

OUR PLACE IN THE CIRCLE

A Review of Métis Content in Ontario Faculties of Education

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This report was commissioned by the Métis Nation of Ontario.

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OUR PLACE IN THE CIRCLE

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A Report on the Métis Education Project

Dr. Susan D. Dion

With contributions from:

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Executive Summary

This research report titled *Our Place in the Circle: A Review of Métis Content in Ontario Faculties of Education*, is informed by the voices of Métis youth, artists and educators, Métis, First Nations and Inuit scholars and students, and a host of others teaching and learning in Faculties/Schools of Education across the province of Ontario. Drawing on data gathered between December 2011 and March 2012, I document, evaluate, and provide an analysis of what is being taught and what is being learned about Métis history, language, and culture in Ontario Faculties of Education. The report is based on the research findings of The Métis Education Study, a project requested by the Métis Nation of Ontario, Education and Training Branch. The purpose of this research is to understand the current climate so as to positively impact knowledge and awareness of the ongoing presence of Métis in Ontario, their history, language and culture.

This research confirms what many Aboriginal educators and students already knew: Métis Education is not being adequately addressed in initial teacher education programs in Ontario. Teacher candidates are graduating from these programs having had little or no engagement with Métis content. Consequently, recently certified teachers do not feel confident or competent to teach Métis content. Yet many of the Recent Graduates from these programs who participated in the project feel that it is *somewhat to fairly important* to integrate Métis content in their teaching, and are looking for resources and guidance on how to use Métis resources in their classrooms.

While there is an initial awareness of the need for Aboriginal Education within Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education, this awareness is not necessarily impacting practice. Course directors report that they often do not include Métis content in their courses due to their own lack of knowledge and understanding. The most pressing challenge confronting those working in the field is the dominant belief that Métis Education is only relevant to teachers who intend to teach in communities where there is a significant Métis student population.

Some Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education are finding creative ways to include Métis Education in their programs. In one program all students are required to read a novel written by an Aboriginal author prior to the start of the program, other faculties arrange for a speaker series that focuses on Aboriginal Education and Métis educators are included in the series. These are encouraging steps, however a much more comprehensive approach to the inclusion of Métis Education is required.

Research Findings

The research informing this report includes surveys and interviews with participants who have a specific interest in initial teacher education. The research has generated eight key findings.

1. While there is increasing attention to the need for Aboriginal Education in Ontario Initial Teacher Education Programs, this attention is not necessarily translating to practice and Métis Education continues to be excluded from the programs.
2. There is overwhelming evidence of ongoing and deeply embedded resistance to engaging with Aboriginal Education by students in Teacher Education Programs. Close analysis of interview data suggests that the resistance derives in part from conflicted and contradictory messages teacher candidates receive regarding their responsibilities and obligations for teaching Aboriginal Education.
3. The majority of Ontario Faculty/School of Education Websites are not particularly welcoming to Métis students. There is an absence of attention to Métis Education on the websites. Some websites completely separate Aboriginal program information from the regular program information suggesting that Aboriginal Education is only of interest to a select few.
4. The inclusion of Métis Education in Teacher Education programs is very much dependent on the presence of Métis faculty and/or a significant and identifiable Métis student population.
5. Many Aboriginal Faculty members are frustrated with having to take exclusive responsibility for the work of integrating Métis Education across the program.
6. In courses on Aboriginal education, diversity is collapsed and Métis Education often gets left out.
7. The majority of Recent Graduates do not feel confident to teach Métis Education. Recent graduates need more access to resources, and more support and direction on how to teach Métis Education in culturally appropriate ways.
8. Participants in this research do not see Métis content a specifically required part of the Ontario school curriculum, teacher candidates are rarely required to teach Métis content during their practicum placements and consequently do not consider it a necessary component of their program.

Recommendations

Eight key recommendations emerge from this research.

1. Provide students attending Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education with opportunities to engage with Métis content in meaningful ways and opportunities to teach the content with experienced Métis Educators as guides.
2. Recognize and clarify the purpose and objectives of Aboriginal Teacher Education programs. If Aboriginal focused programs exclusively address the needs, experiences and perspectives of First Nations people they need to be appropriately named. Faculties/Schools of Education cannot assume that these programs are addressing Métis Education if in fact their focus is exclusively First Nations Education.
3. Review and update Websites for the inclusion of Métis content. If Faculties/Schools of Education are serious about Métis Education and serious about attracting Métis students they need to address the absence of Métis content on their websites.
4. Increase the number of Métis identified scholars in Faculties of Education. Our research suggests that Métis Education is much more likely to be included in programs where Métis scholars are teaching.
5. Address the gap in knowledge on the part of all Faculty of Education course directors. If Métis education is to be taken seriously the content needs to be integrated across teacher education programs. The work of decolonizing and indigenizing teacher education cannot be the sole responsibility of Aboriginal course directors.
6. Provide teacher candidates with opportunities to develop their understanding of why Métis Education is important for all students attending school in Ontario. The extended two-year teacher education program will provide an opportunity to include more Aboriginal content. Métis Education must be included in the teacher education program. Required courses, and prerequisites are ways of ensuring that newly certified teachers are well prepared to teach Métis Education.
7. Organize a national Métis Education conference. Knowledge and expertise of Métis Education exists within the broader teacher education community in Canada. A national conference to bring these scholars together in Ontario would provide the opportunity for the sharing of knowledge and expertise and would advance the process of learning how to include Métis content in Ontario Initial Teacher Education programs.
8. Continue the work of resource development and provide resources for teachers to use in their classrooms. Additionally, teacher educators require resources to use with students of teacher education. Resources that introduce teacher candidates to the history, language, culture and ongoing presence of Métis in Ontario, as well as an introduction to indigenous teaching practices are needed.

The Métis Education Study: A Review of Métis Content in Ontario Faculties of Education

Half-Breed, Mixed Blood, Mixed Ancestry, Frontier Families, Halfcaste, Native,

Voyageur, Coureurs de Bois, Home Guard, Forest Rangers, Country-born, Écossais, Bois Brûlé

Treaty Indians, Non-Treaty Indians, Non-Status Indians, -- Mixed Breed Act, Indian Act,

Neither white nor Native - doubled exclusion - insist upon the singularity of one or the other,

"In-between-ness"

Tanya Senk, 2012

The ghosts of my Metis family have haunted me since I was a child, as if they were begging me to remember them.

Jessie Short, 2011

The words of these artist/educators speak to the need for Métis education. In conversations with the principal investigator, Tanya Senk and Jessie Short both Métis identified women describe a gap in their knowledge and understanding of Métis history language and culture and the consequent questioning of the meaning and legitimacy of their identities. The lack of attention to Métis content and teaching practices in schools contribute to the ongoing gap in understanding experienced by all students in Ontario and contributes to schooling experiences that position Métis students as strangers to themselves.

This research report is primarily concerned with the teaching and learning of Métis Education in Ontario Faculties/ Schools of Education. Recognizing that Métis Education is located within the broader field of Aboriginal Education it was important to include questions about the broader field in the study so as to get a more complete picture of the status and place of Métis Education. In Ontario, Métis Education is in many ways lost between dominant stories and emerging voices. Métis experiences and perspectives are excluded from the dominant story of Canadian history and culture that celebrates the stories of settlement, immigration and progress, they are not included in antiracism or multi-cultural education and are often overlooked in the emerging commitment to Aboriginal Education that for the most part focuses on First Nations' peoples experiences and perspectives.



1. Introduction

The Métis Education Study provided the opportunity to investigate and learn from and with academics teaching in and students learning in Faculties of Education across the province. Although much of what was learned affirms what many of us already knew there were a number of unexpected findings. Not at all but certainly at some universities, Faculty of Education instructors are finding creative ways to integrate Métis content in teacher education programs. And while teacher candidates' resistance to learning decolonizing and indigenizing education is well documented the depth of ignorance and the hostility in Recent Graduates' responses came as a shock to the research team in spite of our knowledge and expertise in the field.

1.1 Context: The Métis and Métis Education in Ontario

Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people with a "shared history, common culture, a unique language (Michif), kinship connections from Ontario westward, a distinct way of life, a traditional territory and a collective consciousness" (Métis National Council). In the 2006 national census, 389,785 people identified themselves as Métis. Métis make up 34% of the Aboriginal population, and are the fastest growing Aboriginal population in Canada. In Ontario, with a population of 73,605, the Métis are also the largest urbanized Aboriginal group in the province (Action Plan, p.5).

In Ontario, Métis students face challenges and marginalization within the public education system. The early school leaving rates are high, and graduation and high school to postsecondary transition rates are low (Action Plan, p.5). As the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Education Action Plan reports, successes in Métis education are largely attributed to specific intervention programs that are unable to affect larger populations and broad-based change in classroom practices (p. 7). A primary concern is the lack of Métis content in current Ontario public school curriculum documents. Throughout each curriculum document for related K – 12 courses, Métis are mentioned no more than twice. As well, the Ministry of Education inadequately defines Métis as "people of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry" (Grade 9 and 10 Native Studies Curriculum Document, p. 26). There are also concerns about the quality and accuracy of Métis content, when it is incorporated into the classroom teaching. As the MNO notes, the "curricula and instructional delivery do not take into account Aboriginal cultural considerations and do not reflect Aboriginal values (Action Plan, p. 5).

In 2008, the MNO published the Education Action Plan to coordinate an approach to addressing the needs of Métis learners. The plan states that the MNO is "committed to the provision of an improved and appropriate education for all of its students that will be sustainable over time" (p. 8).

The long-term goals of the plan include:

- Improved Métis student attendance, retention and graduation rates,
- Improved Métis student achievement K-12,
- Improved Métis student well being, and
- Engaged parent and community partners in Métis student education and increased parent satisfaction with their children's education.

The Métis Education Study is set within this context and the research proceeded with these goals in mind.

1.2 The Métis Education Study

The Métis Nation of Ontario, Education and Training branch requested this research, through the duration of the study the principal researcher was in regular contact with Dr. Chris Paci, Manager of Education and Training at MNO.

1.2A Purpose, Objectives, and Key Questions

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to support Métis education in Ontario. We want to know ‘what is happening’ in the teaching of Métis content in Ontario Faculties of Education so as to positively impact knowledge and awareness of the ongoing presence of Métis in Ontario, their history, language and culture. Ultimately the purpose of this study is to understand the current climate so as to positively impact the educational experiences of Métis children and youth attending school in Ontario.

Research Objectives

The overall objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of what is being taught and what is being learned about Métis history, language and culture in Ontario Faculties of Education.

The research will seek to accomplish the following specific objectives:

- Examine the Métis content offered in Ontario Faculties of Education,
- Examine the Métis knowledge base of Recent Graduates of teacher education programs,
- Investigate what Métis subject material is being taught in Faculties of Education in provinces other than Ontario,
- Identify and describe the challenges and barriers to teaching Métis subject material in Ontario Faculties of Education, and
- Identify and describe conditions that support the inclusion of Métis subject material in Ontario Faculties of Education.

Research Questions

1. Are teacher candidates provided with Métis content in their program of study at Ontario Faculties of Education?
2. Looking specifically at Teaching Canadian History courses and Teaching Native Studies courses offered at Ontario Faculties of Education is Métis content included in these courses and if so how is it addressed?
3. What have Recent Graduates from Ontario Faculties of Education learned about Métis people, history, language and culture?
4. Do Recent Graduates from Ontario Faculties of Education feel confident and competent to teach Métis content? Are there differences depending on where they completed their teacher education program?
5. Are there programs and or courses offered at Faculties of Education in provinces other than Ontario that address Métis content in substantive and comprehensive ways?
6. Are there Métis identified scholars in Faculties of Education in provinces other than Ontario who include Métis content in their teacher education courses? If so what content do they teach, what resources do they use, what challenges and success have they experienced?

1.2B Research Methodology

Writing about Indigenous approaches to research and theory, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that decolonization “is about centering our concerns and world view and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (1999, p.39). In keeping with Indigenous Research Methodologies, we are guided by the following principles: respect for existing knowledge and relationships within community, respect for Indigenous worldviews and traditions, action in support of the development of capacity and skill building, collaboration throughout the process, community ownership and control over gathering of information and process, and ongoing response to community requests for involvement (Absolon and Wilett, 2004).

Specifically, a variety of research methods were used for gathering of data:

- Review of Ontario Faculty of Education websites,
- Phone interviews with Faculty members,
- Online survey of Recent Graduates from Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education,
- Review of Faculty of Education websites in provinces other than Ontario and follow-up phone interviews with faculty members, and
- Short interviews with Métis youth and artists.

1.2C The Research Team

Principal Investigator *Dr. Susan D. Dion*, is a Potawatami /Lenape scholar who has been working in the field of education for over twenty-five years. Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, she is cross-appointed to the School of Women’s Studies. Her research interests include the social and political contexts of education; disrupting memories of post-invasion First Nations-Canadian Relations; Indigenizing and Decolonizing Education; feminist post-structuralist theory and violence prevention in Aboriginal communities. Dr. Dion is widely consulted by diverse community groups, workplaces, and institutions on developing methods for building more equitable, respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people.

Tanya Senk, Cree, Saulteaux and Métis Educator/Researcher is an activist and artist who has been working in the field of education for over 15 years. She holds a B.F.A. specialized honours degree in Visual Arts and a B. Ed. She is currently a graduate student at York University in the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include Indigenous education, Indigenous knowledge in educational institutions, Indigenous community/school based arts initiatives as sites of social and personal transformation and knowledge mobilization. Tanya is now working with the Toronto District School Board Aboriginal Education Centre as Coordinator, Aboriginal Education.

Research Assistants

Michelle DeMerchant is a recent graduate of York University’s Master of Education program and an Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) certified educator in the Primary/Junior division. Michelle has worked in close collaboration with Dr. Susan Dion for three years as a research and graduate assistant, and project manager for *The Talking Stick Project: Aboriginal Education in the TDSB Gathering Stories of Teaching and Learning*, and as a co-writer of a paper on urban Aboriginal youth and schooling.

Katherine Lapointe completed a master’s degree from the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, with a concentration in decolonizing education. Her major paper draws on indigenous theory and critical anti-racism to examine the possibilities for decolonizing education to occur within the public education system. Most recently, Katherine worked with Dr. Susan Dion on the *Talking Stick Project: Aboriginal Education in the TDSB: Gathering Stories of Teaching and Learning*.

Susanne Waldorf is completing a master’s degree at OISE/UT and is a former high school teacher. She is currently working as a research assistant with Dr. Martin Cannon at OISE/UT on a project titled, *Changing the Subject in Teacher Education: Indigenous, Diasporic, and Settler Colonial Relations*. She has had previous experiences directing programs and managing offices for non-profit organizations in the U.S.

1.3 Data Collection and Ethics

In keeping with indigenous research methodology our data gathering was grounded in relationships. Drawing on personal and professional relationships I began by making contact with colleagues who are working in the field of Aboriginal Education. I was able to connect with a number of people who then introduced the research team to others who were willing to participate in this project. While acknowledging the source of teachings is an important practice within indigenous methodology I am conscious of ethical guidelines of the university environment. Information gathered from websites is reported in a university specific table. Knowledge and understanding gathered from interviews is collapsed and not directly linked to individuals or particular institutions. The academic community in Ontario is small and I have exercised caution when reporting so as to protect the confidentiality of participants.

1.3A Table of Data Collected

| Data Sources | # |
|--|-----|
| Review of Websites | 13 |
| Phone Interviews Ontario Course Directors / Program Administrators | 23 |
| Phone Interviews Outside Ontario Course Directors | 3 |
| Online Survey of Recent Graduates | 243 |
| Interviews Recent Graduates | 18 |
| Interviews Métis Youth/Artist Informants | 3 |

Table 1. Data Table

Data collection started in December 2011 with the review of websites, interviewing began in January 2012 and continued through until the project ended in late March 2012. Data analysis and writing of this report was completed in February, March and April 2012. The principal investigator wrote this report with assistance and review provided by the research assistants. The Métis educator/researcher provided comments and guidance through meetings with the principal investigator.

1.3B Key Participants

Course Directors: Individuals teaching courses in Faculties of Education. The majority of course directors who participated in interviews have doctoral degrees and a minimum of three years experience. Many have much more experience in the field of teacher education.

Recent Graduates: Individuals who graduated from a Faculty/School of Education within the past five years. In this report, students currently studying in Faculties of Education are referred to as teacher candidates.

Métis Youth/Artists Informants: Métis identified youth/artists were interviewed about their school experiences and their understanding of Métis identity.

1.3C Overview of Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education Included in this Study

| Name | Location | Aboriginal Specific Program /Full Certification/Community Based |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Brock University | St. Catherine's | Yes / Yes*/Yes |
| Lakehead University | Thunder Bay | Yes / Yes*/No |
| Laurentian University | Sudbury | No |
| Nipissing University | North Bay | Yes / Yes*/No |
| OISE/UT | Toronto | No |
| Queens University | Kingston | Yes/Yes*/Yes |
| Trent University | Peterborough | No |
| U of OIT | Oshawa | No |
| University of Ottawa | Ottawa | Yes/Yes*/Yes |
| U of Western ON | London | No |
| University of Windsor | Windsor | No |
| Wilfred Laurier University | Waterloo | No |
| York University | Toronto | Yes/Yes/No |

Table 2. Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education

Six of the thirteen Faculties of Education offer an Aboriginal specific program and all of the programs lead to full certification. Administrators of these programs explained that community based programs are developed in collaboration with First Nations communities with the intention of serving specific community needs. This means that although faculties are responding to the need for First Nations education, to a large extent Métis and Inuit experiences and perspectives are absent from these programs. Although the programs are named Aboriginal Teacher Education or Indigenous Teacher Education they are more accurately First Nations focused programs. And importantly, the 50,312 Aboriginal students who attend provincial schools, and the non-Aboriginal students they attend school with, do not yet have access to teachers who have a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal subject material and how to teach that content.

During interviews, a number of course directors acknowledged that having Aboriginal scholars as members of the tenure stream faculty increases the possibility that teacher candidates will have access to some Aboriginal education. Ten of the thirteen Faculties/Schools of education in Ontario currently have self-identified Aboriginal faculty members teaching in their general education programs. In nine out of ten of those programs the faculty member is part of the tenure stream. Three faculties do not have a self-identified Aboriginal faculty member. A serious commitment to Aboriginal Education requires increasing the number of Aboriginal and specifically Métis identified scholars teaching in Ontario teacher education programs.



2. Section Two: Learning From Ontario Faculty/School of Education Websites

Faculty/School of Education websites are significant for at least two reasons. First, websites are an important source of information for both prospective and enrolled students, providing information about requirements and expectations. Second, websites reflect a faculty's values and priorities and communicate these to the public. Looking for evidence of both attention to the teaching and learning of Métis subject material and outreach to Métis students, we reviewed the Ontario Faculty/School of Education Websites.

2.1. Website Questions

1. In the General Education program description is there mention of Aboriginal content?
2. In the General Education program description is there mention of Métis content?
3. Is Aboriginal content mentioned in the course descriptions?
4. Is it Aboriginal friendly? Is there any signal to Aboriginal students that they are welcome (words, pictures, articles, highlighting Aboriginal faculty, events)
5. Are potential students directed/given the impression that Aboriginal options are separate from General Education options.

2.2 Website Table

| University | Aboriginal Content in the Program Description | Métis Content in the Program Description | Aboriginal Content in Course Descriptions | Aboriginal Friendly | Is there a Separation |
|-----------------|---|--|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Brock | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Lakehead | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Laurentian | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| Nippissing | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| OISE/UT | No | No | No | No | N/A |
| Queens | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Trent | No | No | No | No | N? |
| UOIT | No | No | No | No | N/A |
| Ottawa | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Western | No | No | No | No | N/A |
| Windsor | No | No | No | No | N/A |
| Wilfred Laurier | No** | No | No | No | N/A |
| York | No | No | Yes | Yes | NA |

Table 3. Website Information

* Students completing the Junior-Intermediate option have access to this course

** Support of Aboriginal rights is acknowledged in the Wilfred Laurier Statement on Equity

2.3 Website Discussion

In our conversations with course directors and administrators we were given the impression that faculties welcome and would like to attract Aboriginal students to their programs, yet the overall message on the majority of websites was not particularly welcoming to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. On the websites only one faculty mentions the inclusion of Aboriginal content in their program description. This stands in stark contrast to the number of faculties that include attention to issues of diversity, equity and social justice. Images on many of the Education Websites reflect this commitment with the inclusion of racialized students. However, none of the websites include images of recognizable indigenous students or signal that Aboriginal education is addressed in their programs. There was no indication to prospective students that Aboriginal education is a topic of significance. It can be an especially alienating experience when diversity and social justice are highlighted while your diversity is ignored. We found only two websites that included indigenous images and or references to indigenous speakers and events highlighted as part of the broader program being offered. We recognize that one of the advantages to website technology is the ability to regularly update material, and in some ways our assessment is based on what was happening in a faculty at a particular time, our intention is to draw attention to the overall lack of indigenous presence on Ontario Faculty of Education Websites.

In some instances, prospective students are segregated according to their interest in Aboriginal Education. On at least two websites visitors to the site are given a choice: if you want to know about Aboriginal Education click this button, all others click this button. Although we appreciate that this may be done to simplify access to information the configuration suggests that “if you are Aboriginal go over here, and if you are not Aboriginal this has nothing to do with you.” This arrangement contributes to the understanding that Aboriginal education is the concern of only a select few.



3. Section Three: Learning From Course Directors In Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education

In total we interviewed twenty course directors and three program administrators at twelve Ontario universities, and three course directors from universities in western provinces. The response for participation was excellent. At most universities, the principal researcher made email contact with colleagues and invited them to participate and or to suggest people in their faculty who have specific knowledge of Aboriginal content. During the interviews, course directors described conditions in their faculties, identified challenges and concerns and explained progressive approaches for the inclusion of Métis content in their teacher education programs. Only one Ontario Faculty of Education is unrepresented in the course director data. Repeated efforts were made to connect with an individual at this university but each attempt was unsuccessful.

3.1 The Status of Aboriginal Education

The status of Aboriginal Education varies across the province. Only one education program in Ontario requires students to take a course that has an Aboriginal focus. Nine programs offer an Aboriginal focus elective and at four universities there is no Aboriginal Education focused course available to teacher candidates. In Ontario, the inclusion of Aboriginal content is largely dependent on geography and population. In faculties where there is a recognizable Aboriginal student population in the local community, it is much more likely that Métis content will be included in the program.

Course directors suggested that if included at all, Métis specific content would be addressed in one of three places: a) foundations courses, b) courses that address diversity issues, or c) in subject specific courses such as teaching Social Studies or teaching Canadian History. Recognizing that students might encounter Aboriginal content in places other than focused courses we asked the following questions:

| Interview Questions for Course Directors | Not at all | Somewhat | Very |
|--|------------|----------|------|
| How likely is it that students in your program will encounter Aboriginal specific content? | 6 | 13 | 4 |
| How likely is it that students in your program will encounter Métis specific content? | 18 | 5 | 0 |

The faculty members we spoke with emphasized that they were responding based on their knowledge of what is happening within their programs. They often qualified responses with statements such as “as far as I know”. When asked about the inclusion/exclusion of Métis specific content course directors often noted that, “it depends on who is teaching the course”. For the most part they suggested that unless a faculty member had an expressed interest in the field of Aboriginal education, Aboriginal content was not included in the courses. Most agreed that it was not likely that students would encounter Métis content in their program of study.

With these limitations in mind, we asked professors to comment on the general atmosphere in their faculties with regard to the inclusion of Aboriginal content in the program for initial teacher education.

| Interview Question for Course Directors | Tolerant | Obliging | Supportive | Exceptional |
|---|----------|----------|------------|-------------|
| How would you describe the general atmosphere in your faculty regarding the inclusion of Aboriginal and Métis specific content? | 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 |

These responses suggest that in at least some teacher education programs a positive attitude toward the inclusion of Aboriginal content is emerging.

3.2 Discussion: Possibility, Complexity and Challenge

There is an initial awareness of the need for Aboriginal Education within Ontario Faculties/Schools of

Education. As one course director explained, “we are at the beginning of what it could mean for our faculty” (OU4CD1). Course directors referenced the 2007 Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework and the Dean’s Accord on Aboriginal Education as significant documents responsible for raising the profile of Aboriginal Education within the province. At the national level, the government’s apology to former students of Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have served to draw attention to Aboriginal issues in education. Additionally, three or four course directors were aware of the Métis Education Tool Kit and referenced it during the interviews.

Attention to and concern with the need to address Aboriginal Education raises particular questions regarding who is going to do the work of integrating Aboriginal experiences and perspectives? Will the work of Aboriginal scholars inform what is taught? Will all faculty members be responsible for working to include Aboriginal perspectives and teaching practices across the programs? Will the content include an indigenizing and decolonizing focus? Data collection for this study was completed at a time when discussions of the move from a one-year to a two-year program were just beginning. Many participants argued in support of including Aboriginal content in an extended Ontario initial teacher education program.

In spite of the growing awareness on the part of course directors of the need for including Aboriginal content, this awareness is not necessarily translating into practice. In the majority of interviews course directors noted that Aboriginal content was not integrated in their programs. Most significant to this study, course directors stated that beyond describing and defining the Métis population, the only time Métis specific content surfaced was during class discussions when students introduced the topic and or when students chose the topic for a presentation. During the interviews 17 of the 23 course directors we spoke with said they did not include Métis content in their classes. Three course directors said they included some content and only three said that they included substantive attention to Métis history, language, culture and addressed the learning needs of Métis students.

The most significant challenge confronting those working within teacher education programs is the prevailing and deeply embedded belief that Aboriginal Education is only important for those teacher candidates who intend to work within reserve communities. In 21 of the 23 interviews course directors reported teacher candidates argue, “if I’m not required to teach it, I don’t have to learn it” (OU2CD2), “we don’t have Aboriginal students so it is not an issue”, (OU3CD2), “why do I need to know this if I’m never going to teach on a reserve?” (OU10CD1), and “I don’t have aboriginal children in my classroom so therefore it’s not important” (OU5CD2). It will take concentrated effort to advance the understanding that Aboriginal education matters for all teacher candidates and for all students attending school in Ontario. Course directors reported that the lack of explicit content in the K-12 curriculum, especially direct reference to Métis content, contributes to the resistance on the part of teacher candidates to take Aboriginal Education seriously.

I spoke with a number of Aboriginal scholars working in teacher education and was not surprised by their anger, frustration and weariness. Aboriginal scholars are frustrated with their colleagues who espouse support for the inclusion of Aboriginal content in education programs, but are not willing to do their own work to educate themselves so as to be able to educate their students. Aboriginal faculty members are tired of having to be “the voice” for Aboriginal issues in education and are extremely weary of having to explain why Aboriginal education matters for all students. As one Aboriginal course director commented, “we are not a people of the past. I’m standing right here. Indigenous world-views are a part of who I am living in the present. The curriculum continues to treat us like we are an artifact” (OU3CD2). Many of the Aboriginal faculty members I spoke with expressed high levels of frustration, noting that while there has been some improvement and an emerging awareness of the need to include Aboriginal content, there continues to be a lack of significant change. This frustration was expressed to me in an interview with an

Aboriginal course director: “It gets tiresome for me because I’m not surrounded by peers. The fact that I teach non-Aboriginal students – I get more and more reluctant to go into any great depth on Aboriginal issues” (OU3CD2). Most significantly, Aboriginal scholars and allies are attentive to the need for all course directors to do their own learning from Aboriginal people’s experiences and perspectives so as to be able to successfully integrate content in their teacher education courses. As one course director stated, “sometimes it is not just the teacher candidates who think making sugar cube igloos constitutes the inclusion of Aboriginal content” (OU2CD2). Addressing the depth of ignorance on the part of faculty members is a complex challenge.

At least one Aboriginal faculty member acknowledged their surprise at the number of colleagues who were including Aboriginal authored readings in their syllabi and taking up Aboriginal issues in their classes. Additionally, administrators of Aboriginal Teacher Education programs observed that increasing numbers of General Education teacher candidates were “crossing the hall” and visiting the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) resource centers and attending ATEP sponsored events in an effort to increase their knowledge and understanding so as to be prepared to integrate Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching practice. This is a promising step toward the inclusion of Aboriginal content. Within this broader framework of Aboriginal education much more work needs to be done to ensure that Métis content is being provided to students of teacher education.

Even when course directors make the space to teach Métis specific content, many teacher candidates do not have time to think about the issues, since their focus and attention is on learning the “techniques” of teaching. As one course director explained, addressing “Aboriginal issues in Education takes time. Teacher candidates need to unlearn what they were taught in high school and relearn and like many Canadians, teacher candidates are resistant and simply do not want to do the work” (OU2CD2). Dominant discourses within teacher education inadvertently serve to support this position. The culturally relevant curriculum model supports teacher candidates understanding that they are only responsible for addressing the culture of their immediate student population. Again and again, Faculty of Education instructors tell teacher candidate ‘your teaching must reflect the experiences of your students’ and TCs interpret this to mean that Aboriginal Education only matters if they are teaching Aboriginal students. This reinforces the point that for Aboriginal content to be seen as important by teacher candidates, course directors must be prepared to take up the task of learning and teaching about First Nations, Inuit and Métis history, culture, and issues.

Most programs include courses that address diversity issues but whether or not teacher candidates receive any direct attention to Métis specific content depends on the course director. Most instructors we spoke with said they do not include Métis specific content in their courses due to their own lack of knowledge. It was Aboriginal scholars who pointed out that while we claim to do Aboriginal Education what we really mean is First Nations Education. When we collapse diversity and use “Aboriginal” we exclude the differences between Inuit, Métis and First Nations. Teacher candidates require knowledge of all three-identity groups and an understanding of each group’s particular histories, cultures and experience of colonialism. In these interviews conducted with course directors from across the province the overwhelming impression is that although there is a lot of talk about the need to address Aboriginal education, professors in Faculties of Education are not yet doing so. One participant asked, “could Faculties of Education be required to address Aboriginal Issues in Education in their teacher education programs in order to be accredited?” (OU3CD1). This would be a major step on the road to representation, social justice, equity that would tie contemporary Canadian education to its complicated and conflicted history in a way that could open students to their present commitments and responsibilities to Aboriginal people.

3.3 Progressive Approaches

We asked course directors about key resources, alternative practices, and progressive approaches to the challenge of including Métis specific education in their programs.

- One course director explained that she has found it helpful to teach candidates how to locate resources so that they are not limited by textbook and curriculum documents. In her required course assignment students must locate Aboriginal focused resources, develop ideas for using them in classrooms and share these resources and sample lesson plans with their classmates.
- In one program, all teacher candidates are required to read a novel written by an Aboriginal author prior to starting the program. When teacher candidates begin their program in September they are able to attend discussion groups and course directors in the program know that the teacher candidates have read the novel and are able to reference it in their classes.

- Some Faculties/Schools of Education have responded to the need by organizing Aboriginal speaker series events and invite Métis speakers to participate.
- One Faculty holds “Professional Development Friday” events when presentations and book displays are organized. More than one person mentioned inviting a provider of Aboriginal resources, *Goodminds™* to faculty events.

These creative approaches to the challenge of integrating Aboriginal Education to the initial teacher education program in Ontario are positive and useful steps. However, they do not provide a comprehensive approach that would ensure that all newly certified teachers in Ontario are being sufficiently prepared to integrate Métis content across the elementary and secondary school curriculum.

3.4 Learning From Out Of Province Education Programs

The three course directors that we interviewed from outside the province of Ontario teach at universities in Western Canada where there are large visible First Nations and identifiable Métis populations. In some ways our expectation that under those circumstances Aboriginal Education would have a greater presence was correct, yet surprisingly these professors shared many concerns expressed by course directors at Ontario universities.

Two of the three professors we spoke with reported that their programs have Native Studies prerequisites. Students applying to the Faculty of Education must have completed at least one three-credit Native Studies course in their undergraduate program. These same two programs have a required Aboriginal Education course and in the third case the Faculty of Education has integrated Aboriginal content across the program. All three professors agree that while it is highly likely that students will encounter First Nations Education as part of their program, the chance of encountering Métis specific education is much less likely. As is the case in Ontario, the inclusion of Métis Education is very much dependent on the knowledge, experience and interest of individual course directors. In spite of these requirements and efforts to integrate Aboriginal Education, at the end of their program many teacher candidates report feeling less than competent when confronted with teaching Aboriginal subject material (AUCD1).

When asked about challenges of teaching Aboriginal subject material all three professors identified resistance from students as the most pressing issue. As one professor explained, *“our students come to us with very racist attitudes. One student recently blogged that native education is not necessary, that it has no place in teacher education”* (SU2CD2). Similar to professors from Ontario, these instructors describe students in the teacher education program who actively take up the position of perfect stranger (Dion, 2009). It is a position of justified innocence and ignorance. Students position themselves as not knowing Aboriginal people and having no intention of teaching Aboriginal students, and thus having no need for knowing Aboriginal issues in education. All three professors agreed that students do not currently know and yet need to know why Aboriginal education matters. One professor was explicit and detailed in describing her experience and perspectives teaching in the pre-service teacher education program. Her course is oriented toward understanding systems of oppression and race based discrimination and its impact on Aboriginal people. In her course, she addresses patriarchy, poverty and racism. She expressed concern with an approach that focuses on the ‘celebration of culture’ and a tendency toward the study of an essential Aboriginal identity. There is no interrogation of what it would actually mean to engage with the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

Although they had different priorities, the three faculty members had a shared commitment to the integration of Aboriginal subject material and a shared concern with their colleagues who were not prepared to interrogate the impact of colonialism and simply do not know or want to put the effort into learning the content. One of these professors expressed concern with graduate programs in education stating that *“there is a link to the graduate program - if we are not preparing new faculty for integrating this content how will we do anything other than simply reproduce dominant ways of knowing”* (SU1CD1).

3.5 In Summary Course Directors Report

The knowledge and understanding shared by the course directors draws attention to key issues and questions.

1. The majority of teacher candidates continue to be resistant to the need for Aboriginal education.
 - How do Faculties of Education respond to that challenge?
 - To what extent is the Ministry of Education responsible for clarifying teachers responsibilities with regard to the inclusion of Aboriginal Education, and
 - What is the role of the Ontario College of Teachers in supporting inclusion?
2. There is a growing awareness of and in some instances a commitment to the need for Aboriginal education among professors teaching in Ontario Faculties of Education. However, there are a number of questions about how to respond.
 - Currently some faculties respond with required prerequisites, required courses, and/or the integration of Aboriginal subject material across the program. Who decides what approach works best or if a combination of responses is necessary?
 - Who is responsible for teaching the content? Keeping in mind academic freedom, to what extent can faculty members be required to integrate Aboriginal content into their courses?
 - What will be taught? There is some degree of agreement that students need access to Indigenous worldviews and the significance of worldview to learning. However, while some faculty support an approach that has a focus on the celebration of culture, some insist on the inclusion of decolonizing and antiracism education.



4. Section Four: Learning From Recent Graduates

There was an excellent response to the online survey with 243 participants completing the survey in a thirteen-week period. The survey provides an overall sense of how Recent Graduates rate their exposure to Aboriginal education and Métis specific content in their Faculty of Education program. While we did not limit the survey to Ontario graduates, we did focus our efforts on reaching Recent Graduates from Ontario Initial Teacher Education programs. Participants were contacted mainly through social networking sites including Facebook. Some faculties have websites for Recent Graduates and we were able to post an invitation to participate in the survey on some of those websites. Of the 243 participants, 223 were graduates from education programs in Ontario. We had participation from eleven Ontario programs.

4.1 Questions and Responses to the Online Survey

We wanted to know if teacher candidates are provided with access to Métis content in their teacher education programs and based on their programs do they feel prepared to teach the content.

| Online Survey Questions | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|
| Did courses in your education program address Aboriginal content? | 168 | 71 |
| Did courses in your education program address Métis specific content? | 64 | 177 |
| Based on your education courses, do you feel confident and competent to teach Métis content? | 32 | 206 |

For the most part, Recent Graduates report having at least some access to Aboriginal content during their programs, but exposure to Métis specific content is less likely. The vast majority (87%) of Recent Graduates express a lack of confidence in their capacity to teach Métis content.

Keeping in mind what teacher candidates tell their course directors about “not needing” Aboriginal education, we asked Recent Graduates about their experience teaching Aboriginal and Métis specific content during their teacher education program and in their current positions.

| Online Survey Questions | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|
| In your practicum placements were you required to teach Aboriginal content? | 42 | 195 |
| In your practicum were you required to teach Métis specific content? | 11 | 227 |
| Are you required to teach Aboriginal content in your current placement? | 38 | 178 |
| Are you required to teach Métis specific content in your current placement? | 17 | 202 |
| Since graduation have you had opportunities to learn how to teach Métis content? | 27 | 211 |

The majority (95%) of Recent Graduates who completed the survey were not required to teach nor were they provided the opportunity to learn from the experience of teaching Métis content during their practicum placements. Similarly, 92% report that in their current positions they are not required to teach Métis content.

| Online Survey Question | Very | Fairly | Not At All |
|---|------|--------|------------|
| How important is it for you to include Métis specific content in your teaching? | 53 | 99 | 91 |

A lack of access to teaching and learning does not necessarily mean a lack of commitment thus we asked Recent Graduates about the significance of addressing Métis specific content in their teaching.

It is somewhat surprising and hopeful that 152 of 243 (63%) participants state that it is “fairly” to “very important” to include Métis specific content in their teaching.

Finally we asked recent graduated about what they would need in order to be better prepared to teach Métis content and if since graduation they had opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of how to teach Métis content.

| Online Survey Questions |
|--|
| What do you need to support your teaching of Métis specific content? |

If you had opportunities to learn how to teach Métis specific content since graduating where did you access this opportunity for professional development?

Recent Graduates replied:

- Further personal and professional education on Métis issues,
- Resources on how to teach Métis content and about how Métis content can fit into the curriculum,
- Guest speakers and experiential learning opportunities for students,
- Professional development seminars,
- A supportive school community, and
- More support from the Ministry and the Board, teachers need to be strongly encouraged and supported to learn and teach Métis content.

4.1A Discussion of Online Survey Data

In many ways much of what the Recent Graduates report affirms what many of us working in the field of Aboriginal education already know. While considerable effort is being exerted to support the inclusion of Aboriginal content in teacher education programs and while some progress has been made, the majority of recently graduating teachers, like their predecessors, are leaving Faculties of Education feeling a lack of confidence and competence when it comes to teaching Aboriginal Education. In spite of efforts by the Ontario Ministry of Education to encourage the inclusion of Aboriginal content across the curriculum teacher candidates are not yet being prepared to accomplish this objective.

While the survey results suggest that teacher candidates are experiencing at least some exposure to the broader field of Aboriginal Education they overwhelmingly report that Métis Education is not being addressed. The results are clear recently certified teachers are not learning how to teach nor are they required to teach Métis content. This is significant and points to the need for concerted work, if change is expected teacher candidates must be provided with opportunities to learn about Métis history, language, culture and ongoing presence in Ontario and they must be provided with opportunities to learn how to teach the content in ways informed by indigenous teaching practices.¹

It is somewhat promising that 63% of graduates completing the survey acknowledge that it is fairly to very important to include Métis specific content in their teaching. This reflects an emerging awareness and is a good starting point. Those responding to the survey express their understanding that in order to teach Métis Education they must first have opportunities to learn and second they need opportunities to learn how to teach Métis content in ways informed by indigenous teaching practices.

4.2 Interviews With Recent Graduates

Eighteen Recent Graduates from Faculties of Education participated in individual interviews; sixteen graduated from Ontario programs and two from programs outside of Ontario. These short interviews provided the opportunity for recently certified teachers to describe their experience of Métis Education, their relationship with the content, their sense of confidence and competence with regard to teaching the content and the general atmosphere in their program with regard to Aboriginal Education.

4.2A Reporting of Recent Graduate Interview Data

| Interview Questions | Nothing | Very Little | The Basics |
|---|---------|-------------|------------|
| In your Education program what did you learn about teaching Aboriginal content? | 1 | 14 | 3 |
| In your Education program what did you learn about teaching Métis specific content? | 14 | 4 | 0 |

In the online survey, 70% of participants said that their education program did address Aboriginal Education. In follow up interviews we asked Recent Graduates about what they learned.

In response, all Recent Graduates reported learning “not much” or “very little” about teaching Aboriginal content and “absolutely nothing” about teaching Métis specific content. Their responses included; “no, nothing and history is one of my teachable subjects” (OU13RG5), and “the framework document was handed out but never taken up in class” (OU5RG1).

Recent graduates overwhelmingly reported that professors in Faculties of Education are not teaching Aboriginal subject material. Some noted that they were provided with nothing more than definitions of the terms Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The most troubling comments came from Aboriginal participants who, similar to Aboriginal faculty, were weary from having to constantly intervene and insist on the inclusion of Aboriginal people’s experiences and perspectives. One participant explained,

While they were for the most part appreciative of us Aboriginal students teaching them they did not/were not able to enhance our learning and they did little to raise the status of learning Aboriginal and Métis content by the rest of the class. (OU5RG4)

In their description of the atmosphere, Recent Graduates responses range from describing the atmosphere as dismissive, to tolerant, to respectful.

| Interview Questions | Dismissive | Tolerant | Respectful |
|--|------------|----------|------------|
| How would you describe your professors' attitude toward teaching Aboriginal content? | 8 | 9 | 1 |
| How would you describe your classmates' attitude toward learning Aboriginal content? | 8 | 10 | 0 |

Only one of the eighteen graduates that we interviewed described an atmosphere of respect. Responses to this question are in some ways shocking and in some ways overly familiar.

- We had a required course, it was geared toward teaching in a Native community, (OU2RG1)
- It was considered not very important; Course Directors did not know how to teach it thus it got brushed aside (OU5RG1),
- It was not addressed that often (OU5RG2),
- In my social justice cohort we paid less attention to Aboriginal and Métis specific content, we did address teaching people of colour more (OU5RG3),
- It was something thought highly of but not given a lot of attention (OU5RG3),
- It is not included, not a priority, I was in the social justice cohort; a link was possible but not made (OU5RG4),
- It was covered in a general way (OU5RG5),
- It was not as if they felt obliged to do it, it just fit with social studies (OU5RG5),
- For the most part it was not discussed (OU13RG1),
- It was not outright rejected it was just not addressed, we had one afternoon lesson (OU13RG7),
- It was an absent consideration (OU13RG4),
- It was never directly discussed; my assumption is the attitude is indifference (OU13RG5), and
- We didn't learn about the history of the people, I wouldn't be comfortable to teach it (OU13RG3).

Again, it is important to hear the perspective of Aboriginal participants one of whom explained,

As an Aboriginal student when you keep asking for the content to be included and address it yourself you get ostracized by your peer group who treat you as if you are taking up time – you're not the professor and you shouldn't be doing that. (OU5RG4)

Recent Graduates who did encounter Aboriginal content in their Faculty of Education courses noted that their classmates reacted in negative ways to this inclusion. Responses from Recent Graduates included the following:

- Teacher candidates thought the Aboriginal Education course was a ‘bird course’ it was not taken seriously at all (OU2RG1).
- A lot of the pre-service teachers were very resistant they were uncomfortable (OU13RG3).
- We did receive some articles about Aboriginal people in Canada and rates of drop out and incarceration, but nothing about a teaching resource (OU5RG5)
- It is like there is structural racism that exists and people in the class feel uncomfortable. There was a lot of eye rolling and negative body language. The attitude was ‘forget about it – it happened so long ago’ (OU13RG3).
- In the student body there was a great divide. And there was a lot of tension in the discussion of what was important. There was a negative attitude towards it (OU13RG6).
- My students aren’t aboriginal they don’t know aboriginals, so its not relevant to me or my students (OU13RG5).’

4.2B Discussion of Recent Graduate Interview Data: Contradiction and Frustration

The key question guiding this project is what is being taught and what is being learned with regard to Métis Education in Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education. Following up on what we learned from the surveys the interviews provided the opportunity to deepen our understanding of Recent Graduates experience of learning and learning to teach Métis Education.

From the perspective of Recent Graduates who participated in the interviews very *little* is being taught and *not much* is being learned with regard to Aboriginal subject material and a *complete lack* of attention is given to Métis Education. What is most troubling and simultaneously most useful is in the details of what the Recent Graduates describe. Many Recent Graduates experience a degree of frustration deriving from the contradictory messages that they receive. On the one hand they are made to feel as if they should integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives across their curriculum yet they are not provided with instruction on what to teach and or how to teach the content. In part this can be understood within a broader context of teacher education. The desire for recipes or quick fixes is a common response to the anxiety of learning to teach but there is something more going on with regard to Recent Graduates appreciation of the complex set of relationships within which they are embedded. The need for change in conditions of oppression and the impact of that oppression in the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people in Canada is receiving fairly regular public attention. The turn to education for answers is consistent yet exactly what can be expected from educators is unclear.

Recent graduates explained their fears and concerns associated with teaching Aboriginal content. They oscillate stating yes it is important, to it is only important if you are teaching Aboriginal students to absolute resistance to the idea that they are at all responsible for including the content in their teaching. Their fear and expressions of concern are well placed and are informed by their lack of knowledge and expertise as well as the recognition that this is indeed contentious subject material. They do need resources, but more importantly, they need instruction on how to teach the content in culturally appropriate ways and opportunities to teach and to learn from the experience of teaching in a supported context.

The interview data also exposed a deep divide among Recent Graduates the depth of resistance from many stands in stark contradiction to the absolute commitment from others. More than one recent graduate reported attending graduate school for the sole purpose of needing to improve their knowledge and understanding of decolonizing and indigenizing education prior to taking on the responsibilities of classroom teaching.

The survey and interview data from Recent Graduates draw attention to specific needs.

1. Teacher candidates need to know why it is important that they integrate Métis content across the curriculum. They need to hear the message from the Ontario College of Teachers, from the Ministry of Education, from school boards, from school principals and union leaders, from students, parents and from the Métis community. If teachers are expected to take Métis Education seriously they need to know why it

matters. The need for and the significance of teaching Métis subject material must be clearly articulated, it must be validated repeatedly and widely promoted.

2. Teacher candidates need opportunities to identify, understand and work through their own resistance to learning Métis specific content. Comments made during the interviews suggest the deeply embedded resistance some teacher candidates have regarding the teaching of Aboriginal subject material. As is the case with all subject material and particularly significant with regard to teaching Aboriginal subject material, teacher candidates need to recognize the ways in which their own relationship with the content will structure how they teach the content. As the Artist/Educator explained the “in-betweenness” of Métis presents particular challenges to teachers who need access to teachings to increase their own knowledge and sense of competence for including Métis content in their lessons.
3. They require opportunities to learn what to teach including:
 - The shared history of colonialism including the history and contemporary experiences of discrimination, oppression and violence,
 - The cultural practices and worldviews of Métis including the significance of world view to experiences of learning,
 - Historical and contemporary expressions of culture including art, literature, music and film and
 - Local histories and relationships including learning whose traditional territory they and their students live on, whose land is their school on? How did Canada come to acquire the land from Indigenous people, where are the Métis communities in the province, where and when are Métis community events held, what do those events include.

4.3 Hearing and Learning From the Voices of Métis Youth/Artists

As this study progressed, the absence of Métis Education from teacher education programs became clear. Wanting to understand the significance of absence I invited Métis artist/educator/youth to participate in interviews. We spoke with three Métis people who because of their interest in questions of learning and representation were willing to engage in conversations about Métis identity and their schooling experiences. Two of these participants are artists living and working in the greater Toronto area, one is currently an undergraduate student in a teacher education program in Toronto.

Each of these three participants shared their experience of conflict and contradiction. They described being Aboriginal but not having status as First Nations, being both inside the Aboriginal circle and outside the First Nations circle, and sometimes experiencing racism and silence within their own families. These participants explained that practices of discrimination and racism embedded in colonialism have penetrated Aboriginal families and communities causing harm in places that are supposed to be intimate places of protection, care and acceptance. As one Métis artist explained, “I felt stigma and shame in being Métis. My cousins were First Nations and they had status”(MY/A3). Another explained, “there were secret signals shared within the family informing us about who knew, who it was safe to tell about our Métis roots” (MY/A1). Students attending schools in Ontario have a right to know the history that contributes to their lived experiences, they have a right to knowledge and understanding of the broader social political context in which they and their families live.

Two of the three participants have family roots in western provinces, but all three attended school in Ontario. Beyond the story of Louis Riel, all three reported learning very little to nothing at all about Métis history, language and culture in either their elementary or secondary schooling. All three described their own efforts to seek out knowledge and understanding of what it means to be Métis. The two who are artists are somewhat older and because of their work feel very much a part of the Urban Aboriginal art community and are firmly grounded in exploring and reflecting their Métis culture, identity, experiences and worldviews in their work. Similarly, the teacher education student is committed to learning more so as to be in a position to include Métis content in her teaching. Their learning is driven by a commitment and need to address feelings of ignorance and inadequacy. They want to know what they did not learn at school; who are the Métis, what is the language, culture and history of the people what is their place in the Aboriginal circle and in Canada. The lack of attention to Métis Education in Faculties of Education contributes to the repetition of this story of not knowing.



5. Conclusions

The roots of injustice lie in history and it is there where the key to the regeneration of Aboriginal society and a new and better relationship with the rest of Canada can be found. (George Erasmus, Launch of RCAP, 1996)

More than fifteen years ago at the launch of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People commissioners made a specific call to educators explaining that hope for new and better relations between Aboriginal people and other Canadians requires teaching and learning of our shared history. More recently a host of Aboriginal scholars (Dickason, 2011; St. Denis 2011; Dion 2009) have documented the depth of ignorance that exists on the part of most Canadians about the history of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships. In this report I examined what is being taught and what is being learned about Aboriginal and specifically Métis history, language and culture in Ontario Faculties/Schools of Education. If we want to change what Canadians know, working with teachers is a good place to start.

This report provides direction to those who accept the obligation to act in ways that seek to accomplish change. All students attending school in Ontario require opportunities to learn about and to learn from First Nations, Inuit and Métis experiences and perspectives. The report points to the need for collaboration. Course directors teaching in Faculties/Schools of Education need to be prepared to integrate Métis content and to be able to teach it in meaningful ways. Teacher Candidates need to take seriously the call to learn, they need to see Métis content in the curriculum and they need opportunities to learn how to teach it. What happens in elementary and secondary school classrooms does impact what happens in Faculty of Education lecture halls. Programs and practices are interconnected and collaboration is required if those of us involved in Education hope to accomplish change within a system that has for generations failed Aboriginal learners and failed to teach all students the history and culture of people who are indigenous to these lands we all call home.

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(Endnotes)

A full discussion of indigenous informed teaching practices is beyond the scope of the present study. The following resources provide a good introduction to Indigenous Pedagogy. See for example Cajete, Gregory. (2000). "Indigenous Knowledge: The Pueblo Metaphor of Indigenous Education. In Marie Battiste (Ed), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. UBC Press: Vancouver, Graveline Fyre Jean, (1998). *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax. Stiffarm, Lenore. (Ed) (1998). *As We See ... Aboriginal Pedagogy*. University Extension Press: Saskatoon.

