

“Storytelling from the Colonial Margins of the Academy: Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous

Experience in and around

Social Work Classrooms of T’karonto”

by

Leah Roberts, BSW

A Research Journey

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ABSTRACT

This is an Indigenous research journey. This journey focuses on the stories of the lived experiences of Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous students in T'karonto while attending post-secondary social work classrooms where they received Indigenous focused or indigenized curricula. Using a Mohawk approach to research (that includes traditional teachings from an Elder and a storytelling approach), this paper explores the impact this curriculum has on Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous social work students as they express their stories of attending university and their social work program in T'karonto - through paintings. It also explores the colonial, societal and institutional factors that cause Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous students to question their Indigenous identity within post-secondary social work classrooms. These stories provide knowledge on how to move forward in a good way when implementing Indigenized curricula within non-Indigenous and settler-colonial classrooms.

Keywords: Indigenous, Storytelling, T'karonto, Urban, Mixed Ancestry, Social Work, Students

Dedication to The Land and All My Relations

I began my healing journey two years ago upon my return to Kahnawá:ke. As soon as I arrived at the Reserve, my mind, body, and spirit were in a peaceful state that I have never experienced before. I met cousins for the first time and did a double take as we felt like we had known one another our entire lives. They wholeheartedly accepted me as family. I am eternally grateful for this love and the opportunity to learn through this MRP process about my Mohawk identity and how it is coming to reveal that which has always been within but will also shape my future practice. Lastly, I want to thank the plants and animals who sustained me throughout this process not only physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well. When I felt alone, I often used the teaching received to go onto the land and you will realize that you are never alone. I want to thank the water for always cleansing me, balancing me, and providing me with reflection and guidance throughout this research process. For that I am eternally thankful- I will protect you and I will respect you.

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Acknowledgement of the Land

I start this paper acknowledging that I am completing this research, as well as living and working on, stolen and colonized land of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nations. This land, T'karonto, has been the long-standing home of many Nations. I must protect the land; this land does not belong to me. I honour the pain of Indigenous peoples past, present, and future who have been impacted by ongoing Canadian colonization that has caused so much suffering. I reflect on this land, as I cannot help to think of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. I am thankful for the ancestors of the present, past, and future who call this land their home - and defend it. I am thankful for Turtle Island, the medicines, the water, the fish, the roots, grasses, berries, trees and bushes, birds, Four Winds, thunders, Grandfather Sun, Grandmother Moon, stars, Sacred Four Beings, and the Creator.

Prior to starting the research process, I connected with the community within T'karonto. As Jean-Paul Restoule (2010) explains that in Section II- Ethical Principles of Aboriginal Health Research (2005 Draft), “the ‘researcher’ has the responsibility to contextualize research approaches to the values and beliefs of the local [Aboriginal] community.” I have offered tobacco to the people I met as well as the water and the land in “humble thankfulness” and in “guidance” from the spiritual realm to the physical realm (Wilson & Restoule, 2010). Likewise, I will return to my community of the Mohawks of Kahnawá:ke for further teachings to guide my epistemology, methodology and ontology, as I will be situating myself as a proud Haudenosaunee woman.

Chapter One: Following the Red Road

I begin in honour of myself, my ancestors, my friends, and my family before moving forward in my discussion as my relationships with both the spirit and physical realm gives me great strength to move onward. I did not grow up knowing who I am as a Mohawk woman. Sadly, I do not think I will ever truly come to know myself in the context of tradition or ancestry due to the impacts of the ongoing colonial project that is and has impacted my family and myself. I always felt different from my peers and my peers always made me feel different whether it was from my peers being able to complete family background assignments in school or various special celebrations they engaged in throughout the year outside of school. I knew I had a family outside my secular nuclear family, but due to the trauma of the Indian Residential School System of Canada, I was just not connected to them.

Culture. Family. Belonging. These attachments nourish the spirit and I believe my growing up without access to any knowledge of where I came from hindered my spiritual development. Eventually this led to self-imposed isolation and other self-harming behaviours. However, I called this section “the red road” as I will describe to you how I (re)member my ancestral knowledge and spirit.

I lived my childhood life believing my body is a question that I never thought to ask. I was ashamed of my body because of the messaging from society that I was not good enough. I was raised not knowing who I was or where I belonged. This was further compounded by the confusing revelation that I was in fact Indigenous but that we also did not exist anymore. I felt like a walking contradiction because *I still exist!* It was not until I was completing my Bachelor’s of Social Work that I learned about the Indian Residential School System of Canada. This experience will forever be ingrained in my memory. I was informed about the Indian Residential

Schools in Canada by a white professor. This professor acknowledged that since they were non-Indigenous, they would not explain Indian Residential School with enough “justice.” The white professor decided to show a video of Indian Residential School survivors and historical Indian Residential School survivors. I did not receive any check-ins before the video was presented. As soon as the professor pressed play, my body went into total shock. The trauma and hurt described in the video was so real to me that I had to leave the room. I broke down in tears. A flood of emotions rushed over me. I was angry. I was sad, and I was alone. I certainly did not receive any check-outs after the video had finished. As I continued my journey in the academy within an urban settling like T’karonto, which is the home of many Indigenous, Urban Mixed Ancestry, status and non-status, off reserve Indigenous people (Lawrence, 2004). I continued to meet more Indigenous and Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous students who share similar stories of trauma, triggers, nonconsensual questions, and tokenized attention when Indigenous histories and issues are brought up in post-secondary social work classrooms. This research is dedicated to Indigenous and Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous students who have and continue to experience hurt due to settler society telling them that they should look a certain way - and that they are not “Indian” enough. This research is for the participants, and it is for me, to heal.

From my perspective, classrooms are a place we come together in a sacred space to produce knowledge, wisdom, and learn from one another, teachers included. I did not grow up with the ancestral teachings of the community I belong to. Since re-connecting with my family and learning more about my roots, I find myself “stuck.” I am constantly decolonizing my mind, and this will be a lifelong process. With learning Mohawk ways of healing, I now know my body is sacred and connected with all life, both human and non-human life. With knowledge comes power and I am tired of handing over my body. I say *niá:wen* to Grandmother Moon,

Grandmother Bear, and Grandmother Turtle who gives me great strength and protection while I tell my story with no fear nor judgement so that I can grow.

Up until recently, I have endured experiences of dysphoria due to my multiple and inherently red intersectional identities. In 1989, the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, the critical race scholar and Black activist (Crenshaw, 1990). I am using the term red intersectionality, whom the Indigenous activists Zitkala-Sa and Winnemucca fought for in 1883 regarding the Indigenous peoples relationship with the land as well as the multiple forms inequality compounded onto the land and Indigenous bodies. This came in the form of my identity constantly questioned, accusations made against my person, family of Indigenous peoples, the land that I belong to, and the near frequent disbelief that I am who I am. It is not until I came to complete my master's that I became aware that this is a colonial act of assimilation. Individuals over the course of my lifespan to date have attempted to undermine my identity and culture as I did not fit settler ideas of the stereotypical colonial imagination. This is a reflection on society and how people have and still are attempting to force Indigenous peoples to become consumed with the attitudes and beliefs of Western society. Well I've got news for you: I am still here. My family is still here, and my ancestors are still here. I come from a strong resilient family lineage that has proven to me that love is stronger than hate. For that, I say niá:wen.

Situating Myself

I believe it is important for everyone to reflect on themselves. I also believe that it is especially important for me as I am not conducting research on my home land. Situating myself will allow readers to know who I am and where I come from as our experiences often flow into our research and impact the lens when conducting research.

When reflecting on myself, I cannot help but think of Baskin's (2016) reflection on being an "insider and an outsider." I am a sixth-generation European settler on my maternal side and Urban Mixed Ancestry of Mohawk and German on my paternal side. I am cisgendered, educated, middle-class, fair skinned, status, and able-bodied. I grew up in a suburban, middle-class home and I am currently completing my Masters of Social Work at Ryerson University. My white-passing and heteronormative privilege mask me from larger social situations and offer privileges that many Indigenous and/or Queer and Two-Spirited peoples in T'karonto do not have. Due to these privileges, I am an outsider. However, I am also an insider as my family has experienced and still experiences the harm of the Indian Residential School and Child and Family welfare systems in Canada.

Being both an insider and an outsider encompasses my identity. The trappings of being recognized as both an insider AND an outsider due to my perceived passability because of my perceived whiteness contribute heavily in how my identity is socially constructed in particular spaces and places.

Being white-seeming, I owe a lot to my community and to those who don't pass. As a light skinned Mohawk woman, I use my white-passing privilege to fight racism and stand behind those who speak (or in some cases can't) about their lived experience of daily microaggressions and overt racism from the average Canadian, experiences that I could never possibly wholeheartedly understand because of my passability. My teachings suggest that in order to understand something, you need to experience it. If one does not experience it, it is just a theory. It is important that I reflect on these truths as my journey could be vastly different than the journeys of other Indigenous peoples in T'karonto, thus, this must be something I need to be

aware of. I recognize my power, responsibility, and privilege of the process of completing my Masters of Social Work and to share the people I walk beside's stories.

Purpose of the Study

Kanonronkhwáhtshera, "Compassion and love...So that when we think, we are supposed to be thinking seven generations. So that what we are doing today is not gonna hurt those seven generations when they come" (Porter, 2008, p 24-25).

The seventh-generation teaching is a part of many North American Indigenous cultures (Lavallée, 2010). Many understand this teaching as a warning to us in our present day that our actions -what we do today - affects the next seven generations to come after us. We can have a positive impact on the next seven generations or a negative impact depending upon our choices as individuals and as a collective. This teaching also reflects upon knowing your ancestors, the past seven generations. If you do not know where you have come from you will not know where you are going. The clan I belong to is the turtle clan. Turtles move slowly, are patient, but never give up on issues worth fighting for. Turtles carry their homes on their back and often are the backbone of communities. Turtle symbolizes peace of mind. Turtles have slow metabolisms and teach us to slow down. The Turtle Clan is an earth clan who care for, protect, and nurture Turtle island. Turtles can live on both the earth and in the water, so Turtle Clan members are seen to be very adaptable to life's traumas. I have been taught that clan systems give you a role and amplifies your voice. I believe being Indigenous is more about one's connection with the community and land, not about blood quantum or percentages. Thus, I believe my role in this research study is to amplify the voices of self-identified Indigenous folx¹ who have experienced great harm while completing graduate and undergraduate Social Work courses so that they are heard, their experiences are documented and thus validated, and encourage a shift away from

harm, to engage in a process of decolonizing our minds from the colonial technologies that are foundational to the education system and putting the Truth and Reconciliation into action.

Past, Present, Future- Significance of the Study

“If you do not know where you have come from you will not know where you are going.”

-Lynn Lavallée & Jennifer Poole, 2010

Impacts of Indian Residential School within Post-Secondary Education

Before colonization, there was no such thing as “owning” the land let alone the questioning of one’s identity. In 1876, the Indian Act was created declaring as “Indian” any male who was Indigenous and his children. Enfranchisement occurred to status women marrying non-status men as well as anyone who had status who earned a degree, became a doctor, lawyer, or clergy. In 1884, the Indian Residential School System of Canada became mandatory. Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their families, their communities and their nations and relocated to faraway places where they were not allowed to speak their own languages or maintain their spiritual wellbeing. In 1886, the term “Indian” was expanded to include any person belonging to a ‘band’ or who followed the “Indian mode of life.” In 1918, the Canadian government allowed itself to lease Indigenous land to non-Indigenous people. In 1951, as the compulsory enfranchisement through marriage to non-status men was still in place, a divide was created in many Indigenous communities as there was little land and increasing populations, which implemented a non-Indigenous exclusive way of thinking.

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action surfaced in 2012, there has been a theme of post-secondary education systems using the phrase “decolonizing our schools.” The document calls for the federal government of Canada to “draft a new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples” (Truth and

Reconciliation of Canada, 2012). This paper speaks to the principles that new legislation should include, particularly: improving education levels and success rates of Indigenous students and “developing culturally appropriate curricula” (Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, 2012).

Although these calls to action have started to be answered in Canadian colleges and universities we must ask: *are they being carried out in a good way? How are Indigenous students experiencing this new “culturally appropriate curricula, and what is the response from non-Indigenous students?”*

Am I “Indian” Enough?

As an individual who identifies as Indigenous but is constantly being judged for trying to belong to a community with whom they do not visibly resemble, violence arises within and out of the classroom. Essentially, the definition of “who is an Indian” has been stolen from the hands of the Indigenous communities and engulfed within the systems of colonial power, particularly with the Indian Act (Lawrence, 2004). This exploits and labels mixed blood Indigenous peoples as “undeserving” of the benefits and rights that come with being Indigenous (Ellinghaus, 2007).

As a result, government policy of the use of “full blood” and “half-blood” or even “quarter bloods,” divides Indigenous peoples and erases a portion of their identity. As Kimberly Huyser (2017), a Navajo woman who is a sociologist studying American Indians, describes how these stereotypes and legal definitions “assault a group’s humanity and can affect members’ self-valuation and identity. This attempt of genocide of Indigenous peoples under the guise of policies impact Indigenous peoples daily and one of the primary tools was the education system (Cote-Meek, 2014).

As shown above, there has been literature written on the impacts on historical Indian residential school survivor students within the colonial classroom as well as the experiences of

being an Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous person and/or do not look “visibly” Indigenous. Yet, there is no literature on the impacts on historical Indian residential school survivor students, who do not “visibly” look Indigenous, and their experience within the social work classroom. This is important because people affected by racism lose their identity in terms of who they are.

Indigenous communities have been internalizing for centuries that they are inferior, they are unworthy, and that they are the “problem.” Therefore, as Indigenous students, whose outward appearance does not match the Western stereotype of what an Indigenous person should look like, attending the social work classrooms, they begin to learn about whom they are as Indigenous peoples through a Westernized lens. This is a moment where intergenerational trauma occurs for Indigenous students within Post-Secondary classrooms (Cote-Meek, 2014). As Taiaiake Alfred explains in his book *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, a “colonized mentality” is an outcome of ongoing colonialism that “becomes internalized in the colonized” (Alfred, 1999, p. 70). This ongoing colonialism forces Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous and Indigenous students to feel they are not “Indian enough,” and that they don’t belong on reserves or in the Western world. This journey particularly looks at Post-Secondary social work classrooms as social work and Indigenous communities have and continue to have a damaged relationship due to Indian Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop and the Millennial Scoop. Yet, perspectives within mainstream social work continue to neglect using lens of racism and colonization, particularly when speaking about Indigenous histories and issues. As a result, “the Aboriginal person becomes a virtual non-entity in institutions that marginalize Aboriginal thought and reality through the neglect and erroneous authoring of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, languages, and colonial history” (Sinclair, 2004, p.51). **Therefore, this paper tries to provide answers of how can schools of social work in Canada help their Urban Mixed**

Ancestry Indigenous and Indigenous students reconcile these feelings of belongingness and attachment that is enacted within the classrooms? As Sheila Cote-Meek (2014) states in her book *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education*, “As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that the learning environment is conducive and safe for all, not only for the dominant group.”

Roadmap for Readers

This is a written and visual journey of the lived experiences of historical trauma of the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools of Canada within Post-Secondary social work classroom’s Indigenous focused curricula. What is unique about this study is that this study looks at Indigenous students whose outward appearance do not match stereotypes of Westerners views of what Indigenous peoples physical traits should look like, and their experiences within the social work classrooms in Canada. I will conduct a narrative study in the form of several interviews with a pool of Indigenous social work students who are not "visibly" Indigenous. I conducted a narrative study in the form of interviews and paintings with a pool of Indigenous social work students who are not “visibly” Indigenous. I will then share the wealth of knowledge produced by these individuals in a holistic manner of the shared experiences, moments of violence in the colonial classroom.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith stated (2012),

“Every issue has been approached by Indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and rewriting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes.” (p. 29)

Therefore, when reading this research paper, I ask you to remember these three critical questions that I have adapted from Susan and Michael Dion (2009) in *Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples Experiences and Perspectives*. The questions are as follows:

- 1) Have I, as the researcher displayed the stories in this paper in a way that you, as the reader, have a sense of what these stories mean to me?
- 2) In what ways would our stories impact on the story that you, the reader, tell themselves about Indigenous students in postsecondary education?
- 3) How have the re(telling)s provided you, as the reader, with what you need to recognize and take action regarding Indigenous students' experiences in post-secondary education?

Until decolonization and reconciliation are put into action in post-secondary education, they are only theories that will never truly be brought to reality unless Canada aligns their thoughts with their emotions and spirit. Reconciliation is non-Indigenous folx doing the work and welcoming their spirit back home because our experiences of ourselves create our reality and if we do not know ourselves, we do not know our reality. The Peace Maker's light encourages us to be at balance with making choices by aligning our emotions and thoughts with our Spirit and to encourage constant learning and transformation.

Terminology

I am using the term "Urban Mixed Ancestry" instead of "mixed blood" that is often stated in and out of academia to acknowledge what Margaret Kovach (2010) terms "tribal epistemology." The reason why I chose to use "Urban Mixed Ancestry" is that, in my mind, it decolonizes the term making it less about blood quantum and more about our roots. However, I will be using "Urban Mixed Ancestry" synonymously with Bonita Lawrence's explanation of "mixed blood" which are individuals of Urban Mixed Ancestry that appear "less Indigenous" than their counterparts who fit the Eurocentric's categorization of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2004).

Likewise, I also use Doctor Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's (2003) definition of historical trauma to describe the unresolved grief of the Indian Residential schools that has been passed down to our kin, seven generations moving forward. I am using the term "Indigenous

peoples” throughout my research to acknowledge and respect that there are many nations, each with their own culture, language, and practice (Cote-Meek, 2014). However, I will use the terminology the writers have used when referencing their work to fully portray their voices to the readers. These terms may include “First Nations,” “Aboriginals” and “Native.” Lastly, I will use the terms “Indigenous identity” and “Indigeneity” concurrently to mean, “belonging and originariness and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification, and thus it distinguishes ‘natives’ from others” (Merlan, 2009).

Put your whole heart in what you learned, so that the spirit of our ancestors, our Creator and our Peacemaker can talk right through your body and use you, so that you can communicate peace. And then our people, we will get better. Our people will be united again.

Tom Porter (2008), p. 312

Wisdom from an Elder

Prior to the research, I have been meeting with Indigenous faculty at Ryerson University and within the Urban Indigenous Education Centre in Toronto, Ontario. I have been doing this because my process is a relationship-based approach. A relationship-based approach is a necessity when conducting Indigenous research and engaging with Indigenous communities because the outsider must invest time into relationship building, ethically and in a good way, in order to get access to the community (Kovach, 2005). Further, in following the Indigenist research paradigm, I also looked towards those who held the understanding of being an Indigenous person within Post-Secondary education (Hart, 2009). For me, that person was my cousin Millie McComber who advocated for Indigenous students to provide their assignments orally rather than in written formats.

In April 2019, I sat down with Elder Joanne Dallaire. Joanne is Cree and Wolf Clan and had agreed to meet with me back in February to speak about this research. I offered my tobacco to Joanne and asked her if we could talk about what her teachings taught about Indigenous identity within post-secondary institutions social work classrooms as Joanne also has a degree in Social Work. I also asked for guidance on completing research in a good way. I spoke about my vision of how I see a group of Indigenous women from various mixed ancestries coming together to heal. Joanne agreed and spoke about how we, as Indigenous peoples, were never allowed to enter Post-Secondary education and how academia makes individuals feel unbalanced as it only nurtures our mental and physical and not our emotional and spiritual health. Joanne also spoke about her experience often being tokenized within Post-Secondary social work classrooms and how Indigenous folx should be able to self-identity as Indigenous within the classroom without having to teach the whole class about Indigenous cultures. I thanked Joanne, and while I was leaving Joanne stated that I was a strong, beautiful Indigenous woman and that social work is just the doorway I will use to do great things for the Indigenous community of Turtle Island.

This research is who I am, it is my story, and this is one way I contribute to my community so that non-Indigenous folx become more aware of the harm Indigenous social work students face within Post-Secondary institutions and that Indigenous social work students realize that the pain they are experiencing is not their fault.

Chapter Two: Mohawk Pedagogy and Epistemology

It is important to recognize that words like ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology are rooted from Western worldviews and that I am unaware, if any, of the translation of these words into Kanien'kehá:ka language. As Maori scholar Graham Smith challenges us to think about how we, as Indigenous scholars, are engaging in relationships with Western

academic institutions in a term he calls “strategic concessions” (Kovach, 2010, p.40). An example of strategic concession is how I am applying conceptual terminology to Indigenous knowledges, specifically Kanien'kehá:ka's knowledge. This does not capture the holistic worldview that Kanien'kehá:ka people have as it holds knowledge as the primary focus and therefore aspects like feelings, spirit, and emotions are given secondary importance. However, I also have limited knowledge of the language of my family and ancestors, so using these terms could be trying to fit Indigenous, particularly Kanien'kehá:ka's ways of being, into a box. The ontology that guides this research is ceremony and that there is an interconnectedness between the physical and spiritual realms. Ceremony is sacred. As Wilson (2008) states, “research is ceremony,” I walk through the research in a good way making sure all are equal. I honour the relationships developed, including lives other than human life. I also believe that there are many realities.

In essence, this research proposal will be a literal representation of my healing journey of connecting to my Indigenous roots. I believe lived knowledge is the only way to understand experience and that it is meaningful knowledge that deserves to be situated. This research topic is a deeply personal topic to me, so I used a First Voice pedagogy, which was created by Fyre Jean Graveline who is a Métis (Cree) Associate Professor and the Director of the First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling program at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. This pedagogy will allow me to define/align myself and speak to my own experience “In-Relation” to my own selves/people and in this instance (Graveline, 1998). I will prioritize the people I walk besides' stories while encompassing my own experiences within the knowledge produced. Using the first person also honours the “experiential while engaging the abstract and theoretical” (Kovach, 2010).

Likewise, the self in relation model also aligns with the epistemology that there is a link between self-responsibility and community well-being (Graveline, 1998). As Graveline (1998) explains in her book called *Circle Works*, it is important to educate our youth in a holistic way, but we must first seek knowledge in experience and stories using our own bodies. Thus, as I undertook this research I met with an Elder to work through and heal from my own story and experiences as well as provide guidance on how to take on the responsibility of hearing other people's stories and experiences. As I also have sixth generation ancestry, I will constantly be reflexive of my "double consciousness" in which I neither privilege a Western nor an Indigenous perspective, but rather I was conscious in creating "3rd space" that draws on both worldviews and locating the strengths of each perspective (Jackson, Debassige, Masching, & Whitebird, 2015, p. 135-136).

Paradigms and Theoretical Framework

There are many different ways of knowing to inform research. I used Indigenous feminism and critical Indigenous theory lenses throughout this research study.

I chose Indigenous feminism instead of feminism as feminism does not encompass Indigenous communities and Indigenous women, trans and two spirit peoples. Indigenous feminism challenges gender discrimination, advocates for social justice for Indigenous women, and resists their social erasure and marginalization (Wingard, Johnson, & Drahm-Butler). I come from a strong lineage of Indigenous trans, women and two spirited people that I attribute my existence to them. Thus, I used Indigenous feminism when informing my methodology to actively try to "decolonize" this research study and amplify Indigenous social work students' voices. As Dian Million, an Indigenous feminist stated,

"Our voices rock the boat and perhaps the world. They are dangerous. All of this becomes important to our emerging conversation on Indigenous feminisms, on

our ability to speak to ourselves, to inform ourselves and our generations, to counter and intervene in a constantly morphing colonial system. To ‘decolonize’ means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times” ([4], p. 55 as cited in *Aboriginal Narrative Practice: Honouring storylines of pride, strength and creativity*).

Likewise, I also used a critical Indigenous theory paradigm to honour Indigenous knowledge and beliefs (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008). Critical Indigenous theory advocates for increased representation of Indigenous people within post-secondary institutions and emancipation of Indigenous identity within Canada. The strength of using critical theory intertwined with a decolonizing approach is that it analyzes power between groups, provides hope for transformation, and emphasizes the role of both structural and personal agency in resistance (Kovach, 2010).

Lastly, when constructing a framework for this study, I sought out wisdom from my cousin in Kahnawá:ke, who holds great knowledge within the community. Together, we bridged Kanien'kehá:ka's knowledges and methods in a manner that could be understood within Western academia. We decided upon the Great Law of Peace as a conceptual research framework as it honour Kanien'kehá:ka's cosmology and gives readers a visual of the thought process behind the research design. Kanien'kehá:ka's knowledge offers guidance in my research decisions that reflect upon Mohawk knowledge and values. I will be using the symbolic representation of how The Great Law of Peace brought together different nations from all four directions to come together to live in harmony without interfering with the other. Also, as Bedford and Workman (n.d.) stated, “The Great Law of Peace, perhaps the most systematic and complete extant expression of the aboriginal [sic] world view, is an invaluable source for the analysis of the defining features of whiteness.” Thus, using this framework challenges the individualization valued by Western society and instead provided ways to come together as a community to heal

as well as tell Post-Secondary institutions, particularly social work classrooms, that it is important to hear and respect all voices. I will be using the Great Law of Peace teaching as my research framework. The Great Law of Peace is the founding constitution of the Six Nations Iroquois confederacy. The basic principles of the Great Law of Peace are: peace, power and righteousness (Jacobs, 2000). The most important principle of the Great Law is that each person relates to one another, peaceful leadership, accountability to further life and responsibility to the seventh generation to come (Jacobs, 2000).

Likewise, to follow through with this research process in a good way, it was very important to respect Indigenous knowledges and give back to the community. Thus, when possible, I provided the people I walked beside a choice between keeping the knowledges produced within their stories and/or incorporating a gathering to display our research as this was a way to interpret the knowledge we gathered, by giving back to the community in a purposeful, helpful and relevant manner (Kovach, 2010). In doing so, this research aims to nurture current and future Indigenous students who are struggling with their Indigenous identity within Post-Secondary social work classrooms moving forward seven generations. Thus, on June 21, 2019, I proudly displayed, with the consent of the people I walk beside's paintings at Ryerson University National Indigenous Peoples Day Gathering where the community came together to honour Indigenous students' artistry and work.

Karihwaientáhkwen: My Responsibilities

On March 6, 2019, I met with a knowledge keeper named Maria Montejo (Deer clan) from Mam Jakalteco/Popti (Mayan) community of Indigenous people who reside in the Xajla territory of Guatemala. We had a conversation about reality and my interpretation of our conversation was that our realities are created by our emotions and thoughts. It is when our

thoughts and emotions align with our spirit that we know we are walking in a good way. This teaching also guides my research.

Yet, due to my own insecurities and my relearning of my belonging, I have been afraid to push the boundaries and conduct my research through an Indigenous lens, specifically a Mohawk lens, in fear of judgement and carrying out my research in a wrong way. I recently facilitated Sharing Circles with youth around the Seven Grandfather Teachings, but I did not have to take the sacred knowledge produced in these stories and write about it in a formal manner. I really hope that academia will change, and that research can be spoken orally instead of written to honour Indigenous knowledges in academia. However, Elder Joanne once told me that a result of fear is that “what is in denial lives forever.” Fear is false evidence appearing real. The Elder shared her wisdom that the only way fear can be silenced is by the truth, and the truth is this fear comes from the colonial messaging I have grown up immersed in, which is that I am not Indigenous enough. I have been taught there is no wrong way if you are coming from a place of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and honesty. Thus, in keeping my teachings I have gathered throughout my life and keeping these teachings in my bundle, I know I have carried out my research in a good way.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

There are many entry points to indigeneity, which is complicated by the colonial structures that withhold this place called Canada, like Post-Secondary Institutions. The literature captures the barriers and experiences Indigenous social work students face with Indigenous focused curriculum within Post-Secondary Institutions, this review will also focus on the unique realities that Indigenous students of Urban Mixed Ancestry experience within urban settings like T'karonto.

Barriers for Indigenous Students to Access Post-Secondary Institutions

Indigenous social work students continue to face stigma due to historic and ongoing barriers (the legacy of the Indian Residential School System of Canada on historical Survivors), social barriers (zero evidence of mandatory workshops or coursework for non-Indigenous faculty, staff and students in mainstream academia), cultural barriers (lack of academic preparation as people feel they were pushed through and lack ongoing mentoring). These experiences are further compounded alongside ongoing issues of geographic and demographic barriers (access to financial aid and support while living in poverty or in remote reserve communities) when trying to access Post-Secondary education in Canada (Malatest, 2004).

If we are stronger as a community then let's ensure everyone has a seat in the circle. When injustice happens to one member of the community, it happens to all. The purpose and intent of this MRP is to give voice to this often silenced and erased part of our communities and explore the experiences of how social work students who do not fit the Eurocentric visual categorization of Indigenous peoples, encounter and/or mediate their sense of belongingness of and in colonial social work classrooms of Canada. First Nations Peoples and Social Work advocates have a professional responsibility to change how policies and frameworks impact

Indigenous folx and Post-Secondary Social Work curriculum is certainly one of them (Simard, 2009).

Indigenous Centered Curriculum

It was not until the 1960s that Canadian colleges and universities started to incorporate Indigenous histories and studies into their courses with Trent University being the first in Canada to establish a Native Studies program in 1969 (Mccue, 2018). This impacts Indigenous peoples even attending post-secondary education as it is not accessible and inherently traumatizing. Also, since due to governmental control over Indigenous peoples, education about Indigeneity was not even available until the 60s and little research has been conducted on how Indigenous curriculum impacts Indigenous students as the curriculum is often taught by non-Indigenous folx. It is important to note that Indigenous students come to the classroom with both their own and their ancestral history of experiences of colonial violence. Learning about Indigenous histories and issues as an Indigenous student in social work, you learn more about your identity and culture. This causes Indigenous students to face profound difficulties with dealing with their non-Indigenous peers and teachers regarding Indigenous issues. As Cote-Meek (2014) states, “As they [Indigenous students] confront narratives of ongoing colonial violence and genocidal practices in the colonized space of the classroom, these students also have to cope with a classroom environment that can be fraught with racism and can be very hostile and destructive to their own sense of well-being” (p.127).

Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous Identity

Much of the research regarding Indigenous students within Post-Secondary education programs has been regarding Indigenous students and the constant negotiation of race and gender within academia (Cote-Meek, 2014). Constant messaging from White Canadians about

“Indianness” and how Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigeneity is “meaningless” in the classrooms greatly impacts White passing Indigenous students to identify in fear of rejection and disbelief. As Bonita Lawrence (2004) writes in her book *“Real Indians” and Others*, “The response of many individuals has been to struggle to measure up to the images before them and to feel their identities tainted and diminished because they cannot be the “real Indians” they feel they are supposed to be (p.135). Lawrence (2004) terms this “ideological racism.” These images of what an Indigenous person should look like are constantly confronting Indigenous students with what the definition of an Indigenous person is, often causing Indigenous students trying to make their peers, teachers, and their own selves believe that they are truly Indigenous.

Researcher Michelle Jacobs (2015) completed a comparative analysis of how individuals who have grown up identifying as Indigenous versus individuals who are just starting to reclaim their Indigenous identity accomplish “Indianness” in personal and public realms within Northeast Ohio. Jacobs (2015) found that it was difficult for both groups to assert their “American Indian identities in interactions with Northeast Ohio residents.” However, this was particularly difficult for those who have recently reclaimed their Indigenous identity because, “they lack tangible evidence (e.g., brown skin, government issued identification cards) to support their Indian identity claims” (Jacobs, 2015). Indigenous identity or “Indianness” is more often expressed as a measurable or quantifiable entity, the measurement of blood quantum (Peroff, 1997). Identity, in Canada’s terms, is always based on power and exclusion (Weaver, 2001). Someone must be excluded from a particular identity, within our colonized society, in order for it to be meaningful (Weaver, 2001). Making criteria for identities is not only damaging, but counterproductive in any individual’s life (Weaver, 2001).

Urban Indigenous Identity

Indigenous identity becomes even more complex when leaving reserves and relocating within urban areas. Brigitte Krieg (2016) researched the role of cultural continuity when reclaiming Indigenous identity amongst urban Indigenous women, trans and two-spirited people. Participants reported that the “issues” they face are a direct consequence of systemic community issues and that they can still feel the effects of Indian Residential Schools “not only because of the impact they have on the well-being of survivors but also because of the disintegration of Indigenous families and communities particularly in relation to learning how to raise and support future generations” (Krieg, 2016). As a result, participants stated that they just “live the life that you know,” which was addictions, abuse, poverty, academic underachievement and unemployment (Krieg, 2016). Participants reported stereotypes and assumptions influenced the way they saw themselves and limited their ability and desire to succeed (Krieg, 2016). Thus, many of the participants discussed feelings of shame connected to their culture because of the negative stereotypes that seemed to be attached to identifying as Indigenous (Krieg, 2016). Lastly, participants spoke about their experience with trying to learn about their culture from “not looking the part” to finding urban resources that shared traditional teachings with them (Krieg, 2016).

Therefore, if Indigenous identity is impacted by various negative factors, how do Indigenous people keep their spirits so strong? John Gonzalez and Russell Bennett (2011) used Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith’s (1997) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) to study Indigenous identity. Gonzalez and Bennett (2011) found individuals who actively participate in important cultural activities had a stronger sense of being Indigenous and of Indigenous “self-concept.” This coincides with the results found in Kathi Wilson and

Evelyn Peters' (2005) study that looked at how Indigenous peoples who have migrated to the cities maintain their connection with their culture. Wilson and Peters (2005) found that they recreate aspects of ceremonial practices in new urban environments, maintain physical links with reserve places of origin and consider themselves to belong to communities in both the reserve and the city. They also challenge the boundaries that have been placed on their cultures and identities within reserve and imagine a "reterritorialized First Nations space" that allows them to affirm their belonging on the land (Wilson & Peters, 2005).

Likewise, Jean-Paul Restoule (2005) conducted a study with Indigenous men within Toronto, to determine how an Indigenous cultural identity is formed in urban spaces. Participants stated that education settings are a significant contribution to their cultural identity development and described their Post-Secondary education as enabling them to work on healing or "decolonising themselves" (Restoule, 2005).

Indigeneity within Post-Secondary institutions

How does identity connect with academic achievement? Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham (2009) used a six-point Likert scale exploring "how students' sense of ethnic identity and biculturalism related to their orientation to and perceptions of schooling." Okagaki and colleagues (2009) found that Indigenous American students who placed a greater importance on education had a stronger connection to their Indigenous identity. How Indigenous American students within this study perceived their mother's socialization of cultural beliefs and practices also strongly correlated to the students' ratings of Indigenous identity achievement, ethnic practices, belonging, and importance of ethnic identity (Okagaki et al., 2009). Lastly, the more the Indigenous students believed Indigenous teachings were valued within society, the higher their ratings of academic identity and belief in the instrumental importance of school (Okagaki et

al., 2009). Likewise, positive attitudes towards the value of education and student possession of school knowledge on how to succeed in school were particularly important for improving student achievement in education (Rahman, 2010).

Some of the recommendations for Post-Secondary institutions are: Indigenous counselors, bursaries and scholarships, and a space specifically allocated for Indigenous students (Timmons, 2013). Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz (2018) offer two suggestions, *treaty-based decolonial indigenization* and *resurgence-based decolonial indigenization*, to create a just society within the academia realm.

Critique of the Literature

Students in Post-Secondary education have demanded the need to “incorporate Indigenous content in program and course work requirements and have Indigenous role models at the front of the classroom” (Indspire, 2018). Instead, when Indigenous centered curriculum has been implemented within Post-Secondary education in Canada, Indigenous students in the classrooms often experience, “overt discrimination; assumption of intellectual inferiority; assumption of tokenization, criminality, invalidation or denial, second-class citizen, racial segregation, and the myth of meritocracy, that often has an impact on whether Indigenous students decide to self-identify as Indigenous within the classroom” (Canel-Çınarbaş Yohani, 2019; Pidgeon, 2016). Although the literature talks about the experiences of Indigenous centered curriculum on Indigenous identity within Post-Secondary education, there is no talk about the impacts of red intersectionality on Indigenous identity within the Post-Secondary colonial classroom. My hope with writing this research paper is to show Post-Secondary institutions that Indigenous identity is diverse and the impact that improper execution of Indigenous centered

curriculum has had on various Indigenous folx. I am hoping this will result in changes to Post-Secondary experiences that honour and respond to the needs of Indigenous students.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Using a decolonialized approach to research, like storytelling, grounds the research in “traditional Aboriginal Peoples’ epistemologies, cultural protocols, and values” (Baskin, 2005a as cited in Silver, 2017). However, as I stated above, growing up in a very neoliberal colonized society, I have internalized Westernized epistemologies and therefore I am conscious that I have made errors specifically when creating my research questions as our epistemology influences our methodology, implementation of method, and representation in method (Carter & Little, 2007).

Thus, I understand power as being exercised and relational (Strega & Brown, 2015). As a researcher, you are in a position of power. However, Foucault’s concept of power-knowledge regimes can be useful in Indigenous research as it takes into consideration relationships (Strega & Brown, 2015). Participants in research are subjected to the complex relations of power but are also enable to “take up subjectivity in and through those relations” (Allen, 2002; Foucault, 1982, 1989 as cited in Strega & Brown, 2015). Therefore, it is important as the researcher to be mindful of these power relations and how discourses regulate these desires and relationships (Strega & Brown, 2015).

I used Four R’s of relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation and right and regulations when conducting the research (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). I wanted to truly encompass decolonization as it is often used as a metaphor in research (Tuck & Yang, 2012). I aimed to intentionally unlearn Eurocentric ways of knowing and relearn Mohawk ways of knowing. I actively challenged myself continuously on who I am, where I am from, and where I situate myself when conducting the research for the MRP. This allowed me to constantly be critically reflexive with my worldview to this day and what I can do from this stage on. Additionally, I used respect, reciprocity, responsibility and rights and regulations, which are

the “four axiological assumptions embedded within Indigenous research” (Snows, Hays, Caliwagon, Ford Jr, Mariotti, Mwendwa, & Scott, 2016).

As stated above, using a decolonized approach to research grounds the research in ancestral epistemologies, cultural protocols, and values. Likewise, the method needs to be respectful of and include Indigenous protocols, values, and beliefs that are important to the specific community when conducting Indigenous research (Lavallée, 2009).” The two methods that were used to gather the stories of the people I walked beside in the study were: Storytelling and Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in the form of paintings.

Method: Storytelling

Throughout the research process of the major research paper, I proposed, as Silver calls it, to “decolonize knowledge production” to respond to the epistemological issues researchers have encountered (Silver, 2017). I built a relationship with the people I walked beside well before they told their stories and I will continue these relationships afterward by staying connected via social networking and/or the telephone. I acknowledge that for a story to surface, there must be trust (Kovach, 2010). I acknowledge that every individual’s experience with Post-Secondary institutions will be different, but I will be accountable to my respondents moving forward.

I chose storytelling to respect participants’ stories and to allow the people I walked beside to have greater control over what they wish to share (Kovach, 2010). Storytelling of one’s experience is a form of teaching and learning in the Haudenosaunee culture. I believe storytelling is also a form of resistance and a form of survival. Storytelling restores Indigenous worldviews and shifts the way Indigenous peoples view themselves. For these reasons, I incorporated storytelling into the methodology of this research study. I recorded these stories because doing

so, as Laara Fitznor, an Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba states, protects the words of the research participants (Kovach, 2010). I then looked for themes of shared experiences, moments of violence in the colonial classroom.

When I say I am using a storytelling approach, I mean in the way the ancestors of the Pueblo people used storytelling which was for “a communal truth, not an absolute truth. For them this truth lived somewhere within the web of differing versions” (Portillo, 2017, p.32). That is, “there are no pure truths, but rather only stories, many stories” (Portillo, 2017, p.33). However, communal storytelling is much more than truth telling: it is for survival and healing (Portillo, 2017). My hope for this paper is that readers won’t only read these stories, but they will engage in new approaches of the TRC.

As people shared their stories in both oral and visual ways, I reflected on how challenging it is to place these stories into text. In Western culture, individuals’ narrative is often transcribed into text for the researcher, supplying a set of assumptions and implications for the reader to interpret (Kovach, 2010). By contrast, in oral tradition, the final product tells a story of the relationship between the “teller and the listener”. (Kovach, 2010). It is a true privilege to be gifted the knowledge through these stories as a Mohawk researcher.

Method: Paintings

In terms of power, I implemented a participatory action research (PAR) methodology as PAR aligns with Mohawk axiology since it values relationships and giving back to the community of the people with whom you work (Wilson, 2001). However, I wanted to be truly transparent with the power I have as the researcher and the personal reward I will be gaining with conducting this research as the MRP is a requirement in obtaining a Masters of Social Work at Ryerson University.

I chose the methodology of having the people I walked beside express their experiences through paintings as I believe that when someone paints, their spirit is placed into that painting. Lynn Lavallée (2009) stated, “something, such as a painting, jewelry, a medicine wheel, or a dreamcatcher, his or her energy is placed into that object and each piece will have a different energy” (p. 30). I adapted the PAR approach, specifically the method of photovoice, but instead of using photos, the people I walked beside created paintings. Doing so directly involved the people I walked beside in a holistic way and allowed them to identify, represent, and enhance their own communities.

Implementing a PAR approach with those I walked beside, Indigenous Social Work students used paintings as a form of storytelling, thus, decolonizing the research design and unifying differing knowledge systems and methods. Similarly, to Krieg’s (2016) research, I used PAR as my methodology in the form of paintings as evidence of the ways that “Indigenous methodologies can be situated within the qualitative landscape because they encompass characteristics congruent with other relational qualitative approaches” (Kovach, 2010).

Criteria for Participation

Students who were currently and previously enrolled in a college or university social work class and identified as Indigenous were recruited for the study. This criterion was set to explore the experiences of Indigenous students in post-secondary education in the hope that it will further help the experiences of Indigenous students in post-secondary education social work classrooms moving forward. Any interested participants over the age of 18 years were considered for the study.

Recruitment

The participants of the study were recruited through on-campus postings of study flyers and through the email listserv of Ryerson University School of Social Work. The flyer was also posted on Facebook where a snowball sampling method was employed by which participants could share the flyer via social media.

Procedure

A voice recorder was used to record the stories with prior consent of the individuals I walked beside to help conduct data analysis of the study. The stories ranged from an hour to two hours in length, consisted of four people, whom I interviewed separately, and were held in the Masters of Social Work student lounge at Ryerson University. I prepared tobacco bundles prior to the interaction. At the beginning of the storytelling, I explained my teachings of the symbolism and importance of storytelling as well as the significance of accepting a tobacco bundle. I emphasized that if during the storytelling they did not feel like answering a question or sharing something, they did not have to.

I then prepared the smudge. I explained the meaning behind the medicines and asked if anyone did not wish to smudge. After the smudge, I handed out the Consent Forms and read the instructions. I asked if there were any questions and reminded everyone that their story would be audiotaped. I collected the signed consent forms and handed out painting supplies. I then asked probing questions which the individuals within the circle could discuss while painting their experiences. Individuals then got a chance to explain the meaning behind their paintings as well as what they felt was best for seven generations moving forward.

The Collective Story

Individuals' stories were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to bridge Indigenous research methods and Western qualitative research methods (Lavallée, 2009). I then used grounded theory to code any themes within what was said in the interviews. The reason why I chose grounded theory is that there are some similarities between grounded theory and Indigenous theories such as like flexible guidelines for data collection and data analysis, commitments to remain close to the world being studied and equal emphasis on the process as well as the outcome of the research (Denzin, 2010). I went back to the individuals I walked beside to confirm my interpretations of what was said and the themes emerging from the data. This is referred to as "member checking" in qualitative research and a method of ensuring the trustworthiness of the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 2000 as cited in Lavallée, 2009). I then brought these stories together to form a "collective story" all while keeping individual stories intact by providing pseudonyms to each individual and allowing the painting to reflect their individual story. Doing so allowed me to show the interconnectedness of the stories.

I adapted Lynn Lavallée's (2009) symbol of collective story where she superimposed two Métis symbols (infinity symbol). What emerged was a flower where the four petals represented the four themes that emerged from the individuals' stories. In the center of these four petals, she placed the four directions, of what participants described as the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual impacts (Lavallée, 2009). However, readers should be mindful that some of these stories overlap within more than one quadrant, so they are not exclusive to the quadrant I have placed them in for the purpose of this research. Finally, the stem completes the symbols with the theme "the way we walk in life." The stem is connected to the whole, symbolizing the interrelationship of the participants' experiences (Lavallée, 2009). Since I am not Metis, instead of using a flower

I looked towards the Mohawk Great Tree of Peace (see *Figure 1*) and used a tree shape as my diagram. The story of the Great Tree of Peace is an epic. It tells of a time in the near future when all nations of people will unite under it and as such, come together to heal and move forward together. For the purposes of my research design, I assigned meaning to the root system from the recurring themes: stories *from the past*, stories of *Post-Secondary institutions*, stories of *Indigenous focused curriculum* and stories of *ways we can move forward*. Their stories are impactful and resilient, and I am truly grateful to have experienced their wisdom and hope to share their friendship for eternity.

Chapter Five: To Move Forward We Must Look Back

Stereotypes and self-identification: physical

Indigenous students of Urban Mixed Indigenous Ancestry spoke about not fitting the stereotype the world has created for Indigenous peoples. JAKE stated,

“When I was a kid, I heard that all the time. It is kind of like old men. But I remember the first time I heard that it was like more aware of this type of stuff. And I was just like, like, is this person being serious? Or are they just like... it's such an awkward thing to be in and be like, no, no. And in fact, in this area, we never live in teepees. We live in a wigwam so longhouses it's like it just it just was like this weird, like. But you know, and that image is painted, though it is... it's a mess. People can't get over that part of things.”

What does it mean to be an Indigenous person outside of these biological ideas around race? When I think of my ancestral knowledge or understanding of what it means to belong in an Indigenous community, I think of kinship and standing with my community. However, policies, assumptions, and Western science seem to be able to dictate who is Indigenous and who is not whether it be from a DNA test or owning a status card. One person I walked beside was grateful for terms like “self-identify as Indigenous”. SANDRA stated,

“I think it should be the students. And the reason I'm saying that is because I think when you get into like, the systematic idea of having like, a system that identifies people, I feel like, that's when you get into those spaces of being like, Where's the cut off? How much? You know what I mean? And then that's when you create that space of like, you know what I mean? whereas like, I love when studies or things say self-identify, because then I can participate. Right? But then there's places that say, you need to have status, and I'm like, Well, I can't go. I don't have it. So yeah, I just like that open-ended idea of like, self-identification.. Then you also get into the spaces of people thinking it's a fad to be like, Indigenous you know?”

As Doctor Kim TallBear, a Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate professor at the University of Alberta specializing in racial politics in science, stated in her article *Tell Me a Story: Genomics vs. Indigenous Origin Narratives*,

“Indigenous peoples do not expect scientists to adopt their stories of origin. Theirs are not generally proselytizing traditions. But they - we - want our political jurisdictions over our

bodies and lands upheld and we want the power of our stories to shape our lives respected and to not be deemed as untruths” (2013).

Feeling outside of the circle of belongingness- emotional

Some of the emotions that the stories revealed were feelings of anxiety, anger, and sadness when society has consistently questioned students’ Indigenous identity and their right to belong as an urban Indigenous person of Mixed Ancestry. JENNIFER stated:

“And I think a lot of that painting came from just that anger. And that pain of not being like, feeling like, you know, you can’t, no matter how much work you do, no matter how much ceremony you do, and how much process you do, you can never get close enough.”

As Bonita Lawrence stated in her book *‘Real’ Indians and Others*,

“In particular, the apparent consensus from all quarters within the dominant society that ‘real’ Indians have vanished (or that the few that exist must manifest absolute authenticity- on white terms- to be believable as Indians) functions as a constant discipline on urban mixed-blood, continuously proclaiming to them that urban mixed-blood Indianness is meaningless and that Indianness of their families has been irrevocably lost” (Sandra35).

This questioning of identity also comes from family members in the form of shame as SANDRA stated,

“She knows like, I kind of have it coming from both sides, like not fitting in with the white people not fitting in with the Black people, not fitting in with the Indigenous people. Like, I’m all over the place. Like, maybe I don’t know, I’m just hoping like, I don’t know, like this grand moment of like, discovery where I can find some sort of information about us. And then my Nana was there and she’s just like, she’s like, I don’t know why you’re so into this. My family being kind of like, upset, maybe not upset but like it comes off as upset with me when I try to engage into to learning more about working from almost like an annoyance.”

This suppression in families is often to escape anti-Native racism (Lawrence, 2004).

Self-identifying as Indigenous while experiencing white privilege - mental

Urban Indigenous folx often have to “negotiate” their identity from a young age due to society not believing that they are a “true Indian” (Lawrence, 2004). As a result, most Urban

Mixed Ancestry Indigenous folx have to contend with the fact that they do not fit the “model” of what an Indigenous person should look like (Lawrence, 2004). Thus, these folx then feel their identities are “tainted” or “diminished” because they cannot be “real Indians” even though they truly feel their Indigeneity close to heart. Indigenous students of Urban Mixed Ancestry often spoke about not being perceived as “authentic” Indigenous peoples as their “full decent relatives.” SANDRA described their experience with completing family background projects in school and noted,

“I’d be like, so conflicted because I’m like, it’s not even about like, if I knew or didn’t know, but I didn’t. I felt like I was making the choice, all the time. And then when I did choose, like, often, I would be like, okay, like, we’re doing a cultural project, I’m going to choose to do a project and like, what I do know about, like [Indigenous Nation] and like, my background and stuff, and then people would do presentations in school, and people wouldn’t believe me, or like, or then like, I think by like, middle school, high school, just like, Whatever. I’m just going to do the Caribbean. Because I look black. People aren’t really gonna challenge that, you know?”

This negotiation of identity due to the Indian Act’s definition of defining Indian identity by blood quantum results in individuals often enduring traumatic experiences of trying to convince people of their identity (Lawrence, 2004). Smithers and Newman (2014) explained the difference between a mixed Indian person of white and black decent as she stated,

“The discourse of blood carried with it the assumption that Indians of mixed descent had their own recognizable characteristics. Indians with white ancestry were seen as more intelligent and more acculturated. They were often assumed to be cultural brokers or interpreters who were able to exploit Indians of full descent with their talents. Indians with black ancestry, on the other hand, were subjected to similarly intense racism to that reserved for African Americans” Sandra64.

Mixed with white and Indigenous ancestry folx cannot ignore the class and gender privileges that give them tremendous social authority and privilege, especially when looking for an apartment, dealing with government bureaucracy, trying to get a job... the list goes on (Lawrence, 2004).

The Urban Mixed Indigenous Ancestry folx who are white seeming have the ability to “blend into” White society. JENNIFER stated,

“I was feeling really, really, really, like I was having a really, really hard time with self-identification. And then I just as I started doing my research, and as I started talking to [Elder], and as I, you know, reconnected back with [professor], like, I have such great conversation with [professor]. And she was just like, she’s like, what, so you’re just going to not be Indigenous now. Like, you’re just going to like abandon it just because you can. And that was a really good call to write because I have white privilege. So, I could if I wanted to. And she was like, you know, that’s that’s kind of fucked up, JENNIFER. And I was like, yeah, you know, you’re right. It is kind of fucked up. So, as I went through that process, I think I, I felt like I got more solid in who I was.”

Feeling Indigeneity in your heart-spiritual

When speaking about the historical impact of residential schools on their lives, themes of loss of identity emerged. Duran and Duran (1995), Locust (1998) and Bastien et al. (1999) also describe the psychological historical impact of colonization as a wounding of a person’s soul or spirit (as cited in Cote-Meek, 2014). However, Indigenous students of Urban Mixed Ancestry constantly feel that connection to their roots as SANDRA stated when talking about their Indigenous identity, “But it’s like, you feel in your heart there’s something there.” Indigenous identity is not settler-colonial definition of focusing on lineal, genetic ancestry alone (Wilbur & Keene, 2018). It is about peoplehood as people who are original to the land and the invocation of this definition is due to threatened folx who are trying to feel comfortable on stolen land (Wilbur & Keene, 2018).

Post-Secondary institutions

Lack of representation- physical

What the people I walked beside found very uncomfortable was that they were also some of the few self-identified Indigenous folx in their classes. JAKE stated,

“Um, but what I more often found was a negative experience was that I was the only Indigenous person in the program, and to my knowledge I am still only like, one of two people who graduate from that program was identified as Indigenous.” This seems to echo the experience of Indigenous students across Ontario. Sheila Cote-Meek (2014) compiled narratives of Indigenous students attending various universities and found that they were often the minority.

Symptoms of trauma in class- emotional

The people I walked beside spoke about the anxiety and dissociation Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous students face within Post-Secondary institutions. For example, CLAIRE stated, “My anxiety rises, I can't concentrate in class. I start not going to class. Start not paying attention.” Erikson describes classic symptoms of trauma as ranging from feelings of restlessness and agitation at one end of the emotional scale to feelings of numbness and weakness at the other (Cote, 2014).

Centering Western knowledge- mental

A common theme that came from the people I walked beside, is this notion that Western ways of knowing are universal and superior to all other worldviews and knowledges. For example, one person stated,

“You know, there weren't opportunities for me to say, rather than writing this lit review, I want to sit with 10 community members and having to have a composition discussion. I did include an Elder as part of my knowledge, but I still had to go do a review. But yeah, I mean, in terms of Indigenous research, and Indigenous content, like, there's more, there's definitely more that can be done to really, really decolonize it, make it more experiential, make it more relational, make it more about culture centered, storytelling, as opposed to being like, yeah, you could do some of that, but make sure you're reading, you know, 50 books.”

Likewise, Timothy Leduc, a social work professor from Brantford, Ontario found in his case study that, “the Two Row illustrates that social work has a cultural position and cannot be seen

as a universal approach” and that “the Two Row also clarifies that we can engage with and learn from indigenous cultural traditions that contrast social work” (Leduc, 2018).

Fighting for Indigenous identity and creating a white persona- spiritual

Individuals usually attend university at a time in their lives when they are truly discovering who they are, which often has been stolen from Indigenous students due to residential schools, child welfare as well as colonial and imperial genocide. JAKE stated, when speaking about the red intersections of Indigeneity,

“And that's that wider spectrum, that social work programs are just completely missing. And I think it's a real crime in some ways, because, you know, school learning should be that time of self-discovery when I was in college, like I said, there was space given so that I could learn differently, I could learn about the things that I need to know about to be an Indigenous Child and Youth Worker. And that was really powerful for me that self-discovery and being able to learn and do that walk of self-discovery at the same time. Most programs aren't set up in a way like that, though, they're set up in a way that you are, you have to know who you are.”

In *Red Pedagogy* Sandy Grande stated, “as we raise yet another generation in a nation at war, it is even more imperative for schools to be reimagined as sites for social transformation and emancipation” (as cited in Kongerslev, 2018). Classrooms should be a place of self-discovery and a place of empowering our future generations to enact change.

A common theme amongst the stories was urban Indigenous students having to “act white” in order to “succeed” while simultaneously having to fight for their Indigenous identity as JAKE stated,

“I acknowledge, like, the privilege that I've had. So I grew up in a white town, I grew up in a way, where I learned to be non-Indigenous, you know what I mean, not in the way that I've lost who I am as an Indigenous person, but in a way that I'm, I can, I can live as a non-Indigenous person with a really nice tan. You know what I mean? And so, because of that, I think I was able to survive in all these different institutions from high school upwards. Because I learned to just check the Indigeneity, on and off, when I needed to, like a light switch or something like that, you know.”

Indigenous focused curriculum

Historical representation of Indigenous peoples- physical

A very common theme that the people I walked beside spoke about when learning Indigenous content within post-secondary social work classrooms was the stereotypes and stagnant content the class read within assigned class articles. JAKE stated,

“But it is making it clear that like, most Indigenous people live in urban settings, but we're still painted as like... and it sucks. But there's that stereotype like, we're still painted like these people who like roll around in the bush and like, buckskin loin cloths, and you know, stuff like that. And I say it sucks.”

These stereotypes often arise when non-Indigenous social work students come into the classroom to learn about Indigenous histories resulting in an enormous burden being placed on Indigenous students and professors who risk having their identity questioned if they fail to conform and/or produce culture (Cote-Meek,2014).

Likewise, the stories showed that if students do self-identify as Indigenous in class, they were often tokenized and isolated. JAKE stated,

“When that kind of discussion would come up, whether people were actually physically looking at me, I knew they were like, I don't want to be mentally looking at me. But like, there was like that feeling that like, oh, we're talking about Native stuff, [JAKE] is going to answer or is going to know about this.”

Anger and pain with Indigenous centered curricula- emotional

A theme that arose from these stories was anger as SANDRA stated in their story,

“I'd be mad, and I'd be angry, but I keep it in. And again, I think it's because I'm not that confrontational type of person. We're not gonna stick my hand up in class and be like, Mrs. So, and so you're wrong, because blah blah blah blah. I just kind of sit there and listen to it. And just like, you know, test and move on, but like, it's still bugs you inside. And then you feel guilty because you didn't say anything.”

This feeling of anger seems to be a common emotional reaction to Indigenous centered curricula in Post-Secondary institutions, and not only within social work. Patricia Monture-Angus, a

Mohawk woman, wrote about her experiences as a law student and then later as a professor. She contends that the anger and pain she experienced “are the violence that grows out of racism” (1995:35 as cited in Cote-Meek, 2014).

A common theme that arose when the people I walked beside described their emotional experiences when receiving Indigenous histories in their social work class is trauma as JENNIFER stated,

“Sometimes I don't have like, literally, I don't have the emotional space to react, even though my body's reacting, but I don't have like, emotional, like, just shits hard. I just don't want to hear. And like sometimes, you know, the people that you're talking to, like, they just won't get it.”

This reaction is from the blood memory of what our ancestors endured as Cote-Meek (2014) explained, “In instances where a student is connected to colonial historical trauma, such as an Aboriginal student who may have attended a residential school or is a direct descendant of a residential school survivor, there may even be an increased risk that the student will experience higher levels of trauma. As a result, the impact of curricula dealing with historically traumatic issues such as the residential school and child welfare systems may inadvertently re-traumatize a student (Cote, 2014).

Indian Residential school survivor videos- mental

A method of learning that was used for the people I walked beside when being delivered Indigenous histories was often in the form of videos of Residential School survivors. This is problematic for Indigenous students as “the effects of historical trauma are further exacerbated by what is termed ‘vicarious trauma,’ described in the counselling literature as responses that develop through second-hand exposure to a client’s traumatic experiences” (Trippany, White Kress & Wilcoxon, 2004 as cited in Cote-Meek, 2014). These second-hand exposures can include: film, video or narratives, to elements of historical abuse, violence and trauma since

many educators, trained in Western methods of teaching and learning, pay little attention to the emotional and spiritual aspects of students' lives (Horseman, 1999 as cited in Cote-Meek, 2014).

Feeling like a side note & negative racialized constructions in class- spiritual

All of the people I walked beside spoke about how social work classrooms in Post-Secondary institutions struggled with the fact that Indigenous worldviews and knowledges were either incorporated as a “side note” or not presented at all. This is problematic as Cajete (1994) noted that it is a daily struggle for many Indigenous peoples to fight to hold onto their Indigenous identities and has resulted, for some, in feelings of hopelessness (as cited in Cote-Meek, 2014). One of the effects of this constant struggle is that, over time, the oppression becomes internalized to the degree where the oppressed takes on the beliefs of the colonizers (Fanon, 1963). Psychologically and emotionally, this may result in a devaluing of their self-esteem and sense of Indigeneity (Cote-Meek, 2014). This is shown in JAKE's story as stated,

“Um, I look at it that universities and colleges are just picking up where residential schools left off. It still is that process of like, we're going to get the native people to not think and not just like direct because universities exists. I'm not saying that's their only purpose. But ultimately, it's a curriculum setup, designed by an elite few to teach everyone what they should think. That's just what residential schools did. It was a curriculum and a mandate set out by the government and churches to alter the way Indigenous children thought of themselves and their own ways of knowing.”

Likewise, the curriculum of Indigenous histories within post-secondary social work classrooms develop racialized constructions of Indigenous folk often using negative imagery, narratives and regulations. JAKE stated,

“We're not seeing a lot of papers about like post residential school in the sense of like, the healing that's taking place, how there's like language camps, and all these different things, is this hyper fixation on the residential school and it paints a picture of defeat, like, after the residential school, we lost. And then don't forget about the Indians, they lost this fight, but like, some of them are still around, and they're okay. That's kind of how it gets painted.”

Thus, Indigenous students enter classrooms carrying this huge burden of representation and are often marked as a victim, inferior, and unintelligent which again allows western post-secondary institutions to maintain existing hegemonic hierarchies in social work (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Hopes for the future

Increase Indigenous representation and support-physical

The stories of the people I walked beside spoke a lot about illuminating Indigenous social work students' successes and hiring more Indigenous faculty. JAKE explicitly stated,

“Hire more Indigenous staff. Number one. And, you know, what that would mean for programs is your, but this is a clarification I have to make not to hire Indigenous staff, just to be like, Okay, you guys can write native programs now about residential schools, all the shitty things to go through, because white people don't want to touch those topics, or it's not appropriate, or whatever it is, right? So, this leads into the second part of what I want to say, is when you have you've hired your Indigenous staff, really care about them and support them.”

Indigenous professors are often marked as “inferior” to their non-Indigenous counterparts and often regulated in having to respond in certain ways either as the Indigenous informant or the “cultural/spiritual native guy” (Cote-Meek,2014).

Building new relationships- emotional

A theme that also evolved through the people I walked besides' stories is this notion of building relationships within the classroom and the importance of relationships when working with Indigenous communities. JENNIFER stated, “And so I think, maybe more discussions around, you know, for working with Indigenous communities, like the importance of building relationships, the importance of, you know, removing your sense of like, you know, being the doer, or being the one who changes things to the one who sits and listens and holds the space and supports and, and seeks allyship and all that sort of stuff.” When working with Indigenous communities, relationship building is vital in the helping relationship process as it nurtures the

help that is offered as well as harmonizes the power imbalance (Hart, 2002 as cited in Lake, 2011).

Social work classrooms should be a place where non-Indigenous students critically analyze their location as well as their current and past relationship with Indigenous folx as JENNIFER stated,

“I think the social work school, especially when it comes down to Indigenous content, needs to get a little bit more process based in the sense of, it can't just be talking about the theory. And it can't just be talking about it from like a cerebral place it has to be, you have to self-locate, and you have to find who you are, where you are, in this nation to nation relationship.”

Leduc (2018) concurred with educators guiding non-Indigenous students with locating themselves by presenting visuals for students to reflect on as he stated, “Experientially engaging with the memorial offers many openings to teach about the lands we are on and the social issues related to colonial dynamics if we take the time to slow down and bring the social work ideas of the classroom to where our everyday relationships are lived. It is a good place for social work students to begin critically positioning themselves, their families, and their chosen profession in Canada’s colonial history as well as contemplating what reconciliation may entail” (p. 414).

Additionally, the people I walked beside suggested the need to really reflect on your relationship as a social worker with Indigenous communities. JENNIFER stated,

“Social Work has a long-standing history of white saviourism, right. And that idea of like, in messed up ways to now sort of maybe, like more low key, but still very present ways, this idea of like, we're going to go in and save the native people, and, you know, make them feel better. And like, you know, take them away from this. And so, I think that that needs to be very cognizant that Indigenous people are the ones that are doing the work to- to support themselves, and that they're going out in their teaching communities on or teaching non-Indigenous people around, you know, how do you engage in Indigenous social work? And how do you recalibrate your approach, and that you are not the center of knowing right, you are not the knower. And that you need to take a step back and follow community.”

Leduc's (2018) case study confirmed similar knowledge that stated, "There is a need to truthfully struggle with the profession's role in colonial processes, despite its concern with justice and human rights" (p.421).

Awareness of lateral violence inside and outside of the classroom- spiritual

The stories noted many teachings about how lateral violence within and outside the classrooms impact Urban Mixed Ancestry Indigenous folx and the importance of talking about this subject in a good way within post-secondary social work classrooms. JENNIFER stated,

"Everybody is subjected, I think in the same way as to the same bullshit lateral violence. And that none of so none of that feedback that you get around what makes an Indigenous person what doesn't make an Indigenous person at the end of the day, I don't think it really matters, because it's how you reconcile with yourself and how you take care of your ancestors. And what you do to care for your, for your ancestors to feast your ancestors to celebrate your ancestors to hold them close, right? Because they never, for me, like, my- my ancestors lost the ability to self-identify their lost community lost everything, and I can't imagine how painful that must have been. And how important it is to, you know, if they never got the chance to, to honor that, to care for that to heal that, then I have to do it. Right. So that they can they can be a peace. And I really, really strongly believe that."

The lateral violence within Indigenous communities is historical trauma that is inextricably to the multiple inhumanities of colonization (Stringer, 2012).

Literature of current Indigenous peoples and environmentalism- mental

A common theme for the hopes for the future in terms of the literature given in classrooms around Indigenous identity and histories is for more contemporary articles to be presented. JAKE stated,

"I just don't want to read about like something that was like some paper that was maybe really great in the 80s, or the 70s. It's just like, it just doesn't speak to the identity anymore. Because it's shifted, it's changed. And it's, it's, you know, so a lot of the content that they presented was also newer content that had been written. So, um, it was something that like, when I would read it, it would talk about rather than residential schools or the 60 schools, we would talk about the millennial scoop, it would talk about trans mountain pipeline, like stuff that was very new, very, it's not about being like fresh, or like the latest coolest thing, but something that like, in the context of my generation,

and my age, this content actually, is my experience, it represents me. So, when they would wrap present that when they would teach that curriculum that way, it actually represents who I am as an Indigenous person. It's not that they just didn't use like older content. They still did. But it was just it was like a nice mix of the two."

More contemporary articles that represent the Indigenous identities within Post-Secondary social work classrooms are needed not only to challenge common stereotypes of Indigenous peoples but for Indigenous students to feel represented. Trying to solve current problems of anti-native racism by keeping material the same, is not a promising avenue of improvement at any point of time (Hooley, 2009).

Likewise, JAKE suggested incorporating current environmentalism within social work curricula, which coincides with Leduc's (2018) experience in his social work program. Leduc states; "I was educated in a standard social work ecological model and value system that teaches the interactions among the human micro, macro, and mezzo systems. Land was discussed less than the occasional reference to Indigenous worldviews, colonial impacts, and the role of social work in that violent history" (p. 413).

As stated prior, the people I walked beside yearned for representation of their mixed urban Indigenous identity to be acknowledged both in and out of the classroom. JENNIFER stated,

"The Bonita Lawrence's book, *Real Indian and Others* really talked a lot about identity, and how identity is negotiated and how people get read as Indigenous or non-Indigenous. We never really talked about that it was always done more from like, Indigenous, you know, like current realities of Indigenous folx in terms of marginalization and social work or in health care and things were always more fact based rather than, here's, I'm sharing my story. And, you know, my process of, of, you know, growing up with culture and identity or not growing up in culture and so, I guess I missed more of those conversations or more of those types of readings, like I remember, we get a lot of readings being like, you know, yeah, the TRC and social work, right, which is great. I mean, these are all things that we need to know. But again, I'm like, what, where are those personal narratives?"

It is time for post-secondary social work classrooms to challenge their colonial regime and hegemonic ordering that controls how and what curriculum is taught so that Indigenous students can concentrate on learning rather than negotiating their identity to others (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Ancestral strength- spiritual

The stories told had many themes of solidarity, ancestral strength, and being resistant to the colonial social work classrooms in post-secondary institutions. JENNIFER stated,

“Yeah, that so I think at the time, I was doing my education, I was feeling a little bit more disconnected from my resiliency, well a little bit disconnected from my feelings. Now I feel more integrated with my feelings. And I do feel like I'm surviving for sure. And I'm calling on my ancestors for strength. And thriving might come down the line.”

This quote reminds me of a teaching I was gifted during a difficult time in my life by an Elder.

The Elder told me that I can get through anything I have gotten through before, and this includes what our ancestors have gone through. My Grandmother is the strongest person I will ever know. She got through the sexual, physical, emotional, and mental abuse of the residential schools as well as losing her children to abusive relationships and the child welfare system. I am privileged to be her granddaughter and I am eternally grateful for her spirit being with me today.

Paintings- Allyship- physical



Illustration 1: by SANDRA

A teaching that came from the paintings was this notion of solidarity, allyship, and championship (see *Illustration 1*) as SANDRA stated,

“Right now, I’m kind of doing something that represents both but like unity as well. Like we have like the Caribbean, Canada and I was kind of doing like the black powers symbol, Medicine behind it so like, it kind of just like, represents the unity that I want to see. Solidarity I want to see in the school.”

This was also found in Inspire (2018) study which found that, “Indigenous students were clear that they needed champions and allies who are knowledgeable and informed, both within their classrooms and across the university system. They needed these champions and allies to stand with them when they faced with barriers to inclusion” (p. 34).

Role-models and mentors- emotional



Illustration 3: made by JENNIFER

A theme of a person I walked beside’s paintings (see *Illustration 3*) was that they did not feel supported in their Post-Secondary education as JENNIFER stated,

“They’re kind of just leaving me to do my thing. They’re not really supporting me, they’re not really engaging with me, they’re not really building relationship with me. So, what these individuals are supposed to represent our like, faculty and other students who are there, but they’re just sort of leaving me to my own experience, and not really, rather than facing me and being relationship with me. So, I think I think that focuses disconnection in some ways.”

This is echoed in Indspire (2018) report on student's experiences of truth and reconciliation in Post-Secondary settings and suggested that, "In addition to role-models and mentors, students needed proactive support and outreach to help them navigate their route to academic success, health and well-being. Indigenous Students said Indigenous staff at Indigenous student service programs were overworked and that this has an impact when they are navigating areas of need and struggle."

Acknowledging our ancestors-mental



Illustration 2: made by CLAIRE

The people I walk beside spoke and illustrated (see *Illustration 2*) about how often they look to their ancestors for guidance, support, and strength as CLAIRE stated,

"I also feel kind of what we're talking about that like, you feel in the heart, your Indigenous identity. Like I feel my ancestors with me. So, like, I'm going to draw my grandma's drum here. And then with the number eight, I just learned is with Mohawk prophecy is like the current generation of youth and I am technically still a youth. It's like, our responsibility to demand Indigenous rights. So that is why like eight is in the background."

Thus, I believe bringing awareness of the cultural genocide of the residential school system and the impacts of the harm caused is important knowledge for everyone, I also believe Indigenous culture, identity and belonging is needed in the social work curriculum as part of the reconciliation process. These three factors offer a framework, a source of strength and protective factors for Indigenous social work students moving forward (Indspire, 2018).

Hope for a better future- spiritual



Illustration 4: made by JAKE

Lastly, I leave you with a lesson that was stated so eloquently and symbolically through JAKE's painting (see *Illustration 4*) of the resilience and optimism that Indigenous social workers still have even after enduring colonizing and patriarchal harm that Post-Secondary institutions place on them. JAKE stated, "So, you know, maybe these clouds will eventually build up into storm clouds, or maybe they'll just blow off one another into little clouds and then one day become water. So yeah, I think it represents just like a small little moment that can be looked at as nonsensical, and momentary, but could also mean something as time marches on." So as Mohawk Pine Tree Chief Joseph Brant stated during his last days in the physical world, "Let us continue free as the air" truthfully reconciling social work education in post-secondary institutions (Leduc, 2018).

Chapter Six: Limitations of Research Design

The research study is based on the experiences of four Indigenous peoples from various nations. Due to a small sample size and the how diverse Indigenous cultures are, the findings cannot be generalized beyond these participants. Additionally, there were no Inuit representatives in this research, and thus the Inuit experience is missing from this discussion. All four participants were of the same age categories (20s and 30s), which marks a limitation on the sharing of the experiences of younger and older Indigenous social work students. Each participant also came from a middle-income economic bracket, and this does not include the voices of other Indigenous social work students from other economic backgrounds. I believe conducting a sharing circle, more healing would have ensued. However, due to the limited amount of time and participants' schedules, I could only do individual interviews. Since I am white seeming as well as another person I walk beside in the study along with another person being visibly Indigenous and the other being Black Indigenous, I will never have the full understanding of their stories because as I stated before, to really know what someone has went through, you have to have walked that same journey. Thus, I encourage readers to take this into consideration when reading this paper.

Lastly, the limitation of using critical and grounded theory within Indigenous settings is that it will not work without localizing and grounding the theory in “the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin, 2010). Specifically, with grounded theory, process and causal narratives may not align with the social justice concerns of Indigenous peoples (Denzin, 2010). Likewise, with critical theory, self-determination and empowerment perpetuates neoliberal axiology, while turning Indigenous people into the “Other” being spoken for and theorized about (Denzin, 2010).

These Are Not My Stories

I have to be honest, trying to complete this research in a good way was a challenge due to the colonial patriarchal restrictions universities have placed on Indigenous students' knowledges. I definitely felt I was walking in two worlds when completing this paper as I was split between meeting the needs of Western academic research as well as fighting for my spirit to be heard and healed. In doing so, I believe this process brought me further along the red road and I have grown to become more confident with who I am not only as a person but as a being. I am so very grateful for the Indigenous social work scholars who paved the way to make mine possible. I am also grateful to the people I walk beside who graciously shared their stories with me and Elder Joanne who shared her wisdom and teachings. This information does not belong to me, it belongs to them. Lastly, I would not have gotten through this project without the support of my community as well as the medicines and all living things.

Karihwiióhtshera- Teachings of Those I walk Beside

The Indigenous students within this study spoke about feelings of anxiety, anger, shame, and sadness when they constantly have to verify their Indigenous identity as well as their longing to belong as an urban Indigenous person of Urban Mixed Ancestry . The Indigenous students of Urban Mixed Ancestry often spoke about not being perceived as “authentic” and an added layer of racism with their black ancestry. In terms of white mixed Indigenous students, acknowledging and utilizing their privilege to support their communities is paramount. Indigenous students often felt the historical impact of colonization within and outside the classroom. However, often feeling a deep-rooted connection to their Indigenous identity.

Within post-secondary institutions, Indigenous students within this study spoke about often dissociating in class due to anxiety and feeling very uncomfortable to self-identified in

their classes due to stereotypes of being inferior. Western ways of knowing is universal and superior to all other worldviews and knowledges and therefore, causing the Indigenous students having to “act white” in order to “succeed” while simultaneously affirming for their Indigenous identity

Literature within post-secondary social work classrooms often contributed to these stereotypes due to the stagnant content of racialized constructions of Indigenous folx often using negative imagery, narratives, and regulations in the assigned class articles. Many Indigenous students do not self-identify due to not wanting to be targeted as different, and/or being confined to the role of Indigenous informant and racism as well as classroom environment. All of the people I walk beside spoke about social work classrooms in post-secondary institutions struggled with the fact that Indigenous worldviews and knowledges were not being centered within the classrooms. This caused anger and trauma of not being heard and represented.

Lastly, the stories told many themes of solidarity, confidence, and ancestral strength. Even though there was a lot of trauma within the social work classrooms, Indigenous students spoke about the significance of building relationships and combating lateral violence within the classroom. Hiring more Indigenous faculty and treating them with respect and dignity they deserve was also echoed as well as really challenging non-Indigenous students to reflect on their relationship as a social worker with Indigenous communities and the land.

Chapter Seven: Creating new circles- Future research

The paintings within this research really gave direction of where we go next. Solidarity, allyship, and championship was shown to be a strong need for Indigenous social work students, so I believe future research is needed around what does solidarity look like within the social work classroom and how are Indigenous students experiencing that solidarity. Also, being a light skinned Urban Mixed Ancestry Mohawk woman, I found myself to be cognizant of my social location when hearing the individual's story who spoke about their Black Indigenous experience as I will not be able to fully understand their story. I listened, clarified, and even though there were many similarities, there were also differences. I was heavy hearted to discover that Black Indigenous scholarly articles are few and far between, so I believe there is a need for future literature of Black Indigenous folx can be made so that Black Indigenous folx's stories are actively heard. I cannot stress enough how resilience, strong, and admirable these people who I walk beside are. I am truly humbled by their stories and really hope there is a change so that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous social work students can reconnect with their spirits and live life in a good way.



**Ryerson University
Consent Agreement**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

Project Title: Othered: Impacts of Indigenous Identity on Historical Indian Residential School Survivors within the Colonial Post-Secondary Social Work Classrooms in Canada.

INVESTIGATORS:

I, Leah Roberts, am a graduate student and am the principal investigator of this study. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Jeffrey McNeil-Seymour in order to fulfill the requirements of my Master's degree.

Leah Roberts BSW

School of Social Work at Ryerson University

Leah.roberts@ryerson.ca

Jeffrey McNeil-Seymour, BSW, MSW.

School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Work at Ryerson University

jmcneilseymour@ryerson.ca

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact myself at the email provided.

Purpose of the Study:

This study is going to look at the ways in which you tell your stories of your experiences within a social work classroom within Post-Secondary Education in Canada. These stories will be supplemented through paintings. Specifically, an interview will be held with around five participants between the ages of 18 or older who self identify as being Indigenous but do not fit Canada's controlling images of what an Indigenous person should look like and their experiences within the Post-Secondary Education social work classroom. The methodology of this research is based off of the Haudenosaunee teachings of the Great Law of Peace.

What Participation Means:

- ☐ ☐ Your participation in this study will consist of a 3-hour interview.
- ☐ ☐ I will ask you to tell me your story, through paintings (you will not be required to give me any confidential information at any time during the interview).
- ☐ ☐ How do you feel Indigenous folks were represented during your learning within a social work classroom in post-secondary education? Were there any specific words they used that you disagreed with or felt uncomfortable with?
- ☐ ☐ Do you feel the story misrepresented you? If so, how? Paint a painting with these questions in mind. After we will share how does the paintings relate to your story?
- ☐ ☐ The interview should last no longer than 3 hours at most but you will be able to decide how long you are comfortable talking for. The interview will take place at Ryerson University student lounge to ensure both auditory and visual privacy.
- ☐ ☐ The interview will be audio recorded but you have the right to ask me to stop the recorder at any time. I will send you the final report via email in which you have one week to look over before I submit the final report to Ryerson University. During that time, you have the right to request to have you section of the report moved. The digital recording will be erased after the interviews have been transcribed. Participants must consent to be audio recorded in order to participate in the circles. Although you withdraw from the study, I cannot guarantee all of your input within the circle will be erased as the knowledge produced within the circle is combined.
- ☐ ☐ A gathering with the community will take place to display the paintings created within the circle. You can still participate in the circle and choose to not display your painting at the gathering. A major research paper will be completed and sent to participants upon request. The community gathering will likely be held on Ryerson campus in late August to display paintings to the Indigenous community in Toronto, Ontario. Pictures of your paintings will be taken, with your consent.
- ☐ ☐ Participants recommendations of how they think Post-Secondary Social Work education should change will be reflected in the MRP, a copy of which will be provided to the Director of the Social Work program and Dean of the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson. However, while your recommendations will be provided to Social Work programs, I cannot guarantee that changes might result from this study.

Research Dissemination:

Participation in this study will further the scholarship on Othered: Impacts of Indigenous Identity on Historical Indian Residential School Survivors within the Colonial Post-Secondary Social Work Classrooms in Canada through potential conference presentations, exhibition opportunities, and/or journal publications. You can access the results of this study at your own discretion by clicking the following link to the Ryerson Digital Repository where all Major

Research Papers (MRP) will be uploaded upon completion:

[https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/search/*%3A*?f\[0\]=mods_extension_degree_department_ms%3A%22Social%20Work%22](https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/search/*%3A*?f[0]=mods_extension_degree_department_ms%3A%22Social%20Work%22)

Potential Benefits:

I am hoping that this study will give you as participants and the researcher the chance to engage in a critical discussion about what it means to be Indigenous when you do not fit the preconceived controlling images of what Indigenous person should look like and how this impacts your experiences within the colonial social work classroom. As well, I am hoping that it will create an opportunity for participants to tell your stories using your own language and artistic expression. Participants may not gain any direct benefit from participation in this study. Further, as an anti-oppressive social worker, it is ultimately my hope to spark conversation in the classroom about the need to give people a chance to tell their own stories, in their own ways. Participants will also be asked to tell any recommendations they may have to Post-Secondary Education social work classrooms so that their experiences are not repeated seven generations moving forward. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Risks or Discomforts:

There may also be a potential psychological risk in discussing emotionally difficult experiences. School is inherently traumatic or commonly traumatic for Indigenous peoples and this in itself is a potential psychological risk. You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, Ryerson University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. If you decide to stop participating, you will still be eligible to receive the promised pay for agreeing to be in the project. There will also be an Indigenous community resources pamphlet on site for participants during and after the interview should they feel some discomfort and wish to receive counseling. As a trained social worker with experience working with Indigenous communities, I fully appreciate the need to be attentive to feelings that may arise during the interviews, especially since participants may get upset when revisiting experiences of trauma. If participants experience distress during the interview, guiding them would be important. For example, I will ask participants if they know of any strategies that work well for them. I will assist with coping strategies to address immediate distress (e.g. smudging, walking, breathing techniques, perception checking, etc.). I will remind participants that they can skip questions, take a break, or discontinue the interviews permanently as well as withdraw from the study at any time. I will also review the list of resources and supports that was provided to them at the beginning of the interviews.

There may be a potential risk of social stigma for these participants if sensitive data is not kept confidential. However, all steps will be taken to ensure participant's confidentiality throughout the research process to minimize risks. All participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point and if any participant chooses to withdraw, all data collected from them will be immediately destroyed and not included in the study. In addition, the interviews

will be conducted with adults and they will be informed before the beginning of the study that their participation is voluntary. All information will be kept confidential. When reporting study findings, the region in which participants live will not be reported to lessen the ability to recognize them.

Some participants may be personally known to the researcher. When recruiting through personal networks, potential participants are informed that the researcher will not be sending future emails regarding the study and that it is up to the participant to contact the researcher should they be interested in participating in the study. Participants will be reminded of their voluntary participation and their ability to withdraw at any time. Participants will be informed that if they refuse to participate, this will not have any consequences for the nature of the already-existing relationship with the researcher. This is also outlined in the consent agreement.

Confidentiality:

The interview will be kept strictly confidential and all identifying information will be omitted from the transcripts and audio recordings. However, I must adhere to professional duties to report where, on reasonable grounds, the disclosure of imminent harm to the self or risk to another, and/or disclosure of child abuse is discussed. Excerpts of interviews may be made part of research reports, presentations or articles, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in any way. Transcripts will not have your name or identifying information on them; pseudonyms will be assigned to participants in order to ensure confidentiality. All of the necessary steps will be taken to ensure the participant's confidentiality is maintained throughout the research process to minimize risks. After the interview, transcripts will be sent to participants to review/edit, as this is your right. The interview will be audio recorded on a password-protected audio recorder. The audio will then be transferred to a password-protected computer and, at this time, the audio file on the recorder will be destroyed. The audio file will be deleted from this password-protected computer after transcription and verification. Transcripts and participant contact information list will be password-protected and destroyed when research has completed in August 2019. You can access the final copy of the research by clicking the link above (please see "Research Dissemination") to the Ryerson Digital Repository where all MRPs will be uploaded upon completion.

Incentives for Participation:

An incentive to participate in the study includes a \$10 gift card and honorarium of tobacco and reimbursement of TTC tokens.

Location

I am available to meet at the location of our mutual agreement, such as (1) a private room at the Ryerson University Library which can guarantee aural and visual privacy; (2) a public library of your choosing which can accommodate the need for a private space; and (3) a private space (to be booked by the researcher) in either of Ryerson's student centers/study spaces. The researcher will ensure that all locations chosen by both the participants and the researcher have both visual and auditory privacy to ensure your confidentiality.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with me, or with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without any consequence to you. By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given the incentives and reimbursements described above. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or the investigators, Leah Roberts involved in the research.

Questions about the study:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

Leah Roberts, BSW School of Social Work, Ryerson University leah.roberts@ryerson.ca
Jeffrey McNeil Seymour, BSW, MSW [SEP] School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Work at
Ryerson University jmcneilseymour@ryerson.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042
rebchair@ryerson.ca

Project Title: Othered: Impacts of Indigenous Identity on Historical Indian Residential School Survivors within the Colonial Post-Secondary Social Work Classrooms in Canada.

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be [audio recorded] for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to have a picture of my painting taken by the researcher and included into the major research paper.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to have my painting displayed at the community gathering on Ryerson campus in late August 2019.

Signature of Participant

Date



INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Do you identify as being **Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit)**? Have you ever taken a **social work** course in **Post-Secondary Education**? Was your experience affected by your Indigenous identity, or stereotypes about Indigenous peoples? Want to come paint?

What:

- Initial meeting with researchers to go over consent and your rights.
- A 1-hour interview where participants will express their experiences of attending a social work classroom within Post-Secondary Education in Canada through paintings. The interview will be audio recorded. Participants must consent to be audio recorded the interview.
- A community gathering will likely be held on Ryerson campus in late August

Where: Ryerson University – Master’s of Social Work Student Lounge

Purpose: To center Indigenous students’ stories of resistance, resilience, and strength within Post-Secondary Education.

Who: To participate, you must meet the following criteria:

- Self-identify as Indigenous (**First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit**)
- 18+ years old
- Currently or previously enrolled in a Post-Secondary Education Social Work classroom.

Compensation: In appreciation of your time, each participant will receive reimbursement for TTC transportation (cash value equivalent to two single rides), as well as a \$10 Walmart gift card.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given compensation and reimbursement as described above.

Please do not feel obligated to participate in this study. For more information or to participate, please email the Primary Investigator, Leah Roberts at leah.roberts@ryerson.ca

This study has been approved by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board (REB file number: 2019-097) and is being conducted by a graduate student as a requirement for program completion. Research supervisor can be reached at Jeffreymcneilseymour@ryerson.ca

Appendix C: Facebook Recruitment Post REB 2019-097

Hi everyone! Please do not comment on or like this post. If you are interested in participating you can DM me or send me an email at leah.roberts@ryerson.ca. However you feel most comfortable!



INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Do you identify as being **Indigenous**? Have you ever taken a **social work** course in **Post-Secondary Education**? Was your experience affected by your Indigenous identity, or stereotypes about Indigenous peoples? Want to come paint in an interview?

What:

- Initial meeting with researchers to go over consent and your rights.
- 1 hour interview where participants will express their experiences of attending a social work classroom within Post-Secondary Education in Canada through paintings. The interview will be audio recorded. Participants must consent to be audio recorded in order to participate in the study.
- A community gathering will likely be held on Ryerson campus in late August

Where: Ryerson University – Master’s of Social Work Student Lounge

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- Currently or previously enrolled in a Post-Secondary Education Social Work classroom.

Compensation: In appreciation of your time, each participant will receive reimbursement for TTC transportation (cash value equivalent to two single rides), as well as a \$10 Walmart gift card. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given compensation and reimbursement as described above.

Please do not feel obligated to participate in this study. For more information or to participate, please email the Primary Investigator, Leah Roberts at leah.roberts@ryerson.ca

This study has been approved by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board (REB file number: 2018-445) and is being conducted by a graduate student as a requirement for program completion. Research supervisor can be reached at Jeffreymcneilseymour@ryerson.ca.

Leah Roberts
Interview Guide

1. Introduction (After reading and signing the consent form) Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I want to make sure that you remember that we can stop the interview or I can stop recording at any point during the interview. I do have a few questions for you but you are free to answer as few or as many of them as you are comfortable with. Ultimately, it is your story I want to hear and you may decline to answer anything at any time. Further, I would like to mention that since the nature of the topic being discussed is quite personal, there is not an expectation that you have an answer to every question, or that you are willing to provide details of every experience. I would like to hear about your story of your experiences of being Indigenous but not looking like the stereotypical representation of what an Indigenous person should look like as well as how you tell that story. I have brought painting supplies for participants to use to portray their experiences through art. Feel free to leave out anything you don't wish to share. You retain your autonomy in choosing what to include or leave out should there be anything you do not wish to share. However if imminent harm to the self or risk to another, and/or disclosure of child abuse is discussed, I have a duty to report.

2. Smudge and Background

Before I ask you to tell me about your story, let us go through introductions of who you are, where you are from, and why are you here?

3. Participants using to tell their stories through paintings.

- What does this painting mean to you?
- How does this painting represent your story of resistance, resilience, and/or strength?

4. Context Questions

- What are some of the positive or negative experiences of the Indigenous content in your social work program of choice?
- How has the Indian Residential School System of Canada, The 60's Scoop, Enfranchisement, etc. impacted you personally?
- What recommendations would you like to see implemented in social work classrooms in Canada?
- How do you feel Indigenous folks were represented during your learning within a social work classroom in Post-Secondary education?
- Do you feel the story misrepresented you? If so, how?
- Paint a painting with these questions in mind. After we will share how does the paintings relate to your story?

5. Restorying and Reclaiming: I am interested in hearing about the ways in which you have reclaimed your experience or how the ways in which you tell your story have changed. Possible guiding questions:

- How could the education system improve to support you and other Indigenous students?
- What are some of the ways you are a surthrivor?

6. Concluding remarks

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to you for taking the time to talk to me and to share your story with me. Is there anything else you would like to add that we might not have discussed yet? Do you have any concerns regarding our interview? I am happy to share the findings of the interview with you once I have finished the study and have left my contact information with you for this reason. Further, I would welcome your input and/or critiques upon completion of the study. Thank you again for your time and for sharing your knowledge with me.

Appendix E: Participant Resources REB 2019-097

Anishnawbe Health Toronto	-----416—360-0486
Native Canadian Centre of Toronto	-----416-964-9087
Toronto Council Fire	-----416-360-4350
Two-Spirited People	-----416-944-9300 ext 222
First Nation’s House of U of T	-----416-978-8227
George Brown Native Students Services	-----416-415-5000 ext.2526
Miziwe Biik	-----416-591-2310
Native Women’s Resource Centre	-----416-963-9963
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendships Centre	----- 416-956-7575
Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services	----- 416-979-5000, x6681
Toronto Aboriginal Care Team	-----647 258-0336

Appendix F: Figures

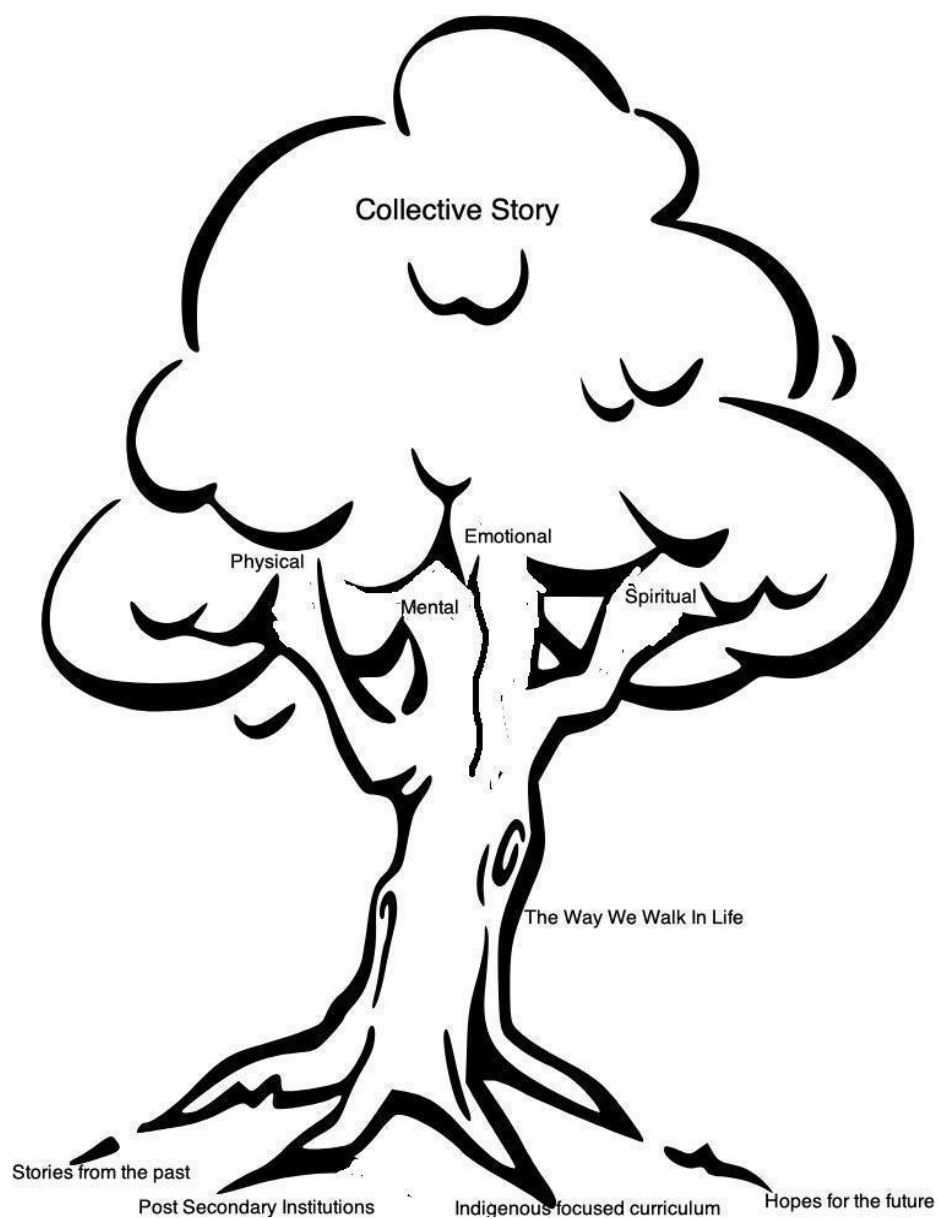


Figure 1. Symbol of the Collective Story

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