



Faculty of Education

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**Master Thesis**

**Teaching the Untold Story: Using '*I Am Not A Number*' as  
a Didactic Resource to Address the Legacy of Indigenous  
Residential Schools**

**Master's Degree in Culture and Language Didactics**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores how the children's book "I Am Not A Number", published in 2016 by Jenny Dupis and Kathy Kacer<sup>1</sup>, can be integrated into teaching in middle and lower secondary schools in Norwegian schools to promote critical thinking and raise awareness of Indigenous history, both in Canada and worldwide. "I Am Not A Number" tells the story of a young girl from an indigenous community in Canada who is forced to leave home to attend a boarding school, where the purpose is for her to lose her cultural identity, through the theory of assimilation policy. The book depicts several aspects of what colonization and the dehumanization of indigenous peoples led to. The paper looks at how the book can be used as a teaching tool in the classroom to teach students about Indigenous culture, identity and the challenges they have faced throughout history, in a simple and reflective way. Through analysis of the book's content and themes, the assimilation and colonization of indigenous peoples is highlighted as an important topic for understanding their current situation and rights, and how this can be taught in line with LK20

The thesis is looking at how teaching can help develop students ability to think critically by questioning the assimilation policy, and what this led to. Through reflection and discussion, students can explore how different historical events have affected indigenous peoples' culture, rights and way of life. The paper argues that it is important to include indigenous perspectives in education to promote a broader understanding of their culture and traditions, and to encourage respect and recognition. This can help students become more aware of indigenous rights and their struggle to preserve their culture and traditions, as well as motivate them to become active supporters in the work for social justice and equality. This thesis argues that the use of the children's book "I Am Not A Number" in Norwegian schools can be an effective tool for raising awareness of indigenous history, encountering assimilation and their rights, as well as promoting critical thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *I Am Not a Number* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016).

## Norsk Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven utforsker hvordan barneboken "*I Am Not A Number*"<sup>2</sup> utgitt i 2016 av Jenny Dupis og Kathy Kacer<sup>2</sup> kan integreres i undervisningen på mellom- og ungdomstrinnet i norsk skole for å fremme kritisk tenkning og øke bevisstheten rundt urfolks historie, både i Canada og på verdensbasis. "*I Am Not A Number*" forteller historien om en ung jente fra et urfolksamfunn i Canada som blir tvunget til å dra hjemmefra for å gå på en internatskole, der målet er at hun skal miste sin kulturelle identitet, gjennom assimileringspolitikken sin teori. Boken skildrer flere sider av hva koloniseringen, og dehumaniseringen av urfolk førte til. Oppgaven ser på hvordan boken kan brukes som et pedagogisk verktøy i klasserommet for å lære elever om urfolks kultur, identitet og de utfordringene de har møtt gjennom historien, på en enkel og reflekterende måte. Gjennom analyse av bokens innhold og tematikk, belyses assimileringen og koloniseringen av urfolk som et viktig tema for å forstå deres nåværende situasjon og rettigheter, og hvordan dette kan undervises om i tråd med LK20

Oppgaven ser på hvordan undervisningen kan bidra til å utvikle elevers evne til kritisk tenkning ved å stille spørsmål ved assimileringspolitikken, og hva denne førte til. Gjennom refleksjon og diskusjon kan elever utforske hvordan ulike historiske hendelser har påvirket urfolks kultur, rettigheter og levesett. Oppgaven argumenterer for at det er viktig å inkludere urfolks perspektiver i undervisningen for å fremme en bredere forståelse av deres kultur og tradisjoner, og for å oppmuntre til respekt og anerkjennelse. Dette kan hjelpe elever med å bli mer bevisste på urfolks rettigheter og deres kamp for å bevare sin kultur og tradisjoner, samt motivere dem til å bli aktive støttespillere i arbeidet for sosial rettferdighet og likeverd.

Denne oppgaven argumenteres det for at bruken av barneboken "*I Am Not A Number*"<sup>2</sup> i norsk skole kan være et effektivt verktøy for å øke bevisstheten om urfolk sin historie, møte med assimilering og deres rettigheter, samt fremme kritisk tenkning.

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<sup>2</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland.

## 1. Introduction

This thesis aims to investigate, and discuss how Indigenous peoples, and their history can be taught in English language classrooms at middle, and lower secondary levels of the Norwegian school system to raise awareness, ethical consciousness, and assimilation through using *“I Am Not A Number”*, an originally bilingual children's book that was published in 2016<sup>3</sup>. The ability to think critically, and especially ethically, is crucial today. Today's world is increasingly more global, and more polarized, so it has become more important than ever to be able think critically and make good choices in life. There are several reasons why school children should learn more about Indigenous culture, history, and gain more respect of Indigenous communities. I believe that a lack of knowledge about Indigenous history, and culture can also create stereotypes about these communities, and add to the assimilation. Indigenous peoples all over the world, from Canada, USA, to Australia, Norway, and the rest of the Sapmi area have experienced considerable injustices directed towards them for centuries, solely because of their indigenous identity, and the communities they grew up. Indigenous peoples have over many centuries been deprived of their most basic rights, like their own cultural identity, and have been subjected to multiple human rights violations for generations. The Sami population in Norway has suffered great injustices directed towards them over the course of history, and the story of the Sami population in Norway is still by far very much untold – as it has really never gained much attention by the broader population, until recent years. I believe it is curial that Norwegian school children is taught about the history of Indigenous peoples in Norway, just as they learn about history in general. It is through learning about Indigenous peoples, such as the Sami, that students can better gain an understand what is going on in a more globalized world, and how several issues are interconnected.

I believe that there is a need for students to understand these issues faced by the Indigenous communities, to be able to build a more inclusive, and a more just society for the future. Helping students be able to evaluate these historical events, and how they still affect society today, learning about Indigenous history, culture and experiences may also help them develop, and foster their own critical thinking and reflection skills, and evaluate historical events in the present. Indigenous communities all over the world still suffer from the trauma

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<sup>3</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland.

they experienced during the assimilation politics, and this continues to cause great suffering in many areas of daily life in these communities, this even affects the younger generation that did not directly experience the assimilation, they suffer due of the generational trauma experienced by their own family, and community. This struggle is also shown in a study on economic and social development done by the United Nations <sup>4</sup> In the world today, indigenous peoples account for circa 370 million people<sup>5</sup>, and in total they make up nearly 5% of the global population <sup>6</sup> Despite this relatively small percentage number wise, they represent a total of 15% of the world's impoverished population and roughly one-third of the 900 million impoverished rural inhabitants around the world <sup>7</sup>. It is important to note that it is somewhat challenging to know the exact numbers when it comes to the total population of indigenous peoples around the world, this is mostly because many still hide their past, or the fact that they belong to an indigenous group. This in many cases due to the assimilation processes conducted in many places, and some communities even refuse to report their numbers to the local government, or even take part in national counting's. This practice is for example relevant to the Indigenous Maasai peoples in Kenya and Tanzania. This is something that I was told while living in Tanzania back in 2009, where I spent a significant amount of time with the Maasai communities, the lack of reporting to the government was because the communities do not trust the government<sup>8</sup>.

Many indigenous communities all over the world remain to this day poor, illiterate, and in many cases unemployed<sup>9</sup>. If we look at the UN report on social and economic development, indigenous peoples continue to deal with historical injustices<sup>10</sup>. Indigenous communities all over the world is still in many cases highly oppressed by their own government in many aspects, and areas of life. Indigenous peoples are discriminated against and stripped of their autonomy over their cultural practices because of colonization, and dispossession of lands, territories, and resources. We see this also here in Norway, when examining school results, or

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, "Economic and Social Development" (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), accessed November 4, 2023, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/economic-and-social-development.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Some estimate more than 500 million, but these numbers are uncertain, due to the fact that no one really knows how many Indigenous peoples there are in the world. This is explained further down.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, "Economic and Social Development."

<sup>7</sup> United Nations.

<sup>8</sup> is based on information I received directly from the Maasai people, and local politicians during the period I was living in Tanzania between 2009-2010

<sup>9</sup> United Nations.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations.

bullying in school, the Sampi areas in the North tend to do worse than the average in these reports. Because both the colonial and other states with an indigenous population pursue economic growth, they have undermined indigenous populations right to development extensively. As a result of this practice, indigenous peoples often fall prey to more dominant forces, like the government, causing them to be marginalized as some of the most disadvantaged groups within their respective nations <sup>11</sup> The lack of recognition of indigenous rights is deepened by the government's inability to recognize their unique cultural, economic, and social needs.

Indigenous communities still need a lot of help in a lot of developing nations, and even in developed ones. Life expectancy, healthcare, education, and employment of indigenous peoples consistently underperforms that of non-indigenous peoples across a range of well-being indicators set by the WHO<sup>12</sup>. If for example look at indigenous children in Australia, they have a approximately life expectancy that is nearly 20 years shorter than non-indigenous children in the country, these numbers stems from the United Nations study on the field <sup>13</sup>. This study by the UN also indicates that Indigenous populations in developed nations are facing significant health challenges due to the increased likelihood of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and tuberculosis <sup>14</sup> A growing movement in TikTok in the spring of 2021 among the young living on Indigenous reservations, particularly in the United States and Canada, posted on social media about the crisis Indigenous peoples face because of a lack of clean water, using the hashtags #dirtywater and #indigenous on TikTok, they gained a lot of attention that they would not otherwise been able to get<sup>15</sup>. The reason behind this movement on Tiktok was because Indigenous communities in Canada, and in the USA are facing an ongoing water crisis. This was the topic of these TikTok videos because of an inability to access safe clean drinking water, contributing to water shortage in the reservations in both the USA, and in Canada. The water crisis at hand, can be attributed to a multitude of factors, ranging from systemic discrimination to colonialism and the disregard for Indigenous land and water rights within reservations. Indigenous communities in Canada, for example, are unfairly affected

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations.

<sup>15</sup> Mia Holowaychuk, "Indigenous TikTok Creator Spreads Awareness for Canada's First Nation Water Crisis" (Global News, June 29, 2021), <https://globalnews.ca/news/7979266/tiktok-video-canada-first-nation-water-crisis/>.



by water advisories, which warn against their drinking water as a result of contamination in the water sources connected to Indigenous communities. In 2019 alone, there were a total of 61 long-term drinking water advisories in communities throughout Canada, with some of these having been in place for several decades<sup>16</sup> A lack of access to clean drinking water in several indigenous communities in these regions can result in various waterborne illnesses, skin irritations, and other serious medical issues if overlooked, and contribute to the already high number of health risks associated with the Indigenous people <sup>17</sup>. Despite decades of advocacy, these indigenous communities still face denial of these very basic rights by both governments, and private companies operating in their communities. Colonization, and the indigenous residential schools have caused serious, and understandably long-lasting trauma for many indigenous communities, this has led to intergenerational effects that continue to impact future generations. Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world experienced dehumanization as part of an assimilation policy, dehumanization is a process when you as a human being, is stripped of your own culture, your language, your identity, and even your sense of self-worth, because of being treated as less than human by someone with greater power – in this case, the colonial powers. Indigenous children were to separate from their families, and join the mainstream Western cultural practices, brought on them by the colonials. As a result of this forced assimilation, there has been a great loss of cultural, and familial bonds, and many generations later they may never have learned about their own original indigenous culture, and have not been able to learn their own indigenous language. This is the case for many Sami’ families I Norway, and in Scandinavia as they were ashamed of who they were, and never passed down knowledge to the next generation.

The fact that indigenous peoples are treated as second-class citizens in society is not, as many believe, a thing of the past; this is something that happens every day. Therefore, I see it as important that there is a focus in schools on the history of indigenous peoples, how they have been treated by colonizers and the larger society, to enable students to understand why it is important to stand up for the rights of indigenous peoples, and protect these, rather than ignoring what has happened, and still happens today. We cannot say that history does not

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<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, “Minister’s Annual Report on Drinking Water (2019)” (Ontario, 2019), <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-annual-report-drinking-water-2019#section-4>.

<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

repeat itself in this case, for one cannot repeat something that has never ended in the first place, it has just taken a different form.

## 1,1 Thesis Aim and Research Question

This thesis aims to investigate how the children's book "*I Am Not A Number*", published in 2016 can be incorporated into the English language classroom in Norwegian middle schools and lower secondary school settings<sup>18</sup>. The study intends to explore and promote Indigenous history. Its aim is to spark curiosity and critical thinking about dehumanization, assimilation, and cultural identity. To do this, the following research question has been formulated:

*How can "I Am Not A Number" be used as a didactic resource to address residential schools' historical, social, and emotional dimensions and their lasting effects on Indigenous communities?*

## 1.2 Outline Of The Thesis

The thesis is divided into five main chapters, each of which has its own purpose. The first and current chapter of the book explores the relevance and importance of teaching about Indigenous peoples' rights as well as the contemporary lives of many Indigenous individuals, even several years after colonization ended. Additionally, the chapter discusses the objectives of the thesis as well as the questions that it seeks to answer. In the second chapter of this thesis, the selected methodology for the assignment is described: close reading of the children's book "*I Am Not A Number*". This chapter also presents previous research conducted in the field relevant to the thesis, as well as a discussion of potential limitations for the study.

The third chapter of this thesis is dedicated to providing a theoretical framework for discussing the assignment in more detail. This chapter also examines the various theories relevant to this thesis, exploring cultural identity, assimilation, the "Indian Problem," and the

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<sup>18</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, "*I Am Not A Number*" (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016).

emergence of residential schools. As well as taking a closer look at what postcolonial theory and what hybridity is, and their relevant research. The fourth chapter serves as the discussion section, presenting the book, and connecting all the various theories from the third chapter to the book, and its potential of application in a classroom setting, being used as a teaching tool. It is also discussed in this chapter how the book is aligned with the objectives of the LK20 curriculum. In the fifth and final chapter of the thesis, the conclusion of the thesis is presented, and argued.

## 2. Methodology

In the following section, I will go a little more in depth of the chosen methodology, which is the close reading of a children's book, and why I have chosen this method for my thesis. I will also look at what already exists in the field, and how this topic has been investigated previously, both in terms of existing academic theory, and investigations. I will also go a little into what limitations I see for the thesis, and what is important to consider when working with this topic.

### 2.1 Previous Research and Theory

Based on my research, few studies specifically focus on children's literature to communicate indigenous history. While I have been able to locate a few Norwegian master's theses, focusing on Indigenous stories, and use in a classroom. They understandably tend focus on the Sami people's history and the process of their Norwegianization. It should be noted that this is partly relevant to the study, as Indigenous residential schools do have a similar history of assimilation and dehumanization of indigenous peoples. Over the past few years, an increased emphasis has been placed on indigenous stories, which can also be seen in several works of children's literature. For example, the book "*I Am Not A Number*" focuses exclusively on the treatment of indigenous peoples in Canada through Christian residential schools, while books such as the Norwegian "*Lappjævel*" and the American "*An Absolutely True Story of A Part-Time Indian*" emphasize what it is like to live in a more hybrid society, with one foot in each culture.

Some academic research has delved into the complexities of indigenous societies, particularly with regards to their experiences of dehumanization, hybridity, and assimilation. Many academic fields such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and education study the

ramifications of colonialism, which have affected societies around the world. Research in these disciplines examines various aspects of colonialism's ongoing and past effects, including the harsh reality of Indigenous children being forced out of their families and community. These children sometimes end up adopting European languages, customs and are left to lose their traditional ways of life along with their knowledge. The development of hybrid cultural forms and revitalization of traditional knowledge and methods have also been explored as ways indigenous peoples have adapted and resisted colonial pressures.

Research has examined how indigenous peoples' dehumanization has been perpetuated and challenged in contemporary societies. Throughout this thesis, I will focus on the issues of dehumanization, assimilation, and cultural identity. It provides an insight into the "Indian problem," which laid the foundation for creating residential schools. This study will examine various theories related to dehumanization, assimilation, postcolonial theory, and cultural theory. It will explore their interconnections with LK20, the learning outcomes for English-language classrooms, concerning disseminating indigenous history. Thereafter, the task will be directly related to children's literature, specifically focusing on the close reading of "*I Am Not A Number*", a children's book that was published in 2016, a book based on a true story. This study aims to examine how the various theories are manifested in this book and how indigenous peoples' history is conveyed.

## 2.2 Close Reading of "*I Am Not A Number*"

My method is to close read the children's book "*I Am Not A Number*" written by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer. Jenny's grandmother, Irene was sent to an indigenous residential school as a child, and the book is based on her life. This children's book is richly illustrated with pictures highlighting the feeling of Irene, and how the children were treated in the residential school and is based on the grandmother's experience of living in this era<sup>19</sup> The book was originally published in two languages, one is a local indigenous language from the Anishinaabe tribe, and the other was English. The book originally came out in two versions: one that used both languages and the other exclusively in English. But it was later translated into several different languages in the past few years, but even though I have only been able

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<sup>19</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland.

to access the English-only version of the book, I will acknowledge the importance of the bilingual version, and the strength this gives to history learning.

Scholarly inquiry delves into cultural identity, assimilation processes, and their implications for indigenous communities. It is worth noting that there exists wide-ranging literature on this topic. The postcolonial theory has gained a lot of attention in the more recent years, this due to its analysis of how colonialism shaped indigenous people's assimilation. I picked close reading over quantitative or qualitative research techniques for this study for various reasons. I find that going through a children's book provides the best approach when investigating the historical experiences of indigenous populations given the situation. A children's book is good at conveying complex ideas in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, making it accessible for readers in understanding past events and cultural perspectives.

### 2.3 Possible Limitations

When delving into historical accounts that rely on personal experiences and viewpoints, there are bound to be restrictions one must navigate, particularly when examining the distinct history of Indigenous communities whose members may never have returned home. This can present a challenge, leading to a Eurocentric approach that lacks a connection to Indigenous peoples. Students may struggle to relate to the tragic circumstances that have befallen these communities due to these built-in limitations. My interest in this subject matter stems from my time spent living and working in Finnmark, where Sami language and traditions were commonly encountered, giving me some insight into Sami history and Indigenous culture<sup>20</sup>. To fully appreciate the significance of approaching this topic with care and sensitivity, the following discussion provides an overview of the potential hurdles one might encounter.

**Restricted scope:** To truly grasp the diverse and complex nature of Indigenous history, relying on just one narrative can hinder student understanding. This is because a solitary perspective only offers a narrow view. Instead, it's necessary to analyze multiple sources and accounts to capture the full scope of Indigenous experiences.

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<sup>20</sup> Much of my knowledge about how the Norwegianization process affected the Sami, comes directly from many long conversations with colleagues who have talked about how their families were affected by this assimilation policy. Many have expressed a deep grief over what was lost, and the loss of their own identity, and language.

**Fictional representation:** Even though "*I Am Not A Number*" is based on the experiences of Indigenous children in residential schools and is based on real events, it is ultimately a work of fiction. It is important to note that relying solely on this book may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical context and nuances of real-life experiences.

**Generalization of Indigenous experiences:** Different tribes and communities have their distinct ways of life, traditions, and stories. Studying a single Indigenous book in-depth to write a thesis might oversimplify their way of life and lead to inaccurate stereotypes

**Lack of primary sources:** To better comprehend Indigenous history and assimilation policies, it is crucial to utilize pertinent primary sources like historical documents, first-hand accounts, and survivor testimonies- unlike a cursory examination of "*I Am Not A Number*."

**Eurocentric view:** To avoid misunderstandings about Indigenous cultures, it's important to recognize the cultural lens that we view the world through. Eurocentric values and assumptions can lead to misinterpretations.

**Temporal limitations:** "*I Am Not A Number*", is within a specific historical context. When reading this text closely like here, it is possible that one may not fully realize the ongoing struggles and contemporary issues that Indigenous communities face regarding assimilation and its consequences.

To overcome these limitations, it is important to incorporate multiple sources to build up on the issues that have been addressed to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous history.

### 3.Theoretical Framework

In this part of the thesis, I will look at different relevant theories for the thesis. There will be a review of various theories related to assimilation, postcolonial theory, cultural theory, and hybridity.

#### 3.1 Reading in the English Learning Classroom

What is reading? And how essential is it to be able to read? If we look at reading in the English classroom, it is directly linked to the basic skill of "reading," as emphasized in the in the English curriculum, set by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training<sup>21</sup> This connection between reading and basic skills, does not only involve the ability to read, but also requires the student to be able to interpret the text they read in a meaningful way<sup>22</sup>. By reading, we as humans does not only gain new knowledge, but we also acquire a valuable skill that contribute to the fulfillment of our lives. The core elements of the English curriculum are clear that the goal of working with different texts in the subject entails developing a linguistic and cultural understanding that enables them to familiarize themselves with indigenous peoples' lives; *“Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples”*<sup>23</sup> It is through reading, we are exposed to new ideas, concepts, and words and meanings, and continue expanding our understanding of the world as a whole, and develop essential communication skills needed in daily life, This also coincides with what the core elements of the curriculum say about working with different types of texts, as a way of acquiring insights into other cultures; *“Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples”*<sup>24</sup> Reading in English is considered an basic skill, and reading different texts in class helps students come up with more unique and creative solutions to problems in life by exposing them to new perspectives. With reading students will keep building a more advanced vocabulary.

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<sup>21</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Læreplan i engelsk (ENG01-04),” 2020, <https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04?lang=nob>.

<sup>22</sup> [Utdanningsdirektoratet](https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04/om-faget/kjerneelementer?lang=eng).

<sup>23</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Core Elements English,” 2020, <https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04/om-faget/kjerneelementer?lang=eng>.

<sup>24</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet.

According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, reading English entails constructing meaning from diverse types of texts presented to the student. This encompasses engaging with English-language readers to be able to comprehend, reflect, and acquire insight and knowledge across different cultures, and disciplines. It involves preparing, executing, and processing the reading of English-language texts for various purposes and varying lengths and complexities<sup>25</sup> Developing English reading skills requires employing different strategies to reading in increasingly demanding texts<sup>26</sup>.

### 3.1.1 The Role of Storytelling as a key to Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous communities across the globe have employed the practice of oral tradition for countless generations to retain and disseminate their cultural knowledge. In recent years, academic dialogue has introduced a vocabulary that appraises this type of education, such as culturally-based or culturally-relevant curricula, and, most importantly, Indigenous education - a pedagogy that empowers the transfer of cultural knowledge. Emily J Faries suggests that Indigenous communities have been actively striving to remedy the ongoing impacts of residential education and external governmental policies on Indigenous lands, aiming to confront the historical injustices that continue to affect multiple generations.<sup>27</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald, an expert in indigenous storytelling and elders, says that the advancement of cultural knowledge has emerged as a critical cornerstone in the reinvigoration of language, traditional practices, historical narratives, and ceremonial rites and melodies in the Indigenous communities<sup>28</sup>. By combining the enduring fluidity of storytelling traditions with contemporary insights, a robust foundation can be established to support the preservation and reclamation of Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogies, and learning modes<sup>29</sup>. Taiaiake Alfred, the author of *Peace, Power, and Righteousness* argues in his book,

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<sup>25</sup> [Utdanningsdirektoratet](https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk12/?requestHash=4c8d977e3c36b660940e32adc055da1723d38ea246dd948066e29205507b47ab&projectId=1241828181&loader=tips&MEDIUM_PDFJS=true&PAGE_REARRANGE_V2_MVP=true&isPageRearrangeV2_MVP=true&hintsImprovements=false&jsf-page-rearrange-v2=false&mode=force_choice#07c51428334d4ce38e35c4fe633d560b).

<sup>26</sup> [Utdanningsdirektoratet](https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk12/?requestHash=4c8d977e3c36b660940e32adc055da1723d38ea246dd948066e29205507b47ab&projectId=1241828181&loader=tips&MEDIUM_PDFJS=true&PAGE_REARRANGE_V2_MVP=true&isPageRearrangeV2_MVP=true&hintsImprovements=false&jsf-page-rearrange-v2=false&mode=force_choice#07c51428334d4ce38e35c4fe633d560b).

<sup>27</sup> E.J Faries, "Research Paper on Aboriginal Curriculum in Ontario. Chiefs of Ontario." (2004), [https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk12/?requestHash=4c8d977e3c36b660940e32adc055da1723d38ea246dd948066e29205507b47ab&projectId=1241828181&loader=tips&MEDIUM\\_PDFJS=true&PAGE\\_REARRANGE\\_V2\\_MVP=true&isPageRearrangeV2\\_MVP=true&hintsImprovements=false&jsf-page-rearrange-v2=false&mode=force\\_choice#07c51428334d4ce38e35c4fe633d560b](https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk12/?requestHash=4c8d977e3c36b660940e32adc055da1723d38ea246dd948066e29205507b47ab&projectId=1241828181&loader=tips&MEDIUM_PDFJS=true&PAGE_REARRANGE_V2_MVP=true&isPageRearrangeV2_MVP=true&hintsImprovements=false&jsf-page-rearrange-v2=false&mode=force_choice#07c51428334d4ce38e35c4fe633d560b). p 1-10

<sup>28</sup> J Archibald, "Sharing Aboriginal Knowledge and Aboriginal Ways of Knowing," *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, no. 25 (2001): 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> Archibald.



that Indigenous populations are indeed justified in remembering their enduring presence and deriving fortitude from the reality that their communities persist, even in the face of the devastating adversities experienced over the past five centuries<sup>30</sup>. Linda Smith – a researcher in Indigenous Methodology, states that the potency of each narrative is indisputable, however, the significance of these accounts extends beyond mere storytelling or simplistic narration<sup>31</sup>. These emergent narratives contribute to a collective chronicle within which every Indigenous individual can find a sense of belonging and representation<sup>32</sup>

To truly be able to recognize and appreciate diverse indigenous cultures, it is vital to analyze past events and circumstances from a historical perspective. The indigenous people who lived on the North and South American continents before the arrival of Europeans had their own unique societal identity, which was shaped by a distinct cultural framework. The belief system of these indigenous communities has played a significant role in shaping the societal fabric and maintaining intergenerational structures. It is important to recognize and appreciate these cultural convictions to gain a deeper understanding of indigenous cultures. According to Verna Kirkness, a fundamental component of the reciprocal exchange in Indigenous communities was the practice of storytelling. Elders shared their stories to impart essential knowledge to the next generation<sup>33</sup>. These narratives and legends served as powerful pedagogical tools that helped to instill cultural values, epistemology, and a sense of self-identity within Indigenous nations and communities. Through the act of storytelling, generations were able to maintain a deep connection to their traditions, wisdom, and way of life.<sup>34</sup> The cultural identities of Indigenous communities are deeply embedded in their stories and legends that convey their values, their connection with nature and the animal kingdom. Among the Sami communities, superstitions about various elements of everyday life are still widely prevalent in their oral narratives. Passing on this rich knowledge from one generation to the next through storytelling is a vital part of preserving the cultural heritage of these Indigenous people. It is through these oral stories and legends; they are also able to deliver culturally relevant education that is inherent to their unique cultural identity. By

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<sup>30</sup> T Alfred, *Peace Power Righteousness. An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press., 1999). P 33

<sup>31</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Smith. P 144

<sup>33</sup> V.J Kirkness, "Aboriginal Peoples and Tertiary Education in Canada," *The London Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 11 (1995): 28–40.

<sup>34</sup> V.J Kirkness, : 28–40.

keeping the tradition of storytelling alive, these communities can ensure the continuity and preservation of their distinctive cultural identities.<sup>35</sup> Traditionally, elders were the primary purveyors of stories, but other individuals who possessed exceptional talent and proficiency also played an important role in perpetuating this oral transmission<sup>36</sup>. A tale or myth can hold far more than just the wisdom of our forefathers; it can carry with it the story of the land, and its inhabitants, its music and rituals, and even its spiritual insight. These tales express a deep bond between the Earth, the terrain, the water, and the creatures who inhabit it, revealing a profound appreciation of the marvels of the cosmos<sup>37</sup>. This can be myths relating to the Northern Light, the water, or how everything was, and is connected in the universe – these myths help people understand the world. Education conducted in this manner fostered close-knit interactions among all members of the community<sup>38</sup>. According to American Indigenous poet Paula Gunn Allen in her book, *The Sacred Hoop*, she wrote as part of her line of work:

*“American Indian myth constitutes a narrative that predominantly relies on symbolism for its expression. Typically, it narrates events and employs supernatural, heroic figures as the agents responsible for the events and the symbols. As a story, it necessitates the immediate, active engagement of the listener»<sup>39</sup>.*

American Indian myths are characterized by a number of core characteristics, as well as the importance of active participation on the part of the listener. It is in this quote from Allen that she explains how American Indigenous myths are often expressed through the use of symbolism, and myths from their daily life. In other words as explained by Allen, these stories use different symbols to convey deeper meanings and messages rather than providing literal or straightforward interpretations and convey deeper meanings and messages. In mythologies such as these, the main characters tend to be supernatural or heroic characters, who are often responsible for the events and symbols within the story, as well as responsible for the events themselves. One example of this is a local Sami myth, is the myth that a monster lives in lakes, and will drown you, if go anywhere near the water. This story, or myth

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<sup>35</sup> Sandra Deer, “An Investigation of the Role of Legends and Storytelling in Early Childhood Practices in a Kanien’kehá:Ka (Mohawk) Early Childhood Facility,” *In Education* 22, no. 1 (2016), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1246749>. p 122

<sup>36</sup> Deer. P 118

<sup>37</sup> Deer. p 118

<sup>38</sup> Deer. p112-113

<sup>39</sup> Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions: With a New Preface* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

is often used to explain to children why the water is unsafe, and to keep them away from this danger. As a result, these stories that are often filled with larger-than-life characters who accomplish extraordinary feats that serve to illustrate important cultural values or lessons. The importance of active engagement on the part of the listener is also emphasized by Allen. Because these myths are often told orally and passed down from generations, it is imperative that the audience actively participate in the storytelling process by interpreting the symbols and creating connections between the events and their own lives based on the symbols shared, in order to pass the wisdom on to new generations in the future.

Kanickhungo, a Seneca chief and a spokesperson for Indigenous peoples at the time, claimed the following in already back in 1736:

*«Despite our advanced age, which may lead some to assume that our recollection of events may fade, we possess methods of transmitting accounts of these occurrences, even though we do not, like you, rely on the practice of committing all transactions to writing. You will discover that the memory of these events is meticulously conserved, and our subsequent generations are informed of the past so that it may not be forgotten as long as the earth endures»<sup>40</sup>*

Kanickhungo in this quote, emphasizes that cultural heritage and memories can be safeguarded and conveyed through oral tradition, even in the absence of written records. He shares that oral storytelling is the means through which their community preserves precise accounts of past events despite the elapse of time, and passes down this knowledge from one generation to another. He firmly believes that as long as the earth endures, they will continue to ensure that their collective memory as an Indigenous community and their history are intact through this method. It is said that the stories told through oral tradition hold the power to keep their traditions and culture alive with an indescribable precision and accuracy that surpasses any written document. Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching have always differed from Eurocentric beliefs on topics such as territory, cultural and spiritual customs, administration, and learning. Despite long and persistent challenges over many years, in recent years indigenous and indigenous communities have taken a more practical approach to

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in F.V Rains, J Archibald, and D Deyhle, "Introduction: Through Our Eyes and in Our Own Words," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 13, no. 4 (2000): p 337.

their own education, aiming to maintain and improve a more balanced basis for maintaining cultural heritage and values.<sup>41</sup> Vera Kirkness argues that for many Indigenous nations, the arrival of organized religion, the emergence of distinct governance systems, and particularly the rise of education have contributed to heightened oppression<sup>42</sup>. The introduction of organized religion has allowed for assimilation efforts to take root - these efforts are widely considered as methods of erasing the people and their culture and characterized an era of cultural unrest. However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving Indigenous practices and knowledge systems.

## 3.2 Cultural Identity

Human beings are fundamentally unique, mainly because of their own culture, and the values they carry with them throughout their lives, and every person comes from a different culture, and background based on their traditions and viewpoints. There is no culture in the world that fits perfectly to all, and with everyone, as humans are all unique, and bring diverse experiences with them. Culture is shaped by several factors, including geography, history, language, religion, and social factors<sup>43</sup>. For an individual to feel connected to the world and have a sense of self-worth, they must have a sense of cultural identity and a feeling of belonging somewhere. People's values, self-esteem and belonging are strongly linked to cultural identity, one loses a lot by not feeling "at home", and this knocks out a sense of alienation, even if one is in one's own country. The cultural identity of an individual can also play an important role in determining how they relate to other people, as well as the opportunities and experiences they have in the world as a result<sup>44</sup>.

### 3.2.1 Indigenousness – What does it mean to be Indigenous?

According to the Norwegian government's definition of indigenous peoples and what it means to belong to an indigenous group, there is no universally recognized definition of indigenous peoples on an international scale<sup>45</sup> It is characteristic of the indigenous people that

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<sup>41</sup> Deer, "An Investigation of the Role of Legends and Storytelling in Early Childhood Practices in a Kanien'kehá:Ka (Mohawk) Early Childhood Facility." p 112-113

<sup>42</sup> V.J Kirkness 28–40.

<sup>43</sup> National Geographic Education, "Cultural Identity" (National Geographic), accessed April 13, 2023, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-cultural-identity/>.

<sup>44</sup> National Geographic Education.

<sup>45</sup> Regjeringen, March 22, 2019, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/indigenous-peoples-and-minorities/Sami-people/midtspalte/What-Defines-an-Indigenous-People/id451320/>.

they do not constitute a majority within the larger communities in which they live, even though they may be the original inhabitants of the country, or of the region in which they live. Most of these communities have their own unique cultures, which are often centered around the use of natural resources, and their local traditions and ways of life often differ greatly from socially, culturally, linguistically, and linguistically from the dominant population in which they live. There is no doubt that indigenous peoples often represent a minority in their respective countries and communities. In many societies, it is difficult to estimate how many people belong to the indigenous population. This has often happened as a direct result of the assimilation policies these societies were subjected to. Many are simply afraid to say publicly that they belong to indigenous people, and many do not even know that they are, because the family has chosen to keep this secret, either because they were ashamed, or as pure protection of their own family - for fear of what the future holds. This has caused many indigenous communities to lose generations, culture and, not least, language. This is something several friends have talked about – the loss of their own culture and their own language. But we are seeing more and more evidence, especially in Norway, of young people who want to take back their rightful culture, and demand to have Sami in school, which they are entitled to under the law. Article 1b of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, ratified by Norway in 1990, delineates indigenous peoples as follows:

*"Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions."*<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2.2 What is Culture, and how does it relate to the process of learning a language?

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<sup>46</sup> ILO, "Who Are the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples?," accessed March 23, 2023, [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/WCMS\\_503321/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/WCMS_503321/lang--en/index.htm).

According to John Condon<sup>47</sup>, An expert in research on intercultural communication, says that culture acts as a framework for our daily existence as human beings, influencing how we humans behave in different settings, it also influences our attitude towards how we perceive the world and the people around us, no matter where we are on the planet. Essentially, culture defines how we behave as human beings.<sup>48</sup> This encompasses a wide range of things that shape us as human beings, such as routines, traditions, art, and music. All these different elements serve to characterize a particular composition of us as individuals within a particular historical era, as well as the origins of those beliefs<sup>49</sup> Culture acts as an invisible hand that guides us through life, determining what is acceptable and what is not, and this applies to everything from the food we eat, to the music we listen to, and how we perceive and understand elements around us; Culture permeates every part of our daily lives. Through this process of self-discovery of what our own culture, and cultural identity is, we can gain a much deeper understanding of ourselves, and understand who we are as people, our community, and the world at large<sup>50</sup> John Condon believes that culture holds immense influence over our behaviors, mental processes, and when people come together, they form a collective identity based on their distinct customs, values, arts, tools, and knowledge that are indicative of a specific era or geographical location<sup>51</sup>. This cultural imprinting is responsible for shaping the way we think and act as individuals<sup>52</sup>.

People are generally aware that language and culture are linked, meaning they do not need separate lessons in the learning process. When trying to learn a new language, culture is part of everything taught. However, we need to look deeper into the exact significance of culture in language learning. According to the National Standards for Foreign Language Education, truly mastering a new language involves comprehending the cultural context in which it exists.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, to achieve success in the acquisition of a second language, it is necessary to comprehend the culture of the country in which the language is being acquired, so if we learn English, it is natural to comprehend the culture of for example the UK, USA,

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<sup>47</sup> E.C Condon, *Introduction to Cross Cultural Communication*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rogers University Press, 1973).

<sup>48</sup> Condon.

<sup>49</sup> Condon. P 3

<sup>50</sup> Condon. P 4

<sup>51</sup> Condon. P 3

<sup>52</sup> Condon.

<sup>53</sup> KS Lawrence, "Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century," *National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project*., 1996.

Australia etc. Many operate beneath conscious awareness, yet all regulate human conduct<sup>54</sup> The meaning of culture can vary depending on individual perspectives. Anthropologically speaking, culture refers to how individuals live their lives. This definition aligns with the necessary material to fulfill the stated aims of the intercultural comprehension<sup>55</sup> The study of communication has increasingly become a focal point for sociology and linguistics, with each field devising approaches to incorporate language research as a shared objective. Linguists acknowledge the significance of linguistically conditioned social occurrences, while social scientists recognize the communal aspect of the language<sup>56</sup>. The sociolinguistics discipline is concerned with the study of the crucial relationship between language and society, exploring the societal aspect of speech acts in all their different forms.

I think that learning about cultural knowledge should be prioritized in schools, to promote intercultural competence and mutual understanding between different communities. Learning a second language is not only a matter of comprehending the divergent cultural perspectives, but also acknowledging that people across the globe are heterogeneous in nature. A second language's ability to converse effectively with people of a different culture and language constitutes one of the principal areas where the greatest demand and potential for improvement in second language education exist. A key objective of English, or any other language instruction in a classroom environment, is not simply to exchange lexical items with others but to comprehend their intended meaning. Dell Hymes underscores that "*the essential factor in the apprehending language in its context is to initiate the process by examining not language itself, but rather the context.*"<sup>57</sup> To really grasp language, it is important to look beyond just the words and really delve into the situation and surroundings where they are being used. It's not enough to just focus on the language by itself – you need to consider the bigger picture.

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<sup>54</sup> Condon, *Introduction to Cross Cultural Communication*. P4

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Chastain, *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988). P 302

<sup>56</sup> Gabriel Obando, Pedro Obando, and Ana Sanchez, "What Is the Role of Culture in Language Teaching?," 1997, [https://www.academia.edu/97912062/What\\_Is\\_the\\_Role\\_of\\_Culture\\_in\\_Language\\_Teaching](https://www.academia.edu/97912062/What_Is_the_Role_of_Culture_in_Language_Teaching).

<sup>57</sup> Courtney B. Cazden, Vera P. John, and Dell H. Hymes, *Functions of Language in the Classroom* (Prospect Heights (Ill.): Waveland press, 1985).

In Luis Gomez-Chova's view, the importance of contextualized exercises in the acquisition of language skills has been recognized by pedagogical approaches<sup>58</sup>. This has resulted in contextualized oral exercises being preferred over repetitive drills as a form of instruction, contextualized grammatical exercises being situated within the context of social and verbal exchanges, and contextualized readings have been tailored to meet learners' specific requirements and appropriate context<sup>59</sup>. To effectively teach language, context must be an integral part of each of the language skills. According to Gordon Brown; certain aspects of language may contribute to the development of cognitive mindsets<sup>60</sup>. The passive voice, the verb system, and various lexical items which have already been discussed in this section affect the way we think in English<sup>61</sup>. This meaning that using context in language learning is crucial, as it improves the acquisition of language skills. When discussing language learning in school, I find it essential to mention the theory of Intercultural competence (IC). IC is the ability to effectively communicate with and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds<sup>62</sup>. Being able to understand different cultures, and not least having an open-minded attitude, as well as understanding how to communicate and deal with cultural differences, are important qualities. The theory of intercultural competence highlights the importance of working with cultural differences in society and the importance of empathy, in order to understand other cultures.<sup>63</sup> The past and culture of indigenous peoples, such as their struggles with colonization and the effects of schools meant to assimilate them into the dominant western culture, is quite significant. It is vital to acknowledge the variety within indigenous cultures, customs, and languages, and recognize that there is not just a single, unified "Indigenous" experience or culture.

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<sup>58</sup> Luis Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, and I. Candel Torres, eds., *ICERI 2011 Conference Proceedings* (Valencia: International Association of Technology, Education and Development, IATED, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> I. Candel Torres, L. Gomez Chova, and A. Lopez Martinez, *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation Held on 14-16 November 2011 in Madrid, Spain* (Madrid, Spain: International Association of Technology, Education and Development (IATED), 2011).

<sup>60</sup> H. Douglas Brown, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, 3rd ed (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall Regents, 1994). P 187

<sup>61</sup> Brown. P 187

<sup>62</sup> Monash Intercultural Lab, "What Is Intercultural Competence, and Why Is It Important?" (Monash University, 2021), <https://www.monash.edu/arts/monash-intercultural-lab/about-the-monash-intercultural-lab/what-is-intercultural-competence>.

<sup>63</sup> Monash Intercultural Lab.



Larsen-Freeman<sup>64</sup> argues with 7 different methods teachers can make use of in the process of teaching a foreign language. Larsen-Freeman's methods are quite different, and adapted to many different groups who want to learn a new language, while working with the culture of the country.

- I. In **direct method**, culture encompasses more than just the fine arts and may also include topics such as geography and the history of the people who speak the target language, as well as the fine arts and literature <sup>65</sup>
- II. Culture, in the context of **Audio Linguistics**, refers to the everyday behavior and lifestyle of the target language speakers<sup>66</sup>
- III. In **The Silent Way**, culture is seen as an integral part of the unique worldview of each learner<sup>67</sup>
- IV. In addition to the culture that the people in each language are on an everyday basis, **Suggestopedia** emphasizes the daily experiences of them<sup>68</sup>
- V. **Community Language Learning** integrates culture with the language <sup>69</sup>
- VI. In the Total **Physical Response** concept, culture is defined as the way of life of the individuals who speak the language indigenously <sup>70</sup>
- VII. The **Communication approach** views culture as the everyday lifestyle of Indigenous speakers, with certain aspects receiving greater attention in this approach, such as using nonverbal language<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson, *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, 3rd ed, Teaching Techniques in English as a Second Language (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Cazden, John, and Hymes, *Functions of Language in the Classroom*.

<sup>66</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. P 44

<sup>67</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson. P 64

<sup>68</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson. P 82

<sup>69</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson. P 102

<sup>70</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson. P 117

<sup>71</sup> Larsen-Freeman and Anderson. P 134

Larsen-Freeman's thoughts on language education highlight the weighty impact of culture within the subject, and she suggests that there are different perspectives on how to integrate cultural nuances into language teaching approaches. When it comes to knowing how to interact with people from different cultures, it is important to not only learn their language, but also learn about their way of life and how they see the world around them. This helps you truly understand their language and how they communicate. To excel at this, you need to appreciate the ways that different people do certain things and have the skills to connect with people from all over the world. The best way to learn about a new culture is to keep that culture in mind when learning their language, and if possible visit the country and culture.

According to Kenneth Chastain, to be successful in the teaching of second languages, educators need to possess three different things; lucid definition, a thematically organized approach, and at the very least, some knowledge of the culture they are teaching<sup>72</sup>. Fortunately, because of the heightened focus on incorporating more culture into language courses and cultivating greater expertise in teaching other cultures, new strategies have been developed for the presentation of culture<sup>73</sup>. Chastain stresses the importance of employing culture as a subject matter not only provides children with pleasure and a more lucid self-conception but also permits the teacher to gain insight into the children's culture through their unique perspective<sup>74</sup>. Despite classroom limitations, culture is an integral part of class time and homework, preparing students for potential interactions with native speakers, even if they never travel abroad.

### 3.2 Assimilation

Assimilation means becoming more similar or alike, or being in a state of similarity or likeness. Sometimes it is about turning food into the stuff our bodies can use, and sometimes it is about changing the way we say words. It can also be used to describe the way we adjust to new things based on what we already know. Assimilation is, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary Merriam-Webster, "Assimilation", a noun that can vary in different things<sup>75</sup>:

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<sup>72</sup> Chastain, *Developing Second-Language Skills*. P 308

<sup>73</sup> Chastain. P 308

<sup>74</sup> Chastain. P 308

<sup>75</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Assimilation" (Merriam-Webster.com dictionary, n.d.), accessed March 23, 2023.

*1a: an act, process, or instance of assimilating*

*1b: the state of being assimilated.*

*2 the incorporation or conversion of nutrients into protoplasm that in animals follows digestion and absorption and in higher plants involves both photosynthesis and root absorption*

*Three phonetics: change of a sound in speech*

*4 The process of receiving new facts or of responding to new situations in conformity with what is already available to consciousness*

People and individuals can either choose to adopt the culture of a dominant group in the society they live in, or they can be forced to do so against their own will, in a link of assimilation into another culture. The first type of assimilation is known as “voluntary assimilation», and this type of assimilation only happens when individuals voluntarily choose to conform to the dominant culture in order to have better social, economic, or educational opportunities. This type is correctly identified as numbers 1a and 1b. The other type, called involuntary assimilation, occurs when individuals or groups are made to adopt the dominant culture. This has happened through coercion or force in a variety of situations. For instance, Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States were forced to attend residential schools that aimed to eradicate their own cultures.

### 3.2.1 Indigenous Education

Education plays a crucial role in organized societies and has been a fundamental component of most cultures throughout history. Indigenous communities, in particular, have always had their unique forms of education, even though some may think the opposite – which laid the foundation for residential schools. Andrew Woolford explains in his work *This Benevolent Experiment* that it is noteworthy that these methods often involved learning through observation and experience, subtle forms of parental guidance, the freedom to explore one's surroundings, ceremony and ritual, and didactic storytelling<sup>76</sup>. The traditional education methods in Indigenous communities were deeply rooted in their culture and played a profound role in shaping these communities' values, beliefs, and practices. The importance of understanding the unique forms of Indigenous education is vital to appreciating the rich

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<sup>76</sup> Andrew John Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States*, Indigenous Education (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015). p 118-138

culture of these communities and promoting inclusive educational practices that acknowledge and celebrate diverse forms of knowledge.

Indigenous residential schools served as a comprehensive educational system that was established by the Canadian colonial government, and was administered by local churches, often catholic with nuns being in charge of the schools<sup>77</sup> While Indigenous children were expected to receive an education, these schools also aimed to enforce Euro-Canadian and Christian beliefs upon the children, in which ultimately forcing the children into the white majority Canadian society<sup>78</sup>. According to official records, the residential school system operated in Canada from the 1880s until 1996, when the last residential school was closed<sup>79</sup>, this is also highlighted in the afterword of "*I Am Not A Number*"<sup>80</sup> During this era, Indigenous children were often taken away from their families and forbidden from practicing their traditions, language, and heritage. Those who disobeyed these strict regulations faced severe consequences<sup>81</sup>. The conditions in the residential schools were marked by a lot of abuse, including psychological and emotional abuse, physical and sexual abuse used as a punishment<sup>82</sup>. It has over the years been reported that some of the victims were beaten, strapped to their beds, and even shackled, while others victims have reported having needles shoved in their tongues for the mere act of speaking their Indigenous languages<sup>83</sup>. These abuses, coupled with overcrowding, poor sanitation, and severely inadequate food and health care, resulted in a shockingly high death toll, with government medical inspector P.H. Bryce reporting in 1907 that 24 percent of previously healthy Indigenous children across Canada were dying in residential schools<sup>84</sup> Despite the ostensibly educational nature of the residential schools, the students did not receive the same education as the general population in the public school system, with teachings focused primarily on practical skills<sup>85</sup> According to Hanson<sup>86</sup>, girls were taught to do laundry, sew, cook, and clean in preparation for domestic service, while boys were taught carpentry, tinsmithing, and farming. Lots of students did only

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<sup>77</sup> Erin Hanson, D Gamez, and A Manuel, "The Residential School System," September 2020, <https://indigenousfoundations.web.arts.ubc.ca/residential-school-system-2020/>.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew John Woolford, p 118-138

<sup>79</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel, "The Residential School System."

<sup>80</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland, *I Am Not a Number*. P 29

<sup>81</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland. P 29

<sup>82</sup> Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*. p 118-138

<sup>83</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel, "The Residential School System."

<sup>84</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

<sup>85</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

<sup>86</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

part-time studying and spent the rest of their time doing work for the school instead<sup>87</sup>. This work wasn't something they chose to do and they didn't get paid for it. They had to do things like cleaning and fixing stuff around the school. When these students reached 18 years old, most of them had only made it up to grade five. This made it tough for them to want to keep going to school.<sup>88</sup> Starting from the 1990s, the authorities and religious establishments engaged in the residential education program, comprising the denominations like the Anglican, Presbyterian, United, and Roman Catholic, came forward to accept their culpability for a learning curriculum that aimed to eradicate the Indian heritage from youngsters<sup>89</sup>. However, the implications of the residential schools are still prevalent.<sup>90</sup>

A sociology professor - Deborah House, has worked closely with the Navajo Nation for many years, and her research on Navajo educational practices has revealed the community utilized a variety of practical and diverse educational approaches; this research by House has been critical in shedding light on the type of education that existed among indigenous peoples, and what value it has had<sup>91</sup>. She explains that education practices were integrated into the daily lives of community members, and this included a variety of different songs, prayers, and other lessons associated with various activities such as shepherding, gardening, weaving, basket making, childcare, and social interactions. In the Indigenous community, the process of learning was not confined to the four walls of a classroom, but instead it occurred through active participation in daily life and the observation of skilled individuals<sup>92</sup> This approach to teaching was efficient and designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for navigating their environment successfully. By highlighting these educational practices, House's work provides valuable insights into the distinctive educational methods of Indigenous communities and underscores the importance of recognizing diverse forms of knowledge in educational settings. Another expert on the Navajo - Jacqueline Fear-Segal, a professor in Indigenous History, states that from practical education, the Navajo culture also emphasizes transmitting important and sacred teachings through ceremonies and events – this

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<sup>88</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

<sup>89</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel

<sup>90</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

<sup>91</sup> DEBORAH HOUSE, *Language Shift among the Navajos* (University of Arizona Press, 2002),

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1mgmcpX>.

<sup>92</sup> HOUSE.

is also what House has concluded in her work, that the learning occurred in daily life<sup>93</sup>. These ceremonies, according to Fear-Segal revolved around the creation of the Navajo people and everything in the world and their emergence into the present white or glittering world<sup>94</sup> through a series of previous worlds<sup>95</sup>. One of how cultural knowledge was transmitted was through telling winter stories, typically during late-night gatherings around the fire in the center of the Hogan<sup>96</sup>. During these gatherings, traditional games such as the shoe game was played, which involved a reenactment of the gambling contest in which animals determined the duration of night and day<sup>97</sup>. These events provided a significant occasion for transmitting cultural knowledge, including essential and sacred teachings<sup>98</sup>. House says that by emphasizing the significance of storytelling and ceremonial events in sharing cultural knowledge, the Navajo culture exemplifies the importance of acknowledging diverse forms of education that may differ significantly from Western educational practice<sup>99</sup>. House's study of Navajo educational practices showed that learning occurred through active participation and observation, rather than being confined to a classroom, in this community. Through ceremonies and events, including winter stories and traditional games, Navajo culture transmits important and sacred teachings. As a result of the work of House and Jacqueline Fear-Segal, there is now a strong focus on the importance of acknowledging diverse forms of knowledge within educational settings as well as the differences between Indigenous and Western educational systems.

Many Indigenous communities, according to Woolford's research, viewed European schooling to help their children adapt to a changing world, while at the same time preserving their cultural traditions and heritage. It is important to remember that the industrial- and vocational-style residential schools that emerged in the United States and Canada grew out of a long-standing institutional legacy rooted in European history.<sup>100</sup> The antecedents of these assimilative institutions did not have to be European schools only, but also included workhouses, missionary schools, and other spaces designed to discipline the bodies of those

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<sup>93</sup> Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

<sup>94</sup> White or Glittering world refers to the creation of the Navajo.

<sup>95</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*.f

<sup>96</sup> The Hogan is a ceremonial structure in the Navajo culture, where knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next

<sup>97</sup> House

<sup>98</sup> House

<sup>99</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*.f

<sup>100</sup> Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*. p 118-138

who were deemed unproductive, shiftless, or sinful. Prior to these reforms, mission schools that aimed to educate Indigenous youth had already been appearing in North America<sup>101</sup>. Woolford says that the emergence of these institutions underscores the complex historical context within which Indigenous education was shaped, highlighting the need to critically examine the roots of these institutions and the ideologies that informed their creation<sup>102</sup>. The story of Indigenous American education in North America is complex and confusing because it involves many different schools and beliefs, and some Indigenous American groups believed that European education could help them change without losing their own culture<sup>103</sup>. However, many Indigenous American children were forcibly removed from their families and forced to attend residential schools where their cultural identity and languages were erased<sup>104</sup>. These assimilative institutions such as workhouses and missionary schools were created by reformers, government officials, religious leaders, and other actors as a solution to the "Indian Problem." To truly grasp the significance of Indigenous education, it is crucial to dig into the origins of these institutions and the thoughts that sparked their creation.

### 3.2.2 Assimilation through Education

The theory of assimilative education can be understood as an example of what James C. Scott describes as "*thinking like a state*"<sup>105</sup>. In Scott's book "Seeing like a state"<sup>106</sup>, he explores the methods employed by modern states to streamline, regulate, and exert influence over intricate social and natural systems, often resulting in catastrophic outcomes. Scott makes the case that the efforts of modern states often lead to disastrous outcomes<sup>107</sup>s. Scott argues that states have a propensity for readability, indicating their intent to make the world more understandable and manageable<sup>108</sup>. When looking at assimilation through education, it is essential to look at the works of both Andrew Woolford and Francis Prucha, in addition to Scott's thinking<sup>109</sup>. When we look at Scott's work, it is necessary to note that the theory behind "*thinking like a*

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<sup>101</sup> Woolford. p 118-138

<sup>102</sup> Woolford. p 118-138

<sup>103</sup> Woolford. p 118-138

<sup>104</sup> Woolford. p 118-138

<sup>105</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Veritas paperback edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

<sup>106</sup> James C. Scott

<sup>107</sup> James C. Scott

<sup>108</sup> James C. Scott

<sup>109</sup> Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*; Francis Paul Prucha, *Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Abridged Edition)* (UNP - Nebraska, 2014).

*state*” comes from a thinking that because the state represents an ambitious attempt at social engineering, grounded in a modernist worldview, which aims to solve a perceived governmental problem through strictly managed or scientifically guided interventions in the social world. In the case of assimilative education, the colonial government problematized the "*Indian problem*". This policy approach reflected a belief in the superiority, or a white man's burden of Western civilization and a desire to impose that civilization on these savage Indigenous peoples. It also reflected a desire to create a uniform, centralized system of education that would be consistent with the values and goals of the state<sup>110</sup>

When the British took over a large part of North American continent, they were faced with a problem in how to deal with the Indigenous peoples. The problem seemed to be how to "fix" Indigenous peoples, which was an issue from the beginning of British control.<sup>111</sup> It was believed at the time that if Indigenous children were removed from their families and community and placed in residential schools, they would adapt to Western culture and society.<sup>112</sup> This approach was centered on the principle of "killing the Indian in the child" so that Indigenous ways of life and beliefs could be replaced with the beliefs and taught of the dominant colonial culture. This led to the establishment of a policy of cultural genocide whose sole aim was to eliminate the unique culture of indigenous peoples, which was alien to the colonists, and instead assimilate them<sup>113</sup> According to Woolford, the "Indian problem" did not only exist in the United States or Canada, but this was a general problem in several of the areas controlled by the British Empire, for example we know that Australia was also one of the areas where assimilation policies largely existed, known under the term “The Lost Generation”<sup>114</sup> The issue of controlling a diverse population with different cultures, religions and languages was a significant challenge for the colonial authorities.<sup>115</sup>

According to Woolford, the idea of the Indian was established by the forces of colonialism, one of many creations created because of the act of colonization itself.<sup>116</sup> He expresses that the notion of 'Indian' was designed to legitimize the subjugation and control of Indigenous

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<sup>110</sup> Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*.p 118-138

<sup>111</sup> Woolford.p 118-138

<sup>112</sup> Woolford. P 118-138

<sup>113</sup> Woolford. P 118-138

<sup>114</sup> Woolford. P 118-138

<sup>115</sup> Woolford. P p118-138

<sup>116</sup> Woolford. P 118-138



peoples and their lands, and only once the idea of the "Indian" was established as a threat to colonialism and its survival, could practices like assimilative education be imposed to counter said threat<sup>117</sup> Originally, the term "Indian" was assigned to Indigenous peoples across North America because the Europeans with Christopher Columbus had mistakenly believed they had arrived in India, but instead they had arrived on the North America continent. Thus the term "Indian" served as a tool used by colonial powers to dominate and erase the diversity of Indigenous cultures, languages, and ways of life, and as a result of this, policies of dispossession, forced relocation and cultural genocide could be easily justified.<sup>118</sup>

In *The Great Father*, Prucha said that the Secretary of the Interior at that time, Carl Schurz, had some ideas about how to solve this "*Indian Problem*." <sup>119</sup> . These ideas were kinda mixed up, and there was some talk about getting everyone to be more like the white people through education, but also about using the military if anyone got out of line<sup>120</sup>. Schurz also thought that letting people live on reservation land and teaching them how to farm would work too. But other people in the government had different ideas, showing that it was a really complicated problem that needed a lot of different solutions<sup>121</sup> So Schurz's approach was to use a mix of different approaches, like the military and education to get people under control. Schurz believed that residential schools could help to "civilize" Indigenous children by teaching them English and Western culture while also isolating them from their traditional ways of life<sup>122</sup> At the same time, Schurz supported the establishment of reservations where Indigenous peoples could live separately and maintain their cultures.

### 3.2.3 Unmarked Graves, and Apology from the Canadian Government

The Indigenous residential school system had a significant impact on Indigenous Peoples, leading to disparities in education, their social well-being, finances, and health. Despite the system's original purpose, Indigenous Peoples have not been fully assimilated, and are working towards regaining their rights while seeking justice for the damages caused by the

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<sup>117</sup> Woolford. P 118-138

<sup>118</sup> Woolford. p 118-138

<sup>119</sup> Prucha, *Great Father*. p 594

<sup>120</sup> Prucha. P 595

<sup>121</sup> Prucha. P 595

<sup>122</sup> Prucha. p 595

Canadian government, and churches.<sup>123</sup> Although it has been more than 38,000 allegations of sexual and physical abuse in the late 1980s, sadly only a handful of these cases actually resulted in conviction within the Canadian legal system.<sup>124</sup> The more recent discovery of unmarked graves in former Indigenous residential schools in Canada has brought renewed attention to the dark past of forced assimilation and systemic abuse<sup>125</sup>. It is been estimated that approximately 150,000 Indigenous children were forcefully removed from their families and communities between the 19th and late 20th centuries, and a large number of these never returned home<sup>126</sup>. The living conditions at these schools have been reported as deplorable, leading to not only emotional, but also physical, and sexual abuse<sup>127</sup>. Sadly, many of these children died from malnutrition, illness, or harsh punishment, while others died trying to escape the residential schools.<sup>128</sup> The issue of the legacy of colonialism and residential schools has been a challenging one for the Canadian government and society to grapple with. In 2008, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up to document the experiences of survivors and promote healing and reconciliation in the community, and the Commission's 2015 report included 94 Calls to Action that addressed various aspects of Indigenous rights, education, language, and cultural issues.<sup>129</sup>

In spite of previous efforts, the discovery of these mass graves has led to increased demands for more accountability from both the Canadian government and the churches behind the residential school system. Many are calling for a thorough investigation into the deaths of these children and for those responsible to be prosecuted. As part of the Settlement Agreement, the Canadian government apologized for their role in the residential school system in 2008.<sup>130</sup> On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada publicly apologized for

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<sup>123</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel, "The Residential School System."

<sup>124</sup> *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

<sup>125</sup> Anderson Cooper, "Canada's Unmarked Graves: How Residential Schools Carried out 'Cultural Genocide' against Indigenous Children," *BBC News*, December 2, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/canada-residential-schools-unmarked-graves-indigenous-children-60-minutes-2023-02-12/#>.

<sup>126</sup> *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.

<sup>127</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel, "The Residential School System."

<sup>128</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 5* (MQUP, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt19rmbqj>.

<sup>129</sup> Kanada, *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Canada's Residential Schools : The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, volume 4 (Montreal Kingston London Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

<sup>130</sup> Prime Minister of Canada, "Prime Minister Harper Offers Full Apology on Behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools System," June 11, 2008, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655>.

the government's role in the residential school system and recognized its enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples, to solemn applause from the House of Commons committee who unanimously approved the motion.<sup>131</sup>

*“...the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to remove children from their homes forcibly and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this”*<sup>132</sup>

(Prime Minister of Canada, 2008)

Here Prime Minister Stephen Harper admits the Canadian government's error in forcibly taking Indigenous children from their families and communities, to assimilate them into the dominant society. This approach had caused great, and unfixable damage to the children and their communities, and the government apologized for this wrongful act. This apology also notes that separating Indigenous children from their cultures and traditions left a gap that impacted countless lives and communities. After the federal government apologized, there were varied responses<sup>133</sup>. Some people thought it signaled a new era of positive relations between the government and Indigenous people founded on mutual respect. Others believed it was only a symbolic gesture and would not change the government's relationship with Indigenous Peoples<sup>134</sup>. Governments and churches must make apologies and acknowledgements to aid reconciliation, but doing so alone will not restore the trust and dignity of Indigenous Peoples that has been eroded over centuries due to colonialism and systemic discrimination, but there is no guarantee that these steps can successfully restore the lost trust and dignity.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.3. Postcolonial Theory

One of the most important theories that must be addressed when looking at how assimilation policies affected the lives of indigenous peoples historically, socially, and emotionally, it is

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<sup>131</sup> Prime Minister of Canada.

<sup>132</sup> Prime Minister of Canada.

<sup>133</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel, “The Residential School System.”

<sup>134</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

<sup>135</sup> Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel.

necessary to look at postcolonial theory, the theories that look at precisely the effects of colonization, and the assimilation many experienced. Here, too, the theory of hybridity will be looked at, which is a concept we see more and more of in our globalized world.

Colonialism, as described by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is a noun characterized by the following meanings:<sup>136</sup>

- 1: the quality or state of being colonial;
- 2: an attribute indicative of a colony;
- 3a: the exercise of control by one authority over a reliant region or population;
- 3b: a strategy is endorsing or founded upon such rule.

While the original inhabitants of colonized territories are referenced in definition 3a, they and their land are designated dependent fields<sup>137</sup> Additionally, the characterization of occupied lands and peoples as "dependent" portrays colonizers as benevolent saviors offering vital assistance to the colonized<sup>138</sup>. To incorporate crucial aspects of power and dominance into the definition. In her work on colonialism, Indian literary scholar Anaia Loomba defines colonialism as "the conquest and control of the goods and lands of other people"<sup>139</sup>. According to James Scott, the postcolonial theory was employed as the initial theoretical framework for this study, given its origins in constructionist epistemology<sup>140</sup> This theory, according to Homi Bhabha, delineated specific approaches to conceptualize and critique the "colonial testimony of Third World countries and discourses of minorities within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South<sup>141</sup>.

Homi K. Bhabha, a prominent Indian postcolonial theorist, has made a significant contribution to the field of postcolonial studies with his theories of hybridity and third space. Bhabha explores the concept of hybridity in his work, examining how both colonialism and globalization have led to the emergence of hybrid cultural identities that are not solely

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<sup>136</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Colonialism" (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary), accessed March 27, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colonialism>.

<sup>137</sup> Merriam-Webster.

<sup>138</sup> Merriam-Webster.

<sup>139</sup> Ania Loomba et al., eds., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Duke University Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1134gnk>. p 20

<sup>140</sup> Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

<sup>141</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004). p 245

aligned with either the colonized or the colonizer<sup>142</sup> Bhabha's hybridity theory asserts that the cultural amalgamation from colonialism generates new artistic expressions that contest and undermine the power hierarchies established by the colonizer<sup>143</sup> Based on Bhabha's theory, hybridity is the result of an interaction that occurs between the colonized and the colonizer, which results in the emergence of a third space that is neither fully colonized by the colonizer nor totally colonized by the colonizer. This third space will be further discussed later in the thesis, as this also relates to the learning process of a culture. But this «third» space serves as the birthplace for new cultural identities, contesting the dominance and authority of the colonizer - hybridity<sup>144</sup> According to Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, colonialism and globalization have resulted in the emergence of new cultural identities that challenge the power dynamics established by the colonizer because of colonization. In a hybrid system, there is an interaction between the colonized and the colonizer, which creates an intermediary space where new cultural identities can emerge because of this interaction<sup>145</sup>. As a means of countering colonial subjugation, Bhabha emphasizes the role of agency and resistance in this process as a means of keeping an eye on colonial subjugation<sup>146</sup>. As a result of these methods, marginalized Indigenous populations and communities are experiencing normalized, unequal development. Investigating the phenomena of colonialism is crucial in countering this effect because it is meant to disrupt the normalized, unequal development experienced by marginalized Indigenous populations and communities.

Edward Said's theory of "the other" is a well-known theory in the field of postcolonial theory, this theory of Said originates from perhaps his most famous work "Orientalism" published in 1978<sup>147</sup>. This theory of "the other" is an important concept in Said's Orientalism, for Orientalism is a term Said has chosen to use to describe how the West has a constructed conception of "the East" as something exotic, or barbaric, this constructed idea contrasts with how the West sees itself as rational, developed and civilized<sup>148</sup>. This is explained by a process of "othering", or making some, in this case the East "the other". In Said's theory, this very "other" is created through various stereotypes whose sole purpose is to confirm the

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<sup>142</sup> Bhabha. p 245

<sup>143</sup> Amar Acheraïou, *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). p 210-216)

<sup>144</sup> Acheraïou. p 210-216

<sup>145</sup> Acheraïou. p 210-216)

<sup>146</sup> Acheraïou. p 210-216)

<sup>147</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>148</sup> Edward W. Said, p 37-52.

differences between "us", i.e., the West, and "them" - the East. Said argues that these stereotypes created by the West are not only outright wrong, but they are also dangerous because they justify political, economic, and not least military domination, creating an image of "the other" as inferior, justifying that they can be treated badly<sup>149</sup>. This idea of "the other" is in close relevance to "The Indian Problem", where the West also created a dominance through various stereotypes created of the indigenous peoples – allowing the colonials to treat them in the way they did, this problem of “othering” Said believes is deeply rooted in Western culture and academia, which in turn reflects how "the other" is portrayed in different ways, both in literature, academic texts and in the media<sup>150</sup>.

Both Said's theory and Bhabha's theory are related, but have different starting points, this Said's focus is on how the West creates a power through stereotyping of "the other". While, in turn, Bhabha focused on how the colonized themselves could help change the dynamics through a form of hybridity. That is, these theories are not opposites to each other, although in many ways they provide different perspectives, because they deal with the relationship between power, identity, and culture in a postcolonial context. Postcolonial theory confronts the economic subjugation, monopolization of epistemological systems, and imposition of sociopolitical dominance intrinsic to Western colonization it serves, according to Smith as a tool to comprehend and contest both the historical and contemporary manifestations of Western hegemony<sup>151</sup> As stated above, Said maintains that Western perceptions of the Other are rooted in stereotypical, imagined, and idealized narratives that are perpetuated by institutions that monopolize knowledge and perpetuate stereotypical, imagined, and idealized narratives<sup>152</sup>

### 3.3.1 The Process of Colonization and Dehumanization

The main purpose of this section is to delve more into the process of colonization and dehumanization, which is crucial to understanding how it was possible to establish residential schools and how it was possible for Indigenous people to be treated the way they were treated for so many years. My primary focus will be on Poka Laenui's study "Processes of

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<sup>149</sup> Edward W. Said, 37-52

<sup>150</sup> Edward W. Said, 37-52

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*. P 1-10

<sup>152</sup> Poka Laenui, *"Processes of Decolonization." Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision.* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2000).

Decolonization" in which she describes how colonization affects an individual step by step, along with Theodor Adorno's work with "Education after Auschwitz" in which he portrays the societal effects of colonization<sup>153</sup>. To achieve colonialism, dehumanization plays a crucial role in the colonization and assimilation process. Poka Laenui's essay "Processes of Decolonization," looks at how cruelty and dehumanization can be used in colonial practices to undermine the sovereignty and dignity of Indigenous peoples by undermining their sovereignty and dignity<sup>154</sup>. When people dehumanize others, they imagine them as less than human, and this makes it easier to treat them badly and see them as monsters instead of fellow humans.<sup>155</sup> The result of this is that any harm that befalls such individuals appears justified and may even be perceived as morally acceptable, much like what we saw under the holocaust<sup>156</sup>. When someone is stripped of their humanity, and cultural identity they are viewed as incomplete members of society and are regularly deprived of the essential rights and attributes that make up human respect<sup>157</sup> Dehumanization can make people seem like they are closer to animals or primitive, than they are actual human beings. This kind of thinking can lead people to believe it is okay to hurt or mistreat them in all kinds of ways, as they strongly believe what they do is right, and might even save the society. There are lots of different situations where this form of dehumanization can happen, for example, it can happen during times of war or conflict – this is for example something we saw recently in Ukraine, or when people are being oppressed or treated unfairly because of their race, gender, religion, here the Genocide in Rwanda serve as a resent reminder. The Holocaust is probably one of the more famous examples of dehumanization. Later in this paper, I will address what Adorno thought about education after holocaust.

Laenui states that the first step in colonization is called *Denial and Withdrawal*, which indicates how Indigenous people are dehumanized and portrayed as lacking characteristics of human beings, being treated like animals, or being objectified<sup>158</sup>. A result of this reification, their feelings are denied, and abusive treatment is justified by denying their feelings, and as a

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<sup>153</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>154</sup> Poka Laenui,

<sup>155</sup> Poka Laenui, “

<sup>156</sup> Michelle Maiese, “‘Dehumanization.’ Beyond Intractability.,” in *University of Colorado*, ed. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess (Boulder, July 2003), <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dehumanization>.

<sup>157</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Dehumanize,” in *In Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary* (Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus), accessed March 24, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dehumanize>.

<sup>158</sup> Laenui, “*Processes of Decolonization.*” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. p 150

result, the dominant culture perceives Indigenous peoples as having no emotional or human sensitivity, cultural heritage, or legitimate religious practices, and they dismiss Indigenous beliefs as superstitions<sup>159</sup>. Because of this Indigenous people have become accustomed to these views, and many of them even take part in the ridicule and denial of their own cultural heritage today<sup>160</sup> The second step of colonization according to Laenui, and entails the process of *destruction or eradication*, which can be taken literally and even metaphorically in various ways. In its literal sense, colonization refers to the physical impact of war, forced removals, and implementing policies and practices intended to erase Indigenous lands, resources, and cultures<sup>161</sup> According to Marie Battiste, this eradication process can also be metaphorical and achieved through dehumanizing practices, such as the teaching methods in residential schools or modern curricula that marginalizes or excludes Indigenous cultures<sup>162</sup> According to Laenui's theory, part of the dehumanization process includes destroying sacred sites, artifacts, and cultural practices to achieve the dehumanization phase<sup>163</sup>. In "*I Am Not A Number*", it is evident that the destruction of artistic traditions takes place not in a mere visual manner, but rather in a manner that causes emotional strain.

Due to the dehumanizing practices and internalization of dominant cultural views, Indigenous people may feel a sense of lethargy and indifference towards their own culture. They may also share the dominant cultural thoughts and fail to see the value in preserving their cultural heritage. In the process of dehumanization, Indigenous peoples are often portrayed as less than human, with their essential human characteristics and traits denied or belittled<sup>164</sup> This is exemplified in the third step of colonization, known as *Denigration/Belittlement/Insult*, where Indigenous peoples are depicted as savages, animals, or mere objects, and their achievements and experiences are disregarded<sup>165</sup>. Some people have been promoting the belief that Indigenous peoples are not as good as others, and that they are not very intelligent, and this has had the effect of making it seem like Indigenous culture and history are not important, and have been overlooked. When the colonization process comes to a close, the final stage is known as *Transformation/Exploitation*.<sup>166</sup> And this stage involves the act of adjusting and

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<sup>159</sup> Laenui, p 150

<sup>160</sup> Laenui, p 150-151

<sup>161</sup> Laenui, p 151

<sup>162</sup> Marie Battiste, ed., *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000). p 193

<sup>163</sup> Laenui, "*Processes of Decolonization.*" *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. P 151

<sup>164</sup> Laenui, p 151

<sup>165</sup> Laenui, p 151

<sup>166</sup> Laenui, p 151



integrating elements of Indigenous culture into the leading societal conversation or ideology. It serves as the conclusive step in the colonization process, and this process entails the creation of universally defined definitions of Indigenous traditions by the dominant culture and the presentation of ready-made images as the only legitimate and reliable facts concerning Indigenous peoples<sup>167</sup>.

When looking at assimilation and not least dehumanization, it is as previously stated highly relevant to look at the works of Theodor Adorno and his theoretical framework presented in "*Education After Auschwitz*," a work which emphasizes the significance of education as a tool for averting the reoccurrence of atrocities such as the Holocaust.<sup>168</sup> Although the Holocaust and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples represent distinct and somewhat different historical events, they still exist parallel in systemic oppression, dehumanization, and the necessity for critical education to cultivate understanding and prevent the repetition of such horrors, in both cases, there were great forces behind the fact that dehumanization was legitimized in society. The horrifying events that took place during the Holocaust are very much alike those that Indigenous peoples faced, and still face today, due to the common dehumanization as a group. Considering the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, I will argue that it is relevant to examine the relevance of Adorno's theory about how education must be after the holocaust, and how can we, as people be able prevent this from ever happening again. According to Adorno, this accentuates the importance of discerning the psychological and social mechanisms responsible for the dehumanization of particular groups, as evidenced during the Holocaust and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.<sup>169</sup> Adorno says that education should instill a sense of moral responsibility and empathy in students<sup>170</sup> and when students are taught about the realistic injustices that Indigenous groups have had to endure over time, and the ensuing ways in which assimilation has affected them, they become more trustworthy and compassionate towards Indigenous cultures and traditions. Adorno's theory showcases the importance of allowing us to face up to our past and help prevent history from repeating itself again. I believe that this also underlines the importance of history and social science as subjects in school, so that students can see how the past affects the future, and what we must do to prevent it from repeating itself time and time again. This doctrine is the

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<sup>167</sup> Laenui, p 151

<sup>168</sup> Adorno and Tiedemann, *Can One Live after Auschwitz?*

<sup>169</sup> Adorno and Tiedemann.

<sup>170</sup> Adorno and Tiedemann.

very foundation of Adorno's theory, and not only applies to Holocaust, but can be applied to many different areas of history. No one wants the bad elements of history to repeat themselves again, that's why we learn ABOUT it, to AVOID it from happening ever again. If educators integrate Indigenous history, and the result of what this assimilation led to in their teachings, students will be able to critically interact about, question the loss of historical memory and take steps toward developing a more comprehensive and impartial society<sup>171</sup>

### 3.3.2 The White Man's Burden

Discussing dehumanization and colonialism, looking at Rudyard Kipling's work "The White Man's Burden" is crucial because it reflects colonists' belief of civilizing almost animals since they were not considered human. This mindset from the White Man's Burden stemmed from the ideas of social Darwinism, which proposed the natural selection of humans where only the strongest survive, famously known as "survival of the fittest."<sup>172</sup> In "The White Man's Burden," a significant section emphasizes dehumanization and assimilation - an important passage in the poem.

*"Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child,  
Take up the White Man's burden—  
In patience to abide,  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple,  
An hundred times made plain,  
To seek another's profit,  
And work another's gain."<sup>173</sup>*

Kipling's portrayal of colonized people as half-devils and half-children exemplifies Kipling's dehumanization of them. In his portrayal, colonized people are portrayed as crude, primitive, uncivilized, and unable to govern independently. With such a portrayal by Kipling, he is

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<sup>171</sup> Adorno and Tiedemann.

<sup>172</sup> H. Winlow, "Darwinism (and Social Darwinism)," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Elsevier, 2009), 4–11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-008044910-4.00675-1>.

<sup>173</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Core Selections Ebook (Tenth Edition)*, 10th ed. (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021).

demonstrating that the colonizers are superior to the colonized people and that they are entitled to "civilize" them. This stanza also touches on the issue of assimilation as the colonizers "take up the White Man's burden" and "teach the colonized peoples by open speech and simple, a hundred times made clear." To blend with who colonized them, they need to accept their way of talking, beliefs, and customs - this is called cultural blending. In Kipling's poem, colonizers are shown as giving and kind in their mission to "help others and work for their advantage." This attitude does not consider the unfair side of colonialism, which often caused pain and control over people that were taken over. "The White Man's Burden" is based on the belief that white Europeans are better than other races and that they have a responsibility to "civilize" and "improve" non-white people in colonies.

Imperialism, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, refers to the policy in which a nation extends its influence and control over additional territories, often through colonization, to increase its power and influence<sup>174</sup>. On the other hand, Social Darwinism applies "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" to human societies, forming human evolution principles<sup>175</sup>. The White Man's Burden is a narrative that presents colonized peoples as inferior and exploitable because of their inherent superiority over them. The poem shows white Europeans as teaching and civilizing non-white people. Non-white people are called "half-devil and half-child."<sup>176</sup> This supports the idea that non-white people are primitive, uncivilized, and incapable of governing themselves. The idea of "The White Man's Burden" was used to justify exploiting and oppressing colonized people by portraying colonizers as kind and necessary to improve the lives of the colonized. However, this view presented in the White Man's Burden ignores the violence, pain, and cultural loss that often come with colonization, and the acts of assimilation. It also reinforces the belief in a hierarchy of racial superiority, which harmed the descendants of the colonized for a long time.

### 3.4. Hybridity

Hybridity can be defined as a person who has a background that combines two different types of animals or plants, as well as something that is heterogeneous in origin or composition, or as something that has two different types of components that perform essentially the same

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<sup>174</sup> Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, "Imperialism," accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imperialism>.

<sup>175</sup> Winlow, "Darwinism (and Social Darwinism)."

<sup>176</sup> Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. P 9689 (digital copy on bookshare)

function. Hybrids are offspring of two different animals or plants, or as people who have a hybrid background<sup>177</sup>. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word hybrid or hybridity can mean the following:

*“One an offspring of two animals or plants of different subspecies, breeds, varieties, species, or genera*

*2: a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions*

*3a something heterogeneous in origin or composition.*

*3b something (such as a power plant, vehicle, or electronic circuit) that has two different types of components performing essentially the same function”*<sup>178</sup>

The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary defines the term 'hybridity' in the following way: In the 19th century, hybridity was a concept that alarmed Europeans, and in order to prevent miscegenation from taking place, the colonial governments actively campaigned against hybridity, do to the believing that mixing of different “races» would dilute their racial characteristics. It was fueled by a staunch belief in cultural purity, as well as the discourse that surrounded colonialism during these times<sup>179</sup> Hybridity or hybrid culture means that the lines between different cultures blend and change in a good way. Acheraïou says that this has been happening throughout history, from the old times like Sumerians and Egyptians to today, so hybridity is not something new Now, with more people traveling and cultures coming together because of globalization and migration, hybridity is even more important<sup>180</sup> It is important to remember that cultures are always changing, they will never stay one way forever, especially when they mix with other cultures, and as a result of hybridity, traditional notions of cultural purity and authenticity have been questioned, and new cultural identities and practices have been created that draw on multiple cultural traditions<sup>181</sup> Hybridity can, on one side, enrich lives, offering a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, but it can also create challenges such as navigating and conflicting cultural expectations and values. In sum, if we accept hybridity, we can enhance intercultural comprehension and integrate all inhabitants of different populations. Hybridity as a theory acknowledges the variability of

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<sup>177</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Hybrid” (Merriam-Webster.com dictionary), accessed March 23, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid>.

<sup>178</sup> Merriam-Webster.

<sup>179</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, First edition (Chichester, West Suxxex, UK ; Malden, MA, USA: Wiley, 2015). p 206-207

<sup>180</sup> Acheraïou, *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization*. p 14

<sup>181</sup> Acheraïou. p 14-15

cultural limits, considering the way diverse societies impact and sway one another as well as the potential for mutual interaction. This disputes the conventional concept of cultural authenticity and generates novel cultural aspects that combine many cultural customs to cultivate new cultural features. Hybridity enables individuals to encounter broader ethical views, but it can present issues when faced with conflicting way of lives. It is essential that we grasp and adopt hybridity to strengthen intercultural comprehension and ensure the inclusion of all inhabitants of different communities.

### 3.4.1 Indigenous Methodology

Emma LaRocque's definition of Indigenous methodology is a set of research approaches, methods, and frameworks grounded in the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts of Indigenous peoples<sup>182</sup>. These methodologies focus on the knowledge, perspectives, values, and ways of knowing of Indigenous peoples, and according to LaRocque, these initiatives aim to empower and respect Indigenous communities by emphasizing their voices and experiences and challenging the dominance of Western research paradigms. In the context of dehumanization<sup>183</sup>. Indigenous authors and researchers have developed a variety of Indigenous methodologies that incorporate Western approaches as well as challenging and expanding upon them. In order to avoid limiting the perspectives of researchers and reinforcing existing prejudices and stereotypes, these methodologies intentionally select particular Western images and research techniques that can be modified and rearranged in order to create new visions and approaches<sup>184</sup>. LaRocque asserts that a study of both Western and Indigenous approaches to Indigenous cultures and literature would advance the study of Indigenous peoples beyond the problematic ethnological typologies and ideological paradigms that have historically plagued the study of Indigenous peoples.<sup>185</sup> The ethnologist Jolanta Dziuba argues that the distinction between Western civilization and Indigenous culture is often prioritized in ethnology, resulting in a further form of colonization when the distinction is taken to an extreme<sup>186</sup>. By adopting a selective approach to the available material, Indigenous scholars have been able to circumvent the dichotomy of similarity and

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<sup>182</sup> Jolanta Dziuba, "Dehumanization of Canadian First Nations in the Context of Indigenous Methodologies as Reflected in the Works of Lee Maracle," *TransCanadiana*, no. 5 (2012): 182–97.

<sup>183</sup> Emma LaRocque, ""Native Writers Resisting Colonizing Practices in Canadian His- Toriography and Literature."" (Winnipeg, Manitoba, University of Manitoba, 1999), <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/1635>. p 44

<sup>184</sup> LaRocque, p 44

<sup>185</sup> LaRocque, ""Native Writers Resisting Colonizing Practices in Canadian His- Toriography and Literature.""

<sup>186</sup> Dziuba, "Dehumanization of Canadian First Nations in the Context of Indigenous Methodologies as Reflected in the Works of Lee Maracle." p 185

difference that would otherwise exist between them. They aim to devise literary criticism techniques that reflect the multifaceted nature of Indigenous cultures<sup>187</sup>

Indigenous scholars have been empowered to conduct comprehensive research on their cultural material and promote their perspectives through Indigenous methodologies. Denying Indigenous writers and critics their right to speak and adhering to stereotypical representations is a dehumanizing practice that seeks to undermine their experience and discredit their voices. In the view of LaRocque, such practices perpetuate the cycle of dehumanization and further, marginalize Indigenous perspectives<sup>188</sup>. The indigenous methodologies prioritize the goals of decolonization and rehumanization over the goals of post-colonization, so Indigenous scholars and practitioners often view post-colonial methods with skepticism. It was in the 1990s that some Indigenous writers began to address decolonization and modern deconstruction theories after years of silence<sup>189</sup>. This underscores the novelty of recent Indigenous resistance publications and why Indigenous scholars utilize adapted Western theories<sup>190</sup>.

It is essential to point out that Indigenous communities are not seeking representation from the West, but rather an opportunity to be able speak up about their experiences, their lives, and their own perspectives on matters related to them as a community, and to let this approach allow for the rehumanization of Indigenous peoples. Developing new methodologies and modifying existing ones is essential for Indigenous intellectuals grappling with ideas, images, and words used to dehumanize their people<sup>191</sup>. Indigenous methodologies often involve using the English language by Indigenous writers as part of their dialogues with the dominant culture as a means of engaging in dialogue with the dominant culture. Due to colonization, it is important to recognize that using the language of the oppressors can stem from the loss of many Indigenous languages. Although it can be tough to use the language that colonizers brought with them, many Indigenous scholars still choose to use English to bridge gaps in communication and encourage comprehension. For instance, poet Joy Harjo suggests that Indigenous scholars "re-invent the enemy's language" by adapting it to their

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<sup>187</sup> Dziuba. p 186

<sup>188</sup> LaRocque, ""Native Writers Resisting Colonizing Practices in Canadian His- Toriography and Literature."." p 44

<sup>189</sup> LaRocque. p 44

<sup>190</sup> LaRocque.p 44

<sup>191</sup> LaRocque. p 172

cultural contexts and using it to express their ideas, emotions, and experiences<sup>192</sup> We see that language plays an important role in allowing people to communicate and express themselves, especially considering the impact of colonialism throughout history, and this highlights just how crucial language really is, as a way to communicate with others.

Indigenous scholars and writers often engage in a textual dialogue by blending English with their Indigenous languages, mainly when a direct translation would not capture the intended meaning. They are mindful of the colonial implications of English, as noted by LaRocque. According to Janice Acoose, who teaches about Indigenous Studies at First Nations University of Canada, writing in the colonizer's language can be both difficult and uplifting<sup>193</sup>. It can be difficult because it is the only way to capture the true experiences of Indigenous Peoples, which can be very painful. But, at the same time, writing allows for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to be transformed and given new names and power, which is very empowering. The use of English by Indigenous writers and scholars has both positive and negative implications. While it allows for communication and breaking the silence on Indigenous experiences, it may also limit their perspectives to the paradigms of the colonizer. Using English can also serve as a means of empowerment and decolonization. As Acoose states, writing in English can be both painful and liberating, enabling the re-creation and renaming Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples<sup>194</sup> It is essential to explore the complexities of using English in Indigenous literature, and to recognize that it can serve as a tool for unity and decolonization. Decolonizing methodologies encompass a wide range of methods and attitudes to address the ongoing disempowerment experienced by Indigenous peoples due to colonization. These methodologies seek to reclaim Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and languages and to challenge the dominant narratives and power structures imposed by colonization. They may include community-based research, storytelling, traditional ecological knowledge, and other Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

LaRocque in her work, she emphasizes a rapidly growing and conscious effort towards decolonizing scholarship, much of which is inspired by post-colonial and liberation/resistance criticism<sup>195</sup>. Despite the progress in decolonizing methodologies, the struggle against racism,

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<sup>192</sup> LaRocque. p 43

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in LaRocque. p 42)

<sup>194</sup> LaRocque. p 43

<sup>195</sup> LaRocque. p 20

abusive treatments, stereotypical representations, and mental and physical violence is still very much present in Indigenous nations and communities today.

Applying decolonizing techniques serves to overcome stereotypical representations, and images and let them reclaim the right to speak. Decolonizing techniques have an essential role in fighting against prejudices and injustices and give indigenous peoples a face in various aspects of life, including academia. Indigenous scholars can challenge the dominant narratives and perspectives that have traditionally excluded or silenced their voices through these different decolonizing techniques. They are so able to assert their right to self-determination and present their unique views on issues of importance to their communities. In this way, for Indigenous peoples, decolonizing methodologies can be powerful tools for promoting social justice and creating a more equitable and inclusive society<sup>196</sup>

Indigenous scholars have also adopted a methodology called *engaged research*, according to LaRocque<sup>197</sup>. The name of this methodology or attitude is unsurprising, given that many, if not all, Indigenous writers and scholars have experienced dehumanization or written about resistance against dehumanizing practices. Their standpoint is engaged and deeply involved in issues concerning their lives and communities. Additionally, their research often combines communal issues with personal experiences and reflections while maintaining a thoroughly academic approach. Through engaged research, Indigenous scholars can delve into their personal experiences and gain insight into how these experiences relate to bigger political and social concerns within their communities. By combining their own personal experience with academic research, this type of engaged research provides a complete picture of Indigenous cultures and their histories and a platform for Indigenous scholars to speak on their terms. This approach of combining the communal with the individual, which LaRocque refers to as recording *many realities*, results in a style that often incorporates "keen rhetorical stratagem, sharp sociological perception, moral outrage, and dignified poignancy"<sup>198</sup> This style, along with the engagement with personal experiences and communal issues, challenges misrepresentations of Indigenous cultures and creates a literary theory specific to Indigenous ethos and expertise that is equally valid as Western theories. It is worth pointing out that

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<sup>196</sup> Dziuba, "Dehumanization of Canadian First Nations in the Context of Indigenous Methodologies as Reflected in the Works of Lee Maracle." p 187

<sup>197</sup> LaRocque, ""Native Writers Resisting Colonizing Practices in Canadian His- Toriography and Literature."." p 30

<sup>198</sup> LaRocque. p 32



Indigenous methods highlight the idea that there is no single way to get knowledge, and different groups and communities have their own viewpoints and routines for doing so. This is seen in how Indigenous writers and experts often mix classic Indigenous expertise with modern Western techniques to make a special method for their group and situation. As LaRocque explains, this approach involves a combination of resistance and post-colonial strategies that challenge Western hegemony and assert the significance of Indigenous voices and experiences in a post-colonial context<sup>199</sup>. Overall, Indigenous methodologies seek to empower Indigenous peoples and challenge the dominant narratives that have historically oppressed and silenced them.

It would not be surprising therefore to note that Lee Maracle and Emma LaRocque refers to their own cultural heritage and how it connects to their work, and several of these methodologies are applicable to several Indigenous communities across the world. But, some may only apply to a particular group of Indigenous nations – like “I Am Not A Number” is mostly relevant to the Anishinaabe. By highlighting both the shared and unique experiences of Indigenous people, we can gain a deeper perception into their perspectives and experiences. Therefore, i see it is essential to recognize that a multi-cultural perspective is crucial when conducting academic research. Different Western methodologies are applied in an Indigenous context without critically examining their suitability and potential limitations. In that case, it may perpetuate the colonial perspective that Indigenous cultures and knowledge are inferior or less valid, and as a result, it is imperative that we recognize and embrace the value and validity of Indigenous methodologies as well as engage in a dialogue between Western and Indigenous approaches when it comes to the research and interpretation of Indigenous texts and cultures. By doing this, we would be respecting Indigenous perspectives and our study would be enriched with a broader range of insights and understandings. Individual experiences play a crucial role in the multifacetedness of Indigenous responses, as noted by LaRocque

This process of deconstruction and reconstruction is part of a more extensive decolonizing methodology adopted by Indigenous scholars. By challenging the colonial representations, Indigenous scholars aim to reclaim their cultural identities, cultures, and histories and

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<sup>199</sup> LaRocque. p 36

counteract ongoing dehumanizing practices<sup>200</sup>. In this way, Indigenous scholars are critically analyzing Western paradigms and creating new ways of understanding and interpreting their own cultural material in their work. Through this decolonizing methodology, Indigenous scholars seek to rehumanize themselves and their communities and resist colonization's ongoing effects<sup>201</sup>. Indigenous writers and scholars aim to challenge and subvert the stereotypes and biases historically imposed upon their cultures. When employing post-colonial methodologies, they seek to reconstruct and adapt them to portray their cultures accurately and authentically.

When discussing Indigenous methodology, it is essential to look at one of the most critical methodologies applied by Indigenous writers – storytelling, as explained earlier in this thesis-storytelling. Indigenous writers consider storytelling one of their culture's most essential methodologies. According to Margaret Kovach, an author of Indigenous methodologies, storytelling is a crucial expression connecting elders' heritage with modern artistic techniques<sup>202</sup>. Moreover, storytelling as a methodology is a fluid and interpretative way of conveying traditional ways of knowing; this will be further elaborated in the discussion part regarding the relevance of storytelling in the book *“I Am Not A Number”*. In Indigenous cultures, storytelling plays a crucial role in preserving and passing down cultural heritage from one generation to another. This form of expression Field emphasizes lineage continuity and individual and communal responsibility<sup>203</sup>. Storytelling is also well-suited to the fluid and interpretative nature of traditional ways of knowing. Even more critically, storytelling maintains the connections between generations, reinforcing the link between storytelling and story weaving. The latter methodology blends tradition with modernity and seeks to empower the Indigenous heritage within the dominant white culture<sup>204</sup>.

Indigenous ways of researching are about using Indigenous knowledge, values, and ways of knowing, and it is different from Western methods, and gives power to Indigenous communities in the research process. For decolonizing methodologies to be effective, they

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<sup>200</sup> Dziuba, “Dehumanization of Canadian First Nations in the Context of Indigenous Methodologies as Reflected in the Works of Lee Maracle.” p 187

<sup>201</sup> LaRocque, ““Native Writers Resisting Colonizing Practices in Canadian His- Toriography and Literature.”.” p 135

<sup>202</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*, Reprinted in paperback 2010 (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2010). p 94

<sup>203</sup> Kovach. p 94

<sup>204</sup> Kovach. p 94

must restore Indigenous peoples' agency and sovereignty as well as counteract colonialism's ongoing effects on their lives and communities. An engaged method of research is one that combines a set of social issues as well as personal experiences and reflections with an academic approach that remains firmly grounded in theory. Storytelling is also a crucial methodology in Indigenous cultures, preserving and passing down cultural heritage from one generation to another. It also maintains the connections between different generations and artistic genres. English can play both an empowering role as well as a constraining role in Indigenous literature, and it is essential to explore the complexities of the use of English in Indigenous literature and acknowledge its importance as a tool for communication and expression. A general purpose of Indigenous methodologies is to empower Indigenous peoples and challenge the dominant narratives that have historically oppressed and silenced them.

#### 4. Discussion

For this study, as I mentioned earlier, I have closely read a children's book based on indigenous peoples as a basis for further discussion in the thesis. "*I Am Not A Number*" is a children's book published, and written by the granddaughter of Irene, who is a survivor and is a time witness to the era of residential schools in Canada. To give a general overview of the book, I will first give a brief summary of what the story is about, then connect existing theories previously presented to the book and examine how the book manifests theories related to cultural identity, dehumanization, postcolonial theory and assimilation in the narrative. I think it is important to stress once again that such an analysis will naturally have aspects of Eurocentrism to it, as I have no direct connection to this, except for my own experiences, and narratives told to me by various members of indigenous communities. I will then finally look at storytelling within the Indigenous tradition and how "*I Am Not A Number*" is integrated into traditional storytelling for future generations.

##### 4.1 Summary of plot in "*I Am Not A Number*"

"*I Am Not A Number*" is a children's picture book written by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer, with illustrations by Gillian Newland<sup>205</sup>. The narrative in the story draws inspiration

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<sup>205</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland, "*I Am Not A Number*".

from the true-life events of Jenny Kay Dupuis's grandmother, Irene Couchie Dupuis, an Anishinaabe woman hailing from the Nipissing First Nation in Ontario, Canada.

The book takes place in the 1920s and shares the tale of Irene, an eight-year-old Indigenous girl forcefully separated from her family by the Canadian government. Irene and her two brothers are sent away to an Indigenous residential school. These residential schools in Canada aimed to make Indigenous children adopt Euro-Canadian ways of culture and life and aimed at the children forgetting their heritage, language, and customs. The story explores the traumatic experiences Irene, and her siblings go through at the school. Irene was given a number at the residential school: "759." She is referred to only by that number at school, symbolizing the dehumanization and loss of identity that Indigenous children experience in these institutions. Irene and her brothers also face abuse from the school staff, who attempt to erase their Indigenous identity by cutting their hair short, forcing them to wear uniforms, and punishing them for speaking their Indigenous language or practicing their customs while in school. At the residential school, Irene encounters various forms of abuse and discrimination. The school's staff, primarily nuns, attempt to erase her cultural identity by forbidding her to speak her Indigenous Anishinaabe language or practice her traditional customs. As mentioned earlier, Irene and the other children have their lengthy hair, a symbol of her cultural heritage, cut short as another means of forcing assimilation. In the harsh surroundings, Irene takes comfort in her family memories and her cultural background. She quietly teaches her Indigenous language and customs to her siblings and other Indigenous kids at the school, preserving her cultural identity. The story becomes hopeful when Irene's father, previously unaware of the school's abuse, learns about the mistreatment when the children come home for the summer. He chooses to take his children out of the residential school, hiding them in his shop when the Indian Agent comes to collect the children in the fall. This reunites the family and lets Irene and her siblings reconnect with their origins and community.

"*I Am Not A Number*" is a moving and impactful story that brings attention to the painful past of residential schools in Canada and their enduring effects on Indigenous communities. The narrative emphasizes the resilience of Indigenous individuals, their capacity to maintain their culture, and the significance of recognizing and learning from this somber historical period. The title of the book "*I Am Not A Number*" comes from the dehumanizing method of giving numbers to Indigenous children in residential schools. The children were called by numbers assigned to them rather than being called by their names; the numbers aimed to strip

them of their identity and uniqueness and left them as a number in the system. This practice was part of the Canadian government's broader goal of forced assimilation of Indigenous populations, which sought to eliminate their culture, language, and traditions. The title holds tremendous significance and pertinence to Indigenous history, underscoring Indigenous children's cruel treatment and systematic dehumanization within the residential school system. By choosing a title highlighting the denial of personal and cultural identity, the book draws attention to the real-life experiences of Indigenous children subjected to this oppressive system. The title is a potent reminder of the importance of acknowledging and celebrating Indigenous peoples' individuality and cultural identity and recognizing the historical trauma and enduring effects of residential schools on their communities. The book is a crucial educational resource for young readers, promoting engagement with the experiences of Indigenous peoples and nurturing empathy, understanding, and awareness about historical injustices. Indigenous communities face.

## 4.2 LK20

In the overall part of the Norwegian curriculum of 2020, also known as LK20, critical thinking and ethical awareness, identity and cultural diversity are described as core values in school. The core values of the curriculum override everything and are the part of the curriculum that guides how we should teach in schools and was a new addition with LK20. The following has been said about, among other things, that we should educate students to become critical thinkers, with an ethical awareness.

*“The teaching and training shall give the pupils understanding of critical and scientific thinking. Critical and scientific thinking means applying reason in an inquisitive and systematic way when working with specific practical challenges, phenomena, expressions and forms of knowledge”<sup>206</sup>. and “They must also be able to understand that their own experiences, points of view and convictions may be incomplete or erroneous. Critical reflection requires knowledge, but there is also room for uncertainty and unpredictability”<sup>207</sup>.*

What is meant here is that the training we give the students in school should form the basis for the students's understanding of, among other things, critical thinking. Critical thinking here means that the students should be able to apply reason in a curious and systematic way,

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<sup>206</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Critical thinking and ethical awareness,” 2020, <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/opplaringens-verdigrunnlag/1.3-kritisk-tenkning-og-etisk-bevissthet/?lang=eng>.

<sup>207</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet.

and that the students should learn to ask critical questions, analyse information they are given, and evaluate this in a good way.

*“Insight into our history and culture is important for developing the identities of pupils and their belonging in society.”<sup>208</sup> And “Common reference frameworks are important for each person's sense of belonging in society. This creates solidarity and connects each individual's identity to the greater community and to a historical context. A common framework gives and shall give room for diversity, and the pupils must be given insight into how we live together with different perspectives, attitudes and views of life. The experiences the pupils gain in the encounter with different cultural expressions and traditions help them to form their identity”<sup>209</sup>*

What is meant here by common framework is the basic values, norms, knowledge and understanding that we share as a common society, or as a group. These values are important for forming and having a cultural identity, and possessing a sense of belonging to the society one lives in. When we have our own cultural identity, and the feeling of belonging somewhere, this strengthens us as human beings, and our own self-esteem. It is this framework that will allow for diversity in society, and provide space for us to have different perspectives, attitudes, cultural background and worldviews. It is the students' own experiences and experiences from encounters with different cultural expressions and traditions that will form the basis for giving them time, and the opportunity to form their own unique identity, and a sense of belonging to a place or society. These experiences do not have to come from direct encounters with other cultures, but can come from teaching in school, or, for example, through reading literature. It is not uncommon in today's world for many children and young people to form a more hybrid cultural identity, where they feel that they belong equally in at least two different cultures. This may be on the basis of growing up in a dominated society, but with parents of a different culture. This also occasionally applies to children who grow up in a different culture than their original, also known as TCK children<sup>210</sup>. But in many cases, these children struggle to find out where they really belong, and what cultural identity they themselves think they have, as it is often a mix of many. When it comes to indigenous peoples who were subjected to assimilation policies, one can in

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<sup>208</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Core Curriculum - Identity and Cultural Diversity,” accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/opplaringens-verdigrunnlag/1.2-identitet-og-kulturelt-mangfold/?lang=eng>.

<sup>209</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet.

<sup>210</sup> TCK, or Third Culture Kids, are children and individuals who grow up in a different culture than their own parents' culture, and who grow up in that culture during important years in their developmental years as children.

many ways see this in the context of TCK, where one does not belong in either the society one originally comes from, or in the society in which one lives.

The English curriculum aims to teach students about different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication styles. There is also a strong focus on students acquiring the necessary English language skills to effectively read, write, and speak in English. The English language subject is crucial for giving students the basic tools they need to interact with others in a good way, regardless of the various cultural, and/or linguistic barriers they may encounter later in life. One of the main aims is to raise awareness among students that their cultural background affects their worldview while promoting curiosity and preventing prejudice. Moreover, the importance of learning about other cultures, indigenous peoples, and diversity outside of their own country is reflected in the competency aims for 7th and 10th grade. One of the primary competence aims (shown below) for year 7 students is to gain intercultural skills, which shows how vital culture and diversity learning is in this subject.

*“investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging»<sup>211</sup>*

Students will with this aim be pushed to take a more curious and deeper look into the practices, customs, and ways of living in diverse societies in English-speaking countries, and Norway with the aim of developing comprehension and appreciation for the differences. This will enable them to know themselves, and their own cultures and beliefs better as they discover and embrace their cultural identity and belonging. Further, it can help them to obtain a more broader perspective, and deeper appreciation for not only their own, but also others cultural diversity, and enhance their understanding of how different societies in the world express their cultural identity. When they move on to lower secondary school<sup>212</sup>, the focus is even more specific, and narrowed, as they delve into learning more about indigenous peoples, both globally, and in Norway and in cultures closer to “home”. Among the competence aims for the 10th grade, we have the following two:

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<sup>211</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Læreplan i engelsk (ENG01-04).”

<sup>212</sup> 8th to 10th grade

«Explore and reflect on the situation of indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world and in Norway»<sup>213</sup> This competency aims to teach students how to explore the present situations and struggles faced by Indigenous communities in English-speaking countries like the USA, Canada, or Australia, as well as in countries like Norway where English is not the primary language and is instead used as a secondary or even tertiary language.

“Explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world»<sup>214</sup> According to this competence aim, the students should be able to examine and explain to others the different lifestyles, thought processes, communication styles, and cultural differences found in countries where English is the primary language.

According to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, students are expected to delve into and contemplate how Indigenous peoples are faring in English-speaking countries and Norway. This can help students gain a much a better understanding of past, and present challenges, and achievements that Indigenous people experience. It can also help students gain an insight into how custom, beliefs, values, and language contribute to the way people interact with each other and their environment. It is crucial to examine systemic inequalities, discrimination, colonialism, and other factors shaping the indigenous people's past, present, and future, and by exploring these things can lead to enhanced sensitivity towards social justice, cultural differences, and diversity. If one chooses, as the intention behind LK20 is, and work more interdisciplinary, then there are several goals in the social studies curriculum that are very relevant when it comes to learning about indigenous peoples, and their rights in society. The new curriculum envisages that there should be a lot of interdisciplinary work across subjects, to ensure good in-depth learning, and different ways of working academically. The Social Studies curriculum for Year 10 addresses several topical topics that can be worked on in parallel with English, and that would be of good relevance when it comes to working with "*I Am Not A Number*".

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<sup>213</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *I Am Not a Number* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016).

<sup>214</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet.



*«explore and describe how human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as other international treaties and international cooperation, are important for national policies, people's lives, equal rights and equality»<sup>215</sup>*

And

*“explain the policy of Norwegianization of the Sami people and national minorities, and the injustices they have been subjected to, and thus reflect on what consequences this has had and has on both the individual and societal level”<sup>216</sup>*

These two aims from social studies for Year 10 deal specifically with work with indigenous peoples, one says more about the students working with the Sami, and the Norwegianization process. It will then be easy to work in parallel with assimilation as a general topic, and in English focus on the colonial power's assimilation policy in the United States, Canada, Australia, and various other countries. To understand the different customs, values and thoughts that govern the English-speaking world, it is necessary to take a closer look at the cultural norms and cultural practices that exist. This exploration can cover everything from ways of communication to various lifestyle patterns found within the different societies. I believe that learning about Indigenous history and experiences is essential for students to develop empathy and respect towards Indigenous cultures and perspectives. By learning about this, student also strengthens their critical thinking and reflection skills as it exposes them to different perspectives. By integrating Indigenous history and experiences into English instruction, educators in Norwegian classrooms can support a more inclusive and fair way of teaching, following the LK20's objectives. The students will gain a better understanding and appreciation of other cultures, promoting more global diversity awareness.

In the Norwegian curriculum, LK20, intercultural competence is highly valued. This means students should be able to communicate effectively with people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students are encouraged to explore and ponder the situation of indigenous peoples in Norway and in the English-speaking world. They also describe different ways of life, thinking, and communication patterns in the English-speaking world in general. By learning about indigenous cultures and perspectives, students can broaden their understanding of cultural diversity, enhance their critical thinking ability, and show empathy

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<sup>215</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, “Social Studies - Competence Aims and Assessment” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020), <https://www.udir.no/lk20/saf01-04/kompetansemaal-og-vurdering/kv147?lang=eng>.

<sup>216</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet.

and respect for indigenous cultures and perspectives. A more inclusive and fair approach to teaching English involves integrating Indigenous history and experiences into the curriculum. This aligns with LK20 goals and enlightens students on the diversity of cultures worldwide. Teachers wanting to include Indigenous perspectives in English lessons can use the book "*I Am Not A Number*". This resource provides a deeper understanding of the historical and present experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the systemic inequalities and discrimination they have faced and continue to face. By bringing in stories from Indigenous culture like "*I Am Not A Number*" into a classroom's English lesson, it can do wonders for students' ability to engage with other cultures. This can include digging into the experiences of Indigenous people both in English-speaking Canada and abroad in Norway, allowing for fascinating comparisons and contrasts. All of this analysis and evaluation can also sharpen students' critical thinking skills and encourage them to reflect more deeply. It's also important to recognize that incorporating Indigenous perspectives can help promote a fairer and more inclusive way of teaching that aligns with LK20. As students explore and learn more about foreign cultures, it empowers them to better appreciate and understand the world's diverse communities. Using works of literature like "*I Am Not A Number*" enhances this understanding by providing a highly accessible means of discussion and exploration around Indigenous history and experiences.

### 4.3 Indigenous Methodology and Eurocentrism in Indigenous Literature

In this part of the thesis, I take a closer look at Larsen-Freeman's theory, and how this is relevant to the topic. Larsen-Freeman's theory prioritizes incorporating cultural parts into language teaching, and the general process of language learning, as also mentioned in the theory part of the thesis.. Larsen-Freeman's theory emphasizes the importance of cultivating intercultural abilities and understanding cultures throughout the language learning experience. There are various aspects of this theory that can be examined in the context of precisely "*I Am Not A Number*", as the connection between book and theory constitutes a very valuable resource for being able to explore the relationship between language, culture, and identity in the English learning classroom. Larsen-Freeman emphasizes strongly in her theory that language teaching should not treat culture as an independent part of teaching, but rather that culture should be an integral part of the process of learning a language. By incorporating a books, and text such as "*I Am Not A Number*" into their teaching, educators can expose students to Indigenous culture and history while developing their language

skills. This approach is in line with Larsen-Freeman's theory, as it allows students to engage with a broader cultural content in a more meaningful and contextualized way, allowing them to more easily comprehend what they learn. It is precisely in language teaching that Larsen-Freeman emphasizes the importance of promoting intercultural competence and emphasizes that this is seen as important for the students to be able to learn to communicate in a more effective and respectful way across cultures. Here, as I see it, "*I Am Not A Number*" can serve as a nice tool to promote precisely intercultural understanding. As a result, students will be able to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous perspectives and experiences, which will help them appreciate cultural differences and develop empathy for people from other cultures. I think overall, you could say that Larsen-Freeman's theory of how language teaching methods for children can look more closely at the use of culture in teaching, to improve the overall learning experience by, for example, using "*I Am Not A Number*" in the English learning classroom. By integrating this theory into the use of culture in language learning in children, teachers can create excellent opportunities for students to engage with indigenous culture and their unique history. Students will then more easily develop intercultural competence, and promote a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language, culture and identity. When we consider this often-difficult relationship between language, culture and identity according to the teachings of Larsen-Freeman, it is also important to look at the theories, and teachings of LaRoque, when it comes to looking at Eurocentrism that dominates after assimilation. For it is seen that indigenous peoples often resort to using the colonists' main language – in Canada this is English or French, to communicate. The fact that language is used as a means of bridging, being understood, and encouraging an understanding of one's own culture is also evident in the book, since the book is originally written in two languages – the indigenous language Anishinaabe, and the colonist's main language, English. According to LaRoque, indigenous peoples, and often the experts, choose to combine their own traditions with modern techniques, to create their own community-specific method that challenges Western hegemonies and makes indigenous peoples' experiences and voices heard. In other words, they rely on Western theory, to gain recognition and be heard by the dominant society, by directly addressing themselves in a main language. This as a decolonizing method of restoring power to indigenous communities, and applying their own experiences into different research situations, often choosing a method like that found in the book, where multiple languages are combined to reach out with an important message. This can also be seen as a way of "taking back" one's own language, and if you compare this with Edward Said's theories about "the other", and the assimilation

where they were deprived of precisely language – this was illegal for the children to use in school, because they were different, and were supposed to become part of the dominant culture. For many societies around the world, this issue of language is a difficult topic, because many were robbed of their own language due to various assimilation processes. As a result, the generations have not learned what was supposed to be their own mother tongue, and in this way much culture and tradition has been lost. As much of the narratives that are carried on originally are precisely in the various languages, and not in the language of the colonist. By doing as the authors of "I Am Not A Number", writing the book both in their own local language, but also in English, you also give many a chance to "take back" their own language, and become familiar with linguistic diversity – also in a classroom.

#### 4.4 Cultural Identity as shown in the book.

"*I Am Not A Number*" emphasizes the importance of cultural identity in Irene's life, as it is an integral part of her identity, and it gives a deeper insight into how she relates to everything. Irene, her brothers and all the other children try to maintain their culture while they are at school, which is not an easy task. In "*I Am Not A Number*", the story revolves around the struggle of indigenous children to maintain their unique identity, the struggle against oppressive assimilation policies designed to oppress indigenous peoples, their language, traditional knowledge, and individuality by promoting oppressive assimilation policies set by the colonists. Although Irene and her siblings have faced many challenges in life, they show a unique resilience and a strong will to maintain their identity, and the story underscores the value of cultural identity in their life, below I will take a closer look at different parts of cultural identity, and how this appears in the book.

- I. **Language:** In residential schools, indigenous languages like Anishinaabe are forbidden while in school, and the children are forced to speak the English (or French) language, which was the language of the colonizers. If spoken, the children faced serious consequences as a punishment. It is evident that this is the case when Irene is hit with a hot bedpan; "*The sister lifted the pan. That'll teach you to speak English here. You be should ashamed of yourself!*"<sup>217</sup> and "*That's the devil's language!*" she

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<sup>217</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland, "*I Am Not A Number*". p. 13

shouted. "We don't speak it here."<sup>218</sup>

Despite this, Irene and her siblings maintain their language by speaking Anishinaabemowin in secret.

- II. **Spirituality:** Residential schools aimed to suppress Indigenous spiritual practices and impose Christian beliefs. «*If you memorize the songs and pray a lot, you will go to heaven," the sisters told us*». <sup>219</sup>
- III. **Hair:** When Irene first arrived at the residential school, she had her braids cut short by the nuns, intentionally erasing her cultural identity: “*Her scissors chewed through my long, black hair, and I watched my locks fall in a pool around me. This meant much more to me than a haircut, though I could never explain*»<sup>220</sup>. The removal of hair is seen as a means of removing children from their connection to their heritage, and many Indigenous cultures place a strong value on hair as a symbol of their heritage.
- IV. **Names and numbers:** “*I Am Not A Number*” refers to Indigenous children in residential schools being assigned numbers rather than their names, effectively dehumanizing them and erasing their identities through the assignment of numbers. Irene's assertion that she is not a number “*We don't use names here. All students are known by numbers. You are 759. “I Am Not A Number”. I am Irene Couchie, daughter of Ernest and Mary Ann Couchie. I will never forget who I am.*”<sup>221</sup> This line is one of the most important points in the story, as it illustrates the girl's resistance to the school's efforts to strip her of her cultural identity.

It is through these concrete examples from the book that we can see more clearly how “*I Am Not A Number*” depicts the struggle for cultural identity despite the oppressive assimilation policies to which the children were subjected. There were many areas in which the children felt that their own cultural identity was taken from them – actually, the main goal was that all the identity the children had should be replaced with the colonist's identity and language, the

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<sup>218</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *“I Am Not A Number”* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 12

<sup>219</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland. p. 15

<sup>220</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland. p 9

<sup>221</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland. p 7

children would become "white". However, I believe that this book alone attests to the strength that existed and still exists in their cultural identity, and the way in which Irene and her siblings worked hard to maintain their Indigenous identity in the dehumanizing environment of the residential school, this I would say again serves as a testimony to the resilience of cultural identity.

#### 4.5 Dehumanization and Colonization

If we take a closer look at the dehumanization method of stripping children of their names, and using numbers to as an identification method, and the at dehumanization theories concerning this method. The most relevant theories in this field, is the theories presented of Laenui and Adorno, as described earlier. I believe these theories are extremely relevant to understanding how, and why the assimilation, and dehumanization came to exist in the first place. Laenui and Adorno's theories help illuminate the relevance of this practice in Indigenous history, and oppression. One of the primary things we should look at when considering Laenui's assimilation theory is that it emphasizes the systematic erasure of Indigenous cultures, languages, and identities by the dominant culture, in which is usually by the colonial powers. This assimilation process is exemplified by assigning numbers to residential school children, as a new identity – they would not be known by their names, as they were Indigenous, instead they would be known by numbers. In the process of stripping the children of their names and replacing them with impersonal numbers, their individuality, culture, and personal history are diminished. There are many direct examples from the book, that one can relate to the theories of both Laenui, and Adorno, One of these examples looks more at kids not understanding why everything they do is wrong and why they must change everything with who they are in order for school to be satisfied. This is strongly evident when Irene says:

*“Why are we treated so cruelly? Why must I change everything about myself?”*<sup>222</sup>

While it is important to note that the theories of both Laenui, and Adorno are not directly addressed in the book, as this is also a children's book, I would argue that these theories are largely applicable when analyzing the book and looking at the opinions "behind" what is

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<sup>222</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *“I Am Not A Number”* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 15

written. Some examples taken from the book, illustrating the theories of Laenui, and Adorno in the light of dehumanization, and the theories of Laenui around assimilation: One relevant quote from the book is the moment when Irene's identity is taken away from her: "*We don't use names here. All students are familiar with numbers. You're 759*"<sup>223</sup> From this moment on, she would no longer be known as Irene, but as number 759, which from then on will become her identity at school. She becomes a number in the system, and dehumanized from who she was, and her own name. According to Adorno, it is crucial to eliminate a person's humanness in order to cause mistreatment and other unjust actions in a society. When individuals are reduced to mere numerical values, as exemplified in the children's situation in "*I Am Not A Number*," they are dehumanized in a negative manner. As a result, individuals in power can easily subject them to unfair treatment and rationalize their actions by claiming that these numbers are meaningless. This, in turn, can be linked to Kipling's ideas from *The White Man's Burden*, where it was seen as the white man's duty to change these people, in line with Social Darwinism's idea that only the strongest would survive. In Kipling's eyes, indigenous people were demoted to "half human – half devil", which is also evident in the attitudes of the nuns at the school. The children's mindset was tuned to the fact that the outside world was evil itself, and the children could not be mixed with this evil world.

*"It's evil out there," Sister Mary told us. "We can't have you mixing with the outside world."*<sup>224</sup>

Adorno believes that it is imperative for us to understand the reasons behind this phenomenon and to prevent its occurrence to avoid future catastrophes like the Holocaust. The residential schools are incredibly harmful towards the indigenous population. By heeding Laenui and Adorno's wisdom, we can acknowledge that numbering the children in "*I Am Not A Number*" is just one aspect of a much larger problem that includes the inhumane treatment of the indigenous people and the eradication of their humanity. By doing so, they become less like themselves and weaker, while simultaneously empowering unfair systems which have inflicted harm upon them for an extended period of time. An excerpt from the book, clearly shows the kind of inhuman treatment, and direct torture Irene, and the other children were

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<sup>223</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *"I Am Not A Number"* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016) p.7.

<sup>224</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, *"I Am Not A Number"* (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 18

subjected to, taken directly from a moment when Irene was to be punished for speaking her own language at school:

*«Sister Mary shoved me into a chair and turned away to fill a bedpan with hot coals from the stove. "Show me your hands," she said. "Please don't hurt me," I whispered. "Show me!" she demanded. There was no escape. Slowly, I extended my arms straight out as Sister Mary lowered the hot bedpan onto my skin»<sup>225</sup>*

The fact that Irene was punished with a hot frying pan, which was filled with hot coals on her hands as punishment, clearly shows the punishment for not listening. This is also very well illustrated, where Irene is seen reluctantly extending her hands and grimacing in pain. The visuals support what is written in a good way. Taking a closer look at Laenui's work from 2000, "Process of Decolonization", as explained earlier in the theory section of this article, this process consists of five stages: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment, and action. When understanding the book and Irene's history, it is crucial to take a closer look at these stages to obtain a deeper understanding. Below I have gone a little more in depth about how "Process of Decolonization" can be directly related to "*I Am Not A Number*" in various ways, based on the theories of Laenui, and examples from the book, against various steps in Laenui's theory.

- I. **Rediscovery and Recovery:** In the book, the protagonist, Irene, is forcibly removed from her family and culture, and she is taken to a residential school where she is forced to learn about her heritage. Through her experiences, she and her family, like her granddaughter are able to rediscover and reclaim her Indigenous identity, which was suppressed by the process of assimilation over the years. This stage emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with one's cultural roots and resisting Indigenous cultures' erasure. For example, Irene and her brother secretly speak their indigenous language while in the residential school, despite the school's strict rules, which state that only English, or French can be spoken on school grounds, and with this they faced various, but often painful punishments.

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<sup>225</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, "*I Am Not A Number*" (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 13



II. **Mourning:** This book discusses the trauma and loss experienced by Indigenous people, as a direct result of dehumanization and assimilation into the residential school system, this was a forced assimilation, and a total cultural genocide. It is at this point in the healing process that Indigenous communities are able to acknowledge, feel, and grieve the immense pain they have endured and the suffering that has been inflicted on them.

Example: When Irene's parents are forced to send their children to the residential school, they are distraught, and Irene mourns the loss of her freedom, family, and cultural ties when she is sent there.

III. **Dreaming:** In the process of decolonization, it is natural for indigenous peoples to envision a future that is rooted in their own cultural values and traditions, and that is free from the oppression of colonialism. Despite the authors not directly addressing this stage in the book, this stage can be inferred from Irene, not to mention her granddaughter as the author's determination to preserve and perpetuate her indigenous heritage. This can also be interpreted as follows, based on the author's dedication of the book to his grandmother, as a way to talk about the treatment she, and others were subjected to: One more direct example from the book is when Irene dreams of returning home and reuniting with her family, where she can be free to embrace her Indigenous heritage in a safe and comfortable environment.

IV. **Commitment** Irene demonstrates her commitment to resisting the assimilation process and reclaiming her Indigenous identity in her poem "*I Am Not A Number*". As part of this stage, it is necessary to make a conscious decision to actively participate in the decolonization process in order to remove or dismantle the oppressive structures of colonialism in order to contribute to creating a more just world

Example: Irene's brother shares traditional stories with her, emphasizing their dedication to maintaining the culture of the people they come from.

V. **Action:** As part of this phase, concrete steps must be taken in order to achieve the goals set. Although the book is largely focused on the personal experiences of Irene and her family, it also highlights the importance of collective action and solidarity in challenging and overcoming the colonial legacy that Irene and her family have

experienced . One example: "*I Am Not A Number*" can help raise awareness of the impact of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples and help promote decolonization and healing processes.

To really grasp the story of the Indigenous characters in "*I Am Not A Number*," it is essential to dive into their experiences and struggles from the perspective of Laenui's decolonization process. This book highlights the significance of reconnecting with your heritage, dealing with the trauma of your past, and dreaming up a future that's based on your culture's values and traditions. It also stresses the importance of Indigenous people banding together to take down colonial structures and working towards healing and self-determination. Here we can draw on Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory to better understand the dehumanization and assimilation that Indigenous children face in "*I Am Not A Number*." Edward Said's theory of Orientalism is particularly useful in adding some context to the stereotypes and misunderstandings that plague the Western world's view of other cultures. The Western world's habit of "othering" - or classifying cultures as fundamentally different or inferior to their own - justifies the mistreatment and forced assimilation that Indigenous children experience in residential schools, as previously mentioned, this also goes hand in hand with the theory of Kipling in *The White Man's Burden*<sup>226</sup>, where indigenous peoples are seen as "others", purely in line with Said's theory. In contrast, Kipling essentially believes that this is something the whites need to sort out to save these people, while Said's theory looks more closely at the consequences of the idea of "the other." "*I Am Not A Number*" underscores the othering process by showing Indigenous children being stripped of their names and given numbers instead. This move reinforces the idea that the dominant culture is more advanced and correct than their Indigenous counterparts because their names are replaced with numbers. It makes it okay for the dominant culture to force their values, beliefs, and norms on Indigenous peoples. Even though "*I Am Not A Number*" doesn't deal directly with Edward Said's work on Orientalism, the themes of stereotyping and cultural imperialism present in the book allow us to engage with Said's theory in a meaningful way.

- I. **Creation of 'Otherness':** According to Said's Orientalism idea, the Western world sets the standards for how non-Western cultures should be understood as 'other'. The Canadian government and its residential schools also treat Indigenous individuals like

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<sup>226</sup> Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

Irene as 'others'. Just like how Orientalism depicted non-Western cultures as inferior, these individuals' cultural identities are also seen as less important. As a consequence, they are compelled to conform to European conventions.

- II. **Imposition of Western values and domination:** According to Said, Orientalism is when the Western people enforce their own ways on non-Western societies, to take over them. In "*I Am Not A Number*", the residential school scheme is displayed as a culture taking over with the Canadian administration making Indigenous children having to let their indigenous cultures go, to that their "new" culture is in an agreement with the Western trends set by the colonists.
  
- III. **Stereotypes and Misrepresentation:** In Said's view, Orientalism perpetuates stereotypes and misrepresentations of non-Western cultures that perpetuate stereotypes about them<sup>227</sup>. The school staff are portrayed in "*I Am Not A Number*" as seeing Indigenous children and their culture as savage, primitive, and in need of 'civilization'. This is also largely consistent with Kipling's theories about the "White Man's Burden," that it was precisely the job of school personnel to "help" these children so that they could have a future. This attitude reflects the same dehumanizing and reductive stereotypes that Said criticized in his theory.
  
- IV. **Resistance and the Role of Intellectuals:** With Said's theory, intellectuals are encouraged to challenge the dynamics of power and representation that are perpetuated by Orientalism. "*I Am Not A Number*" shows Irene and her family fight the oppressive and illegal system of residential schools by maintaining their cultural practices and educating others about the true nature of these institutions. Irene worked hard to keep her own identity, constantly reminding herself of who she originally was. Through Irene's story, we can learn how individuals can take a stand against cultural imperialism and take back control of their lives.

Although "*I Am Not A Number*" is not directly related to Orientalism or Edward Said's theory, I will argue that his theory is still highly relevant when creating the "other." His

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<sup>227</sup> Said, *Orientalism*. p 31-52

theory befitting in present circumstance as it facilitates comprehension of comprehensive themes such as cultural domination, stereotyping of original inhabitants, and the fabrication of dissimilarity. It offers a structure to inspect how Indigenous communities in Canada underwent oppression, exclusion, and obligatory adoption of Western customs. The concept of hybridity and mimicry that was introduced by Homi K. Bhabha also provides insight into the experiences of the Indigenous children in "*I Am Not A Number*". The concept of hybridity refers to the process of blending cultures within colonial and postcolonial contexts to create an entirely new identity. Mimicry refers to imitating the dominant culture to gain acceptance or power<sup>228</sup>. When educated in residential schools, Indigenous children were made to adopt the dominant culture's language, religion, and customs. This resulted in a hybrid identity that was neither fully Indigenous nor fully assimilated, and created also the "otherness" as related to Said's theory. To succeed within the colonial system, children were encouraged to mimic the dominant culture to "fit in," but they were often marginalized and discriminated against while doing so, this was largely done by staff at the schools, who treated the children as if they were rubbish, or savage— children who needed to be rescued from their communities, and cultures. An important excerpt from "*I Am Not A Number*" that illustrates this is the part when children arrive at school for the first time and are told to take a shower, because they had to get rid of "the brown":

*"Make sure to scrub al the brown off." "She must like lighter-skinned girls better, someone next to me whispering"*<sup>229</sup>

Naturally, Irene and the other children didn't understand much that they had to scrub away the filthy and the brown. Because no matter how much you scrubbed, it would never go away. But this was a technique to let the children feel a sense of shame about who they were and how they looked. If only they worked hard enough, then maybe the nuns would be happy with them.

According to the ideas of Said<sup>230</sup> and Bhabha<sup>231</sup>, the act of numbering the children in "*I Am Not A Number*" was a big part of the way Indigenous people have been treated as "others"

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<sup>228</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Hybrid."

<sup>229</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, "*I Am Not A Number*" (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 8

<sup>230</sup> Said, *Orientalism*.p 31-52

<sup>231</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

and pushed to assimilate through the colonial and post-colonial times. Left without the power to control their own fate, and be seen as equals, this way of thinking, where one culture think they are above the other, has really hurt Indigenous groups. Their cultural identity has been lost, and they are still today dealing with issues passed down from generation to generation. Looking into Andrew Woolford's research on Indigenous history education and its connection to his work on "The Indian Problem," it becomes apparent that his findings are an incredibly valuable resource for teaching "*I Am Not A Number*" in the classroom. By using his work as context, one can gain a deeper understanding of the book's historical significance and how it came to be. Moreover, the book's themes align directly with Woolford's ideas about the impact of settler colonialism and the Canadian government's "Indian problem." Woolford sheds light on the cultural genocide perpetuated by Canada's residential school system, which "*I Am Not A Number*" so poignantly illustrates through the story of Irene<sup>232</sup>. Woolford argues that the government's policies aimed at assimilation and erasure of Indigenous cultures played a significant role in the persistence of the "Indian problem."

The importance of acknowledging the resistance and resilience of Indigenous communities against settler colonialism is also underscored by Woolford in his work. Irene and her family represent this resistance in the book "*I Am Not A Number*" as they strive to preserve their traditional cultural practices and educate others about the true nature of residential schools through their work to maintain cultural practices. Irene's story is a powerful reminder of the resilience and determination of Indigenous communities in the face of unjust government policies and actions meant to do them harm. Woolford's research highlights the profound and lasting impact that settler colonialism has had on Indigenous peoples, both in the present day and throughout history. "*I Am Not A Number*" recounts the traumatizing experiences of children who attended residential schools, which continue to impact future generations. This book endeavors to bring attention to the ongoing consequences of these experiences for Indigenous communities and the importance of healing and reconciliation. It should be noted that Woolford's exploration of the "Indian problem" and settler colonialism does not explicitly intersect with "*I Am Not A Number*." However, his themes and issues are relevant to the book and important to understanding.

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<sup>232</sup> Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*.

## 4.6 Hybridity

Through the protagonist's struggle to maintain her Indigenous identity amidst the pressures of assimilation in the residential school system, the concept of hybridity, as discussed by Acheraïou, can be seen in the story, which explores the concept of hybridity<sup>233</sup>. Achariaou asserts that hybridity is an inevitable outcome of cultural encounters and can also be a space for negotiating and challenging societal power dynamics. The aim of the residential schools was to assimilate the Indigenous children into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture by eradicating their Indigenous identities as part of that process. Through this process of hybridity, children at school struggle in many different areas, a simple example of this is food – they miss the food they were familiar with and that reminded them of at home. While at school, they were served food that they saw as alien, but which would become part of their new everyday life. The food they were served was often of poor quality, and there were major consequences if they did not eat up the food, they were served<sup>234</sup>. This is an example that is also evident in the book, that Irene, and the other children were clearly dissatisfied with the food they were served – mostly because it was unknown and did not belong to their own culture. In the book it is described both in picture and text what kind of food the children were served, and what the consequences were if they did not eat up, or worse became ill from the food, and vomited:

*«If you don't eat your meal at breakfast, they wil serve it to you for lunch. And if you throw it up, you will have to eat the vomit»*<sup>235</sup>

As the protagonist, Irene experiences the tension between her Indigenous heritage and the dominant culture that has been imposed upon her, this forced cultural encounter creates a situation that can be described as hybridity. Taking Acheraïou's perspective on hybridity as a point of departure, the protagonist, in Acheraïou's view, is in fact resisting oppressive policies of assimilation based on her own experience. In spite of the fact that the residential school system attempts to suppress the protagonist's Indigenous identity, the protagonist actively seeks to preserve her cultural traditions, language, and beliefs. The resistance that she exhibits could be viewed as an expression of her hybridity, as she negotiates her identity

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<sup>233</sup> Acheraïou, *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization*.

<sup>234</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland, *I Am Not a Number*. P 29

<sup>235</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, "I Am Not A Number" (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P 12

within the space created by this cultural encounter where she is negotiating her identity as she negotiates her identity amidst the tensions of this encounter. Through the protagonist's (Irene) struggle and her resilience, "*I Am Not A Number*" raises the question of how hybridity can be used as a space for challenging and subverting the dominant power structures in society.

If we compare hybridity with Homi Bhabha's theory of "the third space", this will apply in the process to be able to understand how students can connect interpretation of what they read and understanding of what they read in the classroom with their own cultural, social, or personal experiences in mind<sup>236</sup>. According to Bhabha, it is precisely in this "third space" that there is room for more cultures to meet, and where new cultural identities and understandings can be created<sup>237</sup>. In his theory of the "third space", Bhabha argues that when two different cultures meet, such as in a classroom where students read, or learn about a culture different from their own, a new "space" is created – and it is in this space that new learning can happen<sup>238</sup>. This new "space" thus represents a form of hybridity, where these two original cultures meet, but at the same time provides space for forming a new cultural identity. In this third space, there is a process of translation and "negotiation" between the two cultures, which in turn leads to neither culture being untouched, but becoming a hybrid of each other<sup>239</sup>. It is in this hybrid world, as Bhabha argues, that the existing cultural identities, and meanings are being changed, and a new form of culture and understanding across is born<sup>240</sup>. It is through the theory of this "third space" that we can more easily understand the dynamics that arise in various cultural encounters, and, for example, the effects of the assimilation that indigenous peoples were subjected to, and how these new hybrid identities were created using, among other things, residential schools<sup>241</sup>. If we as teachers look at how we teach in the classroom, and especially how we teach literature, according to Bhabha's theory, this third space can serve as a place where students can bring their own experiences and perspectives when they are introduced to, or read literature in, the classroom. This, in turn, can contribute to a deeper, and much more personal understanding of the texts they read, and can help make literature not only more relevant, but also more engaging for the students. Looking at Kris Gutierrez's study, this "third room" from Bhabha's theory can be used to describe a way of

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<sup>236</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. P 144-148

<sup>237</sup> [Homi K. Bhabha p 144-148](#)

<sup>238</sup> [Homi K. Bhabha, p 144-148](#)

<sup>239</sup> [omi K. Bhabha p 144-148](#)

<sup>240</sup> [Homi K. Bhabha, p 144-148](#)

<sup>241</sup> [Homi K. Bhabha, p 144-148](#)

incorporating students' everyday lives and experiences they bring from the classroom into their learning<sup>242</sup>. In this way, the students will be able to look at the texts and interpret what they read, and relate this to their own personal experiences, which in turn will lead to a more personal and, not least, engaging learning experience.

#### 4.7 “*I Am Not A Number*”: Storytelling in Indigenous Communities

Indigenous communities have long used storytelling to transfer knowledge, historical accounts, and cultural values from one generation to the next. A modern adaptation of the tradition of narrative storytelling emerges an example of “*I Am Not A Number*,” where the experiences and views from an Indigenous perspective are through a child who has been exposed to the harrowing experience of having to live in residential schools in Canada. It is through storytelling that indigenous peoples can communicate their experiences, foster community connections, and impart important knowledge, values, and knowledge. When they tell their own stories, they have a unique ability to instill empathy and compassion in listeners. This way of telling a story allows the audience to form a more emotional bond with the experiences and feelings expressed in the story. “*I Am Not A Number*” is a class of its own when it comes to storytelling, chronicling Irene Couchie's arduous journey as a young Indigenous girl. It is through the author's powerful narrative, the book explores both the realities of these institutions, but also how they have impacted generations of Indigenous children and families. At the same time, the book sheds an important light on the impact of these schools on the author's own family, that life has not been easy – something that is more evident in the afterword in the book:

*“My granny rarely spoke about her year away, but when I was a teenager, I wanted to learn more about the legacy of the residential school system and understand what she and many others had endured. Stories about the residential school system were seldom told in our community, but Granny told me hers”<sup>243</sup>*

It is through Irene's telling of her story that the true power of storytelling is revealed in its ability to educate, communicate and, not least, raise awareness of critical issues and experiences. Beyond that, the writing and publication of the book stands as a testament to the

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<sup>242</sup> Kris D. Gutiérrez, “Developing a Sociocritical Literacy in the Third Space,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (April 2008): 148–64, <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.43.2.3>.

<sup>243</sup> Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer, and Gillian Newland, “*I Am Not A Number*” (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2016). P31



preservation and celebration of Indigenous culture and history. Irene Couchie chose to talk to her granddaughter about what she had experienced, despite the fact that many did not talk about what happened in schools and what kind of painful experiences they had. In this way, she ensures that the memory of the residential school system and its consequences for Indigenous peoples will be passed on to future generations. In indigenous literature, bilingualism is often portrayed as a significant aspect of indigenous culture and as a symbol of this culture. The bilingualism of the original edition of "*I Am Not A Number*" can be seen in both English and Anishinaabemowin, the language of Irene Couchie's society, being used in history. In the book, Irene and the family use Anishinaabemowin to communicate with each other and other members of society, this is also revealed in the book, that after all, Irene was also punished for using her Indigenous language.

*«That'll teach you to speak English here. You should be ashamed of yourself!» With that, she walked away. I blew gently on the red welts that had bloomed down my arms. Ashamed? I wasn't ashamed of my language. I was proud of it. But everything I knew and loved about who I was and where I had come from was slowly being taken away»<sup>244</sup>*

Indigenous peoples often use both their local indigenous language and English in various conversations and situations, this thus depends on context. The fact that many Indigenous people use both English (or other local primary language) and their own indigenous language on a daily basis, is reflected in "*I Am Not A Number*." The author here shows how important language is to indigenous cultures by using both languages in the book. The Anishinaabemowin language is crucial to the identity and cultural heritage of Irene and the rest of the children, and including it helps to preserve and celebrate the language and culture of the Anishinaabemowin people. The fact that many choose to make use of both their own mother tongue and the local majority language used by the colonists can be seen in the context of Acheraiou's theory of hybridity, it also relates to the theories of Indigenous methodology. You stand in a kind of between two different cultures, and many feel that they do not quite belong in either of them, much due to the assimilation policies in the past. Non-Indigenous readers reading this book will be able to appreciate and learn more about Indigenous languages and cultures because of the bilingualism in the book. The use of both

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<sup>244</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland.p 13

English and Anishinaabemowin in the book not only promotes respect and understanding for indigenous peoples and their culture, but also highlights the value of bilingualism.

So, what were the lasting late effects of the forced assimilation policies carried out in many indigenous communities? What is certain is that many millions of lives have been destroyed, either directly or indirectly. The traumas that children in schools were subjected to, they manifested themselves in the family, and the generations that followed. Jenny explains in the book that many families were destroyed – partly because the children grew up without having a safe haven, and the children who grew up and had children of their own did not know how to parent their own children, because they had not experienced being raised by their own parents.

*“Of the over 80,000 students who either returned home or relocated to cities and towns across Canada, many felt they didn’t belong anywhere and struggled all their lives. Some survivors suffered intense shame over what they endured as children. Others, without having been raised by their parents, had difficulty raising their own children. Still others continue to feel the impact of residential schools on their lives to this day”<sup>245</sup>*

Depriving a child of their own identity in this way also meant that generations after lost the same thing. Stories I have been told at work, and by friends who are descendants of Sami who experienced the Norwegianization policy in Norway, tell of a loss, longing, and a search for a cultural identity, and self-esteem. They feel like there's a part of them missing. They live in a hybrid world, where they are part of Norwegian society, but at the same time they want to be part of the culture they belong to, but at the same time do not know as they should. Many have also grown up discovering in adulthood, often by chance that they are descended from indigenous people.

#### 4.8 Choice of texts

"*I Am Not A Number*" is, as I see it, a very good choice when selecting relevant literature to teach about indigenous peoples in this age group. Both the book and the story being told are a personal account of a real-life experience experienced by the author's grandmother, and this allows the book to provide students with a real, and more direct, link to Indigenous

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<sup>245</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland. P 29

people's experienced history through assimilation. The story told in the book is set in an era of residential schools, an aspect of daily life that significantly influenced Indigenous history, and the society in which they lived. Throughout this book, students will become better able to understand the rather complex historical context and impact of these schools on indigenous peoples, this through the way the book is both told and, not least, visualized along the way. By also visualizing the book, this gives them a deeper understanding, as they can use the images presented as a visual support for understanding. The book can be both read and interpreted in many ways through the pictures presented in the book. The book also highlights the systemic oppression and discrimination faced by Indigenous communities and promotes a deeper understanding of the long-lasting effects of such policies, particularly through the concluding words of the author. "*I Am Not A Number*" is very accessible and, not least, engaging for readers, with characters in the book that one can largely relate to as a child and adolescent. But it is also real history that you can more easily understand as a student, from a learning perspective. Overall, I believe that this makes the book a valuable educational tool in teaching, for introducing students to complex topics such as assimilation, cultural erasure, and the importance of preserving one's identity, in different ways depending on age. The book is narrated, and presented from the perspective of an Indigenous child and offers students the opportunity to develop empathy and understanding for Indigenous peoples and their experiences through either direct reading, interpretation of images, or a combination of these methods. The visuals in the book give the story a new dimension to interpretation, and this perspective is important for cultivating and developing the students' intercultural competence and promoting a more inclusive society through understanding. Using "*I Am Not A Number*" in an English learning classroom allows integration of Indigenous history into the broader curriculum.

By discussing the book's various themes and the historical context, students can develop their language skills, critical thinking, and analytical abilities, which are important aspects of English education, and according to LK20. If we compare the book with other available and widely used literature such as the book "*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*", then "*I Am Not A Number*" provides a more direct and focused look at life in the residential school system and its impact on Indigenous peoples, and their families. While both books address Indigenous experiences and challenges in different ways, "*I Am Not A Number*" delves even more specifically into the historical context of assimilation politics, making it a particularly effective resource for teaching about Indigenous history. "*I Am Not*

*A Number*” and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* both depict Indigenous experiences, but in different ways. I consider *“I Am Not A Number”* better suited to teaching Indigenous history to especially slightly younger students, as the story is based on the story of the grandmother of the author and goes directly on how children experienced the politics of assimilation. Unlike *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which concentrates more on a teenager’s experiences on a reservation and may lack the depth of historical context, without spending much time on hybridity, and some prehistory that might explain why life on the reserve the way it is. *“I Am Not A Number”* uses a simpler language that is suitable for younger students but is also suitable for a group of students, especially around 7-8 grades in school. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* may not be appropriate for all age groups due to its mature themes and language and is largely often more widely used in 9-10 grade. *“I Am Not A Number”* sheds clear light on Indigenous cultural practices and traditions, as the protagonist perseveres in maintaining his legacy despite the grim conditions at the residential school. Looking at *“The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian”*, this one focuses more on the cultural challenges of growing up on a reservation, and with one foot in each world, the story is seen through the lens of a teenager who spans two worlds — that is, hybridity, and may not encompass the same knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and traditions in the same way, as it has a greater focus on the hybridity that many indigenous peoples face in the modern world. The primary educational purpose of *“I Am Not A Number”*, on the other hand, focuses more on awareness of the residential school system, the politics of assimilation, and the seriousness of its impact on Indigenous peoples, not only then and there, but also through generations. The purpose of using *“I Am Not A Number”* aligns harmoniously with the goals of imparting Indigenous history education within the four walls of a classroom, in both the competency goals of both 7th and 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the Norwegian school system. While *“The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian”* addresses several important themes related to Indigenous life, the focus is on the protagonist's personal growth and journey, and is, as intended, focused more on older children/adolescents, with more of a focus on the hybrid teenage life. Ultimately, I think *“I Am Not A Number”* could have worked better for teaching Indigenous history in English class in terms of its historical content, age-appropriateness, cultural representation, and the clearer educational purposes. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the individual requirements of each classroom, and what one wants to achieve when choosing literature to guarantee that students go through the most beneficial and meaningful learning encounter.

## 4.9 “*I Am Not A Number*” in a classroom setting

In this section, I will briefly look at different ways teachers can use this book in different teaching situations in school.

### 4.8.1 Why Use “*I Am Not A Number*” in a learning classroom.

Utilizing “*I Am Not A Number*” as a pedagogical method to teach about indigenous history, dehumanization, and assimilation can have significant benefits. It is a children's book based on a true story, providing accessible and relatable access to complex historical and cultural themes. The narrative structure of the book allows for a more personal and emotionally resonant portrayal than previous works. The protagonist, Irene Couchie, represents numerous indigenous children who suffered under oppressive residential school systems. The author's accounts of forced assimilation and cultural erasure provide a deeper understanding of these traumas on personal and collective levels. Through this narrative approach, readers can develop empathy and awareness, leading to a better understanding of indigenous peoples' historical experiences and challenges.

It also effectively illustrates the processes of dehumanization and assimilation that occur due to the residential school system by depicting the processes in the book. The pictures and words in the story make the reader feel more strongly about the story's message. People say that a picture can tell a whole story, and that is especially true in this story. The pictures show things about the characters that words can not always explain. The residential school is like a tiny version of what colonization is like, and it affects indigenous people tremendously. The idea of the residential schools was to make indigenous children forget their own cultures and become part of the colonial culture instead. But in reality, the school just made things harder for them and made them feel powerless. “*I Am Not A Number*” shows how bad the residential schools were, how they took away the children's names and made them feel like they did not matter, and the book helps readers understand more about how bad things were for them. Also, “*I Am Not A Number*” offers a platform for exploring indigenous agency and resistance against the forces of dehumanization and assimilation through the art form of storytelling. As an example of the resilience and determination of indigenous communities to maintain their cultural identities in the face of the systemic oppression they experience, Irene Couchie's assertion of her identity and refusal to forget her cultural heritage illustrates the resilient and determined nature of indigenous communities. By incorporating these themes of

empowerment, the resistance and book convey an important message about the strength and perseverance of indigenous peoples, inspiring readers to reflect on the ongoing struggle for indigenous rights and the preservation of indigenous culture.

As a teaching tool about indigenous history, dehumanization, and assimilation, "*I Am Not A Number*" is in my opinion a valuable resource for teachers when teaching about this subject. Due to the book's story-telling structure, emotionally rich content, and focus on oppression and resistance, this book offers a comprehensive and engaging approach to exploring these complex themes. To foster students' empathy, understanding, and awareness, we as educators may apply this book in different educational settings in order to promote a more nuanced appreciation for the historical experiences and challenges facing indigenous communities historically, and even today. In the classroom setting, utilizing the book "*I Am Not A Number*" as an educational tool can yield many benefits, especially in the areas of enhancing knowledge, critical thinking and understanding of Indigenous history, and culture. The book can also be utilized to facilitate educational discussions and an opportunity to dig into Indigenous history, making it a good choice for both middle and lower secondary education levels in the Norwegian educational system<sup>246</sup>. Because the book is a graphic, or illustrated book, it can be used in many ways depending on maturity, age, and linguistic competence. With the younger students, one can focus to a greater extent on what the images tell, while one can expect older students to place greater emphasis on words, while the images play an important role in further interpretation of the story. The fact that the book is so well illustrated, it is suitable for most students. Precisely because younger children learn to a greater extent through the visuals, and from what they can see, this book fits in well. Even among the older students in school, many students are fond of visualizing what they read, because they can more easily connect to the story when they "see" what the characters look like and what they experience. This adds a new dimension to what the students read, and what they perceive, here the visual tools will act as a reinforcement in the reading process. I have had great results using this book in both middle and lower secondary school classes<sup>247</sup>. My own students were engaged and responded positively to the illustrations, which helped them better understand the story and connect with the historical content, and when you see an image as in this book. When you read illustrated books, this helps with memory, because the brain remembers the images, and links this to the story, so you can more easily remember

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<sup>246</sup> 5th to 10<sup>th</sup> grade

<sup>247</sup> Used in 7th, 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

what you have read. As a result of the book's concise but detailed description, students of all ages can rapidly comprehend the book's intended message and understand the historical context in which Canadian authorities sent children to residential schools over a long period of time. In addition, students with prior knowledge of Sami history could easily draw parallels between the two contexts based on their prior knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the benefits of using the children's book *I Am Not A Number* as a didactic tool in the English language classroom 5-10 grades in primary school, to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness of the assimilation that indigenous peoples were subjected to, and how this affected not only historically, but socially and emotionally. The specific research question in the thesis was:

*How can "I Am Not A Number" be used as a didactic resource to address residential schools' historical, social, and emotional dimensions and their lasting effects on Indigenous communities?*

In order to answer the research questions mentioned above, I looked at previous research on the topic, and what kind of theories exist that deal precisely with assimilation, and how this can be used as a didactic tool. What I found was that there is little in the field when it comes to the use of Indigenous literature in schools, to promote critical, and historical thinking. When we read, we enter a third space, a theory developed by Homi Bhabha, in which he has seen that we as human beings decenter and see the world from the point of view of others when reading. This theory coincides with the skill of possessing intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is closely linked to the ability to think critically. Intercultural competence and work with indigenous peoples are also specifically mentioned in the English curriculum. This thesis argues that the use of children's literature designed to educate indigenous peoples can be used to form intercultural competence, and can be seen in the context of Bhabha's theory of "the third space". It is argued for the importance of intercultural competence, as empathy, critical thinking, tolerance, and curiosity can all be linked to what intercultural competence is.

It will argue that thru a thorough examination of "*I Am Not A Number*" it has the potential to expose any subconscious thought, or assumption that shapes the representation of indigenous viewpoints and how they were dealt with. By utilizing this approach, or one of the approaches presented by Larsen-Freeman, students will acquire an all-encompassing comprehension of how Indigenous peoples have regenerated their past and cultural inheritance. It is really sad that indigenous communities have faced a lot of challenges throughout history because of colonialism and assimilation. What is even sadder is that a lot of people do not even acknowledge this struggle and how it has affected these communities in the long term. It is quite fascinating that children's books can actually help us learn more about this untold story and give us a better grasp of indigenous culture. The book serves as a powerful reminder of the pervasive nature of these harmful policies. All of these things underscore the government's intent to erase Indigenous identity by giving Irene and her siblings English names, requiring them to cut their hair, and punishing them for speaking their Indigenous language.

The possible limitation in this thesis has been that it lacks good primary sources, and is based solely on existing theories of assimilation, postcolonial theory and cultural identity. It is important, as I mentioned in my possible limitations for this task, that even though the book is based on a true story, it is nevertheless fiction. This is a field that is constantly evolving, at a time when many are choosing to "take back" their cultural identity. Although residential schools were established many years ago, the last residential school in Canada only closed in 1996<sup>248</sup>, so the last students to experience these residential schools are even young adults. But if you look at the other hand, the theories I have come up with and discussed agree that this type of literature such as "*I Am Not A Number*" is very suitable for teaching assimilation policy in a way that "reaches" children and young people in an effective way. It is the theory of "the third space", which lays a good foundation for learning about cultural identity to take place. Therefore, I would argue strongly that the book fits into teaching with appropriate themes, addressing assimilation, and the historical, social, and emotional implications of residential schools for Indigenous peoples, their families, and communities.

According to the core elements in English for grades 1-10 in the Norwegian school system, it is established that the goal of students working with different texts is for them to develop

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<sup>248</sup> Dupuis, Kacer, and Newland, *I Am Not a Number*. P 29



knowledge and experience with different languages and cultures, in order to understand, among other things, indigenous peoples' traditions and cultures; *Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils' knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples*»<sup>249</sup> It is also very clear according to LK20, that we as teachers must teach and present to students different types of texts, so that they will be able to develop both knowledge and experiences through encounters with different cultures as part of their education, and formation process. By reading and working with, for example, *I Am Not A Number*, students gain an insight into both cultural and linguistic diversity, which will help students acquire knowledge about indigenous peoples, and their traditions and society, and be able to understand the assimilation policies they were exposed to over so many years. This will help students develop their intercultural competence and ability to think critically. Reading books like this, with a lot of help from what the visual book provides, gives students good opportunities to connect history to the present, and help fight injustice against indigenous people. I believe that it is only through the historical context that students are made aware of the injustices of the colonists, and various governments around the world, because they considered indigenous peoples inferior. The book itself is written in a beneficial way, and manages to reimagine how Irene, and the other children, experienced the residential schools, and the dehumanization they were victims of. The children's book is written in a very authentic way, with good, illustrated images that reflect the story being told in an excellent matter. It is easy to get carried away with the story being told, and for students it will be easier to recognize themselves in thoughts and expressions. Since the book is written by Irene's granddaughter, the book will automatically feel more believable, as it is clearly stated that the book is based on accounts from her grandmother, and how she experienced her time at the residential school.

Based on various theories, and information about the book presented in the thesis, I will conclude that "*I Am Not A Number*" is perfectly suited to be used as a didactic tool, to address the historical, social, and not least emotional dimension of residential schools, and how this affected indigenous peoples, and indigenous communities for generations. The book serves as a powerful reminder of the pervasive nature of these harmful policies. All of these things underscore the government's intention to erase Indigenous identity by giving Irene and her

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<sup>249</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet, "Core Elements English."

siblings numbers as names, requiring them to cut their hair and punishing them for speaking their indigenous language. All with the sole purpose of wiping out their own cultural identity, and assimilate them into the dominant white society. By using this book in teaching in grades 5-10 in various ways, students will be able to develop an intercultural competence, think critically, ask questions about history themes, and reflect on the injustice done to people, on the basis that they are considered "the other", and inferior., Students will also be able to gain an insight into the thoughts and traditions of indigenous peoples, all this in line with the guidelines in LK20.

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