receives. In a sociopolitical context where Canada's TRC has released a final scathing, informative, and hopeful report, it would stand to reason that the *Framework*, and efforts to improve Indigenous education in Ontario would be receiving much attention, specifically related to the role education has to play in reconciliation and the responsibilities of ministries of education, school boards, schools, and educators in this work. The absence of activity related to the *Framework*, however, is in direct opposition to the call made in the TRC's final report for all levels of government and the entire citizenry to engage in the work of reconciliation (2015).¹² There has been a missed opportunity for the OME to re-conceptualize the *Framework*, and its associated programs and resources through the lenses of reconciliation and decolonization using the TRC literature as a launching point. As well, there has been a missed opportunity to answer the calls of the TRC to explore the way formal systems of education have been, and continue to be, complicit in the marginalization and oppression of Indigenous voices and perspectives. And finally, also a missed opportunity to create circumstances which would not merely suggest, but specifically facilitate, the education of non-Indigenous teachers in these areas in order to support the development of reflexive practice and transformative education as it relates to Indigenous education in Ontario. This consideration of the macro-level sociopolitical context indicates that the discourses found within the *Framework* are both constituted by and co-constitutive of the ways Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives continue to be marginalized within Ontario schools, the ways reconciliation has not been taken up at the provincial level and, relatedly, the ways the roles and responsibilities

¹² Here I am not suggesting that there is no work being done in Ontario which studies and supports improvements in the area of Indigenous education. Indeed, the work done by Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Dr. Susan Dion and her team, as highlighted through *The Listening Stone* report and *The Learning Exchange* website, indicates the benefits of Indigenous focussed collaborative inquires and programming in education.

of all educators in Indigenous education remain neglected and perhaps even (mis)understood by educators.

Reflecting on the Institutional Story

As demonstrated through the review of literature presented in chapter two, Indigenous education in Canada, and Ontario, is complicated. Formal schooling for Indigenous people and communities has long been vested in a sociopolitical, economic, and legal history which has promoted education as a “civilizing” force, capable of “kill[ing] the Indian within the child” (Harper, 2008, np). As such, formal education has developed as a source of contention, fear, anger, but also as a site of cultural and linguistic renewal (Battiste, 2013; Munroe, Borden, Orr, Toney & Meader, 2013), a potential site to challenge Euro-western norms including inaccurate and harmful historical representations (Dion, 2007; Iseke-Barnes, 2005; St. Denis, 2011), and a site to resist and confront colonial mindsets through transformative education (McGregor, 2014). At the same time, formal education systems in Canada have also largely failed to teach non-Indigenous students about Canada’s colonial past and the implications of Canada’s contemporary position as a settler-state with persistent colonial structures and legacies (Cote-Meek, 2014; Iseke-Barnes, 2005). As well, until fairly recently curriculum has failed to integrate Indigenous cultures, histories, or perspectives into the overt curriculum, instead communicating an inaccurate and harmful message of Indigenous peoples and communities as historical relics (see Battiste, 1998; Dion, 2004, 2007; Iseke- Barnes, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). These varying experiences, resistances, struggles, and perspectives make clear that there is no single “solution” to the problems which plague Indigenous education. It is clear that, as the problems are multi-faceted in origin, so, too, must be the solutions.

My analysis of the institutional story on Indigenous education in Ontario, as presented through policy documents, revealed a significant discursive tension. Earlier work by Cherubini & Hodson (2008) Cherubini et al., (2010) and Cherubini (2010, 2014) has made clear that the *Framework* is both an important effort in Ontario but not one without problems (as outlined in detail through the literature review in chapter two). Here I have sought to add to this discussion by exploring the discursive tensions which came through as findings of my own policy analysis. In using the term discursive tension, I draw on the Foucauldian (1972, 1980) understanding of discourse which understands discursive structures as capable of fashioning and reinforcing particular worldviews. As well, discourses have the capacity to be operationalized, via distribution by those in positions of power and privilege, in ways that normalize these worldviews. In the *Framework*, then, I have identified two areas where the OME seems to be attempting to put forth discourses which appear to be incongruous, and untenable: the purpose of the policy formation and the aim of the policy directives. I argue that in doing so, the OME undermines the efficacy of the *Framework* policy effort.

In order to explore the tension constructed via the *Framework* as it relates to the purpose of the policy formation, I have drawn on Ball, Maguire, Braun and Hoskins's (2011) descriptions of imperative/disciplinary policy *and* an exhortative/developmental policy. Imperative, or disciplinary, policy is driven by standards in that it constructs "the problem of education" as "one of standards and the need to raise standards, represented in quantitative outcomes and measures" (Ball, et al., 2011, p. 613). In this manner, imperative policy sets forth directives which require relatively little teacher reflection (Ball, et al., 2011); teachers are set an agenda of improvement and asked to draw upon policy directives to achieve these goals. Exhortative, or developmental, policy is driven by action and reflection. The problem

of education in exhortative policy, is learning is understood “as a process and a set of skills and dispositions” and allows for a more active policy subject, a teacher who brings to the policy their own judgements, experience, and professionalism (Ball, et al., 2011, p. 615). The *Framework* can be understood as imperative/disciplinary as its creation is directly connected to an identified problem, the “gap,” and attempts to solve the problem. Moreover, in the *Framework*, the OME, emphasizes “Measuring Success” as critical to the solution, and explains that “establishing baseline data on the achievement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario’s provincially funded schools will be a *key target* in the implementation plan of the framework” (p.10). This focus on data, however, is set alongside broader aims including: “support identity building” (p. 18), “foster supportive and engaged families and communities” (p. 19), and “build educational leadership capacity and coordination” (p. 17), in many ways exhortative policy aims. In creating a policy which, through its vision, principles, and strategies works as both disciplinary and exhortative policy, the OME constructed a policy that exists in a state of discursive tension, a policy that seeks both a passive policy subject driving improved achievement but also requires an active policy subject, a subject who is engaged in reflexive practice and works to improve education through relationship building and learning by both students and themselves. Discursive tension also manifests in other ways in the *Framework*. Despite presenting the *Framework* as specific to Indigenous education and the work to be done in this area, the OME attempts to fit the solutions for Indigenous education problems into a pre-existing colonial structure. The *Framework* is structured in a way that organizes the strategies and performance measures to improve Indigenous education into the established goals of Ontario’s education system: high levels of student achievement, reducing gaps in student achievement, and achieving high levels of public confidence. In attempting to fit the strategies for improving Indigenous

education within the existing structures and goals of Ontario's education system, the *Framework* works against its own capacity to truly take a "holistic" approach (p.6) and facilitate substantive change. The intent of the *Framework*, then, is made imprecise by the tensions it creates and actions it attempts to prescribe.

Tension is also made manifest through the policy directives aimed at addressing the "two primary challenges," to improve achievement among Indigenous students and close the gap, but also a vision which seeks to have this improved achievement occur alongside an education of all students around Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspective. Despite both being important aims for OME policy, the education of all students and improved outcomes for Indigenous students represent different challenges for school boards, schools, and teachers and thus may operate in competition with one another when presented in the *Framework* together.

Ultimately what is revealed via the discourses identified through my analysis and by tracing them through subsequent policy publications is that the *Framework* can be understood as a policy, which, despite calls to actions for school boards and schools, remains emblematic, representative of a persistent disjunctive between policy intent and policy action. In the *Framework*, the OME presents a vision which calls for the education of FNMI youth in both "traditional and contemporary knowledge" and of all students in the areas of "contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives" (OME, 2007b, p. 7). Despite the suggestion of wide-ranging action, the policy lacks evidence of any effort to turn the analytical gaze inwards to critically address how the Ontario school system can thoughtfully, and through reflexive engagement, achieve the goals set forth through the vision. Nor does it consider and confront the ways Ontario's education system is complicit in reinforcing the social and systemic norms which create and maintain

the problems related to Indigenous education in Ontario and the ways this might complicate the reaching of the aforementioned goals. Instead, the *Framework* presents a series of strategies and performance measures which ultimately serve to reinforce the colonial structures and beliefs systems which dominate public education in Ontario, that of competition, individualism, and a narrow definition of achievement.

The *Framework*, and the associated documents which followed it, represent a series of missed opportunities for the OME. The documents display little evidence of meaningful critical and introspective reflection on the “gaps” the policy seeks to address. Furthermore, there is little indication of ongoing consideration of the gaps which persist between policy intent and policy (in)action and/or the ways Ontario, as a jurisdictional component of the larger settler-colonial state of Canada, contributes to the continued marginalization of Indigenous knowledges, histories, and perspectives. Instead, the *Framework* locates the “problems” with Indigenous education as existing within FNMI students and communities, as well as teachers, while positioning the OME as a benign and benevolent (Cherubini, 2010) education provider. These actions represent yet another instance whereby curriculum has been operationalized in the project of maintaining settler futurity in place of disrupting settler supremacy (Tuck & Gatzambide-Fernández, 2013). The *Framework* misses important opportunities to support meaningful transformation in Ontario’s schools; to reconceptualise our education system in a way that meaningfully supports critical, decolonizing, and anti-oppressive education in order to support both improved outcomes for FNMI students; and to ensure all students in Ontario are aware of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives.

Conclusion

Through chapters four, five, and six I have presented data findings which have indicated the *Framework* as both necessary and problematic. From these findings comes an argument that the *Framework* is emblematic of broader problems in education policies, specifically, the disconnect between policy intent and action. In making this argument, my analysis aligns with analyses conducted by others such as Butler (2015) and Segeren (2016), who have called Ontario's equity policy symbolic and Abawi and Brady (2017), who describe the OME policy making process as "problematic and one-sided," arguing that the resultant policies "reinforce power dichotomies based on Eurocentric colonial theories of race, anthropology, eugenics and cultures, which privilege whiteness as the norm" (p. 28). My own analysis, like the work of Cherubini (2010), Segeren (2016), and Abawi and Brady (2017) helps to elucidate the problems of policy making driven by political pressure to address a real or perceived "problem" (Rivzi & Lingard, 2010). Such reactive, or problem-driven, policy making, Rivzi and Lingard argue, often results in the production of policy with abstract, though ambitious, goals and visions as well as broad and often unrealistic expectations and timelines. That this problem is prevalent and pervasive in Ontario's Indigenous education policy has been demonstrated in this chapter.

I would also like to recall Ball's (1998) argument that "policies are both systems of values and symbolic systems; ways of representing, accounting for and legitimating, political decisions. Policies are articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for those effects" (p. 124). I do this in order to bring attention to the notion that repeated findings of policy as unfinished, inequitable, too complex, colonial, and neoliberal in nature (Abawi & Brady, 2017; Cherubini, 2010; People for Education, 2017; Segeren, 2016) reveal a significant policy problem in Ontario's education system. Education policies aimed at

improving the formal education system in Ontario appear to repeatedly fail to address, and work to redress, the implications of continuing to privilege colonial education structures, ideals, and goals and a failure to attempt to critically reflect on what it means to live and educate in a settler-state and/or to restructure it. Ball (1998) also reminds us that policies are not solely restrictive, instead offering a range of activities deemed appropriate to serving the aims of the policy. However, even if the negotiation and enactment of policy includes an array of options, we must remember that by the time a policy reaches educators it has undergone a policy making process. The policy making process, Luke and Hogan (2006) tell us is “the prescriptive regulation of flows of human resources, discourse and capital across educational systems towards normative social, economic, and cultural ends” (p.171). Through the policy making process, then, priorities become apparent and normalized. For the *Framework* the priority is that of achievement, driven by the accumulation of voluntary self-identification data, and aimed at the creation of economically prosperous students. That the *Framework* goals are aimed at both the improving of FNMI student achievement and the education of all students also conflates work which, in reality, needs to be addressed separately. In conflating these two separate areas of work into a single policy it becomes possible to dismiss the education of all students as a problem only for schools with an Indigenous student population, despite directives declaring the opposite. Thus, through the creation of these ambitious, necessary, and wide-ranging goals the *Framework* is set up to fail; the policy misses necessary components around critical self-introspection of self and state and reconciliation - in trying to achieve too much, the policy is marked as inadequate by its absences and, thus, does too little.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The results presented and discussed in the previous three chapters make clear that education policy intersects with the professional lives and practices of teachers in complex ways. As well, teachers' ability to enact policy measures communicated through the institutional story are impacted by mediating factors such as those identified by Ball et al. (2012) including the socio-material context, the professional culture, and external pressures. Furthermore, teachers – who develop their practice across the spaces of the professional knowledge landscape – do not merely accept and assimilate institutional stories but instead approach policy with a critical mind informed by that knowledge developed through their work in the classroom and beyond. This critical and reflexive practice exhibited by teachers within this case study highlights the need for policy action to be iterative, collaborative, and persistent in order to make progress towards policy intent. Moreover, it highlights that while policy efforts such as the *Framework* represent a necessary and important step towards redressing the inequities implicit in Ontario's education system, the efforts to date do not go far enough to ensure meaningful change is implemented at all levels of Ontario education.

Thus, while participants understood the *Framework* as a good first step towards improving Indigenous education in Ontario they made it clear that they understood the effort as incomplete. The data of this case study indicates that the *Framework* has been largely unavailing in the lives of these teacher participants (as discussed in chapter five). As such, I have put forth the contention that the *Framework* is indeed representative of broader problems in education policies which tend to talk at length around the topics of equity and social justice with minimal transformation resulting from the effort. This trend has been noted by scholars before me such as Segeren (2016) and Abawi and Brady (2017) who have

argued that such policies can be understood as symbolic rather than material efforts towards change.

In this concluding chapter I offer some final thoughts on the case-study data presented within this dissertation. I begin with a summary of the research study. Next, I offer a discussion on the significance of this case study research. I then summarize the major findings outlined in the preceding chapters and present the recommendations which were designed from the data findings. The limitations of this research study are then considered. I end the dissertation with a discussion of the implications this research has for both future education practice and research.

Research Summary

This research study was concerned with addressing the primary research question: How do teachers understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario?

As well, the following sub-questions were explored:

- 1) How do teachers understand and describe the purpose and role of Indigenous education policy as it relates to their practice?
- 2) How do teachers describe their relationship to Ontario's Indigenous education policy?

In pursuing these research questions a qualitative multiple methods case-study research project was carried out in a single school district in Southwestern Ontario. Participants were recruited from within a single region of this geographically large board. Two data sets were collected. The first came from a document analysis of the *Framework* and associated publications. The second data set was collected from a series of three individual interviews and a focus group interview was carried out with teacher participants.

The document analysis was completed ahead of the interviews with participants in order to understand the institutional story, the macro-level happenings instigated by the Ontario Ministry of Education, in relation to Indigenous education. The research encounters with teacher participants, then supplied insight into the micro-level (in)actions of schools and teachers who are on the front lines of formal education in Ontario. These stories came to be understood as part of a professional knowledge landscape whereby teachers received the institutional story from Ontario Ministry of Education directives. In close relation to that institutional story were the secret and cover stories of teachers, communicated through a series of individual interviews and a focus group interview. This research study was one that can be described as cumulative in that each individual interview was transcribed and initially coded ahead of the subsequent research encounter in order to inform the direction of the semi-structured interview schedule. Using this approach, I was able to center the voices, experiences, and knowledges of teacher participants in the research plan and explore the ways the *Framework* was meaningful (or not) to their professional practice, development, and knowledge.

Significance of Study

This case study research brings to light some serious concerns with the ways that the institutional story, specifically the *Framework*, is being communicated to teachers and with the inadequate actions which followed its release. As the policy intended to guide improvements in the area of Indigenous education in Ontario, the *Framework* has seen attention from scholars (see Anuik & Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2012; Burm, 2016; Butler, 2015; Cherubini 2010, 2014; Cherubini et al., 2008; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017; Kearns, 2013). As well, the *Framework* and the OME's related actions have been scrutinized by the Auditor General of Ontario (2012, 2014, 2016) and People for

Education, a non-profit group dedicated to improving education through research and policy (2015, 2017). I have added to this growing body of literature through this research. As indicated in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I believe that the policy making and implementation processes can be improved through research which investigates the very intersections I explored within this case study, that is the intersection of *policy intent* and *policy action* as experienced and lived in schools through the daily practice of teachers. As has been shown such work yields important insight into the ways teachers understand their relation to policy content and stated vision(s).

My research revealed that teachers view non-curricular based policy as ancillary to their practice. It was made clear that in the professional lives of participants within this case-study, the *Framework* held little impact in supporting, hindering, changing, and/or improving their practice in the area of Indigenous education. Moreover, this case-study yielded important insight into the misalignment between the rhetoric of the institutional story and the experiences of teachers. As such, this study provides additional insight into the ways that policy, specifically the *Framework*, becomes (or does not become) consolidated into the everyday experiences of a school through teacher enactment and practice. This work, then, builds on and contributes to, work done by scholars such as Burm (2016), Cherubini (2010, 2014), Cherubini et al. (2010), Cherubini and Hodson (2008), Kearns (2013), and more who have undertaken efforts to critique the *Framework*, its content and its implementation in various ways and in various settings. Through its analytic focus on the institutional, secret, and cover stories which exist within the professional knowledge landscape, this study has provided detailed insights into the ways participants in this case study have come to understand their relationship with Indigenous education policy in Ontario.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In chapter four I presented data based on the institutional story, that information which is communicated from the Ontario Ministry of Education to teachers and school personnel through a conduit – in this case the *Framework* and associated documents. I explored the institutional story independently and ahead of meeting with teachers in order to examine some of the macro-level happenings in and around the *Framework* and enable meaningful micro-level interactions of educators in the field about the policy during our research encounters. In chapter four I provided a description of each of the documents analysed and then moved to discuss the discourses which arose through policy analysis. I identified four primary discourses in the *Framework*:

- 1) achievement and concern with closing the “achievement gap”;
- 2) developing capacities of school boards, schools, teachers, and students in the area of Indigenous education and more specifically in the area of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives;
- 3) integration of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives in classroom content;
- 4) consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities with respect to formal education.

These discourses were traced across the documents associated with the *Framework* including progress reports, the *Implementation Plan*, and resources designed for teacher and school board use. It was found that achievement and interest in closing the gap persisted across the documents. In the area of developing capacities a disjointed effort in the area emerged through the creation of digital access only resources and online resources not often seeing revision and updating. The integration of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives

remains present across subsequent documents but is often connected with identifying Indigenous “learning styles” in order to support success. Community collaboration remained prominent throughout the associated documents as did the identified absences. Two absences were also identified within the *Framework*. The first was teacher voice and the second was a lack of opportunities for critical and transformative education.

Chapter five saw the inclusion of teacher voices as shared through our research encounters. In chapter five I organized the words of teachers according to their sharing of secret and cover stories. Through these stories it became clear that these teachers, who all expressed an interest in and who indicated that they make explicit efforts in the area of Indigenous education, were minimally impacted by the *Framework* in their daily practice. Their words communicated four themes around education, their practice, and the *Framework*:

- 1) they understand teaching (and policy making) as a political act;
- 2) they identify persistent gaps between policy intent and policy action;
- 3) they shared a feeling of “going it alone” as it pertains to enacting the *Framework*;
- 4) they experience a lack of professional development opportunities in the area of Indigenous education.

Throughout their cover stories teachers did little covering, instead readily admitting they either had never looked at the policy or had not looked at it recently. Instead they used these stories to reconcile the content of the institutional story alongside their own experiences as communicated through the secret story. In these encounters teachers critiqued the follow up action of the OME in the area of the *Framework*, noting that the lack of follow up leads to a disconnect between the policy effort and their own practice. While teachers did criticize the

Framework they also talked about the benefits which emerged from the policy. They also spent time talking about the ways such policy efforts could be made more meaningful to them.

In chapter six I worked to bring these stories together in order to highlight the ways the institutional story (and my analysis) intersect with the experiences of teachers as communicated through their secret and cover stories. Through this synthesis some overarching findings were put forth. First, that the *Framework* can be understood as a beginning but incomplete step towards comprehensively addressing issues of Indigenous education in Ontario's schools. Second, that educators and the OME must consider the opportunities and constraints of creating mandatory learning in the area of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives for both teachers and students. Third, that the *Framework* exists in a complex, and for some overwhelming, policy environment and as such it prioritized as deemed necessary by the constraints of teachers' professional lives. Finally, that the policy requires an explicit re-visioning which explicitly considers its relation to the socio-political context in which it was created and in which action is undertaken in its name. From these findings six recommendations based on teacher voice were developed and are presented later in this chapter.

These findings come together to form the basis for an argument which suggests the *Framework* can be understood as a policy effort which held significant potential but has been found to fall incredibly short of its intent. Though I, and the participants of this research study, acknowledge the *Framework* as a good first step towards improving Indigenous education in Ontario, a first step is not enough. It must be followed up with continued and sustained action to support meaningful change.

I also want to make clear how the data from this study directly responded to the research questions outlined in both the introductory chapter and this one. In relation to the main research question, “*How do teachers understand and enact government policies on Indigenous education in Ontario?*” I will repeat a statement I made above that the stories, knowledge, and experiences shared by teachers within this case study positioned non-curricular focussed policy directives as ancillary to their daily practice. That is, that teachers necessarily prioritized their relationship with curriculum and policy documents related to assessment and evaluation, for example *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (OME, 2010), above other policy directives which they saw as having less direct impact on their daily practice. Teachers in this case study, however, also made clear that they drew upon the *Framework* as they deemed necessary and appropriate to provide support and/or justification in their efforts to provide quality education to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Regarding the first of the sub-questions, “*How do teachers understand and describe the purpose and role of Indigenous education policy as it relates to their practice?*” teacher participants made clear that Indigenous education policy, specifically the *Framework*, had little relation to their daily practice. Though they saw some actions coming “down the pipe” from the OME and their school board they had seen little benefit in the area of professional development and had seen limited impact from the *Framework* in their schools thus far. Participants stressed that they are guided by their own personal and professional drives to improve their practice in the area of Indigenous education. They felt removed from the policy intent and actions as described and carried out by the OME and their school board, describing the effort as a political move which resulted in limited productivity in the area of Indigenous education and required little action of teachers. Finally, on the second sub-

question, “*How do teachers describe their relationship to Ontario’s Indigenous education policy?*” teachers described their relationship to the policy as disconnected. They acknowledge that they had limited interaction with the document despite their interest in Indigenous education and their efforts to create learning environments which explicitly consider and support the needs of Indigenous students and their efforts to improve the knowledge of non-Indigenous students around Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives.

Recommendations. A series of recommendations were developed, informed by the discussions had in the research encounters with participants. These recommendations are based on the voices of teacher participants and the knowledge they shared and are aimed at assisting in the development of meaningful change in the area of Indigenous education in Ontario. The six recommendations offered (presented in Table 2) are informed by both the voices of teachers as well as existing literature in the area of Indigenous education, decolonizing education, and efforts towards reconciliation. Each recommendation is accompanied by words provided by teacher participants which highlights the ways action in the area would operate to improve their practice and/or support efforts to improve Indigenous education. I present these recommendations with the acknowledgement that they emerge from the knowledge, stories, and perspectives of the four participants in this case study. Thus, they are presented as recommendations that also offer opportunities for further research and discussion with teachers. These recommendations are positioned as practical opportunities to create a more productive and purposeful relationship between educators and Indigenous education policy in Ontario.

Table 2: Recommendations from study data

Recommendation	Rationale and Teacher Voice
1) The inclusion of a mandatory Indigenous perspectives course for all secondary school students.	<p>Teachers talked about the potential benefits (e.g. increased knowledge of history, Indigenous cultures and perspectives) of having a compulsory course for students and expressed the desire for the Ministry of Education to have a “firmer hand” to ensure far-reaching progress in relation to that part of the <i>Framework</i> vision. It should be acknowledged that there is some debate around whether a one-time course or modules specific to Indigenous content and perspectives within existing courses is best. In fact, the development of a mandatory course does not preclude and might even support the integration of Indigenous content and perspectives (via module or otherwise) across other courses.</p> <p>“They should have made it mandatory to take a Native Studies course, considering that you know we are Treaty People here and from time immemorial you know FNMI people have been here and if you’re pushing that everybody needs to know, especially with all the truth and reconciliation and everything else why the hell are you not making it mandatory for kids to take a Native Studies course so they can understand the history of it.” (Cameron, Interview 1)</p>
2) Professional development opportunities for teachers that encourage collegial collaboration and are relationship focussed in the area of Indigenous education. This might include a return to subject councils, mentorship programs, and cross-curricular networking opportunities.	<p>Participants expressed a desire to engage in professional learning that was collaborative and dialogic. Such circumstances, participants believed would allow for a safe learning environment to emerge.</p> <p>“And it is through those relationships between colleagues, so FN staff and non FN staff, it is the relationship that creates the dialogue and then the learning about not just information but how to relate more effectively and how to share tough topics with non-Native students. So you know I think it creates, builds that understanding.” (Rory, Focus Group Interview)</p>
3) The creation of mandatory professional development for teachers in the area of Indigenous perspectives and education.	<p>Consistently teachers discussed that they perceived a need for mandatory professional development and learning in the area of Indigenous education. They made arguments that for many teachers such PD seems inaccessible or unimportant and so the decision must be made for them to engage in such learning.</p> <p>“Education is power, knowledge is power. People are</p>

	sometimes unfortunately not going to make that choice, unless you make the choice for them, and that is one that should be made.” (Casey, Interview 3)
4) Increased connections between Indigenous education policy and broader discussions about truth, reconciliation, the TRC recommendations, and decolonization.	The data made clear that there is a perceived gap between the policy effort represented by the Framework and broader discussions of reconciliation and decolonization in society. “Basically it’s a whole new curriculum, like the history is going to change everything is going to change, for so long it was hidden. Reconciliation is about admitting and trying to make things better I guess so just changing the way and the content that we teach.” (Blair, Interview 3)
5) Changes to the ways policy is presented to teachers. Consideration of, and discussions with teachers about, the efficacy of different mediums to communicate policy. Specifically, more succinct and accessible language, fewer documents, and clarity on the ways the policies interact with one another.	Teachers discussed that Ontario’s policy efforts are both too complex while simultaneously being redundant. They indicated that an effort to integrate various policy efforts and present them in a more user-friendly manner would be beneficial. “I think if there is a way to simplify it people are more likely to jump on board. So pick out 4 or 5 one-liners or key points and hand out a page, you know, I know that it is not that simple. But is there a way you can construct that that people can say these are good points and this is how I can involve it and improve achievement and engagement. To me, to be honest, I looked at the Framework numerous times but I am also a firm believer that if I need something it is there I can just go pull it and look at it, I don’t have to memorize it, my phone and the internet is fantastic. But I think there is overwhelming information.” (Casey, Interview 3)
6) Increased accountability measures and transparency for the Ontario Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools which help to ensure policy action at a level commensurate with policy intent.	All participants indicated they felt the OME needs to have transparent and clear accountability measures which would filter down to ensuring accountability for school boards and schools in the same manner. “Like they are really trying to implement things from their perspective. You know they think this is going to work, this is the way it should be done. They are never called on, or held accountable, to “did you consider this other perspective”? Did you consult? And if you consulted what did they say and did you follow through? And if not why?” (Rory, Focus group interview)

Limitations of the Study

This case study represents an in-depth investigation of the experiences and perceptions of four secondary school teachers in a Southwestern Ontario school board. Case study research does present some limitations, primarily that its findings are difficult to extrapolate for understanding at the broader level. Only four teachers' voices are represented within this study. However, the voices are of four teachers who all have 15 years or more experience in the field of education, have all taught a variety of courses across several school sites, and are self-described as passionate about being engaged professionals and improving their practice in the area of Indigenous education. As such, these teachers were quick to criticize the OME and its action around the *Framework* but more reluctant to engage in reflection upon the ways they can, and perhaps should, be more actively engaged with policy efforts such as the *Framework*. I do not put this forth as a chastisement of the teachers who participated in this study but rather as an acknowledgement that there are varying levels of interest and opportunity for teaching professionals in the area of Indigenous education. Research in the area would benefit from a cross-section of participants from the disinterested to the keen, from the "expert" to the least experienced, and all the variations in-between.

Another, related, limitation of this work is a lack of representation in participants across the different socio-material and geographic contexts. As Ball et al., (2012) have shown through their work on policy enactment, teachers are greatly impacted by their contexts. That is to say, the ability to, or interest in, enacting policy is significantly influenced by the social, material, and professional culture contexts of their professional lives. As well teachers are impacted by the degree to which external pressure is placed on them to enact policy. The participants in this case study share similar contexts in terms of student population, access to resources, as well as professional cultures where their

administrations actively supported and worked towards improving Indigenous education in their schools. Thus, the participants in this study, perhaps unsurprisingly, noted that this professional culture operated as a supporting mediating factor in relation to their pursuit of quality professional practice in relation to Indigenous education. A broader cross-section of teacher experiences with varying professional cultures in their schools may offer increased insight into not only the efficacy of the *Framework* but also the impact of mediating factors as outlined by Ball et al. (2012). Despite this limitation I argue that the insights of these four teachers hold relevance at the provincial level as they, like all of their colleagues who practice education in Ontario, have experienced common training (both pre-service and/or in-service) and work in an educational context which remains pervasively colonial in its structure and curriculum.

I want to offer some brief discussion on the point of non-participation as it relates to this study. As indicated in chapter three during the description of methodology and research design, the recruitment of participants for this study proved difficult. Admittedly, this may have been related to the research format. Three individual interviews and a focus group meeting is indeed a large time commitment to ask of busy professionals. Of particular interest, however, is the issue of non-participation as it relates to two principals I reached out to for permission to present this research to their staff at staff meetings. Of the four principals contacted, two (as indicated in chapter three) allowed me to present to their staff. A third principal within the same region of focus did not reply to requests while the fourth principal indicated I would be unable to present this project to teachers. For this principal my research held little value for their staff, and in turn they believed their staff held little value for my research, as they claimed “We do not have any First Nation, Metis [*sic*], or Inuit students at our school” (Email communication). If we accept the unlikely circumstance that not a single

First Nation, Métis, or Inuit student attends this school, a troubling scenario remains. This principal, acting in an official capacity, presented the notion that the *Framework*, and research related to it, was only relevant to schools and teachers who have direct interaction with Indigenous students. Such communication makes this researcher question the reach of the *Framework* policy as well as its vision which makes clear that the policy is intended to not only impact the formal education of Indigenous students in Ontario but also their non-Indigenous peers.

That policy enactment is affected by mediating factors within one's professional environment has been made clear by the work of Ball et al. (2012). Important to this consideration is that mediating factor of professional culture, a set of norms, values, and priorities or “outlooks and attitudes that have developed over time and inflect policy responses in particular ways” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). In order for a policy such as the *Framework* to achieve its vision it must reach and achieve buy-in by those in positions of power within the formal spaces of schools, those with the capacity to challenge and exert influence over the professional culture. Moreover, in order for a policy such as the *Framework* to create opportunities through which educators can support efforts of decolonization and/or reconciliation, it must make requirements of teachers to consider the relationship between policy efforts in the area of Indigenous education, their own practice, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The difficulties which arose during the recruitment process and specifically the example listed above suggest that the *Framework* has not been clearly communicated as a policy effort which aims to impact every school in Ontario and in many ways supports the recommendation of mandatory professional development for teachers as well as increased accountability measures for school boards and

schools concerned with assessing the implementation of the *Framework* and future Indigenous education policy efforts.

This study intentionally sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of teachers in order to address the primary research question around teachers' responses to and enactment of the *Framework*. I acknowledge that there is much to gain from further work which would consider the relationship of other school personnel to the *Framework* and to programs which support the work of the policy efforts. Such work has been undertaken by Burnm (2016) and Cherubini (2014) and is of significant value to both scholarship in the area of Indigenous education in Ontario and professional practice as it relates to Indigenous education in Ontario.

Implications of Research for Practice and Future Research

In the years which have passed since the introduction of the *Framework* in 2007, a large number of students have continued to enter and progress through Ontario's formal education system. The *Framework* and recent efforts to revise certain aspects of the curriculum, specifically the secondary school *Canadian and World Studies, 9-10* (OME, 2108a) programme, represent important work being done to improve Indigenous education in Ontario. Despite this, however, the formal education system in Ontario remains a system which operates in a fashion that not only marginalizes Indigenous ways of knowing but also continues to fail both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by not requiring important content acknowledging Canada's colonial past and present be mandatory in their education. Though gains have been made in some areas of concern relevant to this research, specifically increased access to professional development (People for Education, 2018) there remains many problems associated with the *Framework* and the carrying out of Indigenous education in Ontario's education system.

The findings which emerged through this research indicate that policy is persistently understood as removed from the daily practice of teachers. As such, important implications and considerations regarding the ways policy intent must intersect with policy action specific to teacher practice arise. Teachers made clear that they needed to prioritize the institutional stories they received based upon perceived necessity and did so in ways which reflected the limitations presented by their busy schedules, heavy workloads, and professional knowledge. Additional funding which supports teachers and opportunities to engage more actively with Ministry policy efforts would work towards mitigating some of the concerns outlined by teachers.

The material limitations of daily practice and the professional knowledge landscape also emerged through this work as important to the level of engagement between teachers and policy. That is to say, accessing professional development and resources relevant to the enactment of the *Framework* can be understood as a barrier. This barrier is at times constructed due to the limits of funding and access (geographic or otherwise) to professional development opportunities. Perhaps more problematically, however, this barrier can be created and maintained through gaps in communication around who is provided information and opportunities to attend professional development activities. This suggests that board and school administration staff are provided the opportunity to reconceptualise who gets such information. By this I mean, if a goal of the *Framework* is to have increased capacities of all teachers in the area of Indigenous education then all teachers must have professional learning opportunities made available to them. Indeed, the findings of this case study suggest that further research considering the benefits and drawbacks of mandatory professional development in the area of Indigenous education warrants would be beneficial.

Findings from this study support the notion that the *Framework* has seen some attention at the provincial and board levels and thus has operated to improve, in some ways, Indigenous education in Ontario. As well, movements such as the 2016 funding of a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education lead within every school board in Ontario dedicated to supporting the work of the *Framework* represents a positive step forward. Despite this, however, the findings of this study also support a conceptualization of policy documents and directives as disconnected from the daily work of teachers. That is to say, that policy documents such as the *Framework* and its associated progress reports and resources, exist in the margins of teachers' professional knowledge landscape. Some interesting ideas expressed by teachers within this study, then, provide opportunities for future research regarding not only Indigenous education policy but also policy more broadly. First, further exploration is warranted around the materiality of policy directives. By this I mean research concerned with identifying, deconstructing, and re-visioning the mediums of policy and the ways the medium of presentation operates to provide opportunities and/or constraints as it relates to policy enactment. Connected to this would be research into the possibilities and limitations of re-conceptualizing policy efforts in a more integrated fashion, considering the ways the policies intersect and diverge in order to support teacher understanding and enactment of such policy efforts.

Final Thoughts

In the first chapter of this dissertation I outlined my goals for this research as having to do with addressing the ways the *Framework* came into teacher practice in order to support or limit their capacity to not only support Indigenous student achievement but also increase the knowledge of non-Indigenous students in the areas of Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. I was particularly interested in the ways teachers understand and view their

relationship to the *Framework* and the ways they understood the policy rhetoric, that is intent, and how they understood it in relation to policy action on the part of the OME, their school board, and themselves. I admit that during the conceptualization and design of this research study I had overestimated the ways the *Framework* would impact teacher practice and the level to which educators would interact with the *Framework*. Indeed, during the process of constructing my thesis proposal I had identified research questions based on such assumptions which were focussed on detailing this impact. As I progressed through the initial stages of policy analysis, however, concerns with the content and format of the *Framework*, began to emerge and I began to question my assumptions. As such, when I went in-situ with research participants I had questions about the *Framework* and its ability to truly impact and support efforts of transformative education and meaningful change in the area of Indigenous education – concerns participants echoed as they determined the direction and focus of our semi-structured interviews.

As an individual who has made continued efforts as a settler, an educator and Ontario Certified Teacher, and a researcher to come to understand my relation to and role in the perpetuation of colonial education and settler futurity, it struck me as self-evident that the *Framework* was required reading. However, as a teacher currently removed from practice in the secondary school setting my assumptions were remiss in that they failed to consider the ways mediating factors such as professional culture, socio-material realities, and (a lack of) external pressures influenced the daily lives and work of teachers. Participants in this study were also, albeit differently, engaged in processes which sought to improve their practices and relation to Indigenous education within their classes and schools. As such, pursuing a case-study in which I was privileged enough to interact with educators passionate about not only engaging in professional practice which supported Indigenous students, but encouraging

non-Indigenous student learning in relation to Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives elucidated a great deal about the distance between policy intent and action. It is my hope that through this case study I have been able to make clear for readers that this gap between policy and action is reflective of a number of intersecting realities, including the mediating factors outlined by Ball et al. (2012) and the reception of the institutional stories by teachers with a critical mind and reflective teaching spirit. Such learning I believe emphasizes the need to take seriously the perspectives, views, and knowledge of teachers as they relate to policy and to move teacher voices from the margins of policy to the center while providing opportunities for increased interaction among teacher, student, and community voices.

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Appendices

Appendix A – University of Western Ontario NMREB Approval



Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Coulter

Department & Institution: Education\Faculty of Education,Western University

NMREB File Number: 107026

Study Title: Educator Perspectives on Indigenous Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools
Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: August 31, 2015

NMREB Expiry Date: August 31, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Letter/Advert	2015/07/27
Instruments	Interview Schedule	2015/07/27
Other	References	2015/07/27
Western University Protocol		2015/07/28
Letter of Information & Consent		2015/07/27

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number [REDACTED]

Ethics

member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Erika Basile erbasile@uwo.ca	Grace Kelly grace.kelly@uwo.ca	Mina Mekhail minmekhail@uwo.ca	Vikki Tran vikki.tran@uwo.ca
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Appendix B – Recruitment Flyer**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH ON FNMI EDUCATION**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of educator perspectives on FNMI education in Ontario's secondary schools who meet the following criteria: Ontario Certified Teachers employed at an Ontario Secondary School serving both FNMI and non-Indigenous students.

If you are interested and agree to participate, you would be asked to respond to a number of open-ended questions in a series of three individual interviews and, if you are interested, a single focus group meeting.

Your participation would involve three individual interview sessions, each session being up to 60 minutes long. If you volunteer for the focus group meeting, this will involve one session up to 90 minutes long.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Natalie Currie-Patterson, PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

[REDACTED] or

Email: [REDACTED]

Version Date: 13/01/2016

Appendix C – Letter of Information**Letter of Information and Consent**

Project Title: Educator Perspectives on Indigenous Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Coulter, Professor Emerita

Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

[REDACTED]

PhD Student Researcher: Natalie Currie-Patterson

Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

[REDACTED]

1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a research study exploring educator perspectives on First Nation, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) education in Ontario's secondary schools. Your participation is sought as you are employed as an educator at an Ontario secondary school serving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you need to make an informed choice regarding your participation in this study.

Individuals who are currently employed as educators and who are qualified to teach in Ontario in the selected school district and in a secondary school serving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who are not educators employed by the school board specified or who are employed in a secondary school that does not serve both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are not eligible to

participate in this research. Individuals unwilling to have their participation recorded are not eligible for this study.

2. Why is this study being done?

This research will focus on exploring educator perspectives on teacher preparedness, content knowledge, and Ontario Ministry of Education and school board policies specific to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education. The objectives of this work are: 1) to make visible the voices and perspectives of educators and reveal the ways these voices can be understood as important contributors to policy and practice recommendations; 2) drawing on the perspectives and self-identified needs of educators, to develop recommendations about professional development and policy and practice improvements that will strengthen the delivery of FNMI programming; and 3) to contribute to the academic and professional literature.

3. How long will you be in this study?

This study will take place throughout the 2015-2016 school year. During this time you will be asked to participate in a series of three interviews, each taking a maximum of 60 minutes. Also, if you are interested, a single focus group meeting will be scheduled following the interviews and will last up to 90 minutes.

4. What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to a number of open-ended questions in a series of three audio-recorded individual interviews over the course of the 2015-2016 school year. Each interview will take a maximum of 60 minutes. The individual interviews will be conducted at a time convenient to participants and in a private location within the school identified by participants.

Additionally, you will be asked if you would like to participate in a video-recorded focus group meeting with the other study participants to discuss topics that have

arisen in the individual interviews. The focus group will be video recorded in order to assist the researchers with accurate transcription. The video, and your image, will only be seen by the principal investigator, Dr. Rebecca Coulter, and co-investigator Natalie Currie-Patterson. However, you may choose to participate in the individual interview portion of the study but not the focus group interview. The focus group interview will take no more than 90 minutes. The focus group interview will be held at a location accessible to all participants at a time scheduled to accommodate participant availability.

Upon study completion interested participants will be invited to meet with the co-investigator, Natalie Currie-Patterson, in order to hear results. This meeting will occur at a time convenient to participants. During this meeting the co-investigator will go over the results of the study. Participants will also receive a copy of the thesis abstract and information about how to access the completed dissertation online.

5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

You may choose to refuse to answer any questions posed during the interview(s) or the focus group. It is not required that you participate in the focus group interview in addition to the individual interview. If you choose to participate in the focus group component of this study, you should be aware that despite a request for declarations of confidentiality from all participants, the researchers cannot control what participants do with the information they hear in the focus group.

Information that would identify you (e.g., your name) will be not be associated with your interview data. You will be assigned a pseudonym and this will be used in all transcripts, publications, and presentations on the research. While every effort will be made to remove

information that could identify you, there is a slight risk of being identified indirectly through quotes used from the information you provide in the study.

6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

You may benefit from this study in the following ways: through the identification of professional development opportunities related to FNMI education; through reflection on your professional practice which may encourage professional growth; through the development of policy and practice recommendations focussed on your perspectives relating to FNMI education; through the opportunity to have your voice heard in research related to FNMI education; and through the professional satisfaction of expressing your views related to the practice of FNMI education.

7. Can participants choose to leave the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to refuse to participate in this study. You may withdraw from this study at any time without repercussion. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request that the researchers withdraw all information collected from you.

8. How will participants information be kept confidential?

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators conducting this study. The master list of participant names and pseudonyms will be kept in an encrypted electronic file. Data without identifying information will be kept in an encrypted file on a password protected computer. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed from our database and destroyed. In accordance with Western University's policy, data will be kept for five years. After this time electronic data will be destroyed through permanent deletion and paper documents will be shredded and discarded.

While we do our best to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project which we may be required by law to report, we have a duty to report. Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. The findings of this research will be disseminated through academic and professional publications and conference presentations.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

10. What are the rights of participants?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to refuse to answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, it will have no effect on your employment status.

We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

11. Whom do participants contact for questions?

For further information about this research project or your participation in the study you may contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Rebecca Coulter, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] or Co-Investigator (PhD Candidate) Natalie Currie-Patterson,
[REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

12. Consent

If you would like to participate in this study, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by signing the letter of consent on the following page.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Written Consent

Project Title: Educator Perspectives on Indigenous Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Coulter, Professor Emerita

Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
[REDACTED]

PhD Student Researcher: Natalie Currie-Patterson

Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
[REDACTED]

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the **three individual interviews** which will be audio recorded and the focus group which will be video-recorded.

I agree to be audio / video-recorded in this research

YES NO

I am only willing to participate in the **three individual interviews** which will be audio-recorded but *not* the focus group meeting.

YES NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research in academic publication(s) and conference presentation(s).

YES NO

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CURRICULUM VITAE**Natalie Currie-Patterson, BA (Hons.), B.Ed, MA, OCT****EDUCATION:**

PhD Candidate (Education Studies: Critical Policy, Equity, and Leadership Studies),
 Western University Anticipated completion, Winter 2019
 Supervisor: Dr. Rebecca Coulter

- Areas of focus and interest: First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) education in Ontario's secondary schools; FNMI education policy and educator practice; decolonizing education, reconciliation, and the professional education of non-Indigenous teachers; history and geography education

Master of Arts (Geography), Brock University 2013

Additional Qualifications, Brock University 2009

- Special Education, Part 1

Bachelor of Education, Brock University 2008

- Certification to teach History and Geography at the Intermediate and Senior level

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Brock University 2008

- Major: History

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE:

Instructor (Sessional) August 2018 – present
 Teaching History I, Intermediate/Senior, Faculty of Education, Brock University

Research Assistant November 2018
 December 2017- February 2018
 September-October 2017

Research assistant to Dr. Erica Neeganagwedgin

Instructor (Graduate Student Academic Appointment) January 2017-March 2017
Aboriginal Education: Towards a Decolonizing Pedagogy for Teachers, Faculty of Education,
 Western University

Instructor (Graduate Student Academic Appointment) September 2015 – March 2016
Curriculum & Pedagogy in Geography in Intermediate/Senior Grades, Faculty of Education,
Western University

Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Education, Western University September 2015 – March 2016
Developed “Professional Development Sessions: First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education,” presented as a module within the *Transition to Professional Practice* course for teacher candidates.

Assisted in *Curriculum & Pedagogy in History for the Intermediate/Senior Grades* course.

Research Assistant, Faculty of Education, Western University September 2014 – April 2015
Research assistant to Dr. Brent Debassige

PUBLICATIONS

Watson, K. & **Currie-Patterson, N.** (2018). Responding to the *Calls to Action*: Reflections on teaching mandatory Indigenous education to teacher candidates in Ontario (Notes from the Field). *McGill Journal of Education*, 53(2):362-371.

Currie-Patterson, N. & Watson, K. (2017). Conceptualizing critical friendship as a protective measure in academia *Working Class Studies Journal*, 2(2): 47-61.

Currie-Patterson, N. & Watson, K. (2017). A policy, a ‘priority’, an unfinished project: The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. *Canadian Journal of New Scholars in Education*, 8(1): 70-79.

Currie-Patterson, N. (2016). Considering the role of critical friendship in education research. *Intersections: Western Journal of Graduate Research*, 13: 1-7.

SELECTED PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

“Teacher perspectives on Ontario’s Aboriginal education policy: A case study”
N. Currie-Patterson (Paper presented May 2017) Canadian Association for the Study of Indigenous Education, constituent association of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Annual Meeting , Ryerson University

“Two steps forward, one step back: Moving towards reconciliation through (un)learning mainstream pedagogy with pre-service teachers”
N. Currie-Patterson, K. Watson & A. White (Interactive roundtable facilitated 9 May 2017)
Ontario Ministry of Education Faculty Forum, Toronto, ON

“Focus groups in educational research: An opportunity for professional development”
N. Currie-Patterson (Paper presented May, 2016) International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Annual Meeting , University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Exploring educator perspectives on Indigenous education in Ontario’s secondary schools: Theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations”

N. Currie-Patterson (Paper presented June, 2015) Canadian Association for the Study of Indigenous Education, constituent association of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Annual Meeting , University of Ottawa

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:

- 2018 **Senior Copy Editor**, *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*
- 2018 (ongoing) **Review Mentor**, *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*
- 2018/2017 **Reviewer**, Canadian Society for the Study of Education 2018 Annual Conference. Reviewed for Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies, Canadian Association for Teacher Education, Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, Canadian Association for the Study of Indigenous Education
- 2018/2017 **Reviewer**, *Canadian Journal of New Scholars in Education*
- 2015-2016 **Co-chair and Member of the Steering Committee**, 2016 Robert Macmillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium, Western University

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Fall 2018 **Collaborate for Community Impact Course**
- October 2018 **Foundations of Community Engagement** (Web-based modules)
- September 2018 **Celebrating Diversity: Using an Anti-Oppression Framework** (Workshop)
- August 2018 **Selecting Resources with Indigenous Content** (Webinar)
- July 2016 **Wilfrid Laurier University Summer Institute for Research Methods** (Qualitative Data Analysis)
- June 2014 **Indigenous Health and Well-Being Initiative Summer School**