



**Nomads, Exiles, Pilgrims, Tourists:
Women Teachers in the Canadian North
And the Australian Outback**

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Comments and Questions Welcomed

by

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for

The Australian Association for Research in Education

2001 Conference

Fremantle, Australia

December 2-6, 2001

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I should mention to you that for quite a while when I got here, I looked at myself a lot. . . . I kept thinking what do I look like. It was very strange. What do I look like to them? I kept trying because I'd never seen myself as "the oppressor." I could never see myself as [pauses] even though I'm white, because I always felt I was on the periphery, I never felt really Wonder Bread white. And I was all of a sudden. And I would look all the time. I remember asking myself questions like, 'how white am I?' I did that a lot. It was very weird.

We're actually not considered a part of the community—the white people. In all official LEA [Local Education Authority] documents we're defined as transients: the hospital staff, the teaching staff, some of the workers at the Northern Store.

There's a lot of guilt associated with leaving here...I could never promise continuity for them [the students]. Probably a lot of the hatred that they feel towards us is that we do leave.—Robin, a white teacher, beginning her career in Northern Ontario, Canada

Sometimes I feel kind of strange because I've lived on reserves most of my life and hung around with Native people all my life. And then I come here and [am] labeled as "teacher." Here I'm hanging around with a lot of non-Native teachers. I don't mind, but sometimes it's kind of strange. You know, you're "the teacher," even though I'm Native. But I'm still not from the community. I'm still an outsider. But I am Native, you know what I mean? —Martha, an Aboriginal ¹ teacher, starting a new teaching position in Northern Ontario, Canada

The one thing I'm still really noticing is a feeling of being an outsider. I don't really expect anything different but it's sometimes a bit tough to deal with. It's an everyday feeling. It's nothing overwhelming but you definitely get the sense that, well, could you ever call this home really? Definitely everybody knows you're temporary.—Nell, white woman and first year teacher in Baffin Island (Nunavut Territory, Canada)

Introduction:

Robin, Martha, and Nell² are struggling to make sense of their role and position as women teachers in the small northern communities, in which they live and teach. They were part of an ongoing research project that explores the experiences of women teachers, white and First Nations, who work in the Canadian North, an area characterized by Arctic or subArctic climate and terrain, small relatively isolated communities and a population predominately of First Nations people involved in resource industries: mining, forestry, fishing, and hunting. The intention of this ongoing research is to understand how professional teacher identity is organized and negotiated in order to intervene in the preparation of teachers for more effective anti-racist, multicultural, and First Nations education.

During the course of my sabbatical leave in Australia, I have come to realize what I have previously only suspected, that is, that the historical and current circumstances of women teachers in Northern Canada would seem to have some resonance with women teachers in

Aboriginal Education in the Australian context. The paper offers the beginning of a comparison between the two contexts with regard to the discursive and material history and contemporary experiences of women teachers in isolated Aboriginal communities.

The organization and negotiation of teacher identity is particularly salient in Northern Canada and in the isolated interior of Australia because of its history of colonialism and neocolonialism which continues to pit western (i.e. European) education and teachers against Aboriginal communities and cultures. The current effort of indigenous peoples to regain political control over their lands and to recover or secure their own cultural and linguistic practices makes for very volatile places, politically and socially. This is particularly true in the area of education as indigenous communities are gaining greater control over the education of their children, while working with teachers who are usually non-aboriginal, and not from the area.

As suggested by the comments cited at the outset of this paper, one of the themes that reiterates in discussions with the twenty-five women teachers who participated in the Canadian study was itinerancy.⁴ All the teachers, including the First Nations teacher I interviewed, were contending with the idea of being the "Outsider" and/or the "Transient," and all were rendered to various degrees alien to themselves, to each other, and to the community. Teaching and living in a community 'not like their own' exposed the gender and racial organization of teacher identity. The struggle for Robin and Martha was particularly acute in relation to issues of race. Robin, a young, non-Aboriginal teacher, was disturbed by the equation of "whiteness" with oppressor and transient: an equation she knew existed but believed she could quickly transcend; Martha, an Aboriginal teacher new to the community, struggled with the association of "teacher" with "whiteness" that threatened to undermine her credibility and authenticity both as "teacher" and as "Native."⁵ These women, along with many others I interviewed seemed to experience what Homi Bhabha (1997) calls the "unhomely": moments when the familiar and the assumed, becomes terrifying and strange. The isolation of communities in Northern Canada, along with the cultural and historic conditions, makes the destabilizing, "unhomely" moments much more salient.

Engagement with the work of Carol Reid (2001) at the University of Western Sydney and with Jan Connelly (2001) studying at the University of Queensland suggests that Australian women teachers working in local indigenous contexts have also experienced moments when the familiarity of self, other and place becomes suddenly strange: Homi Bhabha's unhomely moments. This is not surprising. Both countries have a history of colonialism and a postcolonial legacy which continues to haunt race relations between settler and indigenous populations. Much of the Aboriginal populations in both countries continue to live at third world standards. The vast majority of land in both countries consists of relatively isolated areas in which First Nations/Aboriginal populations predominate. Oddly, it these remote lands (the Arctic, the bush, the outback, and the desert) that serves to name and define in large measure a national character and identity. Moreover, these lands I would argue serves as the national imaginary, deployed to inscribe and reinscribe for the settler population, the identifications, dreams, fantasies, and fears of the national psyche.

In both countries, with the politicization of Aboriginal/First Nations communities relations between indigenous and settler populations and governments have become more volatile, particularly over land rights and issues of self-determination. In both countries Aboriginal education has been one site where colonial oppression in all its symbolic and real violence has been most evident and where reforms have been most needed and yet in my opinion have or seem to destined to fail. Teachers, students and communities in the North and in the Outback/desert are struggling with social and educational problems that seem to defy solution: high absenteeism, high drop out rate, low academic performance, high rates of substance abuse, poverty (National Report on School in Australia, 1999; Royal Commission

(Canada) on Aboriginal Affairs, 1996). In both countries women comprise the majority of teachers even in remote areas in countries have historically defined a national identity in relation to a masculine British norm. Similarities make comparison between the two countries possible. Comparison also and most importantly provides an indication of the complexities and many variations in the legacy of British imperialism; and, conversely, the unrelenting monotony of its reinscription across time and place.

This paper focuses on women teachers. As a teacher-educator, as a feminist, if one dare say that anymore, and as someone invested in issues of social justice, I am concerned about the struggles of women teachers who work and live in indigenous communities. It is with these women in these difficult contexts and their moments of intense "estrangement" that the nature, possibilities, and parameters of a gendered and racialized teaching self in relation to an "other" are more easily examined, along with, the more general question that should concern us all in this post-September 11th world: how do we encounter the "other" respectfully on negotiated terms?

Because the theme of itinerancy resonates so strongly in the data, this particular paper looks to the parameters organizing a teaching self evident in relation to itinerancy or transience. Specifically, I explore the discursive and material history of women teachers in the Canadian Arctic and the Australia desert in relation to itinerancy and explore those particular discourses invoked by actual women teachers in making sense of themselves and their work. At the time of writing this paper I can draw on both the ethnographic (interview) and historical data in the Canadian study but have only historical data and its contemporary analysis for the Australian context. Therefore discussion about the Australian context focuses only on the discursive construction of the Outback/bush/desert and on the history of settler women. Eventually I hope to include interview data collected on Australian women teachers who have worked in Aboriginal contexts. I am currently looking for interviewees and hope to have this data shortly.

Before beginning, I would like to note as well that the teachers in the Canadian part of the study deployed contradictory and multiple discourses, both individually and collectively, and often did so with a great deal of hesitation, uncertainty and confusion. Thus I have suggested that the women "struggled" to organize and legitimate their presence in the First Nations Education in the Canadian Arctic. I am aware that this reading of the data along with all others offered in this paper may well reflect my own anxieties, concerns and struggles with the role of a transient non-aboriginal woman researcher in Northern Canada. Some of the discourses evident in the study seemed eerily familiar, traceable, if I can bear to reflect upon it, in my own discursive performance of the university teacher/researcher with its particular set of alienations, itinerancies, and "unhomely" moments. So, although the study speaks to the specific context of the Canadian North and gestures towards the Australian context and circumstance, I believe there are ways in which this research speaks to other sites and circumstances of pedagogical engagement including my own. This is not to deny the unique character of the Canadian North or the Australian desert Outback.

Itinerancy in the Canadian North and in the Australian Outback

There is a long tradition of teachers arriving and departing from the Canadian North. Although some teachers and missionaries stayed permanently, most have not. Even those who have spent considerable time in the North have not often remained in any one location. For example, Margery Hinds, one of the first white women hired federally (as a non-missionary) to work in the high Arctic, had a career spanning fourteen years, beginning in the late 1950s, during her career, she transferred five times, shifting from Aboriginal to Inuit communities, and across various ethnic divisions within those groups (Hinds, 1958; 1968). Learning about the community and the culture(s) to any great degree could only have been

difficult under such circumstances. Even today, one of the major difficulties, administratively and pedagogically, with southern teachers is thought to be their high rate of turnover (Tompkins, 1998). Two years or less is common.

In Australia, there has been a high rate of turnover of teachers in what I referred to as "geographically isolated regions." The National Report on Schooling (1996), reports that "teachers commonly serve only minimum periods of time before transferring" (National p.58). In Aboriginal communities this is particularly true, as reported anecdotally by teacher and scholar Max Hart (1974):

Nowadays non-Aboriginal teachers have a high turn-over rate; they rarely stay in a community for more than two years. They have scarcely begun to know the people, their language and their customs when they move on. The Aborigines see this as a rejection of their people and prefer one of their own colour who, though less highly qualified, is more likely to stay and work. (p. 53)

In 1983, Neville Green, writing of his teaching year in Warburton Ranges, one of the most isolated Aboriginal communities in Australia, some 700 kilometers from the nearest town, states that the "staff turnover of such schools is high. Some teachers do not last a year, others count off the days, a few thoroughly enjoy themselves, and this is reflected in their teaching" (p. iv).

Various states in Australia provide incentive schemes in operation to encourage teachers to remain in isolated schools including in some cases a guaranteed right of return to a metropolitan area after a specified number of years (National Report, 1996, p. 59). It is thus not surprising that the term used by some communities to describe their teachers is "two year tourists". As is the case with Australian teachers across all States and all school types, significantly more female than male teachers were teaching "geographically isolated schools" (National Report, 1996, p.58). Thus itinerant teachers, more often itinerant women teachers, are a common phenomenon in Aboriginal Outback schools and communities.

Contemporary times has seen an increased the flow of people of all sorts in this ever shrinking world. For Northern Canada, as in the Australia's isolated areas, the most recent era of globalization has brought an unprecedented increase in the movement of people and information. Even the most northern Canadian communities I visited had the Internet, satellite television and telephone connection, as well as regular plane, in some cases, jet service. Although it remains expensive, travel to the North has never been easier or more comfortable. This seems to be the case in Australia as well. Alice Springs is a comfortable, relatively inexpensive flight from Sydney. Thus for those with the means, access to the "Other" has never been so easy, virtually and actually; as Rizvi and Lingard (2000) comment, "Even the remotest cultural traditions are readily assessable to us. The Cultural Other is longer removed, exotic or mystical and beyond our reach." (p. 419). As suggested by this quote "the Cultural Other" is often rendered feminine: irrational, exotic: an object to touch. The Orient and other sites of colonization have often been conceived as feminine and as such produce and organize a masculine and western explorer/traveler against a feminine landscape (Yengenoglu, 1998; Alessio, 1997; Kaplan, 1996).

The North in the Canadian colonial imagination has been organized largely as a feminine place. At times it has been depicted as an empty land: blank, remote, silent, and therefore open to exploration and "development." Writer Aritha van Herk (1990) calls the North, specifically Ellesmere Island as "that clean-swept northern desert of desire" (p. 105). It has been described as a dangerous place. Margaret Atwood (1995) suggests that in Canadian literature the North is seen as "a frigid but sparking fin de siecle femme fatale who entices

and hypnotizes male protagonist and leads them to their doom." (p. 3). She asks, as I ask with reference to women teachers: "If the North is a cold femme fatale, enticing you to destruction, is it similarly female and similarly fatal when a woman character encounters it?" (p. 4). If the North is feminine to the male traveler/explorer, what happens when it is a female traveler/explorer, or in this case, a woman teacher who goes North?

In Australia the outback, the desert, and/or the bush have also been described by settler populations as a feminine force against the masculine explorer and bushman (Haynes, 1998; Schaffer, 1988). Schaffer, in her text *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (1988), suggests that "the central image against which the Australian character measures himself is the bush" and "the bush is the heart, the Interior—a mysterious presence which calls to men for purposes of exploration and discovery but is also a monstrous place in which men may perish or be absorbed" (p. 52). In her text she argues that "feminine is present in the bush tradition—not necessarily in actual figures of women inhabiting the bush, but in response to the bush itself. The landscape provides a feminine other against which the bushman-as-hero is constructed." (p. 52). More specifically, Roslynn Haynes in her 1998 text *Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film*, comments:

A 'female' land was a ready metaphor for male explorers to use, identifying an alien terrain with the alien sex and thus constituting it as doubly 'other.' Also implicit in the image of a female land was the notion of conquest and possession. Consciously or not, the inland explorers conceived of their endeavours in terms of a classical struggle or agon, which they themselves were the protagonists and some conceptual composite embracing nature, the land, the feminine, the 'other', was cast as the antagonist. (p. 51)

Miriam Dixson (1987) suggested that while colonial landscape image in the Americas, Africa and the West Indies suggested a rich fecund virgin land available for fertilization or a libidinous and wild land to be forcefully tamed and domesticated. However, the Australia desert was seen as "the body of an unloved woman: "an old hag." Kay Schaffer (1988) suggests, "The pre-eminent meaning encoded in the nationalist myth of the land-as-woman is that of a harsh, cruel, threatening, fickle, castrating mother. She is dangerous, non-nurturing and not to be trusted." (p. 62).

In opposition to this characterization, the North in Canada and the Bush/Outback in Australia have also been viewed as a frontier wilderness where white travelers can be physically and spiritually rejuvenated, in some sense, reborn. Emily Murphy, a social activist, politician and writer in the early twentieth century, captures this sense: "the hardy Northern environment of Canada is a fertile breeding ground where the tired, ailing Anglo-Saxon race, exhausted and numbed by the unhealthy conditions and decadence of the late nineteenth century city life, could be revitalized" (Basset 1975: xix). Similarly in Australia there is a sense of the outback as a place of new life as evident in this quote about the land: "As the soil of old countries become impoverished and needs rest and recuperation, it becomes imperative that fresh virgin ground must be found to meet the ever increasing wants of the stockholder and the husbandman. (in Schaffer, p.85). The Australian desert/outback/bush, which perhaps failed to provide new soil, did provide the site of national identity. It provided the site of male adventure novels—"ripping yarns"—of the late 1800s and early 1900s that promoted, "the bravery and racial superiority of British males at the boundaries of the Empire, far from the restrictions of the domestic sphere and petticoat government (Haynes, 1998, p. 130). Building on Judaeo-Christian tradition, the Australian desert could also be seen to offer a means of spiritual purification and salvation where the absence of material comforts and the vast expanses could test one' ability to stand alone before God—a kind of spiritual Outward Bound trip. Moreover, as Roslynn Haynes (1998) comments:

More specifically the desert was, and largely still is conceptually a man's place. Thus an important part of the self-denial associated with the desert was sexual abstinence, with a concomitant rejection of women, at least implicitly perceived as inherently sinful, the source if not the active perpetrators of sexual temptation. Even when literal residence in the desert was considered impractical or superfluous, it remained a powerful metaphor for spiritual pilgrimage and a test of manhood, its very barrenness suggesting sexual abstemiousness along with rejection of debilitating 'softness', luxury and decadence. (p .29).

So again, if the Australian desert/bush/outback and similarly the Canadian North offer place of adventure and spiritual growth for male explorers and settlers, where they could escape the "feminine", what did it provide women? Did women also wish to leave if not outright reject the softness and luxury of the feminine, the settled and petticoated urban life? How do women, in particular non-Aboriginal women, engage the Canadian North or Australian bush/desert/outback? Does it and its inhabitants recreate, rejuvenate or compel and threaten women the way it does men? And how does one's identity as an itinerant woman teacher organize this response to the land and its people?

Woman as Travelers and Itinerants:

Historically white women do not have a long history in Northern Canada. Initially the Hudson Bay Company, which was given a monopoly in the late 1600s for fur trading in what was then referred to as Rupert's Land, did not permit employees to bring wives or female relatives with them. Lifting this restriction did not change the situation dramatically. There were few white women in the North, particularly in the High Arctic, until the middle of the twentieth century. Those few that did travel were more often nuns, missionaries, the wives of fur traders and trappers or, and very occasionally, a governess. These women were described as "tender exotics" (Van Kirk, 1980). Often the fur-traders and settlers took and were encouraged to take these refined white women as their wives, replacing their "country wives" that is the First Nations or Metis women with whom many had long standing relationships. Although more European women would come to the North over the course of the 20th century, they remain for the most part, exotic, rare and strange. The notion of white women, traveling to and living in the North was considered odd both then and now.

The first group of "tender exotics" who traveled to the North in the 19th century often did not come of their own volition, generally they were following the calling of God or the demands of their husbands. The writing of some women such as Anna Jameson, Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill suggests that although they admire the landscape, life in the wilderness was difficult. Rather than encountering or penetrating the wilderness they wrote from a distant from it, coping with the environment and studying it from the cabin (Atwood, 1995). The second wave of women chose to go North, some times independently for economic and personal reasons.

In Canadian literature around the middle of the 20th century, women protagonists start going off into the woods to be by themselves, at times to get away from a man. Ethel Wilson's 1954 novel *Swamp Angel* is a classic example. There are others. The North or the wilderness becomes a sanctuary and rather than conquering the natural world the female protagonist befriends it and is changed by it. For their women protagonists, women writers tend to create the North and the wilderness as sexually neutral and refreshing or renewing in some way (Atwood, 1995).

Traditionally First Nations women who were from nomadic or semi-nomadic groups traveled with their families and bands often for better resource harvesting. For example, the

Inukjuamiut, like other Inuit groups, traveled within fifty square miles to secure game, for fellowship, and as means of conflict resolution (Rowley, 1985, in Marcus, 1995). However with European contact, settlement, and control, nomadic and semi-nomadic groups were confined to reserve land and communities, or to the fringes of white settlements. For First Nations women to be seen as "civilized" meant living settled lives organized within European notions of femininity. Nomad life and living off the land would end. (Carter, 1997; Van Kirk, 1980).⁶ However their description of land is like the Australian Aboriginal is of a different order than that of the European women, an intimate part of the self and one's culture rather than separate place or an object of study. More study is required to know how gender operates, if it does, to distinguish Aboriginal male and female understandings of the land, preferably by someone with more personal and intimate understandings of First Nations' cultures than this author.

Well known to the world, the first white women in Australia did not come to country, let alone to the bush, or the outback of their own volition. They were instead guests of the State; that is, convicts sent from Britain to live in forced exile. The first teachers in Australia were indeed two women convicts, Isabella Rosson and Mary Johnson (Spaull, 1977). Since more male convicts were transported, European women in colonial Australia were but a tiny minority of the population. And since the bush, outback, desert areas were considered, as was the Canadian North, as 'no place for a woman"—that is a white woman, and only a few European women ventured into the interior. The first European women arrived on the Australia's Northern coast in the 1820 and 30s and not into the Central Australia until the 1870s when Dorothea Queckenstedt and Wilhelmine Schultze arrived with their missionary husbands to a mission at Hermannsburg. Emily Creaghe was considered the first (only?) woman explorer. She traveled with her husband in the Ernest Favenc exploration party of 1883. It was reported that her appearance caused some consternation and excitement among the Aboriginal people most of whom had never seen a white woman, but she also some fervor among the white men who rarely saw or spoke to a white woman. So much so that a "messenger was sent ahead to warn the men that a woman was coming, as the 'outback' ways in the matter of clothing were not always considered suitable for a woman's eyes (James, 1989, p. 57).

The first woman teacher arrived in Alice Springs in 1888. Although in other parts of Australia women and men quickly balanced out in the population, in the Northern Territories it is only since the mid **1980s** that women have achieved some degree of numerical equivalence to men in population numbers (James, 1989). So while the bush/Outback may be depicted as feminine, actual white women have not been present in any great numbers. Historically white women, like in the Canadian context, have been exotic, rare, strange.

According to Kay Schaffer (1987), the writings of Australian women suggest that the "imperatives of masculine sexual, political and economic domination of the land have not been those of women...Women writers have registered conquest of the land as an alien concept. A resistance of the dominant masculine desire for mastery over the land marks their writings." (p. 103). Instead the land is viewed as a "loving, mysterious, powerful and positive force which usually gets reinscribed as feminine for both female and male protagonists.

According to Marilyn Lake (1998), the Australian frontier was also seen for white men as a place of freedom on the outskirts of civilization where white men could do as they liked and travel as they liked: "[t]he mobility of men, that condition said to characterize the frontier and to be definitive of freedom, was assumed, by men and women alike, to be inherently threatening to women...mobile men were dangerous men" (p. 95). Immorality was thought to accompany the nomadic lifestyle of frontiersmen and " For white men, the frontier was a fantasy of freedom; for white feminists it was a focus of fear and anxiety, a place beyond

their ken, where undomesticated men turned feral" (p. 96). It was not surprising that few women traveled and those that did assumed a "special authority as agents of civilization and custodians of the race to reform characteristically masculine behaviours (drinking, gambling and a predatory sexuality" (Ibid.). Women who traveled who were itinerant would certainly be considered odd.

Historically and discursively white women who travel, particularly those who travel independently to "less civilized lands," have been positioned outside the bounds of feminine normality. As Janet Wolff (1995) comments, "the wanderer may be able to pass in anonymity, women however, cannot go into unfamiliar spaces without drawing attention to themselves, without mobilizing those apparently necessary strategies of categorization through which they can be neutralized and rendered harmless" (p. 8). The strategies to explain a woman's status as traveler include attaching her to a man. She, thus becomes the wife or sister of a traveler rather than a traveler herself. Another strategy used to explain a single woman traveler is to suggest they are eccentric or morally unrespectable (literally, "loose women" i.e., prostitutes) because they are unattached and out of place. In response to this last categorization, it has been noted that women who chose to write of their travel adventures, particularly in the during the 19th and early twentieth century, repeatedly asserted their respectability by detailing the state of their travel clothing and living arrangements (Mills, 1991; Smith, 1989; Russell, 1986).

Another reason for the incongruity of femininity and travel is suggested by psychoanalysis, and specifically object relations. From this theoretical perspective a boy must separate himself from the preoedipal mother in order to assert his masculinity (Chowdrow, 1985, 1978). His relationship with his mother is of a different order from the daughter who can remain in a closer, more immediate relation to the mother without threatening her femininity. Both genders distance themselves eventually in order to assert a separate self from the mother, but the daughter's relationship to her mother may create a more tangled process of engagement and disengagement. For both genders, efforts to separate cause grief and mourning since, in some sense, they must leave "home" but there is also great freedom in this move. Within this economy, the notion of a daughter or more particularly mother leaving family and domesticity becomes more difficult to understand and organize psychologically.

Considering the discursive, psychological and historical organization of woman and traveling, it is not surprising that, as Cynthia Enloe (1989) comments, "[i]n many societies being feminine has been defined as sticking close to home. Masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel. Feminist geographers and ethnographers have been amassing evidence revealing that a principal difference between women and men in countless societies has been the license to travel away from a place thought of as 'home'" (in Wolff, 1995, p. 212). It is not surprising then that women who travel to Northern Canada or to the Australian Outback might trigger the dissonance associated discursively, historically and perhaps psychoanalytically with women and travel. In their urgent efforts to legitimate and normalize their travel to the North, women in my study at various moments, and in various ways drew on modern and postmodern notions of the traveler and often created the North and perhaps the Outback as a sanctuary and a place of freedom and renewal but also a place of to experience adventure, novelty and the Other. At this point and for the rest of the paper I draw on the work of Zygmunt Bauman and the interview data generated with the Canadian women teachers.

Teacher-Pilgrim Identity: The Modern Traveler

The work of Zygmunt Bauman (1997; 1996) speaks to the resources and strategies available for identity formation that have dominated modernity and postmodernity. He

suggests that identity and strategy of being a "pilgrim" dominated modernity, while the identity of the stroller, the vagabond, and/or the tourist has been central to postmodernity.

The pilgrim, according to Bauman, is not a modern invention but was inherited from the earliest days of Christianity. For the pilgrim, truth and the true place are always some distance and some time away. Traditionally, the pilgrim goes to the desert or the wilderness to seek the truth and the true self. Pilgrims gain purpose and indeed definition because they are not simply travelling but travelling through the wilderness or desert to a known and assured destination. The problem with the world as a featureless desert or untamed wilderness is that it does not leave signs of progress. Literally as well as metaphorically, tracks disappear in the sand and/or paths get overgrown. It becomes crucial that the world become orderly, stable, and determined so that the record of past travels—the path—is preserved and progress celebrated. The true destination and progress to that destination must be beyond doubt. They must be, in fact, self-evident.

Public school is one of several modernist institutions established to assure the preservation of records, the celebration and confirmation of human progress, and to instill a desire in the next generation for the journey with an absolute confidence in its destination. I would argue that "teacher" is an identity born of and for modernity that continues today.⁷ If schools and more particularly teachers, together with other institutions and social agents, cannot function to ensure that progress will be recorded and transmitted to the next generation—if the path and the destination cannot be discerned—the footsteps disappear in the sands of time. If the absolute certainty of the destination (e.g. truth, the true self, salvation, capital accumulation, western male and white supremacy) is placed in doubt, then the pilgrim and his/her pilgrimage lose integrity. Modernity slips. In the case of First Nation's education in Canada, the goals and ideals of modernity has often been seen as problematic. The colonial mission of schooling for Inuit and Aboriginal communities has been viewed with increasing skepticism—the journey of Europeans and more recently Canadians to the North to bring "progress and civilization" questioned.

This burden, this profound duty and responsibility of the white, middleclass woman to educate the 'other' provided a way to circumvent Victorian strictures on women's travel and itinerancy. Marjorie Theobald, Australian educational historian reminds us that

The everyday world of the woman teaching for the state encompassed a daily journey out of her physical and moral enclosure within domestic space (notionally female space) and into the public domain (notionally male space). The masculine privilege of moving freely between domestic and public space was bestowed upon the female teacher by bureaucratic edit....the geography of womanly propriety had to be redrawn imperceptibly by countless daily journeys, as women followed their traditional childwork out from the home and into the publicly provided elementary school. (p.177)

With imperialism white women could move from the home into the elementary schoolroom in the colonies. Thus the pilgrim identity could be articulated with regard to white woman was in the form of the lady missionary teacher who was charged with the duty of "improving" her indigenous students. Drawing on the words of Honor Ford Smith (1990), I have referred to this identity as "Lady Bountiful" (Harper, in press/a, 2000a/b). It is a position in which "notions of imperial destiny, class and racial superiority were grafted onto the traditional views of refined English motherhood to produce a concept of the English woman as an invincible global civilizing agent" (Ware, 1992, p. 120). Initially her role was to educate British working-class women in religion, morality and hygiene but with imperialism her sphere expanded to any where the British flag was flying, which meant travelling to the colonial margins.

Despite the fact that this female pilgrim identity—Lady Bountiful—is a product of 19th century British imperialism, the women in my study continue to struggle with this identity. For example, the Canadian women teachers wondered at times about the value and purpose of the knowledge, the so-called progress, they, as non-aboriginal and aboriginal outsiders, were bringing to First Nations communities. There was confusion and uncertainty as to their purpose:

What am I supposed to do here? I kept asking . . . What's my goal? Is my goal to prepare them [the students] for life on the reserve or is my goal to prepare them for white life off the reserve? Do I prepare them to go into a job or do I prepare them to follow their family's traditions and "be" in the traditional way? Which there doesn't seem to be [a traditional way of life].

For several teachers the value or not of their presence and their lessons was most obvious in their comments concerning the teaching of English. One teacher acknowledged with anguish the problem of teaching English:

English slips into the language [Cree] and starts altering it . . . Words are being lost. English is a not solely responsible for this, I hope, but it is a major contributor to this loss and to a loss of culture . . . Why am I teaching English here?

English is an official language in Canada, but in many communities of the High Arctic it is not the lingua franca of the people. But even within communities, the dominance of English, nationally and internationally, is threatening home language. Some Aboriginal languages in the South have already been lost (Royal Commission, 1996; Battiste and Barman, 1995). Thus there is a key commitment to the preservation of language and culture in First Nations education, ideally by First Nations teachers who know their culture. Despite this, one teacher emphasized, "I realize we're educating them in [or for] White society. But I'm sorry in this day and age, that's where it's at. If they want to go to college or university to further their education, they have to learn English." English is represented in this example as the language of progress: the language of "this day and age" and thus teacher is obligated to provide it.

Alternatively, a dramatic comment made by one of the white women teachers indicates some of the conflict with the role of "Lady Bountiful" that then inhibits her action:

I think they [the community] could use some help with environmental issues around here. That's the other part of me—the environmental geographer—that's saying, 'What can I do to help these people,' but then I don't want to feel like the white person coming in and *saving them* [my emphasis]

With the certainty of the pilgrim and pilgrimage of Lady Bountiful in question, it becomes difficult at times for some of those interviewed to understand, articulate and legitimate themselves as female teachers from elsewhere working in the North.

From another perspective, the Aboriginal teacher who spoke English as her first language, struggled with the community's expectation that she should be assuring the survival of First Nations language and culture to her students and in so doing "saving them." She commented:

They [the students] asked me if I could speak the language and stuff like that. They often want to talk to me in Cree. I understand it a little bit. I never

learned the language because we're living on a reserve where Cree wasn't spoken.

The lack of facility in the language and culture of the community, as well as the powerful association of "teacher" with "whiteness" and missionary work of Lady Bountiful and perhaps its corollary—an Aboriginal mother-teacher bringing progress to her people—disrupts the discursive positioning of the First Nations woman educator in the North.⁸

The construction of the pilgrim-teacher is dependent on the production of the North as a harsh wilderness to be endured as one travels to reach the "other" and provide progress and civilization. Traveling to teach in a harsh, difficult environment might be seen as a sign of one's belief in modernity and its gifts. A related but slightly different discourse invoked more often in the study suggested that the North was the ideal destination for the woman pilgrim-teacher. It was viewed as a place that strengthens and empowers women teachers from the south. This is evident in the words of one teacher, who had left her home, her children, and a failing marriage for a new life and career in the North:

the North was a place where a woman could be independent; where you could be on your own. . . I just felt it was a wonderful opportunity. . . A wonderful place. It was the perfect place for me to go and meet people and I could see my strengths in a whole new light.

Not a traveler per se, the words of this woman teacher suggest that she was more a refugee or pilgrim seeking and evidently finding a better home. There is a long history of white women travelers who go to the Canadian North to travel to escape difficult and constrained gendered lives, to pursue dreams of greater independence and/or to rejuvenate in new light, new experience, new people and "openness" that the wilderness and the frontier is thought to embody.⁹ There is also a relatively recent trend in Canadian literary history in which the wilderness has been depicted as a place of refuge, a haven, at least for white women.¹⁰ As suggested earlier in this paper, the frontier, the wilderness, and the North have been viewed as an ideal site for revitalization and renewal—a new and wonderful place.

In a similar vein, the North is depicted as a wonderful place because of the freedom and autonomy offered specifically to teachers:

I am willing to try things [that] I wouldn't try in the south. . . There are no risks because you don't have the same kind of parental involvement. . . It's exciting. She [the principal] lets us try what we want. . . There's a lot of freedom that I think is spoiling me. If I taught in the south I wouldn't have that kind of freedom.

In this depiction the North provides so much professional freedom, the teachers feels "spoiled by it." Certainly she may become "spoiled" for southern schools. Undoubtedly, some community members might consider such individual freedom inappropriate in terms of developing collaboratively with teachers a community-based Aboriginal curriculum and pedagogy.¹¹ However in this quote, professional freedom and autonomy are viewed as exciting, unusual, and faintly inappropriate because it lies outside of southern norms. Such individual freedom and autonomy may also lie outside of the gendered norms of women's work as teachers, thus the North may provides opportunities for women teachers, in particular, to find and experience their "strengths."

Another woman in the study was more explicit in depicting the North as an ideal place for a teacher:

You may find this hard to believe but I wanted to teach up North. I was sick of the city and I wanted to be somewhere [pause] I was tired of being nobody and I wanted to be somewhere where I could make a difference. And I felt that I could in a smaller place. And I knew that in a Northern area, where it's more isolated, a teacher is not just a teacher: a teacher is *somebody*. [my emphasis]

Taken together these three quotes speak of a strong desire to be "somebody," powerful and independent, free from the constraints that are imagined in southern schools and in southern non-Aboriginal society more generally. The desire to be "somebody" and the freedom to do so is mapped onto the Canadian North as a free, open, and isolated place. Thus in this discursive framework, the North becomes an obvious and credible place for teachers from the south to live and work so that choosing to work there isn't "hard to believe," particularly for women teachers.

The promise of a teaching career has been the pastoral power and agency granted to women in the name of service and the love of children (Schick, 2000; Robertson, 1994; Dehli, 1993). This notion of teaching allows women to remain within the bounds of traditional femininity while exerting what might be considered masculine power and authority. To exert power and influence—"to be somebody" and to "make a difference"—as important and pleasurable as those desires might be, requires those who will recognize and submit to the teacher's knowledge, power and authority both in and outside the classroom. Evidently, there also needs to be literally "no bodies" in the form of parents or (male) authorities present to whom the women teachers must account. The postcolonial context provides for such absent and marginalized bodies that allow for the discursive and material organization of the "powerful" woman pilgrim-teacher.

Evident from the interviews in the research, this discourse continues to be reproduced in the North today to the point that it may seem like common sense. However, if instead, Aboriginal communities and students were organized discursively as present and powerful in their own right, the possibility of women teachers from the south becoming new-found somebodies—heroines—in Northern communities would be less possible to imagine. If the North was viewed as richly complex and textured both socially and geographically, rather than open, free and blank, the possibility of becoming a free, autonomous and agentic "somebody" would require more than independent will and an act of travel to secure. As elsewhere, it would require negotiation with the people and circumstances encountered.

The teachers did at times address the circumstances that impinged on their desire to be seen as "somebody" in the community. As cited at the outset of this paper, Robin was disturbed by the discourses about white racial identity, that according to her, linked whiteness with concepts of "oppressor" and "transient;" and, for Martha, discourses that named teacher as white and Aboriginal as an insider to a particular First Nations language and culture. Another teacher spoke about the professional status of teachers as a difficulty attributing it to the local context:

The community treats me the same as all the other teachers, but they don't treat their teachers any differently than they treat their water truck driver [for example]. There's definitely no respect for professional occupations or anything like that. I don't think so anyway.

Itinerancy also made it difficult to secure authority and respect in the community according to the teachers. Staying for even a second year evidently affected one's status: "People told us that coming back the second year you get a lot more respect and that is totally true." Whether true or not, the women in the study at times depicted the North as a place where it

was difficult to secure particular power and authority because of local circumstances, and therefore difficult to recognize oneself as a legitimate and successful teacher within the discourse of the pilgrim woman/teacher—a somebody. Nonetheless, this discourse and the desire persisted in the efforts of women teachers to make sense of themselves and their work as itinerants in the North. It may be that this desire underwrites the investment many have in teaching as a career anywhere. And perhaps that the inability of women to be seen as teachers within this potent discursive framework "to be somebody" at this time in the First Nations education may result in dissatisfaction with the community or with teaching in general that might lead to a high turnover rate of those who come to teach in the North.

There were other discourses that teachers invoked to organize and legitimate themselves as women teachers in the North. These discourses seem to draw from postmodernity and its life strategy of the tourist that allows for, rather than works against notions of itinerancy, and at the same time refused the missionary zeal of modernity and its dreams of progress in the work of the female pilgrim-teacher.

Teacher-Tourist Identity: The PostModern Traveler

Bauman (1997; 1996) suggests that in these days of globalization and skeptical postmodernity, life as a pilgrim appears a risky option. Better to keep one's options open than to commit to one path, one destination, one truth, and/or one dream of a perfect place. Rather than embracing one less than reliable destination, better to look at short-term commitments and short trips and thereby avoid the horror of being stuck in the wrong path. Better to be the vagabond, tourist or stroller than the pilgrim. As a vagabond, tourist or stroller, relationships, according to Bauman, are neither stable or trustworthy, in comparison with the romance of modernity as its dream of the "one and only" who will "love you forever." Loyalty to one's companions, one's company, or one's partner is emotionally dangerous since within the logic of postmodernity, time will soon come to detach and move on. Less engaged, the vagabond, the tourist, and the stroller are more disconnected from people and places, and less oriented to a destination, less concerned with the path. Unlike the pilgrim's dogged determination and seriousness with regard to the journey, the stroller or tourist is more playful, more mocking of life and its travels.

Tourists are not entirely frivolous, however. They do have a purpose in that they seek the new, the novel and/or the exotic. A sense of home is important as a place to return if the journey proves unexciting or, alternatively, too dangerous. However, it is the very mundane nature of home that sends the tourist out in the first place. Thus while the tourist can be homesick, the greater fear is of being homebound. Home has both a "uncanniness of shelter and prison." I would suggest that for the tourist, the journey concludes by sharing the experience and knowledge of the "other" with those at home. In other words, teaching those back home about the "other."

At times the women teachers seemed to invoke postmodern identities and strategies, in particular the tourist, to explain their understanding of themselves and their purposes in coming North: One teacher explained her decision to teach in the North in terms of gaining "real" and unique experience:

My idea was sort of to do a unique thing. . . It was a way to be involved in Native issues, also just for my own personal development . . . The more different settings you're in the more you learn. . . I've been studying political science and Native issues in a university classroom for five years but that's not the same as going into a community and living the experience.

Living the unique experience of the North is crucial for this teacher, who at an earlier moment also spoke of the limitation of home in the south and the origins of her desire to go north in the first place:

I wonder if any of this interest stems from just having such a sheltered upbringing. I never met a Jewish person until [she lived in] T----. . . never spoke to anybody who couldn't speak fluent English.

Home is viewed negatively here, as a monocultural, monolingual shelter in which there is no social difference. This shelter is refused within this discourse in order to experience, rather than study, the "Other" as imagined within this discourse. The North, therefore must provide what is unique, what is different, and rather than protection, it must offer risk and exposure. Another teacher specified what exposure to the North would provide women, in particular single women:

I could see that if you were a woman who was used to living by yourself, an independent person who wasn't in a relationship, coming up here could be such a liberating thing if you just wanted to pour yourself into your work and throw yourself into experiencing new things, this is the one place you could do it. There are so many different opportunities for a single woman, especially to learn about life, making snowshoes, tanning hides, making moccasins, snaring, hunting and fishing—living off the land.

The notion of the single independent woman learning to hunt and fish is dependent on constructing the North as a place open to redefining "southern" notions of male and female work. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the North is depicted as a place for women to escape the gender restrictions of "home" in southern Canada. However, the type of activities for a woman to learn and experience assumes First Nations culture and interests as different and exotic in relation to one's own: making snowshoes, tanning hides, making moccasins. The community's contemporary practices and modern conveniences as well as whatever gender restrictions exist in the culture cannot be entertained in this dream of living the new and the novel. Indeed similarities to one's own culture and home community in terms of gender organizations or experiences need to be suppressed in order to experience and celebrate the exotic. The North must provide the new, the novel, the exotic, and once experienced, the traveler becomes bored and moves on, or scared and goes home.

"It's scary, I'm very visible as a white female" a comment by one teacher suggests that exposure to the "unique" experiences of the North can be exciting for the tourist, but also unsettling when suddenly one is exposed, not only to an "Other" perhaps previously unimagined, but to a self suddenly all too evident and "very visible." As cited earlier in this paper, the sudden presence of the racialized self entered into the discussion of women in the study. Occasionally the women also mentioned race in relation to teaching: "I'm definitely conscious of the fact all the time of being white and I'm not here to be a white educator teaching in the Southern way." To teach and "be" differently in the world—not in "the southern way" as a result of contact with First Nations groups and circumstances may be inevitable but the ways in which this is understood and organized discursively is not.

The women in my study appeared to draw on a discourse that contains both the fear and desire of the tourist to "Go Native" that is, to turn themselves into Aboriginals. What Margaret Atwood (1995) calls the "Grey Owl Syndrome" runs through Canadian film, literature and other cultural and artistic discourses.¹² In the interviews with the teachers in my study was a discourse that spoke to a fear and at times a desire of contamination by First Nations culture; that is, a concern that the teacher-tourist might never leave, or find adjustment back in the south difficult. One teacher used the term "bushwhacked" in this way:

She [her mother] was worried about us: that we'd get bushwhacked being up here---if people stay too long, I think that if they're planning on going back down south, they might find it an adjustment to go back but we're not planning on staying a long time. [H: Bushwhacked means?] That you spend too much time in the bush, away from what you were used to, where you grew up.

Another teacher used the idea of the North getting into 'one's blood':

I don't see myself being a "lifer" here as they call it. . . I just don't see that. I'm not a Northerner. Although it's been said to me "The North gets in your Blood" and it may get in mine.

At one point a teacher mentioned that in returning to the community: "It felt like coming home, so I think that's a good sign . . . I think it's [the North] gotten into my blood." But the same teacher also spoke of leaving:

It's a given that they [the community] know I'm going. . . There's no reason why I wouldn't come back. It's just a matter of whether I want to stay down South to get my other life going---the boyfriend. You can't do this when you've got two kids and a mortgage. You know, I do have normal American dreams like having a family and having a home.

"Normal" dreams and goals are played against the abnormal possibility that the North and First Nations people may get into one's blood and perhaps also one's bloodlines. The possibility of being a tourist-teacher that highlights itinerancy and "normal dreams" defuses the possibility of losing one's self as a white woman teacher to the North.

The identity of teacher can provide another avenue for invoking and legitimizing the tourist discourse and alleviating the concern about "going Native." One of those interviewed mentioned how the difficulties she faced in her first year of teaching and the souvenirs and mementos of the North she had collected would provide her with strategies and resources for teaching when she returned south:

In my first year of teaching there were a lot of challenges that will make me a better prepared for the south. The thing I'm looking forward to---I can't wait to teach [back] in ---- and I get to do a big unit on "Native People." I can show them bones, and slides, and my Native earrings . . . I could show them all of this. So you are walking away with a great teachable subject.

Of course teachers are always looking for resources to share with their students. However, considering the circumstances of the North, teachers can be turned into tourists, collecting and sharing souvenirs and other artifacts. The effect may be to turn the North and its people into resources to be exploited for the education of southern and largely non-indigenous students and their teachers. Also taken as a resource, as teaching objects, the North and its people are distanced from the teacher and from the possibility they will get into her blood. The dream of teaching later in the south insures a future destination and circumstance that prevents, discursively, the possibility of being a "lifer" in the North.

Being the tourist teacher allows women to admit their transient status---and their tourist gaze" as a legitimate part of becoming a better teacher for other classrooms and other sites of pedagogy. It has none of the expectations that the teacher must bring the gifts of modernity to "save" First Nations' children, but as a discourse it positions the student and

the community as a resource to be exploited with an insistence that they have and share their "unique" cultural practices.

The postmodern teacher-tourist was not always easily mapped onto the identity of "woman" teacher in the North. The tourist's distance or detachment to people and place undercuts the assumption that woman teachers should know and love their students. This affective characteristic seemed to define the good "woman" teacher in the North. One woman in speaking about her husband who had experienced difficulty teaching in the North seemed to suggest this: "I think I was accepted because I wasn't a tourist; Tom [her husband] was." Another teacher suggested that she could not be the teacher she wanted to be because she was transient and so not as emotionally connected to her students and the community: "My heart isn't totally here. I know that this isn't permanent."

At the same time teachers spoke of the limits they saw in becoming affectively connected to their students:

There was a primary teacher here last year that at one point referred to her students as my kids, 'oh my kids are doing this.' I do [say] that. Jane does that. We all do that. And a parent overheard it and freaked out. It was a very big thing. And that teacher was sat down and there were meetings. The community was really upset when they found out because they are not your kids and don't you ever think they are 'your kids.'

Against the discourse of the more detached teacher-tourist, the discursive framing of the teacher here as the mother-teacher, a "somebody" who students depend on, neglects the history and racial construction of the "white" mother-teacher and her contemporary and historical relationship with Aboriginal students and their communities. This local incident plays out actual power struggle between the white mother-teacher and the Aboriginal mother-teacher occurring on a larger scale as First Nation peoples seek greater control over the education of their children. In the history of Aboriginal education it has been the white teachers and administrators who, as agents of the Federal government, have been central in making educational decisions for and about Aboriginal children. Yet this notion of motherly love is what some women have drawn on in organizing and legitimating their presence as professional "women" teachers in the North.

One teacher described the guilt she was going to feel in leaving the community:

I know it's going to be really, really hard to leave this place. There's a lot of guilt associated with leaving here. I can never promise my students that I'm going to be here for them. I could never promise that I'd be here next year. Some ask for this. Some want to but are too afraid because they don't get it. A lot of the hatred they feel for us is because we do go.

The position of the teacher-tourist and her detachment prevents the guilt that is associated with the mother-teacher so affectively involved with the community.

Conclusion: Women Teacher-Travelers

Clearly the Canadian women working in isolated Northern Aboriginal communities involved with this study were struggling with the itinerancy in relation to the gendered and racialized identity of woman teacher in the North. It remains to be seen whether in fact Australian women reiterate these struggles and in what way. I suspect it will be the case.

The first half of this paper offers the beginning of a comparison between Australia and Northern Canada with regard to the discursive representation of these isolated areas and the history of women, mostly white European women, who traveled to these sites. In both cases the Bush/Outback/Desert of Australia and the North of Canada have been places organized as feminine for the male physical exploration and adventure, and at times moral and spiritual challenges. They are places in which women, that is white women, were absent. I have argued that women who travel threaten notions of femininity in general, but that those women who travel to Northern Canada or to the Outback have been viewed as particularly aberrant—They are "out of place" historically, discursively, and psychologically.

If the association of women and travel is suspect as I have suggested it is, then mission of the modernist pilgrim and the novelty-seeking postmodern tourist are discourses that work to legitimize, to some degree, travel for women, particularly when she is positioned as teacher. As women teachers, the pilgrim, through self-sacrifice and enduring the wilderness, brings progress and certainty to the marginalized; the teacher-tourist, in the self-interested search for the new and unique, procures educational resources and knowledge of the "other" for those back home. In relation to the pilgrim woman teacher, indigenous students and their communities are delineated as "in need" of Western education and progress and civilization. With the tourist teacher, they become a "resource" for the teacher's personal and professional development and the education of future non-indigenous populations. Discourses of itinerancy support the tourist-teacher position, but seriously undermines the desire for power and influence, as well as the affective investment in students that would seem to name and define the "woman" teacher. Both the pilgrim and tourist teacher reinscribe colonial attitudes towards the Other, reinvoking British imperialism, to the detriment of First Nations/Aboriginal people. Women teachers as pilgrims or tourists are clearly out of place, politically in regards to issues of social justice and equity for indigenous people.

Earlier in this paper I raised the question whether the North is fatal or restorative to women and for women teachers in particular. It is clear to me that the North can a disruptive force, exposing and shifting assumptions of self and other, and at this time, demanding more than simple acknowledgement but instead a re-examination of the teaching self and its psychic, social and historical investments. Such a re-examination can only be viewed as positive. It is apparent that there are powerful desires and fantasies that are incorporated into various discursive positions of the woman teacher in the North. The intensity of the desire "to be somebody" and the dream of a space open and available to fulfil such desires, as well as the fantasy of the "return home" that highlight both the fear of and desire for the First Nations "other", suggests that gender and racial organization continue to impact powerfully on the lives of women teachers and their students who live in the North and perhaps too in the Australia Outback.

One place for the examination of these desires, and the discourses they encompass, is in the preservice and inservice education of teachers and teacher-educators. What was evident to me in the interviews was that beginning teachers could most easily name their moments of disjuncture; their un-homely moments, that could be used to expose and perhaps alter the construction of the teaching self and "other." More experienced teachers in the study were aware of their struggles but seemed more habituated to ignore or deny these moments as significant. It may be in pre-service education is one important site together where, with First Nations educators, reconfigured identities and identifications can be developed, where other fantasies can be imagined, about the teaching self and other that might forward a more just, equitable and compassionate society, both in the North and in the south. Such work will not be easy but in an increasingly mobile world, where, literally and figuratively, we are all becoming travelers and itinerants, what could be more important.

Notes

1. In Canada, the term "Indian" has been largely replaced by the "First Nations" or "Aboriginal" and sometimes "Native." Martha, the First Nations woman in my study, used "Native" to refer to herself. In the context of this paper the terms "Aboriginal" or "First Nations" are used somewhat synonymously to refer to indigenous populations and follow what was suggested in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In more specific usage "Aboriginal" refers to those peoples once called "Indians" including, among many others, the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Mohawk, Haida, and Ojibway. "First Nations" is a more inclusive term referring to all indigenous peoples including the Inuit. Inuit has replaced Eskimo.

In Australia the common term for indigenous people is Aboriginal which is distinguished from the Torres Strait peoples, a group of indigenous people located in the Northeast coastal area of Australia. "Aborigines" is a term used in Australia but not in Canada.

2. These names are pseudonyms. With these exceptions, no names or pseudonyms have been provided to any others in the study in order to avoid drawing excessive attention to individuals and away from the multiple and contradictory discourses invoked individually and collectively by the participants. Those individuals who have been named appear have been cited in previous published materials.
3. In this paper I speak of "the North" as a geographical location, referring the area of land in Canada that is sparsely populated, most frequently by First Nations people, in Arctic, sub-Arctic climatic zones or by the Canadian Shield. Much of this area is above the 60th parallel. It includes the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut (formerly part of the Northwest Territories but now a newly established eastern territory populated primarily by Inuit people). "The North" can also refer to the northern sections of the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland/ Labrador.

Historically what has been designated "the North" in Canada has shifted with settlement patterns and subsequent governmental organization. Much of the southern Canada was initially considered part of "the North" and considered a frontier and wilderness area, but with increasing settlement non-Aboriginal populations, the designation shifted ever north and westwards. "The North" also functions in the collective consciousness of Canadians as a form of identification. Although the majority of Canada's population lives in the urban south, within two hours drive from the American border, our identity is formed in part by identification with the "North" and a cold, wilderness environment. As the "North" of North America, in our national anthem we describe ourselves as the "true North, strong and free."

4. To date the study has involved interviewing twenty-five women who were at the time of the study teaching in Northern, First Nations communities. Interviews were conducted in three of communities; and several were conducted at a southern. Three of the participants were participated in a series of individual, semi-structured interviews over the time of the researcher's visit to their community. The majority of teachers interviewed were first- or second-year teachers. For further information about the study and its findings see H. Harper, (in press, a), "There is no way to prepare for this": Ten women teaching in First Nations communities in Northern Ontario—Issues for teacher education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*; H. Harper, (in press/b), 'When the big snow melts': White women teaching in the Canadian North in C. Levine-Rasky (Ed.), *Working through whiteness: International perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press; H. Harper (2000a) White

women teaching in the North: Problematic identity on the shores of Hudson Bay. In *Dismantling White Privilege: Pedagogy, Politics, and Whiteness*, Nelson M. Rodriguez and Leila E. Villaverde, (Eds.), New York: Peter Lang, and finally H. Harper (2000b), *The least harmful English: Teaching identity and language*, in B. Barrell and R. Hammett (Eds.), *Advocating Change: Contemporary Issues in Subject English*, Toronto: Irwin Press.

5. Racial identity is complex and problematic concept. Scholarship suggests that race is a social and historical construction that has material effects on individuals and on society in general. There are local understandings and practices which determines who is and is not a First Nations person and, for example, then able to attend and speak at community meetings. In Canada, as in the United States, there are also legal discourses that determine Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status in relation to treaty rights.

Several of the subjects in my study self-identified as white as in the case of Robin and Nell; and Native in the case of Martha during the series of interviews. The others did not. In this study, I am drawing on their own identification while recognizing that race is a socially constructed, discursive and linguistic performance that extends beyond phenotype and beyond the particular ways and times in which individuals position themselves.

6. More research is required to determine how First Nations' women and femininity were organized in relation to travel within their own ethnic groups, if indeed such a relationship is translatable or intelligible within cultural understandings. The quotes from Enloe and Wolff cited on the following page suggest that, universally women are associated with "home" rather than "away" and with a stabilized domesticity; however in the case of nomadic and semi-nomadic First Nations groups, there might be specificities or variations or incommensurabilities that needs to be explored further.
7. If teacher identity is born of modernity, then the idea of "women teachers " might invoke a degree of suspicion, consciously or unconsciously, considering that modernity and its assumption of a male subject has not always served women well. Greater surveillance of women teachers might well result. Certainly the historical and ongoing regulation of women teachers has been well documented.
8. The construction of the First Nations woman as the "mother-teacher bringing progress to her own people" is only one discursive positioning. The construction I am suggesting here comes from discussions with Martha but also appears to be the frame organizing some of the documents concerning First Nations teachers in the North. More research needs to be conducted in this area perhaps by those with more intimate knowledge about First Nations cultures.
9. See for example, Isabella Bird (1879), *A lady's life in the Rocky Mountains*, London: John Murray; Anne Deans Cameron (1986). *The new North: An account of a woman's 1908 journey through Canada to the Arctic*. Saskatoon, Sask: Western Producer Prairie Books;
10. See for example Ethel Wilson (1954), *Swamp Angel*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart; Margaret Atwood, 1979, *Surfacing*; London: Virago, *Wilderness Tips*(1992), London: Virago; Marion Engel, (1976) *Bear*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart; Gwendolyn MacEwen (1987) *Afterworlds*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
11. For discussions of First Nations Education in Canada see Battiste, M. Barman, J. (1995). *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds*. Vancouver: UBC Press; *the Canadian Journal of Native Education*; and the government document: The 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples.

12. See for example: James Reaney's play *Wacousta!*; Robert Kroetsch (1973) *Gone Indian*; Alice Munro's (1968) short story "The Dance of the Happy Shades"; Ernest Thompson Seton (1959) *Two Little Savages*; and of course, Grey Owl (1989) *The Men of the last Frontier* and (1970) *Pilgrims of the Wild*.

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