

Living in Indigenous Sovereignty:  
Relational Accountability and the Stories of White Settler Anti-colonial and Decolonial Activists  
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## Abstract

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Canadian processes such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and Comprehensive Land Claims as well as flashpoint events (Simpson & Ladner, 2010) such as the Kanien'kehaka resistance at Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawà:ke (the "Oka Crisis") and more recently, the Idle No More movement, signal to Canadians that something is amiss. What may be less visible to Canadians are the 400 years of colonial oppression experienced and the 400 years of resistance enacted by Indigenous peoples on their lands, which are currently occupied by the state of Canada. It is in the context of historical and ongoing Canadian colonialism: land theft, dispossession, marginalization, and genocide, and in the context of the overwhelming denial of these realities by white settler Canadians that this study occurs.

In order to break through settler Canadian denial, and to inspire greater numbers of white settler Canadians to initiate and/or deepen their anti-colonial and/or decolonial understandings and work, this study presents extended life narratives of white settler Canadians who have engaged deeply in anti-colonial and/or decolonial work as a major life focus. In this study, such work is framed as *living in Indigenous sovereignty*, or living in an awareness that we are on Indigenous lands containing their own protocols, stories, obligations, and opportunities which have been understood and practiced by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.

Inspired by Indigenous and anti-oppressive methodologies, I articulate and utilize an anti-colonial research methodology. I use participatory and narrative methods, which are informed and politicized through words gifted by Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers. The result is research as a transformative, relational, and decolonizing process. In addition to the extended life narratives, this research yields information regarding connections between social work education, social work practice, and the anti-colonial/decolonial learnings and work of five research subjects who have, or are completing, social work degrees. The dissertation closes with an exploration of what can be learned through the narrative stories, with recommendations for white settler peoples and for social work, and with recommendations for future research.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late brother Byron Matwewinin, who left us too early in my opinion, during the time I was engaged in my PhD program.

It would be an understatement to say that Byron has brought much healing to my life and has shared many teachings. He adopted me as his sister at a time when I was most in need of relations. Despite this, when working on my studies I generally didn't ask for his input. Why? Because I wanted to be critical. I didn't want to let myself or my ancestors off the hook when it came to colonialism and decolonization. And I didn't really want to hear what Byron, with his big old heart, would have to say about this.

Several years ago I was working through issues around terminology for this dissertation. I wanted to know how Indigenous peoples on whose lands I reside refer to white settlers. I decided to go and see Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr), who has been a teacher to me. As it happened, Byron also had some things he wanted to discuss with Dave, so we travelled to Sagkeeng First Nation together. As I offered tobacco and gifts, Dave shared some of the words he has heard used in Anishinaabemowin and his understanding of their meanings. Byron asked his questions, received guidance, and we drove back to Winnipeg.

A couple weeks later, I received a phone call from Byron, telling me that he had dreamed my answer regarding Indigenous terminology for white settlers, but couldn't quite remember. [I didn't ask you Byron. I distinctly did not pass you tobacco. And now you call to tell me that you had, and lost, the answer?] Another week or so passed. Byron called again. He dreamed my answer. *Creator's creation.*

Not terribly impressive to someone who grew up religious right, and finds its rhetoric to be oppressive. They were just words I had heard a thousand times, and they sounded suspiciously like we-are-all-one kumbaya colourblindness BS.

And then, perhaps six months later, he made his journey into the spirit world.  
And his words remained.

*Creator's creation.*

This is how we refer to you.

This is who you are.

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## Chapter 1

### Introductions

Canadian journalist, author, and activist Naomi Klein began her sold-out talk to a Winnipeg audience in April 2016 by acknowledging they were gathered on Treaty 1 territory. She continued, “It is not enough for us to simply say that this is Indigenous land. We need to *act* like it is Indigenous land” (25:36-25:46). This is what I mean by *Living in Indigenous sovereignty*, a guiding concept of this thesis. I first encountered similar phrases in the writings of white Australian scholars Fiona Nicholl (2004b), and Michelle Carey (2008), who wrote of *being in Indigenous sovereignty*, and *being in Aboriginal sovereignty*, respectively. Months later, I would hear Dawnis Kennedy (2015) speak, suggesting a paradigm shift for non-Indigenous peoples. Rather than seeing ourselves solely as main characters in our own stories, she suggested that we begin to think of ourselves as characters in the stories of Indigenous peoples. *Living in Indigenous sovereignty*. For me, this represents a powerful shift because as I, a Euro-Canadian, white settler colonizer, invader, occupier, re-settler, *Wasicu*, *Aamitigoozhi*, and/or *Wemistigosi*<sup>1</sup> begin to see myself this way, I can begin to sow the seeds of a different reality.

From Australia, another settler colonial state with similar enough Indigenous-settler relations to allow for connective theorizing, Nicholl (2004a) writes, “The legacy of *Terra Nullius* sticks to our shoes with the dirt as we walk over Indigenous sovereignties everyday” (para. 1). She (2000) sees “the ongoing failure of white Australians to engage with the reality of Indigenous sovereignty” (p. 370) as the “persistent failure of white people to respond appropriately to the true stories of Indigenous people” (p. 370). Nicholl (2004b) writes,

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<sup>1</sup> These terms and others will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, where I explore terminology and colonial location.

As long as Indigenous sovereignty continues to be dismissed (as an ‘impractical rights agenda’) there is literally no ground for better relationships between Indigenous and other Australians... my experience suggests that when we acknowledge the ground of Indigenous sovereignty the axis of national drama begins to shift, enabling white Australians *and* non-Indigenous Australians racialised as non-white to explore less invasive ways of being towards those in whose sovereignty we stand. (para. 35-36)

Nicholl (2000) notes,

The current terms of engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are determined [in part] by a non-Indigenous system of governance... Indigenous people will be enriched rather than robbed in their interactions with non-Indigenous people only when their political and legal sovereignty is acknowledged and empowered. (pp. 384-385)

As Indigenous peoples articulate practices of living their sovereignty, they often do this outside of a need for state recognition (Coulthard, 2014; Nii Gaani Aki Inini, 2016b; Simpson, 2011).

While simultaneously expecting more of the state, and working towards decolonial transformation at multiple levels; and while recognizing that as settlers, our relationship with Indigenous peoples will no time soon be unmediated by the state or by its (or our) systems and institutions; I believe that *living in Indigenous sovereignty* sets an important frame for decolonial action. Indigenous sovereignty *just is*, regardless of the state’s opinion. Recognizing and living this can serve as an orienting framework for settler lives and relations. It represents that part of us that can choose how we relate with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands; the part that is not governed by the state.

Nicholl (2004a) recognizes Indigenous sovereignty not as “a philosophical abstraction but an ontological belonging in this place (See Moreton-Robinson, 2003)” (para. 6). Because sovereignty belongs to Indigenous peoples, to be defined by them, Nicholl (2004a) notes its “constitutively indefinable quality” (para.6) for non-Indigenous peoples. In fact, she (Nicholl, 2004b) writes, “insofar as we presume to know what ‘it’ is or is not, white people can find ourselves working against Indigenous sovereignty even (or perhaps especially) as we are

consciously working for it” (p. 31). Noting these limits and its relational quality, Nicholl (2000) advises those who wish to support Indigenous sovereignty that “*what* you know will turn out to be less important than *who* you know and what you *cannot* know” (p. 385).

In many ways, this work is motivated by my wish to gain a deeper and more embodied understanding of what living in Indigenous sovereignty could mean in my life. Having come to pursue decolonization in varying, often problematic, and generally increasing ways for almost twenty years, I also know how useful and comforting it might have been to receive more explicit and nuanced guidance from other anti-colonial white settler occupiers in addition to what I was receiving from generous Indigenous and/or racially marginalized friends, relatives, and mentors who have informed my living and my work. Thus, this study is also motivated by my wish to gift it to other white settler occupiers who are seeking to initiate or deepen their own anti-colonial and/or decolonial work. With the recent advent of Idle No More, a new iteration of centuries of Indigenous struggle on the lands occupied by the Canadian state that calls for settler participation (Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014), and with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada having come to a close, issuing its recommendations and calls to action, the timing is good. Increasing numbers of settlers are wondering what they can do to support resistance and reconciliation.

### **Introducing Myself**

I come to this work from what are perhaps unlikely places. With Swedish, Saami, German, and Scots-Irish ancestors who “settled” on the lands of the Anishinaabe occupied by the state of Wisconsin, and the lands of the Omaha occupied by the state of Nebraska, I grew up in the Evangelical religious right. Surrounded by some very kind people and some powerful teachings, there was a time when this life held much meaning for me. I received religious

teachings that have, in some cases, strengthened my decolonial value framework. I also grew up in a violent and patriarchal home, which I increasingly recognized as a teen and I began to rage. I was sensitive to the hypocrisy and injustice around me, and in certain instances these left big marks on me. What I wouldn't become aware of until later was my socialization as a colonizer.

When I was eight years old my family moved to a wooded suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. Soon after, as horses had become my passion, my parents gifted one to me. He became one of my closest childhood friends, and I would spend much time in the woods, walking the trails alone or on horseback. There was a particular place on the top of a hill with huge boulders where I would sit, feeling its power and wondering about who and what had been there before. I was saddened when the area became developed and subdivided, roads put in and trees cut down. When I was sixteen, my family moved out of the country to engage in missions work, and I began to study social work at a Baptist university. There I studied under Dr. Nicholas Cooper-Lewter who taught about structural racism and became a mentor, while as an African-American teaching social change, he received death threats from conservative alumni. Another mentor, a white sociology professor who taught liberation theology, was fired after an influential local pastor complained about his progressive views regarding Christian heterosexism. These moments enraged me. I knew in my core they were wrong. During this time I also began to realize the historical multiplicity of Christian social and political stances: up to that point, I was convinced being Christian equaled being part of the religious right. I felt both liberated and betrayed. Justice issues became the wedge between myself and the church.

After graduating with my BSW, I joined the United States Peace Corps and was sent to St. Lucia, where I lived in a mountain village and worked in an urban alternative high school. As I studied the St. Lucian Creole language, I began to understand the connection between language



and worldview, and read Michael Aubertin's thesis (Aubertin, 1987) explaining connections between slavery, intergenerational trauma, and gender norms in St. Lucia. Upon returning, I was employed as a school social worker at an Indigenous alternative school in Minneapolis. I knew little about the history of Indigenous peoples or about the colonial dynamics operating in my own beliefs and actions. Despite my best intentions, I likely did more harm than good. Because of my belief in learning the language of those with whom I am working, I began to study *Anishinaabemowin*. I attended weekly community language table gatherings and became close friends with the school's language and culture teacher, Lorraine (Whitecrow) Derman. She coached me on the language and introduced me to Anishinaabe protocols. When the school's students were invited to a ceremonial youth gathering and staff were needed to chaperone, Lorraine and I volunteered.

The sacred fire was to be kept during the entire gathering, and being a morning person, I volunteered to accompany a student in putting logs on the fire at 4 a.m. The lights I saw that morning, which the student did not, were something I had no explanation for. I spoke with Knowledge Keeper Dave Courchene Jr. (Nii Gaani Aki Inini) from Sagkeeng First Nation, who had been leading the gathering; and my feeling, along with his counsel, led me to experience what I had seen as a call. When, a year or so later, I developed joint pain eventually diagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis, Lorraine insisted we make a trip to Sagkeeng First Nation to seek help from Dave. He explained that as the earth is experiencing pain at her destruction by humans, many women are resonating this pain in their bodies. He invited us to stay for their ceremonies and asked questions on my behalf. He shared that I would heal faster by connecting with ceremonies, and Dave invited me to attend a number of upcoming ceremonies, including their Earth Lodge. Determined to defeat my disease, and wanting to respect the call I had experienced, I began to

travel multiple times each year to Sagkeeng. In these travels, I connected with Zoongigaabowitmiskoakikwe who was a helper at the ceremonies and lived in Minneapolis. She would become a close friend and mentor, sharing teachings and spiritual guidance. I was influenced by a sentiment expressed by a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the ceremonial community led by Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene), that by attending Indigenous ceremonies, non-Indigenous peoples can learn the spiritual skills necessary to connect directly with their own ancestors and ancestral traditions.

In the late nineties, I began my MSW program in Minneapolis, focusing on anti-oppression, intergenerational trauma, and clinical social work. In my thesis work, I pondered my own white American culture and the sickness I observed in it (us), and recognized a connection with trauma symptoms. I looked at cultural trauma and healing with regards to the transformation of racism and oppression white folks are socialized into perpetrating. And I got tired of making the long trip to Manitoba multiple times a year. Thus, after I graduated, I found work as a school social worker in rural Manitoba. As I continued to attend ceremonies, I met Byron Matwewinin. He recognized me from dreams he had, and asked to adopt me as his sister. He explained to me the meaning of this ceremonial adoption, and he became, as was noted in the dedication of this dissertation, an important and healing influence in my life.

The exploration I had done during my master's thesis persisted inside of me. I became aware of my Saami ancestry, and began to connect with networks of North American Saami peoples. When I was invited to write a piece for a North American Saami journal, I was connected with Anno Nakai, who is Navajo and Saami, by phone. When I described to her the work I had engaged in during my masters program and continued to work on, she said, "It

sounds like you are talking about decolonization.” And it made sense to me. Now I had a word for what I was doing. I began my doctoral studies in 2007 with this focus. The timing was great. There was a solid and growing body of interdisciplinary literature by Indigenous scholars and activists (e.g. Adams, 1999; Alfred, 2005; Cardinal, 1969; Manuel & Posluns, 1974; Simpson, 2008). Regan, in 2006, had written, “We are still overly-focused on researching, analyzing, and interpreting Indigenous experience. What is missing is a corresponding research emphasis on our own experience as descendants of Settlers who colonized” (p. 35). I would become aware of her work, Freeman’s (2000) *Distant Relations*, and the work of Adam Barker (2006). During my studies I learned from the work of Indigenous social work scholars (e.g. Hart, 2002, 2007; Blackstock, 2009; Sinclair, Hart, & Bruyere, 2009) and applied the anti-colonial and decolonial material I read to social work both academically, and in practice as I continued to work as a counsellor and therapist. I also, upon moving to Winnipeg shortly before the advent of Idle No More, became more connected with local activist circles and Indigenous-led initiatives and events.

As I continued to attend ceremonies and listen to Indigenous Knowledge Keepers speak about their connection to the land, I knew I didn’t understand. Despite having powerful childhood experiences on the land, there was a different quality to what they were saying. In many ways, my life as a settler seems intent on disconnecting me from land. As I move from building, to car on pavement, to building, I might get a few breaths of fresh air in between if I am lucky. I wanted to understand more, and felt responsible to learn how to connect in a deeper way. There were a number of times when I asked the land to teach me. In November 2014, I had a dream that has greatly impacted my emotional and spiritual understanding. *I dreamed of walking over an area of wooded land in which sat a clearing and a house. My attention was being guided*

toward a number of things. I was shown a few raspberry bushes on the periphery of where someone had come in with heavy machinery and removed a section of land and the majority of the raspberry bushes, leaving a large hole in the earth. My attention drawn to an individual raspberry, it was explained to me the process by which the raspberry plant gathers energy over its growing season, the berries gathering vitality from the earth, the water, and the sun as they ripen. As the raspberries ripen and become red, this represents the fullness of months of gathering nourishment in order to create their ultimate gift to other beings--a beautiful, sweet, ripe, red raspberry. When picked, the ripe raspberry almost falls off of the bush in an effort to gift itself to others. In my dream, I understood the process and the gift as the plant's way, and land's way, of expressing its love and kindness. When I experienced this in my dream, I was overcome by the waves of love given by the land, which brought tears to my eyes and generated a realization of how greatly the land was honouring me by offering the berries. A feeling of immense gratitude and love for the land welled up in me in response to this gift. I realized in a new way just how insulting and violent it was that humans had opted to bring in heavy machinery to gouge out a section of land and raspberry bushes in order to demand and take this gift on our own terms; how it was a slap in the face of the lovingness with which the land seeks to give. In my dream, my attention was then guided to a cluster of large boulders covered with mosses and lichens. It was communicated to me that those rocks are our relatives, and they are like us. The mosses are their skin. This love and connection I experienced from the land in this dream inspired in me a different motivation to find a way to change my exploitative relationship with her. In the past, my motivations had been fear (of the crises in store if we don't change), and justice (an ethic of doing the right thing). My new motivation was love. Not the abstract, vague love of the past, but a concrete, embodied, and more powerful love. Even now that I have had the

dream, I forget the feeling sometimes. I trust it is slowly being integrated into my being. When I need to, I can access it.

## **Introducing the Research**

In addition to being a personal quest to work toward a more embodied way of living in Indigenous sovereignty and a desire to gift other anti-colonial settler occupiers, this research is a response to calls from Indigenous scholars. For example, Simpson (2008) states that in order for the Eighth Fire of peaceful co-existence foreseen according to Anishinaabe prophecies to be lit, “settler society must... choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations, and to join with us in building a sustainable future based upon mutual recognition, justice, and respect” (p. 14). In the context of Minnesota’s dispossession of the Dakota peoples, Waziyatawin (2008) calls upon *Wasicu* [white] Minnesotans who have benefitted from Dakota dispossession to learn the true history regarding *Wasicu*-Dakota relations, to help repair tremendous harms and injustice, to take part in land restoration and reparations, to help restore the integrity of the land and people, and to participate in decolonization as the creation of a new social order in which all peoples will be liberated. Harold Johnson (2007) calls upon the dominant culture to free our minds from tyranny; to cease assuming that our structures are natural, necessary, and superior; to end our domination; and to return to the original intention of treaty and recognize that we are relatives in order to walk into the future in a good way.

The research question of this study is: *what can we learn about living in Indigenous sovereignty from the lives, thoughts, and work of white settler occupiers who have engaged deeply in anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work?* A sub-question, as the research unfolded, became: *how can one do research in Indigenous sovereignty, when the research*

*involves a white settler occupier researcher, white settler occupier research subjects, and anti-colonial aims?* Studies of the lives and work of white settlers are not common, but are not absent from the literature. I build upon a history of studies of the lives of white anti-racism activists (e.g. O'Brien, 2001; Thompson, 2001; Thompson, Schaefer, & Brod, 2003), and on Wilmot's (2005) work on white anti-racism in Canada. I build upon the theoretical work of Lowman and Barker (2015). I build upon studies such as those of Regan (2006, 2010), Carey (2008), Wallace (2013), and Hiller (2013). Regan (2006, 2010) engages autobiographical material, national narrative, and *unsettling* processes as she relates as a settler with Indigenous diplomacy, Canadian apology, and state reconciliation processes. Carey (2008) uses radio documentary interview as a method to access the stories of non-Aboriginal Australians who have close relationships and meaningful connections with Aboriginal people, publically representing the ways intercultural relationships enrich non-Aboriginal people's lives and influence their identity development. She writes,

The significance of these biographies and autobiographies are that they provide glimpses into other relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people based on familial obligation, friendship, reciprocity and love. Thus they provide for more complex understandings of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in the face of racism and white oppression. (pp. 63-64)

Wallace (2013) examines grassroots peace-building between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous activists in his case study of several solidarity sites. Hiller (2013) takes a narrative approach to understand the ways "white settlers develop and sustain shifts in in their own spacial consciousness and praxis that support recognition of Indigenous rights and relations to land" (p. 22) and how "such shifts shape, inform, or limit their efforts to provoke similar forms of consciousness and praxis among other settlers, particularly in sites of overt conflict over Indigenous lands" (p. 22).

Dynamic and complementary tensions and paradox weave through and between elements of this research study (the literature, the consultations, the narratives). Harvey (2013) writes,

Naming and living the edges of paradox is the only way for those of us who are white to move into justice work with authenticity, competency and ground-under-our-feet. On the flip side, I'm convinced that failure to see, understand and wrestle (hard) with paradox is why many of us who are white and well-intentioned, justice-loving, and longing to be counted against racism stay stuck. (para. 4)

As will become clear to the reader if it isn't already, given the state of the structures and systems of socialization operating on the lands occupied by Canada, Euro-Canadians cannot currently be *other* than colonizers. However, we are *more* than colonizers. LaRocque (2010) writes,

Inasmuch as we must seek to recognize the faces of both the colonizer and the colonized, we must at the same time acknowledge that we are human beings and, as such, are more than the sum total of our colonial parts. (p. 13)

Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) says, "I know that the literature is complicated, the relationships are complicated, the history is complicated because of colonialism and the racialization and the positionality of that." Yet, she urged me to leave room "for that humanity in this whole understanding. For real people with hearts, and minds, and bodies, and spirits that know something." Certainly a dominant and critical framework of white anti-racism and settler decolonial work is that of accountability and taking direction (e.g. Wilmot, 2005; Gehl, n.d.). Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) offers a counterpoint to this:

You are a spirit too. You have a spirit too. And you have a purpose, and you came to this world for a purpose. You have a work to do that's your own. And that's okay. And you don't need permission from other people for that. That's between you and the spirit.

Mills (2016) writes,

The most radical thing anyone can do with respect to decolonization is to allow that he or she is a sacred person, has gifts others need and is worthy of receiving others' gifts, and is part of creation. Yes, it truly is important to recognize that one is a settler but that should never be an impediment to the practise of Anishinaabe law on Anishinaabe territory and that means standing within creation, not taking a dejected step back from it. (para. 27)

This, of course, took me right back to the words of Matwewinin, as described in the dedication page of this study. *Creator's creation*. In many ways, the tensions that run through this study are about *who* we are—colonizers, occupiers, invaders, settlers, spirit, and creator's creation, and *where* we are—on Indigenous lands and in Indigenous sovereignty.

Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) reveals another tension when she states, “A lot of the colonial, anti-colonial literature isn't about love. It's just about responsibility.” I think this is particularly true from the settler side of the equation, due in part to centuries of socialization into frameworks of unaccountability, and to socialization that cuts off the mind from the heart and spirit (Ani, 1994; Spretnak, 1997). Feminist (e.g. Collins, 2000; Nicholl, 2000) and Indigenous scholars have sought to disrupt this disconnection. For example, Hart (2007) writes of Indigenous research values, involving the “awareness and connection between logic of the mind and feelings of the heart” (p. 132) and the “deep listening and hearing with more than the ears, where one would...pay attention to how his/her heart and sense of being is emotionally and spiritually moved” (p. 132). Following what I have learned from relationships with and teachings from Indigenous peoples, in this study I aim to correct the disconnection of settler decolonization literature from love, and present a work that is about responsibility, accountability, reciprocity, spirit, *and* love in addition to a host of other things. It is my belief, from what I have gained before and during this study, that this is a meaningful and balanced way to approach the work of living in Indigenous sovereignty.

Following this chapter of introductions, I engage knowledge and relations for learning in Indigenous sovereignty (literature review). This includes an examination of terminology and colonial location, colonialism and settler colonialism, and anti-colonialism and decolonization. My treatment of anti-colonialism and decolonization includes a look at Indigenous and



Indigenous-led resistance and white settler decolonization and anti-colonialism. The bulk of the chapter is a focus on listening in Indigenous sovereignty: listening to what Indigenous scholars, activists and Knowledge Keepers are saying about white settler occupiers living ethically on Indigenous lands among Indigenous peoples. This, following Mills' (2016) counsel urging settlers to live, "not merely making space for indigenous voices but acting, choosing, thinking, feeling as if what those voices say about this land and how to be on it really matters" (para. 27).

Next, I turn to focus on doing research in Indigenous sovereignty. I review the colonizing dynamics of mainstream research, narrate my search for an optimal methodological fit, and articulate the anti-colonial research methodology and narrative methods used in the study. I describe how the value framework of the methodology was put into practice during the research process. I describe my process of engaging community, of interviewing research subjects, and of constructing the life story narratives.

From there, I present the research findings: the narratives of fourteen white settler occupiers who have engaged deeply in anti-colonial and/or decolonial work for at least two years, and usually many more, as a major life focus. I describe their identities and early influences, their learning and engagement processes, the types of work they have taken part in, and some of their experiences and learnings from their work. I then share my reflections regarding the narratives. Being that my doctoral work is through a faculty of social work, I examine and reflect on the connections between the social work education, social work practice and decolonial work of the five research subjects who have (or are working on) social work degrees. The dissertation is concluded with a review of its contributions, thoughts on its strengths and limitations, general recommendations, social work related recommendations, and closing thoughts.

## Chapter 2

### **Learning in Indigenous Sovereignty: Engaging Knowledge and Relations**

When the focus is learning within the context of Indigenous Sovereignty, academic conventions of what constitutes scholarly knowledge will need to be widened. Battiste and Henderson (2000) state, “To learn about Indigenous perspectives requires a different method of research” (p. 41). Indigenous knowledges are accessed increasingly through books and journals, and traditionally through the intergenerational transmission of traditional teachings, conversations with Elders, collective processes, the land, and through “the spiritual realm, coming to individuals through dreams, visions, [and] ceremony” (Simpson, 2014, p. 10; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Indigenous knowledges are shared in written, oral, and experiential forms, and through a web of relationships (Nicholl, 2000; Sinclair & Cariou, 2012; Simpson, 2014). Thus, learning in Indigenous sovereignty may include reading texts, attending community gatherings, following Indigenous protocols for seeking knowledge such as spending time with Elders (Battiste & Henderson, 2000), land-based protocols and pedagogies (Simpson, 2014), fasting, and dreaming. Leona Star-Manoakesick (personal communication, April 9, 2016) shared challenges of gathering knowledge related to Indigenous ways of being and Indigenous knowledges, in that they are not always documented. She says, “You can’t necessarily have an understanding of that without participating and experiencing it for yourself” (L. Star-Manoakesick, personal communication, April 9, 2016). In the previous chapter, knowledge from community gatherings, spoken presentations, Knowledge Keepers, conversations, consultations, and a dream were shared. In this chapter, the knowledge and relations engaged are also varied. When oral presentations, video documented or transcribed, are used as sources of knowledge, these are chosen carefully. Some of the video sources document gatherings I have

attended and experienced for myself where esteemed Indigenous community leaders, activists, and/or Knowledge Keepers have spoken. Other video sources document teachings of reputed Indigenous scholars, activists, and/or Knowledge Keepers. I base my understanding of the reputation of these sources on my observation as to the frequency with which they are invited as speakers at community events, the numbers of people who attend the ceremonies and/or events they lead, and/or their publications, inclusion in publications, and/or the frequency with which I see their work cited in scholarly literature. I also rely on personal communications in this chapter and throughout the thesis. Those whose communications I share are also carefully chosen based on their scholarship and/or community leadership. Although some of the sources cited are nontraditional with respect to Western academic hegemony, I believe them to be trustworthy in the context of Indigenous sovereignty.

As may be evident, my focus on living and learning in Indigenous sovereignty has meant that in most cases, the words of Indigenous peoples have been prioritized. In this chapter, I engage with Indigenous knowledges and relations in order to learn more about important themes to consider for myself and for other white settler occupiers who wish to pursue living in Indigenous sovereignty. I note here that many of these themes are also very present in the interview data and thus the research subject narratives. In this chapter, I also engage literatures exploring foundational concepts and practices of this study. Dawnis Kennedy (2016) shared the following:

It sounds like you're asking that question for yourself: *How do I live in Indigenous sovereignty?* And you look at the literature, but you're finding *these are the things that are important to me to learn how to do so that I can live in Indigenous sovereignty*. I see a process of going out, just like anybody else, *what do I want to know?* And then going and finding people, finding Elders, finding mentors. *What is it that I can pick up for my bundle, to be able to [live in Indigenous sovereignty]?* And then learning from everyone...It's about finding all of the people who are able to help you fill your bundle to do what you want to do. For you, it's like *this is the life that I want to live. What do I*

*need?* And then going through that process of picking all that up. (D. Kennedy, personal communication, April 9, 2016)

In many ways, Dawnis' words frame the entire study. For me, they have particular applications to this chapter in which I engage knowledge and relations foundational to this study: oral and written literature, knowledge shared at community gatherings, and knowledge shared by traditional Knowledge keepers from whom I have sought specific guidance using traditional protocols. These are explored within the spheres of terminology, colonialism and settler colonialism, anti-colonialism and decolonization, and listening in Indigenous sovereignty.

### **Terminology and Colonial Location**

LaRocque (2010) says, "Terminology about identities is a minefield, given this history of stereotypes and legislative divisions, *real* cultural and historical differences" (p. 6). Terminology regarding both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be complex and problematic, given dynamic and changing landscapes of consciousness and changing politics of anti-colonialism and decolonization. When I asked Knowledge Keeper Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr.) for guidance around terminology, he emphasized the importance of these decisions, as our words can have a big impact with ripple effects (personal communication, September 4, 2013). With regards to the First peoples, the sovereign peoples of the lands currently occupied by the settler colonial states of Canada and the United States, I most often use the term *Indigenous peoples*. I do this following Alfred and Corntassel (2005), who claim this identity as one "constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (p. 597), rather than using terms imposed and designated by colonial governments. They write, "the communities, clans, nations and tribes we call *Indigenous peoples* are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire" (p. 597). When I am discussing specific peoples, in

keeping with a focus on Indigenous sovereignty, I use their self-definitions such as Anishinaabe, Nehiyawak, or Dakota. When I am citing or discussing the work of authors who use other terms, I may use their terminology in order to honour the contexts of their work.

Various terms are being used in the literature to refer to non-Indigenous peoples, each with their political and descriptive ramifications. Lowman and Barker (2015) note that terms for “who the ‘we’ is who is colonizing” (p. 14) may have varying degrees of accuracy: “If we try these on, some are uncomfortable and the fit is poor. Some are too comfortable and tell us little we do not already know” (p. 14). *Non-Indigenous* itself as an identifier may be understood to position Indigeneity as the referent in keeping with locating oneself in Indigenous sovereignty, following the logic of Carey (2008) and her use of the term *non-Aboriginal* in the context of Australia. Knowledge Keeper Daabaasanaquwat ‘Lowcloud’ (Peter Atkinson) suggests using the term *non-Anishinaabe* (personal communication, September 8, and October 3, 2013). He uses the term *Anishinaabe* to include all those who are Indigenous to this land as it is used in the creation story he shares. The importance of the term *Anishinaabe* in his definition is that it refers to those who were lowered here. Daabaasanaquwat ‘Lowcloud’ directed me to share the creation story in the following way:

When the creator told his children that he made them a beautiful place to go, there were four spirits, four colors of his children. They were each lowered to what is today their homelands. The spirit of our [Anishinaabe] people did not want to leave the creator, so he was the last to leave. When this spirit was finally lowered here, the creator took four scoops of mother earth, four elements and created the physical being of Anishinaabe. The spirit and the physical being became Weynabooshoo, original man. Weynabooshoo and the fire keeper’s daughter of the north married and had four sons, and each one went to the four directions. This is where all the different tribes came from. (Daabaasanaquwat ‘Lowcloud,’ personal communication, December 7, 2013)

In this sense, non-Anishinaabe would refer to those who were not lowered here; which has important and relevant spiritual, philosophical, and political ramifications related to colonialism

and decolonization. I also consider that the term *non-Indigenous* focuses on what we are not (Flowers, 2015; Lowman & Barker, 2015), which “says little about what we *are*” (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 15). For Flowers (2015), *non-Indigenous* it is often used as a neutral, comfortable, and de-politicized descriptor. Further, when the focus of this study is Euro-Canadians, the term non-Indigenous used in exchange lacks specificity, erasing racially marginalized non-Indigenous peoples and centering whiteness. The term *Euro-Canadian*, however, in my mind is also problematically comfortable and de-politicized.

As was alluded to in the previous chapter, there is a growing body of literature that specifies Canadian colonialism as *settler colonialism* and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada as *settlers*. Scholars such as Alfred (2005), Alfred and Cornthassel (2005), Lowman and Barker (2015), and Regan (2010) have used this terminology in referring to non-Indigenous peoples. Flowers (2015) views *settler* as a “critical term that denaturalizes and politicizes the presence of non-Indigenous peoples on Indigenous lands, but can also disrupt the comfort of non-Indigenous people by bringing ongoing colonial power relations into their consciousness” (p. 33). However, she cautions that when *settler* is used as synonymous with *non-Indigenous*, it lacks “a critical understanding of its meaning and the relationships embedded within it, rendering it an empty signifier” (p. 33), and involves the “reduction of a set of privileges and practices to fit within a binary...[instead of] a set of responsibilities and action” (p. 33). Similarly, Lowman and Barker (2015) believe the term *settler*

Voices relationships to structures and processes in Canada today, to the history of our peoples on this land, to Indigenous peoples, and to our own day-to-day choices and actions...[and] turns us toward uncomfortable realisations, difficult subjects, and potential complicity in systems of dispossession and violence. (p. 2)

Lowman and Barker (2015) write, “We identify ourselves as Settler Canadians and understand that, in doing so, we are declaring that we benefit from and are complicit with settler colonialism

and therefore are responsible, as individuals and in collectives, for its continued functioning” (p. 18). As Macoun and Strakosch (2013) write, “settler colonialism is structural which means we are all still settlers in a colonial space and it can serve no interests but our own to erase this” (p. 430). Some critique use of *settler* due its discomfort for some non-Indigenous peoples, who may not see themselves as settlers, “such is the nature of their settledness” (Carey, 2008, p. 11), despite their embodiment of “the beliefs and values of the early settlers” (p. 11) and their position of benefitting from invasion. Emma LaRocque (2010) uses the term *re-settlers* because

Native peoples were the original settlers, in the sense of being a deeply rooted and settled indigenous presence on this land we now call Canada...Europeans cannot own the notion of ‘settler’ and ‘settlement’...These words represent a perniciously colonialist phraseology that Europeans have always assumed and from which they have justified the conquest and dispossession of peoples native to their lands. There are obviously many ways of settling. (p. 7)

LaRocque’s statement about many ways of settling is important. The nature of the settling of Indigenous as compared to Euro-Americans has been, in my understanding, generally different with respect to its impact on the land. I can see how the term *settler* could play into the terra nullius ideology, which says that before European arrival the land was essentially empty and unused. Sakej Ward (2015) finds the term *settler* to be problematic because “the image of the frontiersman settler going out and carving a whole new life—builds a home, brings his family, has access to wide open expanses of free land...it leaves the Indigenous population out of the equation” (19:47-20:11, used with permission). He says,

*Settler* does not speak to genocide. The term *settler* does not speak to ethnic cleansing. The term *settler* does not talk about the imposition of a reserve system as a way of controlling the Indigenous population so you can take the rest of the land. The word settler is historically and politically sterile. (20:12-20:38, used with permission)

Ward argues that the appropriate way, from his perspective as Mi’kmaq, to describe the status of *hwulunitum* (the hungry or greedy ones, European settlers) on the land is that of an occupier.

Carey (2008) takes her thinking further than her use of *non-Aboriginal* to point to Aboriginal sovereignty. She refers to literature from white Australians and white New Zealanders who have identified as *Pakeha* or *Wadjula*, according to local Indigenous people's words for them and in respect of their Sovereignty, in accordance with "'naming' as an Indigenist epistemological priority" (p. 253). She notes Indigenous efforts to reclaim names for children, landscapes, and sites as efforts that declare Indigenous sovereignty and resist "the potency of colonialist labels" (p. 253). Carey sees these identifications as consistent with an anti-colonial paradigm, and notes that within this framework, as we travel our identities might shift according to whose territory we visit. For example, when we are in Stó:lō territory, we would use *hwulunitum* to refer to ourselves. Flowers (2015) says,

The Hul'qumi'num' word for settlers is *hwulunitum*, which means the hungry people. It explicitly refers to the fact that settlers were not from the land and did not know how or where to get food, but also to the greed of settlers to accumulate resources, land, people, and wealth. (p. 34)

Corntassel (2006) looks to the terms of Indigenous languages for settlers as indicators of "the specific values that settlers hold," (p. 35) and of "the stories indigenous peoples tell of first contact with settlers" (p. 35). After reviewing Mohawk, Tsalagi, Cree, Dakota, and Cheyenne terms, he concludes, "Based on over 500 years of experience with settlers, our ancestors provide us with valuable insights into a different value system: directionless, money worshipping, fat-taking squatters that divide the land, devour their prey, and cling to everything that's solid" (p. 36). In keeping with this practice of naming in Indigenous sovereignty, I explored local Indigenous terminology for Euro-Canadians. Because what knowledge I have about Indigenous language and teachings is primarily knowledge that has been shared with me by Anishinaabe peoples, this is where I started. I recall living in Minnesota and often hearing the term *Chimookoman*, which can be translated as long knives, in reference to swords. I heard the term



*Zhaginaash* with reference to the English, and *Mooneyaa*, which I have also heard among Anishinaabe in Manitoba. I also understand *Moniyawak* to be a Nehiyawak term for white people. Nii Gaani Aki Inini (personal communication, September 4, 2013), Sherry Copenace (personal communication, September 8 and 22, 2013), Dennis Jones (personal communication, September 30, 2013), and James Vukelich (personal communication, October 6, 2013) discussed the terms *Aamitigoozhi* (meaning people of the tree, people who chop down trees, and/or people who are greedy for trees) and *Wemitigoozhi* (referring to wooden boats such as York boats, or those who build forts). Sinclair (2013) uses *Wemitigoozhiwag* to refer to the French. It would appear that these terms are more common in Canada with Anishinaabe language speakers. In Minnesota, Dakota people have referred to white people as *Wasicu*. Louis Bird (2013), Omushkegowak scholar and storyteller, shares an origin story related to the Omushkego version of this word, *Wemistigosiwuk*. Bird shares that it was originally a reference to white poplar trees from a quotation in a story about a sick old man who was found by a trapper. Later, when Europeans came in wooden boats to the Hudson Bay area, the word from this quote stuck. Bird explains that *Wemistigosiwuk* means people who sail with the wind, something that sails without control, and/or a wooden boat. *Aamitigoozhi* appeals to me on a number of levels. In addition to its acknowledgement of Anishinaabe sovereignty in naming, I feel connected to the term having as ancestor white settler occupiers who “broke” the land by clear cutting it for agriculture and by engaging in the logging industry which cut down old growth forests in what is now called Wisconsin. In addition, the colonial image of trees cut down and felled has within it an image for decolonization, that of new growth and saplings, which, to me, connects to the Oshkibimaatiziig (New Life) of the Anishinaabe eighth fire prophecy, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Although there are differing thoughts on the relationship of racially marginalized and/or recently arriving Canadians to the term settler (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Byrd, 2011; Jafri, 2012; Patel, 2010), these are not my focus here. I am wanting to learn more about how I, as a Canadian of European descent, as a white person whose ancestors were part of the initial re-settlement of Wisconsin and Nebraska, might live in Indigenous sovereignty. Thus, for me, my use of settler, when referring to myself and others like me, will include the signifier white. Although I realize that there are those who find the language of whiteness problematic as a racially essentializing or totalizing practice, I nonetheless believe the terms *white* and *whiteness* are important because they are indicators of the ongoing realities of racialization, racial marginalization, and white supremacy. Eliminating use of these terms seems to me as a convenient erasure. Whiteness is so tied to settler colonialism in Canada and the US (Lopez, 2005, p. 6).

In this study, I use various terms to refer to Euro-Canadian and non-Indigenous peoples depending on the context. When I am referring to non-Indigenous peoples generally, I most often use the term *settler* for the political and structural reasons mentioned as well as its growing usage in settler colonial literature. When I am referring to Euro-Canadian peoples, I use *white settler*, *colonizer*, or *white settler occupier* often in order to be specific and politically and historically accurate (not neutral). When I am referring to specific Euro-Canadian peoples on specific nation's lands, I use the nation's Indigenous language term for them if I know it, for the purpose of honouring Indigenous sovereignty. When my reference is within the context of the scholarship or knowledge shared by a particular person or persons, I most often use the terminology associated with their work.

## **Colonialism and Settler Colonialism**

As is reflective of colonial processes, much of the mainstream academic literature regarding historical and contemporary political and social realities in Canada is written from the colonizer's perspective which, when it comes to issues around colonialism, is often shrouded in denial. This despite the fact that, as LaRocque (2010) says, "as soon as Native individuals could use the techniques of writing in the enemy's language, in this case, the English language, they immediately addressed their colonial conditions" (p. 77). LaRocque says, "In addition to documenting the dispossession, Native writers have, at the same time, addressed the devastating consequences that colonization has wrought, repeatedly, century after century" (p. 86). Hart and Rowe (2014) note the absence of the voice of First Nations people in many definitions of colonialism. As members of Fisher River and Fox Lake Cree Nations, Hart and Rowe (2014) offer a definition from their perspectives:

Colonialism is the evolving processes where we, as peoples of this land, face impositions— from genocide, to assimilation, to marginalization—of views, ideas, beliefs, values, and practices by other peoples at the cost of our lives, views, ideas, beliefs, values, practices, lands, and/or resources. It is when we, as peoples of this land, are stopped, hindered, cajoled, and/or manipulated from making and enacting decisions about our lives, individually and as a group, because of being a person of the peoples of this land. (p. 35)

A specific assault was made on the connection between Aboriginal nations and the land due to the colonizers' desire to claim and legitimize their domination over Aboriginal land and resources (Hart, 2002). Taiaiake Alfred (n.d.) states, "Colonialism is the disconnection of Native people from the land, their history, their identity and their rights so that others can benefit" (para. 3). Emma LaRocque's (2010) account of colonialism in Canada is worth quoting at length:

On a fundamental level, colonizers invaded, stole, and exploited natural and human resources, the consequences of which left the colonized dispossessed, demoralized, objectified, and marginalized. When the dust settled, indigenous peoples across the Americas were massively destroyed and exiled in their own lands. For the last half-

millennium, White colonization of North America has been nothing short of catastrophic for Aboriginal peoples. The numerical loss alone is staggering. (p. 7)

She lists estimates of 4.5-18 million lives lost in Canada, and three-quarters of the entire

[Indigenous] population of America. LaRocque continues:

Colonization as an historical event (or series of events) in Canada has now been amply documented by numerous scholars ... We can trace this loss not only to military invasion but also to attempted genocide, starvation, land theft, and structural changes over time in areas fundamental to cultural integrity... But invasion is only the beginning of the colonization process. As the invasion deepens, the colonizer moves to protect and enhance his newly gained position of power. This is done in many ways... from the colonizer's perspective, 'peopleing' the 'empty' spaces, renaming the 'natives' and (their) landscape, building strategic points of entry and defence (i.e., forts), and occupying strategic roles as (re) educators, employers, and, gradually, as legislators... For Native people of Canada, the dispossession and the dying continues... the grossest amount of destruction has been taking place since World War II... Native peoples continue to lose massive amounts of ecological space and resources to megaprojects to extract or produce hydroelectricity, lumber, gas and oil, and uranium and other minerals... Not only do Native peoples continue to lose their lands and resources, arguably the very ground of their cultural beings, but they, as a result, continue to lose their lives in disturbing proportions. (pp. 74-76)

Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write,

It is the loss of our land that has been the precise cause of our impoverishment... In Canada the overall percentage is even worse, with Indigenous peoples controlling only .2 per cent of the land and the settlers 99.8 per cent. (p. 8).

In conceptualizing colonialism, I also consider the oft-cited statement of Wolfe (1999), which is reflective of the above scholars' work: "the colonizers came to stay—invasion is a structure not an event" (p. 2). Simpson (2013a) describes the daily reproduction of Canadian colonialism. She writes, "Colonialism was and is a choice that Canadians make every day. It is a choice to maintain and uphold a system that is based on the hyperexploitation of the land and of Indigenous peoples" (p. 53). Colonialism is a specific form of imposition and domination in the context and forms described by Alfred, LaRocque, Hart, and Rowe. When defining colonialism, it is important to include local and contextual specificity as well as historical, contemporary,

structural, process-oriented, relational, personal, social, institutional, ideological, and material components. Thus, I see colonialism as a process whereby settlers have come to North America, taken Indigenous land, set up their own systems and structures, perpetrated genocidal policies and actions, and murdered, dispossessed, and marginalized original Indigenous inhabitants; as well as the current structures that have resulted from this process, the reproduction of these structures, and the ideologies and relations that have supported and reproduced these structures.

**Settler colonialism.** Young (2001) argues that colonialism took two major forms: that of settlement and that of economic exploitation with little settlement. Perhaps an oversimplification, Young states that one was motivated by the desire for living space and the other by the extraction of riches. Within this framework, the type of colonialism that has ravaged what are now called Canada and the United States may be specified as *settler colonialism*. Lowman and Barker (2015) write, “Settler colonialism is a way of thinking about power and migration that allows us to better understand the nature of contemporary Canadian society” (p. 24). Evans (2004) explains,

British settler colonies were characteristic of a very particular colonial formation: That of settler colonialism. As distinct from franchise colonies such as India, or slave colonies such as in the Caribbean, where resource value was maximised through the extraction of surplus value of the labour of the colonized, economic interest in settler colonies was vested primarily in the land...the primary objective was in securing permanent control of the land and converting it to alienable private property. Moreover, unlike in colonies of exploitation, the settlers had come to stay, literally seeking to **replace** the Indigenous inhabitants on the land. (p. 69)

Lowman and Barker (2015) describe three pillars of settler colonialism: (a) invasion continues through “the social, political, and economic structures built by the invading people” (p. 25), (b) settlers’ intend to stay which is characterized by their denial of Indigenous presence, and (c) “the settler society becomes so deeply established that it is naturalized, normalized, unquestioned, and unchallenged” (p. 26). Tuck and Yang (2012) contend, “Settlers are not immigrants. Immigrants

are beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to. Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies. Therefore, settler nations are not immigrant nations” (pp. 6-7).

**Social work and colonialism.** Indigenous social workers and social work scholars have been clear about social work’s complicity in colonialism (e.g. Blackstock, 2009; Hart, 2002, 2007, 2009; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Sinclair, 2004, 2007; Waterfall, 2006; Yellow Bird & Grey, 2008). Perhaps the most notorious examples involve the role of social work in Indigenous child removal systems (Sinclair in Harp, 2016) such as residential schools (Blackstock, 2009) and child welfare (Blackstock, 2009; Sinclair, 2004, 2007). I have explored in depth elsewhere the white colonial settler epistemes that undergird much of mainstream social work (Carlson, 2010; Carlson, 2016). Although not the primary focus here, this is important to note as this study has secondary connections to social work and as five of the research participants have social work degrees, most of these having explored the connections of their social work practice to both colonialism and decolonization.

### **Anti-Colonialism and Decolonization**

In the context of this research regarding the anti-colonial and decolonial work of white settler occupiers, it is important to clarify what is meant by anti-colonialism and decolonization here, and how this relates to what is meant by others who use the terms. Following this, I explore Indigenous and Indigenous-led resistance, which I believe should always be foregrounded in discussions of anti-colonialism and decolonization. Finally, I do some framing around the concept of white settler anti-colonialism and decolonization.

**Anti-colonialism.** Citing Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000), Hart (2009) defines anti-colonialism as “the political struggle of colonized peoples against the specific and existing

ideology and practice of colonialism” (p. 29). For Hart (personal communication, January 14, 2016), Indigenous resurgence is the centre of anti-colonialism, pushing outwards from this centre and re-claiming space that had been occupied by settler colonialism. According to Simpson (2004), anti-colonialism involves the recovery of traditional knowledge as a strategy that resists the replacement of Indigenous ways and knowledges with Western ways and knowledges, processes endemic in colonialism. Anti-colonial strategies “foster the political mobilization to stop the colonial attack on Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples” (Simpson, 2004, p. 381) and “require the recovery of Indigenous intellectual traditions, Indigenous control over Indigenous national territories, [and] the protection of Indigenous lands from environmental destruction” (p. 381). A strength, for Hart (personal communication, January 14, 2016), of using the term and concept “anti-colonialism” is that there can be no mistake that it communicates the reality of a current presence of the structures and practices of (settler) colonialism. He notes that terms like *postcolonialism* or even *decolonization*, facilitate the ability of academics to position colonialism as being something of the past, as in ‘colonialism is over and now we can decolonize.’ A number of activists and scholars see anti-colonialism somewhat differently. For example, Tuck and Yang (2012) associate anti-colonialism with transnational struggles and anti-imperialism rather than seeing it as specifically addressing settler colonialism, Benally (2013) indicates that anti-colonial struggles may include class struggle and struggles against heteropatriarchy, while Lowman and Barker (2015) believe anti-capitalism can be anti-colonial, and anti-colonial acts may “continue to follow the form of colonial narratives” (pp. 110-111).

**Decolonization.** Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012) write, “Decolonization is the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our [Indigenous people’s] minds, bodies, and lands” (p.3). They state,

“Decolonization is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation” (p. 3). Lowman and Barker (2015) write, “We use decolonization here to describe an intensely political and transformative process with the goal of regenerating Indigenous nationhood and place-relationships while dismantling structures of settler colonialism that oppose or seek to eliminate Indigenous peoples from the land” (p. 111). Dine’ activist Klee Benally (2013) sees decolonization as being a deeply personal as well as collective process of Indigenous communities which includes re-learning traditional languages, reconnecting with traditional food systems, learning one’s prayers and cultural practices, taking down colonially imposed tribal governments, and simply reconnecting to being who one is. For Archibald (2006), decolonization includes “the individual process[es] of healing from post traumatic stress disorder...and healing from historic trauma,” processes which “bring history and culture together with personal healing on a journey that is both individual and collective in nature” (p. 26). Tuck and Yang (2012) write, “Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice” (p. 21). They write, “Decolonization is not equivocal to other anti-colonial struggles. It is incommensurable” (p. 31). Tuck and Yang (2012) state that decolonization is not

Converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of ‘helping’ the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes...By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. (p. 21)

When people speak of decolonization without addressing Indigenous sovereignty and rights, without regard to unsettling and deoccupying the land, they avoid engaging with settler colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that decolonization is not accountable to settlers or settler futurity, but rather to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. Decolonization thus means “all land is repatriated and all settlers become landless” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 27) such that “settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles



everyone” (p. 7). Lowman and Barker (2015) write,

Decolonization is more than anti-colonialism. It is not simply opposition to colonial imposition, or even endless resistance. Decolonization as an ethic and guiding principle for collective struggle is both the ending of colonialism and also the act of *becoming something other than colonial*. (p. 111)

Because I view anti-colonialism and decolonization in ways that are closely aligned if not interchangeable, in this study I include both terms, and participants who frame their work in either or both ways. Some participants frame their work using other terms such as solidarity, support, or ally. I use these terms in the context of those participants, and in the context of literatures that utilize them, observing that the participants and literatures I have chosen are relevant also to the way I see anti-colonialism and decolonization. Although anti-colonialism and decolonization have international forms, they also have forms specific to the context of the lands occupied by Canada, and forms specific to one’s social location. Anti-colonialism and decolonization have a long history and multiple manifestations originating with Indigenous peoples and communities here. For me, both anti-colonialism and decolonization will prioritize, support, and complement Indigenous resistance. Both seek to resist, challenge, undo, change, transform, and transcend settler colonialism on personal, relational, institutional, structural, political, and national levels. Ultimately these processes must occur in dialogue with Indigenous peoples and in Indigenous sovereignty.

**Indigenous and Indigenous-led resistance.** “Native peoples of Canada have been engaging in contestatory practices right from the initial contact with Europeans to the present,” writes LaRocque (2010, p. 23). She states, the “simple assertion of one’s (Native) humanity is a form of resistance, given the magnitude of dehumanization over a span of 500 years” (p. 23), and “In this overarching history of colonization, Native peoples have developed a collective sense of relationship to the land and to each other, and to the common cause of decolonization” (p. 23).

Ladner (2010) says, “Indigenous Peoples continue to engage in such a politics every day. In fact, as so many have said, to be born Indian is to be born political” (p. 306). Ladner (2010) writes that when specific issues and opportunities arise, “The masses mobilize, ‘kitchen table’ networks are engaged, wider networks are rekindled and the movement becomes organized” (p. 306). She says,

Episodes of mobilization have varied and will continue to vary in orientation, issue, level of mobilization (elite or popular), the ability (and desire to organize and create organizational capacity, as well as the domains of mobilization. Though using different methods, it is almost always the same issues that are being contested and questioned in every flashpoint event and this has been constant through history, as Indigenous Peoples have taken up matters of citizenship, territoriality, development and Canadian sovereignty. The issues at hand have not changed. Indigenous struggles have been and will continue to be defined by or predicated on considerations of nationhood and decolonization. Though overwhelmed with frustration and while they know that they are fighting a battle representative of a modern-day matching of David and Goliath, people have not given up. (pp. 306-307)

Ladner (2010) lists many acts of Indigenous resistance:

Little things like Mistahimaskwa refusing treaty, citing the need for meaningful and trustworthy consultation and negotiation and reminding the representatives of the Crown that the Nehiyaw are a sovereign people who will not (and have not) ceded their right to self-determination nor their territories, which they agreed to share with the newcomers. Little things like the women...who refused to leave and/or returned to their reserves after they had married non-status men, gotten divorced or been widowed and who brought this gendered inequity to the streets, the Canadian Courts, the constitutional talks, the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. Little things like all of those parents and grandparents who refused to allow the state/church to take their kids to residential school and fought tirelessly for day schools, access to high school, integration and band-controlled education. Little things like Frank Calder and the Nisga’a Nation taking the Canadian Government to court in the 1970s in defense of their land rights and Aboriginal Title. Little things like all those fisherman (and women) like Dorothy Van Der Peet and Donald Marshall Jr. who struggled for years on their rivers, their lakes and their oceans to maintain their fisheries despite being told that they were ‘fishing illegally’ and knowing that they would end up in Canadian jails and courts. Little things like the Dene Declaration of 1975 and the corresponding mobilization of the nation in defense of their homelands. (p. 300)

Ladner (2010) describes the resistance at Kanehsatà:ke, a “flashpoint that captured the attention of the world...[and] was Canada’s wake-up call” (p. 302):

There were blockades. There were rocks. There were tanks, guns, bayonets, helicopters, snipers and anything else that the Canadian army and the Québec paramilitary provincial police force could imagine. There were Elders and children who had their cars pelted with rocks or who were beaten (even bayoneted) as they attempted to leave their communities. And then, of course, there were the people who stood on their lands protesting the development of their lands (a commons which held the trees their ancestors planted and the bones of their Ancestors) for yet another golf course and parking lot. They were the people—the women, children, Elders and men—behind the blockades and on our television sets every night talking about their Ancestors, the treaties that they signed with the newcomers, their lands/the Pines and the violence that besieged them on the blockades, in the neighboring towns, by the Quèbècois, Canadians, their army and the Sûreté du Québec (the SQ). (p. 303)

Christian (2010) gives a personal account of her involvement in Indigenous resistance, in what she refers to as two *Indian Wars*:

As fate would have it, on 11 July 1990 I got a call at 4:00 a.m. and a voice said ‘The army has gone in.’ Canada had mobilized its military against the Mohawks, who were under siege for 78 days while they protected their land rights. During this modern-day Indian War, the so-called Oka Crisis, I was able to use my rage by adapting my skills toward a good cause. I then had five short years to find healers to help me with my rage and post-traumatic stress syndrome, because there was another armed standoff within my own homelands, on Secwepemc territory at Gustafsen Lake in 1995. For the last 12 days of that resistance, I brought my communications skills to support the people who were upholding Aboriginal Rights and Title while I prayed they would not be massacred. (In Christian & Freeman, 2010, pp. 377-378)

McCue (2010) says Kanehsatà:ke was “a catalyst for the constitutional talks regarding the Charlottetown Accord” (p. 282), and that afterwards, “The Indian Claims Commission was set up to address outstanding treaty issues and outstanding crown obligations to aboriginal peoples” (p. 282). In addition, a new treaty process was created in British Columbia and “In the courts, more Indigenous Peoples were standing up for their rights, and some of the key Supreme Court of Canada decisions came out during this time...” (p. 282).

The Grassy Narrows blockade, beginning in 2002, has been operational now for over a decade. The blockade was in response to mercury pollution found in the water in 1972 as a result of a paper mill dumping mercury into the water since 1952; and in response to clear cutting in

the area (DaSilva, 2010). Ostman (2010) describes Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuweg (KI) resistance to platinum prospecting when a drilling crew was found on their lands in 2006 without prior consent or knowledge. He says

Signatories of Treaty 9, the community placed a full moratorium on development within their territory until land issues were dealt with under the terms of the treaty, and Canada fully respected their land rights and responsibilities. Over the next three years (and continuing at the time this book was going to press), the community mobilized to protect their lands from Platinex, a platinum prospecting company. In attempting to protect their lands from irresponsible development, the Chief, four Band Council members, and one community member were incarcerated in the spring of 2008...they were later released after a successful appeal of their sentences. To date, the land issue has not been resolved. (Ostman in conversation with Leanne Simpson, 2010, p. 223)

Of course, a recent and international movement began just a few years ago in Canada, in the fall of 2012. The Idle No More movement is Indigenous-led and has garnered much support from non-Indigenous activists as well. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (2014) writes,

Entitled Idle No More, this “teach-in” organized by Sylvia McAdam, Jess Gordon, Nina Wilson and Sheelah Mclean raised concerns regarding the removal of specific protections for the environment (in particular water and fish habitats), the improper “leasing” of First Nations territories, as well as the lack of consultation with the people most affected even where treaty and Aboriginal rights were threatened. With the help of social media and grassroots Indigenous activists, this meeting inspired a continent-wide movement with hundreds of thousands of people from Indigenous communities and urban centres participating in sharing sessions, protests, blockades and round dances in public spaces and on the land, in our homelands, and in sacred spaces...As it grew, the movement became broad-based, diverse, and included many voices. There were those focused on the omnibus legislation, others who mobilized to protect land and support the resurgence of Indigenous nations, some who demanded justice for the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and still others who worked hard to educate and strengthen relationships with non-Indigenous allies. (pp. 21-23)

I want to close this section by emphasizing that Indigenous resistance has been multifaceted. Wherever Indigenous peoples live, work, and engage, they may be involved in anti-colonial and decolonizing practice. Indigenous peoples in their anti-colonialism, decolonization, and resistance efforts have been, according to Alfred (n. d.), portrayed as angry and violent criminals by mainstream media, allowing their continued exploitation by government

and corporations. Although, as LaRocque (2010) says, “Native people resisted European oppressions long before they took up the English alphabet” (p. 19), part of the anti-colonial mobilization on the part of Indigenous peoples has been in written, scholarly, or academic forms. Certainly, academia is a growing site of Indigenous activism. Many are also involved in spiritual activism, including reclamation of ceremonies and traditional knowledge; and my observation is that this undergirds the structural and epistemic activism of many Indigenous peoples.

**Framing white settler decolonization and anti-colonialism.** In the context of Dakota peoples and Minnesotans, Waziyatawin (2008) writes

Decolonization requires the creation of a new social order, but this would ideally be a social order in which non-Dakota would also live as liberated peoples in a system that is just to everyone, including the land and all the beings of the land. Thus, *Wasicu* [white] people need not fear the empowerment of Dakota people. When we are lifted up and our humanity is recognized, everyone will be lifted up. Those of us clinging to traditional Dakota values are not interested in turning the tables and claiming a position as oppressor, as colonizer, or of ruthlessly exploiting the environment for profit... This project ... is spiritual in that it calls on the people who have benefited from Dakota dispossession to help repair its tremendous harms, so that we can all live together in a good way. This cannot proceed as long as Minnesotans deny this legacy of genocide and ethnic cleansing, or if Minnesotans continue to celebrate what was gained from our genocide and dispossession. If we eventually reach a place in which we have repaired the injustice and restored the integrity of the land and people, then all Minnesotans will really have something to celebrate. In the meantime, we have a lot of work to do. (pp. 174-175)

Waziyatawin’s words emphasize the interrelatedness of Indigenous and settler decolonization.

Barker (2010) contends,

There is much discussion in the literature about the need for Indigenous peoples to ‘decolonize,’ but there has traditionally been little recognition that Settler people can, and perhaps must, decolonize as well. Just as Indigenous peoples must defeat the legacy of prior colonization and the realities of current neo-colonialism in order to achieve freedom, Settler people must do the same for themselves. (p. 318)

In the previous chapter, I emphasized the importance of this research. Here I add to this discussion, focusing on the possibility, importance, history, and framing of white settler decolonization and anti-colonial activism. Alfred’s (2005) description of an effective anti-

colonial movement among Indigenous peoples is one that rests on a number of conditions, including the condition that it have the support and cooperation of allies in the settler society. He writes,

While we are envisioning a new relationship between Onkwehonwe [original peoples] and the land, we are at the same time offering a decolonized alternative to the Settler society by inviting them to share our vision of respect and peaceful coexistence. The non-indigenous will be shown a new path and offered the chance to join in a renewed relationship between the peoples and places of this land, which we occupy together. (p. 35)

McCaslin and Breton (2008) argue that decolonization is critical for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. They note,

Colonizers need to learn the ways of decolonization that teach respect and the honouring of all relationships. What is destructive and catastrophic to the well-being of one cannot be good for the other... We cannot get to a good society or a good relationship between peoples as long as colonialism is the dominant model. (p. 513)

Biermann (2011) points to a number of motivations for non-Indigenous peoples in settler states, where they constitute a majority of the population, to work toward decolonization:

To me, there exist at least three compelling reasons to decolonize. Firstly there is a concern rooted in principles of solidarity and social justice, recognizing the injustices of colonial oppression and, as a fellow human being, doing all within one's power to dismantle the unequal and unjust structures that produce privilege and disadvantage. Secondly, there is the realization that colonial systems of oppression diminish everyone's humanity, including and especially the oppressor's, necessitating resistance by those who are systematically privileged, for example, by whiteness. Finally, there is the concern of mutual benefit—how might engagement with Indigenous philosophies, knowledges, and processes facilitate greater understanding of many contemporary challenges and questions about the human condition? (p. 387)

McCaslin and Breton (2008) argue “This, then, is the core challenge: We cannot practice justice as a way of life and remain colonizers. We cannot avoid confronting the colonizing cage—a cage that traps both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people” (p. 519). Despite the privilege and material advantages of colonizing, there are spiritual, ethical, and emotional reasons to decolonize. But can we?

*Can settlers be anti-colonial/decolonial?* According to Dei (2009), “Anticolonial thought is an epistemology of the colonized informed by a particular politics to interpret oppressed and colonized peoples’ experiences on their own terms and evoke intellectual understandings not forced through Eurocentric lenses” (p. 253). Dei (2009, 2006) sees anti-colonial discourse as a situated knowledge, situated within the subjectivity, positionality, location, and history of marginalized and colonized subjects. They are the anti-colonial referent. He writes, “The anti-colonial perspective is also deeply anchored in Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding of the spiritual sense of self and the collective” (Dei, 2006, p. 5). Albert Memmi’s (1965) *Portrait of the Colonizer* notes the near impossible existence of anti-colonial colonizers because “To refuse [being a colonizer] means either withdrawing physically from those conditions or remaining to fight and change them” (p. 19). However, choosing to stay and fight is fraught with compromise and defeat, being an “impossible historical situation” (p. 39). The colonizer who refuses cannot eliminate the privilege bestowed upon oneself and become one of the colonized, and “if his ideology should triumph it would question his very existence” (p. 39). The colonizer who refuses

certainly does not conceive...of a deep transformation of his own situation and of his own personality...He invokes the end of colonization, but refuses to conceive that this revolution can result in the overthrow of his situation and himself. For it is too much to ask one’s imagination to visualize one’s own end, even if it be in order to be reborn another; especially if, like the colonizer, one can hardly evaluate such a rebirth. (Memmi, 1965, pp. 40-41)

These perspectives limit, if not eliminate, the possibility of white settlers fully internalizing or utilizing anticolonial thought, since epistemologies of the colonized would not likely originate with them. White settler peoples do not share Indigenous subjectivity, positionality, location, and history in lands occupied by Canada. Further, it would be quite challenging, if not impossible, for a white settler person to, as Dei says, interpret oppressed/colonized peoples’ experiences *on*

*the terms of oppressed/colonized peoples*, or to have intellectual understandings *not forced through Eurocentric lenses*. I believe that taking up the challenge to participate well as a white settlers in anti-colonialism and decolonization is more difficult, demanding, and unlikely than may be assumed or desired by most white settler occupiers. I believe that fear and denial prevent many from engaging in anti-colonialism to the extent that we could, and that it is much harder to truly let go of privilege than many of us would think. We should proceed with humility as we may have little positive to offer. Kempf (2009) says,

I come to anti-colonialism...as a straight white guy...Anti-colonialism necessarily works with the knowledge of the oppressed. So what do I bring to anti-colonialism? I bring various layers of latent racism and sexism. I bring what I assume is a full – scale misunderstanding of the struggles faced by people ... I bring an overly dismissive attitude...I am by no means proud of the preceding basket of political goodies and I bring them up for a reason. The blind spots help to confer, at times in visibly so, various elements of my dominant privilege. (p. 19)

Despite this, I believe that when white settler peoples participate well (although always imperfectly) in anti-colonialism, anti-colonial efforts have the capacity to become stronger, more balanced, and more effective.

Dei (2006) also emphasizes the “‘two-sidedness’ to any critical study of domination and oppression” (p. 11). He writes, “Dismantling colonial relations and practices has as much to do with the studying of whiteness and oppression as the study of marginalized positions of resistance” (p. 11). Dei (2009) says, the

anticolonial discursive framework ... articulates that the study of colonialisms, racism, and oppressions must be preoccupied with the experiences and knowledge of the oppressed, while simultaneously focusing on the benefits and privileges that accrue to the dominant/colonizer from their oppression. (p. 251)

Hart and Rowe (2014) write, “We must remember that relationships involve at least two parties. As such, both the oppressed and privileged in the colonial relationship must be involved in



decolonization processes” (p. 37). Kempf (2009) emphasizes that anti-colonial thought includes both resistance and dominant accountability:

While anticolonialism is in many ways a language of resistance for and from the oppressed (see Dei & Asgharzadeh 2001), the dominant must also participate in the anticolonial struggle ... Where anticolonialism is a tool used to invoke resistance for the colonized, it is a tool used to invoke accountability for the colonizer. (p. 14)

Having established both the limitations and the importance of white settler occupiers’ decolonial and anti-colonial work, I mention here an important principle in this work. Dei (2006) emphasizes the *epistemic* saliency of the subordinate voice because the colonizer will often “remain oblivious to the sites of oppression/domination... (thereby showing limitations in knowledge and knowing)... [because] the site from which we oppress is the site on which we least cast our gaze” (p. 11). Dei (2006) challenges those who engage in anti-colonial practices to consider the question of “whether the dominant/colonizer should know and critique colonialism, imperialism and oppression without the input of those who have received, and continue to receive the brunt of the colonial encounter and its violence” (p. 11). As white settler occupiers, we are well positioned to contribute toward anti-colonial change within ourselves, in other white settler peoples and communities, and often also in structures and institutions as long as these change efforts occur in dialogue and collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities and in the context of Indigenous sovereignty. Hart, Straka, and Rowe (2016) emphasize,

Although all parties can be involved in anti-colonial activities, there are differences in the tasks faced by people of the colonizing group and the colonized group. To be anti-colonial, Settlers have to ensure that their actions do not reinforce colonial oppression, such as when they claim they are doing “what is right” for the colonized. Their actions must always support Indigenous peoples’ self-determination, and it is always Indigenous people who determine “what is right” as anti-colonial action... People of the colonized group thus have to recognize the complex dynamics of colonialism, how they are implicated, how they may replicate the power dynamics in their relationships, and how they can use their power to challenge the oppression. (pp. 2-3)

I end this section with some thoughts on its original question of whether white settler occupiers can or should engage in anti-colonialism and decolonization. My answer is yes. Although we will do this work in a limited and imperfect way, with numerous blind spots, reproducing colonialism even as we make strides towards resistance and transformation, we must try. To do otherwise would probably mean more harm and less liberation. It would mean accepting our role as colonizer and continuing to reproduce this dynamic in the same ways we always have, and as fully as we always have. With all this being said, as we engage in anti-colonialism, our work must have, as its foundation, the epistemological mirrors we receive in text and dialogue as gifts from Indigenous and colonized peoples, as best as we can understand them. Because of our limitations (our Eurocentric lenses, fears, and defence mechanisms such as denial), it will be important to have input from Indigenous peoples into our work at multiple levels. And although we must engage in a journey of continual growth, we will never understand fully enough, or engage in a complete-enough transformation. We will never be fully anti-colonial.

*Historical examples.* In this section, I review selected historical ideas and examples related to European and white settler anti-colonialism and decolonization. Some examples refer to individuals, and some to larger movements; some examples take place in or come from Europe, while others are specific to anti-colonialism in the Americas. They were never widespread or complete enough to effectively and fully intervene in colonialism in Canada or the U.S. in a way that significantly changed the trajectory for the better. In sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle ways, many of these examples have reinforced colonial dynamics even as they seek to disrupt them. LaRocque (2010) notes that

As to dissident, anti-colonial material, the Western world does have a noticeable prophetic tradition. Within Judeo-Christian and European theological and philosophical

developments, there have always been dissidents and visionaries. And throughout the many phases and expressions of colonization, there have been those who abhorred European—and, later, White American—cruelty against indigenous peoples. Some also – Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria comes to mind—defended Native humanity and native rights in the early 1500s. (p. 5)

Young (2001) writes of sixteenth century Catholic Bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas, who had witnessed the horrific practices of the conquistadors and questioned the “moral and legal basis of the Spanish occupation of America” (p. 75). Young states that Las Casas’ writings “were to remain the most influential polemics against colonial rule right up to the eighteenth century” (p. 75). Young (2001) contends, “Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, there was a strong tradition of anti-colonialism in the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a radical tradition” (p. 74). I refer those wishing to read a more detailed account of these traditions and an analysis of their colonial contradictions, to Young’s (2001) text.

From here, I turn to focus on Euro-Canadian anti-colonialism. Simpson (2013a) writes, “Throughout Canada’s colonial history, there has always been a small group of settlers that has refused to uphold this system, that have chosen not to follow the inherited mandate of their forefathers” (p. 53). Haig-Brown and Nock (2006) write of the “lives of [Canadian] individuals of European ancestry and organizations working with Aboriginal people against injustice” (p. 2) before 1931. Such individuals “worked to temper the impact of their more corrupt siblings on the peoples and lands of Canada” (p. 1), while remaining “fully implicated in the process of colonization despite their sensitivities” (p. 2). Freeman (2000) notes,

Not everyone shared the general consensus about how Native people should be treated: some vehemently protested the generally accepted cruelty and injustice and were not listened to, such as John Eliot when he denounced Indian slavery, or the lawyer who wrote the letter to Duncan Campbell Scott about the price the Indian Department was offering the Rat Portage band for its land. Such critics were even sometimes in positions of power. In 1841, for example, the dangers of the government’s paternalistic Native policy were articulated by Gov.-Gen. Charles Thomson, Lord Sydenham when he spoke of “the general truth that a government undertaking to assume a parental relation to adult

men and women is sure to do itself and them unmixed harm.” Similarly, no less a personage than Frank Oliver, the Minister of Indian Affairs in 1908 wrote to the General Synod of the Anglican Church, “I hope you will excuse me for so speaking but one of the most important commandments laid upon the human by the divine is love and respect by children for parents. It seems strange that in the name of a religion a system of education should have been instituted, the foundation principle of which not only ignored but contradicted this command.” (p. 453)

Thomas (2002) writes, “non-native Canadians who actively support Aboriginal rights are few and not tightly organized” (p. 215). He says,

The most prominent efforts by non-native Canadians to support Aboriginal rights tend to be crisis-driven, an ad-hoc response to current events rather than a persistent, organized effort with an agenda and a strategy. This is in part because it is only in times of crisis – at Oka, Davis Inlet, Burnt Church--that Aboriginal people become visible and unavoidable to the average non-native Canadian. (p. 216)

DaSilva (2010) describes solidarity work around the blockade of the Anishinaabe of Grassy Narrows with solidarity groups such as the Friends of Grassy Narrows (which later became the Winnipeg Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement), the Wilderness Heritage and Community Keepers Organization, and the Rainforest Action Network. Keefer (2010) writes of the Six Nations reclamation at Caledonia in 2006, when a developer was commencing construction on a subdivision which encroached on land granted to the people of Six Nations by British General Frederick Haldimand in 1784: “The standoff between the people of Six Nations and the federal and provincial governments over the Douglas Creek Estates land reclamation, which ... has drawn thousands of people, both Native and non-Native, into political action” (p. 77). He describes both positive and negative engagement of settlers with questions around the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty. Wallace, Struthers, and Bauman (2010) describe solidarity and ally work with the Chippewas of Nawash regarding Indigenous fishing rights. They explore the strengths, limitations, and dynamics of ally roles, the effectiveness of anti-racist strategies in this context, and the lessons learned from their work. Thomas (2002) describes his involvement,

along with others, in solidarity work with the Lubicon Lake Indian Nation. His awareness and outrage at the treatment of the Lubicon increased over time, and in 1988, they felt they could do more if they organized collectively and strategically, and so, they formed the Friends of the Lubicon. They were asked by the Lubicon Cree to try to hold back Daishowa, a transnational forestry company from clear-cutting their unceded traditional territories in 1991. They came up with the Daishowa boycott campaign which was able to block the clear-cut operations. Daishowa lost \$20 million in sales through this boycott, and they signed an agreement that as long as the land rights remained under dispute, they would stay out of Lubicon territory. LaRocque (2010) writes, “In Canada today there are non-Native organizations and countless individuals who support and advance Native rights and well-being” (p. 5).

On lands occupied by the United States, the Cherokee had been resisting displacement pressures for years, and after the ratification of Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Indian Removal Act,

There were a number of white missionaries who traveled south to support the efforts of the Cherokee people. The state of Georgia banned the white missionaries from the land and in March of 1831 three of them were arrested. In July, Georgia officials arrested ten more missionaries for occupying Cherokee lands, as well as the editor of the Phoenix. The detained were beaten, reviled, and loaded with chains. They were forced to walk 35 miles to the jail. Almost all of them pleaded guilty and were released, but the two who did not were found guilty and sentenced to four years of hard labor. (Hopkins-Hayakawa, 2011, para. 4)

Also in response to the Indian Removal Act, a group of more than 60 women from Steubenville, Ohio wrote and signed a petition to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, which is noted as the first time American women became politically active on a national scale (Onion, n.d.). Despite the efforts of the Cherokee and their white allies, in 1838, the Cherokee were forced to vacate their land and walked the Trail of Tears west, along which 4000 of them died (Hopkins-Hayakawa, 2011).

Sharing these examples is not meant, in any way, to minimize the role of Indigenous resistance in what changes have been made. Clearly, Indigenous anti-colonialism has a very long and effective history and has provided direction and knowledge that has informed settler resistance. Examples of European and Euro-American approaches to anti-colonialism are important, however, because they represent elements of a (at least partial) counter-narrative to settler participation in colonialism and can be instructive, providing inspiration and allowing us to learn from both their successes and shortcomings. It remains important, to my mind, for white settler people to have models of doing emancipatory work. Thomas (2002) draws a parallel:

The most disempowering thing about my high school history class was the absence of stories about those who stood up to resist the German government during the build-up to World War II. Where were they? In a nation gripped by evil, were there no dissenters? My history class brushed aside any talk of Jewish or nationalist resistance to Nazi domination. Nor were there any Germans defying the tide of Nazism. (p. 214)

Yet, Thomas came to know, through his research outside of the classroom, about groups like the White Rose Society, “the young students who told the truth about genocide to their fellow Germans and who bravely faced execution for their efforts” (p. 214). He says, “I looked to examples like the White Rose Society for answers” (p. 214).

*State of the colonizer.* As colonizers, our participation and complicity in colonialism in the places we occupy has, as Memmi (1965) says, diverted and polluted our best energies: “For if colonization destroys the colonized, it also rots the colonizer” (Memmi, 1965, p. xvii). Whether or not we wish it, as Euro-Canadians, we are turned into colonizers (Memmi, 1965), which means occupying positions and reproducing practices of colonial privilege. These privileges draw settlers to colonies: “jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid, and business more profitable” (Memmi, 1965, p. 4). However, colonial privilege comes at the expense of Indigenous dispossession. Memmi (2000) writes,

The economic aspect of colonialism is fundamental...the deprivations of the colonized are the almost direct result of the advantages secured to the colonizer. However, colonial privilege is not solely economic. To observe the life of the colonizer and the colonized is to discover rapidly that the daily humiliation of the colonized, his objective subjugation, are not merely economic. (p. ii)

Wilmot (2005) states, white settlers “are often bogged down in paralyzing and patronizing feelings and behaviours, including both a ‘fascination and guilt’ with our privileged position, as well as shame and despair” (p. 15). An appropriate response to wrongdoing and colonial complicity, guilt is part of the settler condition. Freeman (2000), who has researched and written about the role of her ancestors in Canadian and US colonialism, writes,

Just who is responsible for what has happened? Are colonization, land theft, and cultural obliteration the work of certain morally reprehensible individuals or a collective guilt? What I have seen in researching this book is that the colonization of North America has been the result of millions of actions, or non-actions, great and small, by thousands, even millions, of people over hundreds of years... Ordinary people have been part and parcel of the process, making decisions that deny another people’s being or that allow a destructive process to continue. Within the norms of a culture, ‘decent people’ can do indecent things; they are conditioned to be insensitive to another people’s pain. With regard to the taking of Native land, the breaking of treaties, and cultural genocide, Canada as a whole is implicated – as is the United States. Everyone benefited except the indigenous people. It was, and to a very large degree remains, a culturally sanctioned injustice. (p. 452)

Day (2010), a white settler professor at Queen’s University, describes the response of the “normal Canadian liberal-settler child” (p. 264) to watching Obomsawin’s film *Kanehsatake* in class. Initially they are typically silent and stunned, which eventually gives way to “an outpouring of guilt and sadness...Rage all around, directed everywhere, except at us sitting there, in that room” (p. 265). He describes the desire to lift emotions of guilt and sadness for the benefit of the settler participants such that, “eventually, someone will ask, what can we do about it?” (p. 265). Day finds himself frustrated by the limits of this approach, which involves “a departure from, and return to, a long-standing norm, rather than the permanent replacement of the status quo by something new” (p. 266). Tuck and Fine (2007) discuss the dynamics of colonizer’s guilt

through which the “acknowledgement of oppression and the simultaneous retreat from responsibility for change” (p. 153) occur. They describe the dynamics that inevitably emerge in Q & A discussions of Indigenous scholars with mostly-white audiences:

There is a moment and a string of moments when members of the audience begin to feel implicated, personally responsible for the ongoing colonization of indigenous peoples. And so one person stands and says, “What can I possibly do?” And that response, although frustrating (...because it is so quick to get that big guilt off its back, to shift from being under the eye of scrutiny) is understandable only because it is so typical. Understandable if the audience misunderstands/takes the indigenous project as swapping one agenda for another, ... sliding a new checklist beneath the academy’s waiting pen... This question, steeped in the privilege of white ideology, reeking of false generosity, asks me to do the work of the question poser. An element of white privilege is to reduce someone’s theoretical work to a honey-do list for white people. (pp. 153-154)

Responses of “white guilt and colonizer’s guilt detract from what a real/an ethical conversation about ongoing colonization and ongoing decolonization requires: preparedness, listening, reflection, and reparation” (Tuck & Fine, 2007, p. 155). Much of the critical whiteness and anti-racism literature suggests that guilt is not helpful for white peoples; that it is immobilizing and an exercise in narcissism (e.g., Dyer, 1997). As white settler occupiers, we tend to conflate guilt and shame believing that if we do wrong or hurtful things this means we are bad people; a conceptualization which makes it psychologically difficult to view anything we have done as bad. I contrast this with Matwewinin’s (personal correspondence, October 1, 2010) Anishinaabe/Cree teachings about guilt. Matwewinin shared that his father always taught him that guilt is a sacred teaching: it tells us what not to do. When we have done something wrong and we feel bad, we learn about ourselves and what that feels like so that we won’t be like that a second time. He shared, “you get yourself up and continue taking that walk.”

Grief also affects white settlers who are willing to come face to face with colonial realities. Freeman (n.d.) says, “It’s appropriate to grieve because it’s a pretty horrible history, a lot of it. It’s really sad. And a lot of people died, and a lot of lives were wasted. And grief is



something we can share” (5:11-5:35). Tuck and Fine (2007) write,

These dynamics are aged, living in the bodies of those who have survived and those who have been sacrificed; these dynamics also carried through the bodies of those who believe themselves unaffected...what David Eng calls racial melancholia for white people. (p. 146)

Freeman (n.d.) explains,

A lot of times non-Indigenous people do not go anywhere near Indigenous issues because they're afraid of what they're going to feel. Whereas, if you can allow yourself to feel what's there, including the grief, it passes. It doesn't mean it's over, it doesn't mean that, okay now everything is fine, but it's a working through, it's an acknowledgement of how bad it was. And in my experience, unless you come to that acknowledgement, it's going to be pretty hard for you to work with Indigenous people and for Indigenous people to trust you...Where your heart is, is really important, and I think that unless we do open our hearts and let our hearts grieve, and feel even a smidgen of the pain of what's happened, which Indigenous people had to live with, we can't really connect honestly. We're avoiding it. (5:35-6:27; 6:50-7:15)

The emotions of white settlers often result in the intense engagement of defenses.

DiAngelo (2011) writes,

White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. (p. 54)

Defence mechanisms such as denial, minimization, justification, repression, and projection are common in settlers in relation to colonialism. Williams (2008) aptly writes, “If we live in dread of guilt, we must construct a temple of illusions” (p. 249). Sartre’s (1943/trans. 1956) concept of *bad faith*, which has been applied to racism and colonialism, is described as “a lie to oneself” (p. 87), “hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth...” (p. 89), and “denying the qualities which I possess...constitut(ing) myself as being what I am not” (p. 111). The goal of bad faith is, “to put oneself out of reach; it is an escape” (p. 110). Memmi (2000) writes that as bad faith, racism also demands constant defense and endless defensiveness and self-explanation in white settlers’ attempt to justify themselves to others. He describes this as an “endless

campaign that never brings them peace of mind” (p. 58). Alfred (2005) says that denying the truth is “an essential cultural and psychological process in Settler society” (p. 107):

I am convinced that most Settlers are in denial. They know that the foundations of their countries are corrupt, and they know that their countries are “colonial” in historical terms, but still they refuse to see and accept the fact that there can be no rhetorical transcendence and retelling of the past to make it right without making fundamental changes to their government, society, and the way they live. For no other reason than a selfish attachment to the economic and political privileges they have collectively inherited as the dominant people in a colonial relationship, they, by cultural instinct and imperative, deny the truth. The disjuncture between knowledge and its acceptance is baffling and grating to anyone who doesn’t understand the absolute need to deny in the colonial mind. (p. 107)

Tuck and Yang (2012) detail a number of ‘moves to innocence’ employed by white settler peoples in the face of “the relentlessness of settler guilt and haunting” (p. 9). They observe, “Directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept. The weight of this reality is uncomfortable; the misery of guilt makes one hurry toward any reprieve” (p. 9). One of the moves to innocence described by Tuck and Yang (2012) is that of colonial equivocation. This involves “the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization” (p. 17), such that all of us are colonized and “none of us are settlers” (p. 17). *Settler nativism* occurs when one locates or invents a “long-lost ancestor who is rumored to have had ‘Indian blood,’ and they use this claim to mark themselves as blameless in the attempted eradications of Indigenous peoples” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 10). Tuck and Yang do not take issue with the appropriateness or legitimacy of adoptions, but note that the representations and claims by settlers to be adopted by Indigenous peoples “far exceeds the actual occurrences of adoptions” (p. 14). *Fantasizing adoption*, as a move to innocence, functions to “spin a fantasy that an individual settler can become innocent, indeed heroic and indigenized, against a backdrop of national guilt” (p. 14), whereby they are absolved from the inheritance of settler crimes and bequeathed “a new inheritance of Native-ness *and claims to*

*land*” (p. 14). Ultimately, all of these moves are attempts to “deflect a settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupying stolen land” (p. 10). Regan (2010) describes an instance of her own internal personal campaign of defensive self-justification:

On the way to the meeting place, I find myself recounting all the reasons I am not a colonizer: I am working for social justice and change from within my own dominant-culture institutions; I am enlightened and empathetic; my intentions are good; I am committed to finding a just solution...I have Indigenous colleagues and friends; I grew up in a single-parent, low-income family in an ethnically diverse East Vancouver neighbourhood; I am not one of those racist white upper- or middle-class people raised in insular privilege! (p. 171)

Projection, another defence mechanism, is described by Memmi (2000) as scapegoating, whereby the colonized and racially marginalized “make excellent hooks on which to hang collective anxiety” (p. 64). Memmi (2000) says, “to exteriorize evil by incarnating it in another separates it from society and renders it less threatening...at the individual level, one destroys in the other what one would like to destroy in oneself, by imputing to that other one’s own faults” (p. 64). Thus, the racist is left to feel innocent and pure, given “self-absolution” (p. 65). Memmi (2000) argues that racism itself is a function of projecting the negative onto the colonized and racially marginalized such that it justifies oppression: without it, one would have to accuse oneself, “one’s own people, and one’s cosmos of having done it...[which] would require a degree of lucidity, of integrity and courage, that few people...attain” (p. 134). Kroker (2010) writes of the Oka Resistance,

If the peoples of the First Nations can be so oppressed, not only in Montreal, but also in all of the Americas, from the United States to South America, maybe that is because they are the bad conscience of what we have become in the society of speed and war: perfect sacrificial scapegoats for feelings of anxiety and doubt about that which has become lost in the coming to be of the technological dynamo. (pp. 273-274)

The effects of colonization, Sartre (1965) asserts, are the alienation and dehumanization of not only the oppressed, but also the oppressor: “The impossible dehumanization of the

oppressed...becomes the alienation of the oppressor...the colonizer must assume the opaque rigidity and imperviousness of stone. In short, he must dehumanize himself, as well” (p. xxvii-xxviii). McCaslin and Breton (2008) write,

To dehumanize others can only dehumanize the dehumanizers, the controllers, the ones who treat others as objects and benefit materially from doing so. Not only that, but colonizers almost immediately start treating themselves as objects as well—objects that are judged successful or not, objects that command high or low salaries, objects that hold high or low positions in hierarchical societies. (p. 513)

Kelly Lovelace, Anishinaabe (personal communication, February 4, 2002) shared the following:

Something had to have happened in their history that they would forget who they are, their ancestors, that disconnection...there’s a lot of white people that are disconnected from themselves...who are suffering in the mind. And they’re looking for something but they’re either afraid, unwilling or don’t have the ability to go back to find who they are.

This is reflective of Day’s (2010) description of his own condition as a non-Indigenous man in Canada:

I know I am not really of the land, anywhere. Just as I am landless, it is also very unclear who are my people, other than, as I’ve already mentioned, that I am some kind of European settler...a nomad wanderer, with fragments of a family, a few friends widely dispersed, many contacts, but no real community, no one, other than my two boys, whose fate I share, whether I like it or not...can there be a true community of the homeless and landless? (pp. 267-268)

Carey (2008) narrates that as a non-Aboriginal woman living in Australia, she has been unable to find belonging in the land of her ancestors:

I went to Ireland when I was 19, to check if I was Irish. A bus driver in Limerick set me straight. He said the Americans were tourists and Australians were guests. At first I thought he was flattering me. It soon clicked though that he thought I was only marginally higher up in the pecking order than those loud Americans who developed sudden penchants for wearing tweed caps and walking with the aid of a blackthorn stick. I was just a guest. An Australian guest. (p. 3)

These dynamics and characteristics of the conditions of white colonial settlers living on Indigenous lands are important as they interface with our ability to engage in decolonization and

anti-colonial activism. The narratives presented in the findings chapter of this thesis reflect the struggles of a number of white settler occupier participants with the state of the colonizer.

Thus far, this chapter has been a journey through issues of terminology, conceptions of colonialism, conceptions of anti-colonialism and decolonization, Indigenous and Indigenous-led resistance, and finally, the framing of white settler decolonization and anti-colonialism. The remainder of this chapter explores issues related to white settler occupier decolonization and anti-colonialism through the framework of listening to Indigenous peoples. The areas of engagement explored in the rest of the chapter become important for the data analysis of the study: in order to centre Indigenous sovereignty in the analysis, I prioritize these areas from the data in the construction of narratives. This process will be described more fully in the next chapter.

### **Listening in Indigenous Sovereignty**

While there is growing literature by settler scholars and activists regarding living in Indigenous sovereignty and settler decolonial and anti-colonial work (e.g., Lowman & Barker, 2015; Davis, 2010; Regan, 2010; Wallace, 2013; Walia, 2013), in the findings chapter of this work, some of these and other voices come forward. In this section, I focus on listening to what a number of Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers are saying. I have learned both before and during the process of this study by listening to Indigenous peoples and by reading their words about some critical overlapping relationships and teachings important to living in Indigenous sovereignty--living ethically on Indigenous lands among Indigenous peoples, and doing accountable anti-colonial and decolonial work. Here, I review some of these learnings within the groupings: engaging with the land; engaging with Indigenous peoples; engaging with Indigenous laws, teachings, prophecies, literatures, practices/ceremonies, and treaty perspectives;

engaging with Indigenous resurgence, nationhood, and decolonization; and engaging with what Indigenous peoples are asking us to do. Waziyatawin (2009) says,

You can find Indigenous individuals who will support any position you want them to support—that is a direct result of the colonial experience... Because this is a political struggle, it is essential to work in solidarity with critically minded and politically engaged Indigenous individuals. (p. 155)

Although I recognize the diversity among Indigenous nations, communities, and individuals in what they are saying, I make no claim that what I present here represents the fullness of this diversity. The authors and scholars I draw from tend to be well-respected and esteemed within circles of people working in these areas, and, in some cases, are people who I know and with whom I have nurtured relationships. What I present here is influenced by my own choices based on where I live, my connections with Indigenous communities, and my focus on decolonization, activist, and anti-colonial Indigenous literatures. As has been noted, striving to live with a view of oneself being in Indigenous sovereignty is fraught with tensions, contestations, and seemingly opposing perspectives. I generally view these as parts of the whole and as threads to be woven and balanced. I focus, in part, locally. As Ritskes (2014) contends, the terms of engagement with Indigenous nationhood “depend on the Indigenous land and culture that you are co-existing and co-resisting with” (p. 261).

I frame this section on listening in Indigenous sovereignty with some teachings from those who offered feedback during consultations and conversations about this specific research. They offer context through which the remainder of this literature review can be understood. During a research consultation, Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) shared a story of her adopted aunt, Marjorie Heinrichs who, if she were to be measured by some of the settler decolonization, solidarity, and ally literature, did many things wrong--except, perhaps, for what really mattered most:

She was amazing, and funny, she had this huge laugh. Oh you would've loved her. She came to do one journal article about Roseau at the pow wow, and she never left... You know, after she lost her son, I told her about losing my mom, and what that grieving process was like for me. And she was always there for me after that. She came to my wedding. She came to each graduation, she flew wherever she needed to be. She was my Auntie, and she was like a mom to me in many ways. She was adopted into my family ... That's one thing I want for [settlers] to know... You are a human being with a heart. Any relationship that's a true relationship has to also be about love. Not just about responsibility... Marge knew it because she isn't part of that academic stuff, she was part of the community stuff. She was family. She was a member of our family. And her family is our family. And that's the way we relate to her. And that's the way she related to us.

Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) shared that settler decolonial work

isn't going to happen in just one way, and it isn't formulaic... In any ally relationship, you can check all the boxes and somehow it's always gone wrong... Being in relationship is something very different than just checking a box in these categories.

She said, "It's about the continuing dialogue about common goals and objectives, so that idea of grounding in a relationship is important. How much are you actually listening, and dialoguing, and continuing to check in with Indigenous partners?" I note these words in order to advise the reader that the areas in this section are not meant to be seen as a checklist, but rather as areas to consider for settlers engaging in anti-colonial and decolonial work. Craft says, "what you might take away at one point in time is actually what you need to work on, what you lack" (A. Craft, personal communication, April 9, 2016).

**Engagement with the land.** Dakota Elder Eva McKay (1999) says, "Our ancestors say we were always here, this is where we always were" (p. 293). "Tribal territory is important," writes Little Bear (2000), "because the Earth is our Mother (and this is not a metaphor: it is real). The Earth cannot be separated from the actual being of Indians" (p. 78). Little Bear (1994) describes the relationships of Indigenous peoples to the land as manifest "through a complex interrelational network with all of creation which sees humans as simply a part of creation and not above it, and which has as its goal balance and harmony... accomplished through constant

renewal” (p. 7). McAdam (2015) writes, “*nêhiyaw* laws are in the songs, the ceremonies, and in all the sacred sites. The land is intertwined in a most profound manner, so to separate the two would mean death to many aspects of *nêhiyaw* culture” (p. 23). The dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories has had a profound impact. McKay (1999) explains:

There are lots of farms here, no one can trap and hunt for livelihood, so we are in a tight spot here. There is nothing much left. We cannot live off the land anymore. The generation today has lost their culture, so they are suffering. You see them in jails, they are people without a culture, they have nothing. (p. 307)

Because, as Leanne Simpson (2013b) says, the root of the [colonial] problem is “the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from our homeland” (9:40-9:43), a root of decolonization is “land and how we’re going to share it” (9:45-9:47). Thus, the role of land in white settler anti-colonialism and decolonization is key. In this section, I include Indigenous voices speaking and writing in relationship to settler occupiers’ status on the land; experiential, spiritual, and emotional connections with the land; and responsibilities to the land.

***Status on the land.*** Simpson (2013a) writes, “I hope that Canadians learn to acknowledge whose land they are living on, and to recognize how their presence on our lands interrupts our ways of being in this world” (p. 56). Sakej Ward (2015) states that one’s status on the land serves to orient one’s relationship to the land and to the people of that land. Ward discusses examples of status on the land, starting with his own story as Mi’kmaq from Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation, having married into and residing in Shxw’owhamel First Nation (Stó:lō territory). His status has been that of a guest, which means:

You respect their laws, you respect their customs, you respect their rules, you respect their norms, you respect their way of life... You become aware that it’s their land, not yours. They have rules that were developed specifically from their relationship to the land. You must learn to put yourself under that, you’ve got to humble yourself so that you’re willing to accept those laws, those rules, and your status within it... As a guest, you are informing them that you have certain limits and certain restrictions, that you can’t just exceed those limits. You can’t just somehow impose your ideas, your behaviours,



your conduct... I don't have the right to tell the people of this land what to do... We are really saying we're holding back and we're restraining personal power as a way of demonstrating respect. And we have to be able to learn to conform our behaviours within that status... I am not to assume I know better about how to relate to this land. I've been here [Stó:lō territory] what--just a little bit over a decade? And I can assume that I know more than people who have been here for tens of thousands of years? That I can tell them how to relate to the land better?... I am in a role of being a helper and a supporter. (Ward, 2015, 1:30-5:45, used with permission)

Ward (2015) contrasts his guest status with the status of *hwulunitum*, the colonizing group. He says,

We do not have the same status here on this land... As *hwulunitum*, you carry the legacy of the colonial crimes of your forefathers up to now. Up to now. Right up to the inclusion of the very Canadian system that occupies these territories. As *hwulunitum*, you're a part of that, and that's what you carry with you as baggage, every single time you encounter an Indigenous person. Every second you're standing on Indigenous soil, that's the baggage you carry with you, and that's how your status is formed here... Guests don't invade your lands. Guests don't declare sovereignty—absolute control over your nation. Guests don't come in with gunboats, armed personnel, and the first things they construct are forts. Guests don't settle the land for the sake of gaining your resources, displacing you from your own territory. Guests don't bring in their families, their friends, and your slaves to take over your land and take those resources. Guests don't disrupt and destabilize your society or your political institutions. Guests don't forcibly change your religion. Guests don't usurp your traditional government. Guests don't replace it with a puppet regime. So I hope that's clear enough, that your status is not a guest. (16:25-18:45, used with permission)

As has been noted, Ward (2015) believes the status of *hwulunitum* on the land to be that of an occupier. He says, “when you first acknowledge the land and then say ‘I’m an occupier of this land’... you’re at least truthfully and clearly stating what your real status is here” (22:10-22:25, used with permission). Decolonial work, thus, involves honesty about, and a willingness to re-think, our status on the land.

***Experiential, spiritual, and emotional connection.*** Relating to land in experiential, spiritual, and emotional ways, as settlers, can be difficult given seemingly contradictory sets of values and ethics. If we are working toward the return of Indigenous territories to Indigenous

Nations, is it not counterproductive to attach to these lands? Leanne Simpson (2013a) describes some of what the colonizing presence of settlers on the land has cost Indigenous peoples:

Over the past two hundred years, without our permission and without our consent, we have been systematically removed and dispossessed from most of our territory. We have watched as our homeland has been cleared, subdivided, and sold to settlers from Toronto. We have watched our waterfronts disappear behind monster cottages...our most sacred places have been made into provincial parks for tourists, with concrete buildings over our teaching rocks... The land, our Mother, has largely been taken from us. (p. 51)

Waziyatawin (2009) explains that due to colonial regulation, Dakota people today continue to be prevented from living as Dakota on their homelands. She says “we are not in control of caring for our land base...we are still denied access to sacred sites, lands, and waters that are central to our spiritual traditions. Consequently, we grieve the losses we have suffered and continue to suffer” (p. 154). We must remember that our access, as settlers, to a connection with Indigenous lands comes at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

Despite this, a number of Indigenous peoples are asking non-Indigenous peoples to understand Indigenous peoples’ connection to the land, and to learn to connect to and love the land themselves so that they will be able to more effectively support Indigenous efforts to protect the land. Melody Andrews (2015) describes the connection of Stó:lō to their territories:

Being *Hwulmuhw* [an Indigenous person]... is about understanding your connection to the land, where you come from, and knowing the origin stories of the land and the sacred responsibility for defending your territories from destruction and exploitation...A *Hwulmuhw* person knows how to interact with the land in such a way that it guarantees a future for upcoming generations. It is a way of thinking that utilizes deep respect as a tool to place limits on our capability to take from nature. This restraint ensures a healthy sustainable way of life for generations yet to come. To be *Hwulmuhw* on this land means to be Stó:lō. Stó:lō means people of the river...The river has always taken care of us for thousands of years. Our villages are located along the river, we sustain our lives from the river ... The land develops you as a person. It provides places, specific experiences, and wisdom for a person as they grow. (7:07-8:25)

Andrews (2015) says, “As a *hwulunitum* you need to understand the connection to the land, and the importance of our sacred sites so that [you] too can get behind the Stó:lō and have the sacred

responsibility to protect these lands for the next seven generations” (9:23-10:00). Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr.) (2016b) says,

The reality of the Red Man is one of connection to the land – having a close and sacred relationship with the land... in the sense of relationship like that of a child to its mother. Mother Earth has been the true teacher for our ancestors. It was through her natural laws we found balance and harmony... Her abundance comes with the full spirit of love that she has for all life – a love that we feel in the food, the medicines, the natural materials we use in our homes and in our cooking, and most importantly, in the teachings, natural laws and connection she brings us... Relationship begins with the land... For us, the Earth is the face of the Creator. (para. 11, 12, 13, 21, 24)

Dawnis Kennedy shares,

We love our mother [earth]. That’s why we want to be responsible in our relationship with her, because we love her. And she loves us. She loves us. That’s the heart of that relationship. The heart of our [Anishinaabe] law is that. And a lot of the colonial, anti-colonial literature isn’t about love. It’s just about responsibility. And it’s only about humans... But our connection to each other is through our mother, the earth. And that’s where the heart comes. That’s where the love comes. There’s a purpose to decolonization and respectful relationships that has nothing to do with human beings. We as human beings have obligations to all our relations in creation. (personal communication, April 9, 2016)

Benally (2013) explains that to avoid perpetuating settler privilege and colonialism, non-Indigenous persons seeking to connect with Indigenous land should consult with Indigenous peoples. He suggests listening to Indigenous people who are still here and have had connection with the land since time immemorial. Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) says,

We’re the ones who were placed here on this earth [Turtle Island]. So yes, we’re the ones who are responsible to be able to speak for the land here, to have protocols in place. That’s our responsibility. And yes, that positions us differently. But we are also just human as well.

In *The Great Binding Law (Statement of Manitoba Elders)*, Oshoshko Beneshiikwe et al. (2015) say,

We make an invitation to the whole human family, and all the children, to come to our lodges so we can teach them to love the land, connect to the land, and take care of the land... *Kizhay Manitou* [the Great Spirit] gave all of us gifts to share with each other, to take care of the Earth and all life. In our lodges, the children will hear the teachings, feel

the ceremonies and feel the love for Mother Earth. (para. 21-22)

Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr.) (2016a) speaks to both Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples when he says,

It is only in returning to the mother, that we will be reminded of our true purpose as human beings. The only thing that can lift us out of this insanity is love, a love that comes from the land... When we are able to sit on the land is when we have our best chance of feeling the love expressed by the Earth...It will be the great love of the Earth that will take us to the heart. We need a change of heart if we hope to survive... This is a personal journey that we must each make. It is a journey to discover your own spirit that will define your purpose and bring meaning to your life. When we are able to truly feel the land is when change will happen, because we will be directed by the spirit in the land... Our homeland is filled with the spirit of our ancestors, who walked for tens of thousands of years taking care of the land. They continue to walk in spirit to help those who will be willing to accept the duties and responsibilities required in taking care of the land. We are willing to share what has helped our ancestors to take care of the land. We want to step forward and fulfill our leadership in our homeland, teaching those that want to learn why we love the land so much, and hopefully you will join us as we take care and love the land together, for the sake of all children. (para. 7, 25, 28, 31, 32, 84, 85)

***Responsibility to the land.*** As has been noted, one of the reasons for settlers to learn to understand and embody a connection to the earth is that it will strengthen their support of Indigenous efforts to defend their lands. In fact, a number of Indigenous scholars maintain that connecting with and defending the land is a Treaty obligation of the crown and those represented by the crown on Treaty lands. Tasha Hubbard (2013) shares that, based on treaties,

We [Indigenous peoples] understood that we would share information back and forth, that we would share [with settlers] that ethic of mutual responsibility of giving back, of the obligations that we all have to this land and to the inhabitants of this land. And not just humans. We tend to think it's always just about us. It's all about people. But it's not. It's about our other relatives. And just imagine how different this land would be if people had come, and been open, and understood that we are in relationship with everything that lives on this land. They are our relatives, and we need to think about them and their wellbeing. (45:00-45:35)

Sinclair (2014) speaks of treaties made between the Anishinaabe and a number of animal nations represented by the clan system. When Anishinaabe people signed treaties with the newcomers, they often signed with their clan symbols, demonstrating that the newcomers were signing into

responsibilities to those clan animals, and thereby to the natural world where they live: “In the water, in the land, in the sky, in the sun, in the moon; in a long chain and network of relationships” (44:30-44:45). Therefore the treaty reflects the obligations of non-Indigenous people to also care for and relate to the waters, the land, and the animals. Simpson (2013a) shares insights she has gained from Elder Robin Greene who says that from Nishaabeg perspectives,

Humans should be taking as little as possible and giving up as much as possible to promote sustainability and promote *mino bimaadiziwin* in the coming generations. We should be as gentle as possible with our Mother. We should be taking the bare minimum to ensure our survival. He talked about how we need to manage ourselves so that life can promote more life. How much are you willing to give up to promote sustainability? We need to make different decisions. (Simpson, 2013a, p. 55)

**Engaging with Indigenous peoples.** Engaging with Indigenous peoples is crucial for those working toward decolonization. Nonetheless, engaging well can be challenging given our histories and given white settler occupiers’ colonial socialization. Taiaiake Alfred (2005) writes,

There is a great danger in attempting to negotiate structural changes to our relationships before our minds and hearts are cleansed of the stains of colonialism. In the absence of mental and spiritual decolonization, any effort to theorize or to implement a model of a ‘new’ Onkwehonwe [Original Peoples]–Settler relationship is counter-productive to the objectives of justice and the achievement of a long-term relationship of peaceful coexistence between our peoples. (p. 180)

Sakej Ward (2015) says,

We can’t have a relationship if you insist on being the colonizer. We can’t have a relationship if you’re still going to be the occupier. That part of that identity has to be acknowledged, and there has to be work to change that. I am not going to be in relationship with anybody who insists they’re superior to me, that insists they have the right to control me, they have sovereignty over me; that insists that because of our race they have a right to take away my nation, my land, my kids. The only relationship we’re going to have is a hostile one. (24:40-25:20, used with permission)

Flowers (2015) notes the legitimacy of the politics of refusal exercised by some Indigenous peoples. When considering dispossession and colonization, she says, “These are the primary obstacles to even beginning to imagine the co-existence of settlers with Indigenous peoples,” (p.

34), and asks “How might such a gulf be bridged and solidarity be created?” (p. 34). Flowers says, “Indigenous peoples have no desire to build a future that is still grounded on a colonial relationship” (p. 35), as happens often even in spaces of co-resistance. Flowers writes, “maybe some Indigenous people don’t want or need settler co-resistance because we don’t trust them...For many Indigenous peoples the settler never ceases to be the enemy; the settler cultivates righteous anger within the colonized” (p. 38). In this context, Flowers stresses that the “settler too must demonstrate a willingness to be refused,” (p. 34) and that the “labor of settlers should be to imagine alternative ways to be in relation with Indigenous peoples” (p. 34).

Engagement with Indigenous peoples also needs to be realistic. Tuck and Fine (2007), citing Vine Deloria, “reprove that romanticized vision of the Indian guide, that noble savage leading the white folks into the clearing, the earth and brook that will make real again the sterility of modernity” (p. 155). Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) sees Anishinaabe peoples as “an unsteady touchstone, because we’re just as human.” She says,

Anishinaabe people, we may have been the first ones here among the human people, but we aren’t the first ones here. As members of the human people, we’re like twins [of non-Indigenous people] born a second before. But we have so many relatives that came before, and our mother [earth], and the spirit who created us all. So looking at only just this one little human relationship, we don’t have any wisdom. We’re just as human as anyone else.... It’s not our knowledge. It’s from the plants, it’s our relatives, the animals, they showed us all of that... We can’t be a measure of anyone else’s success because we’re trying to walk and live and learn life just the same way everybody else is. Our people have almost destroyed ourselves numerous times with nobody’s interference. (D. Kennedy, personal communication, April 9, 2016)

***Treaty relatives.*** A number of prominent Indigenous legal scholars indicate that Indigenous perspectives on treaty relationships provide some guidance towards establishing better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenous sovereignty, according to Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000), originates from the Creator; and treaties, “through spiritual ceremonies conducted during the negotiations, expanded the First Nations sovereign

circle, bringing in and embracing the British Crown within their sovereign circle” (p. 41). The Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (2007) emphasizes the political relationship established by treaties, which creates obligations of both sides, is mutually beneficial and reciprocal, and is “perpetual and unalterable” (p. 168). In addition to identifying a set of treaty obligations, a function of treaties is the making of relatives. Harold Johnson (2007) says, “If we return to the original intention of treaty and recognize that we are relatives, *Kiciwamanawak* [my cousin], we should be able to walk into the future in a good way.” He says,

It was in accordance with the law of adoption that my family took your ancestors as relatives. We solemnized the adoption with a sacred pipe... This adoption ceremony is what we refer to when we talk about the treaty... We expected that you would behave like relatives and help us in hard times, just as we took the responsibility to help you if you needed it. We expected to keep living as a family with a new family in the neighborhood.... You became my relative at treaty, you are my relative today, and our children and grandchildren and great-great grandchildren, and so on, will be relatives in the future. We have an obligation *Kiciwamanawak*, you and I, to make things right between us so that the future generations do not inherit our missed opportunity. (Johnson, 2007, pp. 29-31)

Sylvia McAdam (2015) writes,

When treaties became binding, it became a ceremonial covenant of adoptions of one nation by another. During the Treaty 6 making process, the *nêhiyawak* understood it was adoption of the Queen and her descendants, binding the two nations together for all time. We became relatives. (p. 41)

Aimée Craft (2013) writes of the Anishinaabe kinship norms expected from the Treaty One relationship: “While each party negotiated the relationship on the basis of kinship and referred to the Queen as mother, the Anishinabe kinship norms invoked duties of love, care, kindness, and equal treatment of all children” (p. 16.) Craft (2013) says, “In Anishinabe *inaakonigewin* [law], relationships never end. They are constantly fostered, re-defined, re-examined, and re-negotiated. They must be tended, fuelled, nurtured, or simmered” (p. 113). Sinclair (2015) writes,

Treaties are the fabric of creation, binding all living things together in a vast and complete network of relationships. They are intricate ties that must be visited and re-visited, maintained and fortified, and can—with enough care and concern—be virtually

indestructible. This is why treaties produce family, not friends. Family is for life...Treaties are the template Indigenous people follow in creating and maintaining relationships. (p. 10)

Sinclair (2014) says “treaties are about trying to figure each other out for the rest of our lives. Forever” (32:25-32:30).

***Solidarity and activist relationships.*** Indigenous scholars also share thoughts on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in anti-colonial and solidarity activism. Indigenous Action Media (2014) describe the ideal relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists as that of *accomplices*. This is an accountable relationship built of trust and mutual consent in which non-Indigenous activists are at the side of Indigenous activists, complicit in their work. Xhopakelxhit (2014) emphasizes that in addition to attending solidarity rallies and marches, non-Indigenous peoples will create meaningful relationships with the Indigenous peoples with whom they are in solidarity. These relationships do not mean the supporters become “one of us” (p. 5) or that they become universally accepted. Friendships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who are both working toward decolonization can be powerful sites of transformation. Christian and Freeman (2010) describe “how [friendship] can build or deepen our commitment to work for social change, and how powerful friendships can be in changing both parties – actually helping people to decolonize at a personal level” (p. 367). Such relationships are not always easy. Christian writes of the amount of energy it sometimes takes to be around non-Indigenous peoples, and of some of Freeman’s colonizing behaviours. Freeman states,

Friendship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is certainly not all that is required for decolonization. There are entrenched systemic issues of inequality, prejudice, violence, poverty, and theft of land that will take years of political action to address. But the relationship between our peoples does not exist only on a political level; it exists on every level, including the most personal. All of us are part of this relationship; all of us make it what it is. Working things through at a personal level can prepare and



strengthen us for other kinds of more public work. The tricky part is to understand what in the personal is political or social in origin. (Christian & Freeman, 2010, p. 38)

**Engaging with Indigenous knowledges.** Engaging with Indigenous knowledges respectfully is another way of embodying the principle of living in Indigenous sovereignty.

McAdam (2015) writes,

In the spirit and intent of Indigenous sovereignty and treaty, and honouring Indigenous relationships; non-Indigenous people must begin supporting and encouraging Indigenous laws and teachings, in every aspect, and by whatever means possible. How this might look is up to the Indigenous nations working alongside these systems to intervene in colonial narratives, laws, and policies, and collectively work toward dismantling destructive and oppressive systems which have been imposed on Indigenous peoples through colonization. (p. 36)

Simpson (2014) argues that because Indigenous knowledge systems are land based, with land dispossession as their biggest threat, the fight for Indigenous knowledge “lies with communities like Grassy Narrows, and those on the ground who are active practitioners of Nishnaabewin or who are actively protecting their lands from destruction” (p. 21). In this section, I explore engaging with Indigenous knowledges by examining prophecies, treaty perspectives, laws and teachings, literatures, and practices, protocols, and ceremonies.

***Prophecies.*** At a recent gathering, Dawnis Kennedy (2015) explained that Anishinaabe foresaw and considered a way for non-Indigenous peoples to belong here before we came to Turtle Island. Elder Peter Waskahat, Nêhiyawak from Frog Lake First Nation, Treaty Six (in Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000) says,

Long before the arrival of the White man, the First Nations discussed how they would live with the White man. There were extensive discussions to determine how the First Nations could peacefully co-exist with the newcomers. The Elders say they knew the White man was coming across the sea from places where there was much bloodshed. On the island of the new world created by Wisahkecahk, that way of life could not prevail. The island of North America was created so that peace could prevail. When the newcomers arrived, peace treaties would need to be negotiated. It was decided long

before the White man arrived that the First Nations would treat the newcomers as relatives, as brothers and sisters. The First Nations had decided they would live in peace and that they would share the land with these newcomers. (p. 31)

Bone, Copenace, Courchene, Easter, Greene, and Skywater (2012), write of the Anishinaabe

Eighth Fire prophecy:

The 8<sup>th</sup> fire prophecy shares that a time will come when Mother Earth will enter into a change and rebirth, a time of a “New Life”...At that time all cultures of the world will gather here at the centre of Turtle Island to share their teachings and knowledge and collectively seek a vision that would create a “new People” representing all races of humanity. The New People will find a way to unite and create a new understanding of how to live in peace and care for the Earth... The circle of life continues as we return to our original instructions, and we believe this time all the races of humankind will walk with us. Our prophecies have told us that it will be our people, the Red People who will lead this movement of return. (p. 38; pp. 44-45)

Simpson (2008) writes,

In order for the Eighth fire to be lit, settler society must also choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations, and to join us in building a sustainable future based on mutual recognition, justice, and respect. (p. 14).

*Treaty perspectives.* Sylvia McAdam (2015) writes,

Treaty 6 is created on the foundations of the *nêhiyaw* laws and legal systems from the understanding of the *nêhiyaw* people...Much of the *nêhiyaw* laws have not been recorded nor understood; however, they are imperative in the treaty understanding, negotiations, and interpretations. (p. 41)

This use of Anishinaabe laws and protocols inform “the substantive expectations of the treaty [One]” (Craft, 2013, p. 16). Craft (2013) says, “Anishinaabe law is all about relationships: relationships among and between ourselves, relationships with other animate beings. These relationships give rise to rights, obligations, and responsibilities” (p. 16). Thus, she writes, “kinship relationships, the obligations derived from them, and a sense of the sacred obligations involved in treaty making informed the agreement that was made between the parties” (p. 13). Indigenous perspectives consistently affirm that Indigenous nations, during treaty negotiations, did not cede, surrender, or agree to the extinguishment of their titles to their traditional territories

(Craft, 2013; Hubbard, 2013; Johnson, 2007; McAdam, 2015). The Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (2007) writes, “Elders firmly believe that the land was to be shared with the newcomers but that did not mean a loss of ownership” (p. 18). Craft (2013) says “Anishinaabe understandings of their relationship to Mother Earth informed what could be negotiated in terms of sharing the land with the incoming settlers” (p. 16). Craft notes, “it may have been that each party had a different understanding of what sharing the land actually entailed” (p. 11). She writes,

Anishinaabe expected they would not be limited in their movements or their sustenance activities...Neither an owner or a seller, the Anishinabe used the land and cared for it. The Anishinabe retained control over the land, subject to sharing it with the White settlers for the limited purpose of sustenance. (Craft, 2013, p. 112)

Johnson (2007) explains,

When your family arrived here, *Kiciwamanawak*, we expected that you would join the families already here, and, in time, learn to live like us. No one thought you would try to take everything for yourselves, and that we would have to beg for leftovers. We thought we would live as before, and that you would share your technology with us. We thought that maybe, if you watched how we lived, you might learn how to live in balance in this territory. The treaties that gave your family the right to occupy this territory were also an opportunity for you to learn how to live in this territory. (p. 21)

Johnson (2007) says, “Your right to occupy the territory [based on treaty] did not give you the right to impose your law, your customs, and your religion” (p. 66). According to Kennedy (2015), in order to belong here, non-Indigenous peoples need to learn to respectfully observe, belong to, and fit into the pre-contact treaties of Anishinaabe law. As has been noted, pre-contact treaties included treaties with other-than-human life as well as treaties between Indigenous nations. Spiritual protocols and assistance were invoked during the making of treaties, making them eternal and spiritually binding (Johnson, 2007; McAdam, 2015). Following the teachings of Haudenosaunee scholar and orator Dan Longboat, Leanne Simpson (2011) says, “treaties are not just for governments, they are for the citizens as well. The people also have to act in a manner

that is consistent with the relationships set out in the treaty negotiation process” (p. 21). Craft (2013) writes,

My hope is that a better understanding of Anishinabe normative values and principles will assist in rebuilding the treaty relationship and allow us to honour its original spirit and intent. The core purpose of treaty was to create relationships, not to cede land—which was the way that it was understood by the Anishinabe and endorsed by the creator. (p. 114)

**Laws and teachings.** Borrows (2005) writes, “Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada developed various spiritual, political and social customs and conventions to guide their relationships. These diverse customs and conventions became the foundation for many complex systems of law” (p. 190). These laws, according to Borrows (2005), have often been recorded and communicated through oral histories, Elders, ceremonies, and wisdom keepers, and have been preserved using memory devices such as “wampum belts, masks, totem poles, medicine bundles, culturally modified trees, birch bark scrolls, petroglyphs, button blankets, land forms, crests, and more” (p. 190). Nii Gaani Aki Inini (2016a) says, “Everyone and everything is held together and governed by Spiritual Laws and Natural Laws – laws that are woven into the fabric of Creation and written upon the Earth. We refer to this as *Okichitibakonikaywin* – The Great Binding Law” (para. 5). Sakej Ward (2015) explains,

Those teachings have evolved over thousands of years to get to a point to understand how best to relate to that land so it can be there for the next generations. Those teachings become the culture of this area. They become the basis for natural law in this area, in this particular nation, and that’s important. We have to understand that land develops culture... My ability to interact with my homeland, my ability to be Indigenous in my homeland, requires certain skills, certain understandings and certain teachings... we have to see that the land will inform us, the land will tell us, the land will let us know how best to live here. And we in turn have to learn those rules, and those behaviours of how best to live with the land. When we don’t abide by those rules, when we no longer respect the land we live on, we start to extract, we start to destroy, we start to commodify, we take. To the point where that land can no longer take care of you. (7:33-11:15, used with permission)

Johnson (2007) says, “When your ancestors came to this territory, *Kiciwamanawak* [my cousin], our law applied” (p. 27). McAdam (2015) emphasizes the necessity of non-Indigenous peoples following the laws of the Indigenous peoples on whose land we are staying. She describes a number of *nêhiyaw* laws including laws of transgression against other human beings (*Pâstâhowin*), and laws of transgression against other-than-human beings (*Ohcinêwin*) in which the people are instructed not to cause pain or suffering to animals, waste animal products, over-harvest trees, or pollute the environment. She writes, “No relationship could be developed without the *nêhiyaw law of miyo-wîcêhtowin*” (p. 47), which refers to having good relations, and “originates in the laws and relationships that their nation has with the creator” (McAdam, 2015, p. 47). Xhopakelxhit (2014) indicates, “saying you are in solidarity with indigenous people and sovereignty means you accept our laws and reject the illegal laws of the military state that is actively occupying our lands” (p. 5). Mills (2016) describes an effect of identity politics on settlers involved in anti-colonial work. Their work to acknowledge and account for their privilege and to engage their subsequent responsibilities results in some turning inward, “focused on what seemed the inherent and perhaps inescapable badness of their settler identity” (para. 4). He writes, “In the end I couldn’t see how the internally-initiated tear-down that resulted from the careful accounting of identities in this instance was helpful and I couldn’t square it with the teachings of my *gete-Anishinaabeg* [Elders]” (para. 5). Noting the value, and yet the lack of transformative potential in identity politics, he turns to Anishinaabe constitutionalism based on mutual aid, which for Mills means “constituting ourselves as one more community amongst communities in creation’s order, affirming our participation in a universe comprised of the infinite connections of gift relationships” (para. 20). Within these relationships, connection informs responsibility, allowing for “far more of an impact on oppressive behaviours I encounter

than would institutional action or an obsessive attention to what my identity means for your freedom” (para. 26). It is an impact born of “treating others as sacred persons” (para. 26), which brings us back to his pivotal words shared in the previous chapter:

The most radical thing anyone can do with respect to decolonization is to allow that he or she is a sacred person, has gifts others need and is worthy of receiving others’ gifts, and is part of creation. Yes, it truly is important to recognize that one is a settler but that should never be an impediment to the practise of Anishinaabe law on Anishinaabe territory and that means standing within creation, not taking a dejected step back from it. (Mills, 2016, para. 27)

**Literatures.** LaRocque (2010) writes,

Today, there is a rapidly growing, consciously alert, decolonizing scholarship, much of it inspired through Native Studies, feminist, postcolonial, and Indigenous criticism. We all stand on the shoulders of such works—these writers in turn stand on the sloping shoulders of the colonized. (p. 14)

Alfred (2008) says,

Indigenous scholars who are culturally rooted and connected to their communities, they are doing what Euroamerican scholars simply cannot do for us: they are showing us forms of thought and pathways of action that are beyond the boundaries of a colonial mentality. Settlers have serious difficulties thinking thoughts that are outside foundational premises of their imperial cultural background. Very few of them can overcome the ingrained patterns of authority and dominance that are the heritage of empire and colonialism. So, we have to do it for them. And for us. (p. 10)

Thus, engaging with Indigenous literatures becomes an important aspect of living in Indigenous sovereignty as settlers.

**Practices, protocols, and ceremonies.** As has been noted, Indigenous peoples are diverse. They may hold differing views related to a host of issues, including the participation of non-Indigenous peoples in Indigenous spiritual and cultural protocols and practices. There are historical and structural contexts that shape views shared by Waziyatawin (2009) regarding white colonizers’ participation. Waziyatawin (2009) says, “Most Dakota people today are prevented, still, from living as Dakota people in our homeland” (p. 154). She notes that many Dakota are

unable to practice their traditional spirituality due, in part to being “denied access to sacred sites, lands, and waters that are central to our spiritual traditions” (p. 154). She says, “our spirituality remains inaccessible to most of our community members because our people do not know where or how to begin practicing the traditions that were stripped from us” (p. 154). She asks,

What does it mean when white colonizers practice aspects of our culture while that privilege is still denied to us, or remains inaccessible for a variety of reasons? It is deeply offensive to most of us. White people coming to our ceremonies do not carry the traumatic history that we do. Instead, they come with a sense of entitlement... When Indigenous people object to their theft of our traditions, they dismiss those objections as hateful, angry, and un-spiritual. Yet, those individuals have appropriated our inheritance. They are practicing what has been denied our ancestors and what our children have yet to recover. It is just another assault on our spirit. (p. 154)

She cautions that appropriation is “not a good way to build solidarity with the Indigenous struggle” (p. 154). In light of these political and structural contexts, Waziyatawin (2009) suggests that at this time, a more helpful approach, rather than adopting Indigenous practices, would be to “work to ensure that Dakota people are able to practice Dakota ways of being” (p. 155). She also states that this should not mean, “others should never engage in Indigenous ways of being (p. 154). Waziyatawin (2009) writes,

If we are struggling for Indigenous liberation on Indigenous lands, all people are going to have to practice Indigenous ways of being in some form. We will all need to engage in sustainable living practices and Indigenous cultures, including Dakota culture, offer excellent models for all people. That does not mean former-colonizers can appropriate our spirituality and ceremonial life, but it will mean they need to embrace Indigenous values such as balance and reciprocity. (pp. 154-155)

Some Indigenous peoples conceptualize appropriation differently than non-Indigenous peoples attending Indigenous ceremonies and involvement in Indigenous practices. For example, Fyre Jean Graveline (2012) defines appropriation as “the process of taking land, ceremonies, stories, images and ideas without giving acknowledgement or benefits to the person or people who originally had it or came up with them” (p. 79). Further, some Indigenous spiritual and

ceremonial leaders invite non-Indigenous peoples to attend and learn from their teachings and ceremonies. For example, Nii Gaani Aki Inini (2016b) believes Anishinaabe prophecies place Indigenous peoples as the true leaders of the land and urges that Indigenous peoples return to their sacred lodges, awaiting the arrival of the newcomers who will come to seek advice.

**Engaging with Indigenous nationhood, governance, sovereignty, resurgence, and decolonization.** Cornassel (2006) writes, “Settlers are not off the hook either—they will have to decide how they can relate to indigenous struggles” (p. 36). Alfred (2005) writes of the necessity that movements for resurgence and the defeat of the colonial system have “the support and cooperation of allies in the Settler society” (p. 64), and Simpson (2013a) calls upon Canadians to “lend their support to various expressions of Indigenous nationhood” (p. 56). It is important that settlers understand and relate with Indigenous processes and practices of resurgence and decolonization, and are supportive of Indigenous nationhood, governance, and sovereignty in order to ensure that their work is not counter-productive to the efforts and goals of Indigenous peoples. This may not be easy to define since Indigenous perspectives on resurgence, nationhood, and decolonization are likely as diverse as Indigenous nations and individuals themselves. Here, I note just a few of these perspectives, under the interrelated headings of *nationhood, governance, and sovereignty* and *decolonization and resurgence*.

***Nationhood, governance, and sovereignty.*** One way of supporting Indigenous nationhood is to relate with Indigenous peoples through a nation-to-nation partnership reflective of original treaties of peace and friendship (Alfred, 2005). Chickadee Richard (2013) says,

We talk about how we work together as nation to nation. We can work with the Haudenosaunee, we can work with the Mi'kmaq, we can work with the Haida. But you [non-Indigenous peoples] also have come from different nations. And how can you work with us? (57:00-57:10)



The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) calls for “nation rebuilding and national recognition” (p. 5). Reconstitution of nations, according to RCAP (1996), involves reintegration of excluded citizens, development of each nation’s constitution by that nation, and an expanded understanding of nationhood beyond Indian Act bands, established by each nation through “a process of negotiation, political debate, and perhaps even trial and error” (p. 6).

Sylvia McAdam (2015) notes that international law defines nationhood and self-determination as “based on the laws, cultures, lands, and languages of nations” (p. 84). European superiority narratives and claims to Indigenous lands as well as the Indian Act place Indigenous nationhood under siege (McAdam, 2015). Daabaasonaquwat (Peter Atkinson) (2016) sees Anishinaabe nationhood as being embodied by the clan system rather than *The Indian Act*. He says,

We had our own system, our own governance system, and that’s the clans. We didn’t have no *Indian Act*. We knew who we were... In our clan system, we had a lot of power, and the power was carried by the Clan Mothers. Women don’t realize how much power you have. I’m not talking about women’s rights, men’s rights. In the clan system we don’t talk about rights. We talk about responsibility... Every part of our life was identified in the clan system. There were societies in each one of those clans that that looked after a segment of our nationhood. Why are we trying to re-invent the wheel? We already have a governing system. We already are a nation. We already have nationhood. We always have that. We just have to deprogram our people, and reprogram them with the truth of who we really are... We’re a sovereign people... This is our home. White people just live here. (1:52:38- 2:01:42)

Simpson (2013b) says, “Our nationhood is based on the idea that our earth is our first mother, that natural resources are not natural resources at all, but gifts from that mother” (32:46-32:54). She says, “our nationhood is built on the foundational concept that we should give up what we can to support the integrity of our homelands for the coming generations. We should give more than we take. It’s nationhood based on a series of radiating responsibilities” (33:55-33:14).

Christi Belcourt (2016) believes discussions of nationhood should recall sacred alliances and agreements with the buffalo nation, the moose nation, the bear nation, the plants and all living

spiritual beings. She said, “We’re alive because of them, and yet we allow the pollution of lands and waters where they live” (41:45-41:55). Indigenous governance, for Belcourt, keeps the children and the survival of all beings at the centre of decision-making. She says,

We need to have our lands because we can see the future, and we need them to be protected for the future generations. And we don’t just need our lands. We need our children to be immersed in our languages...I would like to see our kids being taught by the trees and by the plants, and by the animals the way that we were all this time ago. Because when we were taught by those nations that we had relationships with, the waters were clean, there was plenty of fish, we didn’t have to worry about any of this kind of stuff that we see now. The world is being run into being a garbage dump. And I think it’s time that we asserted our jurisdiction, we asserted our responsibilities. (47:45- 49:04)

Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr.) (2016b) shared his perspective that Indigenous Nationhood defines the duties, responsibilities, and gifts of Indigenous peoples. The animals and the natural world (natural laws) provide guidance and direction to humans, establishing the framework for Indigenous governance and Nationhood. Nii Gaani Aki Inini (2016b) says,

Nationhood is not something that another Nation can give you. It is something that the Nation believes and establishes itself... Wherever I go in my homeland I carry my Nationhood in my heart, as a free and independent spirit... Colonial systems, structures and laws are only a distraction from living our true Nationhood. We do not have to waste any energy trying to change their system or convince them to recognize our Nationhood. All we need to do is live our Nationhood... In living our true Nationhood, I see a day and a time that we will no longer feed from the hand of the colonizer, but from the hand of Mide-Aki [earth] who provides everything we need to survive... Our Nationhood is about showing respect for Nature’s authority that is based on balance and harmony. Our Nationhood is about following Nature’s Laws that serve to nurture, teach and guide our lives towards survival. Our Nationhood is about returning the deep love we all receive from Mother Earth. Our Nationhood is about returning to the beginning, that holds the memory of the original instructions we were all given on how to be a human being, that reflects respect and kindness for all life. (para. 40, 46, 68, 100-104)

Alfred (2014) sees the Idle No More movement as “part of a larger and long-standing commitment to the restoration of Indigenous nationhood” (p. 348). He says,

Now is the time to put ourselves back on our lands spiritually and physically and to shift our support away from the Indian Act system and to start energizing the restoration of our own governments... Our governments should be circles in which we all sit as equals and participate fully and where all of our voices are heard. (p. 348)

Alfred (2005) describes Onkwehonwe governance as

founded on relationships and obligations of kinship relations, on the economic view that sustainability of relationships and perpetual reproduction of material life are prime objectives, on the belief that organizations should bind family units together with their land, and on a conception of political freedom that balances a person's autonomy with accountability to one's family. (p. 155)

Corntassel (2006) sees Indigenous governance as “an ongoing process of honouring and renewing our individual and collective relationships and responsibilities” (p. 36). Alfred (1999) advocates that Indigenous governance achieve the basic goals of “rejecting electoral politics and restructuring native governments to accommodate traditional decision-making, consultation, and dispute-resolution process” (p. 136); the reintegration of native languages as each community's official language; economic self-sufficiency, which is based on expanded land bases; and nation to nation relations with the state, including the defence of their territories. Chickadee Richard (2016) explains that their homelands give Indigenous peoples their sovereignty and identify them as a people. She says,

One of my Elders said, as long as you practice your ceremonies on the land, you're sovereign. As long as you're growing your food on the land, you're sovereign. As long as you're speaking your language, you're sovereign. We've never given that up. We've never surrendered that. It's still inside of all of us. We have natural laws that govern all of us. And it's only when we believe those natural laws that we become that sovereign people again. Because those were the natural laws that governed us when we were placed on this land. (Richard, 2016, 1:36:30-1:37:25)

Sylvia McAdam (2016) says, “Once you know where your lands are, you'll know your relatives...To speak your language is an act of sovereignty, your nationhood” (2:10:30-2:11:06).

She says,

When people tell me they're from a First Nation, you've already relegated yourself into a municipal status... We need to know our laws, we need to talk about them, and start breathing life back into them. Women have jurisdiction over land and water. Are the men prepared to step back and let the women step back into their jurisdiction? Are they? Remove the men from those tables that negotiate about the land and water. That's

nationhood. Put the women back in there. Because we carry the ceremonies of water.  
(2:11:07-2:12:08)

McAdam (2016) urges Indigenous peoples to bring back their original structures of leadership in which the women had a powerful role, and to learn about and follow traditional laws.

***Decolonization and resurgence.*** Leanne Simpson (2011) writes,

Perhaps the most epic narrative in Nishnaabeg thought concerning the processes of mobilization or migration in relation to colonialism, decolonization, and resurgence, is communicated through the Seven Fires Prophecy...For Nishnaabeg thinkers, resistance and resurgence are not only our response to colonialism. They are our only responsibility in the face of colonialism. Resurgence is our original instruction. Many Nishnaabeg thinkers believe we are in the period of the Seventh Fire. It is a responsibility of the new people, the Oshkimaadiziig, to pick up the pieces of our lifeways, collectivize them and build a political and cultural renaissance and resurgence. It is also foretold that if this is done in a good way, it has the power to transform settler society generating a political relationship based on the Indigenous principles of peace, justice, and righteousness as embodied in mino bimaadiziwin. (pp. 65-67)

Simpson (2008) writes,

It is the Oshkimaadiziig whose responsibilities involve reviving our language, philosophies, political and economic traditions, or ways of knowing, and our culture. The foremost responsibility of the “new people” is to pick up those things previous generations have left behind by nurturing relationships with Elders that have not “fallen asleep.” Oshkimaadiziig are responsible for decolonizing, for rebuilding our nation, and for forging new relationships with other nations by returning to original Nishnaabeg visions of peace and justice...For Nishnaabeg people, our prophecy is the foundation of our resistance and of our resurgence. (p.14)

“Nishnaabeg people embody all the necessary knowledge for resurgence” (p. 16), writes

Simpson (2014). She (Simpson, 2011) says, “We need our Elders, our languages, and our lands, along with the vision, intent, commitment, community and ultimately, action” (p. 17). This is the ultimate antidote to colonialism, according to Simpson (2011):

Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly re-investing in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions... It requires us to reclaim the very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and life-

ways in the dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context within which they were originally generated. (pp. 17-18)

Simpson (2011) believes, “Resurgence movements then, must be movements to create more life, propel life, nurture life, motion, presence, and emergence” (p. 143). They must be based on land because, Simpson (2013a) says, “Our resurgence and recovery depends upon our ability to connect with our lands” (p. 54). Alfred (2005) recommends a “ resurgence that is authentically cultured, spiritually rooted, and committed to non-violence in its strategy and that leads to the creation of a credible threat to the colonial order” (p. 204). He proposes “a spiritual revolution, a culturally rooted social movement that transforms the whole of society and a political action that seeks to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect truly a liberated post-imperial vision” (p. 27).

Coulthard (2014) suggests an approach to resurgence that “would see Indigenous people begin to reconnect with their lands and land-based practices” (p 71), re-familiarizing themselves with their lands, reoccupying sacred places, and engaging in traditional harvesting. He believes direct action is a necessary way to “physically say ‘no’ to the degradation of our communities and to exploitation of the lands upon which we depend, ...[and say ‘yes’ to] another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world” (p. 169). He recommends blocking resource extraction from Indigenous territories while impacting Canada’s economic infrastructure in order to transform its political economy, constructing Indigenous alternatives. These types of Indigenous resurgence “embody an enactment of Indigenous law and the obligations such laws place on Indigenous peoples to uphold the relations of reciprocity that shape our engagements with the human and nonhuman world—the land” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 170). Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write,

There is no question in my mind that direct action—that is, asserting our Aboriginal title and rights on the ground—will also be necessary before the government finally agrees to sit down and negotiate with us... To send a clear message that the days of surrendering our fundamental rights are over and that we are ready once again to take charge of our land and our lives, we will have to show our seriousness with our deeds... Just to be sure that there is no doubt on this issue, I am speaking without exception of non-violent protests. But this does not mean I do not support our warrior movements, which are rooted in our nations. (pp. 219-220)

For Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, Coulthard (2014) emphasizes the importance of developing relationships of solidarity, mutual aid, and mutual empowerment between urban and land-based Indigenous communities by addressing “the interrelated systems of dispossession that shape Indigenous peoples’ experiences in *both* urban and land-based settings” (p. 176). He urges Indigenous peoples to

begin to shift our attention away from the largely rights-based/recognition orientation that has emerged as hegemonic over the last four decades, to a resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically non-exploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions. (p. 179)

Decolonization and resurgence will necessitate the re-building of Indigenous economies. Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write,

We are not seeking to join the multinationals on Wall Street or Bay Street as junior partners, but to win back the tools to build our own societies that are consistent with our culture and values. Our goal is not to simply replace Settlers Resource Inc. with Indigenous resource Inc. Instead we are interested in building true Indigenous economies that begin and end with our unique relationship to the land. (pp. 10-11)

Nii Gaani Aki Inini (2016a) says,

We must design a completely new economy – one that is grounded in a vision of peace, sacred values, representing our leadership, and respecting the contribution of the uniqueness and diversity of cultures that have arrived on our homelands. This new economy we design must be inspired through the guidance and direction of the Spirit, and based on stewardship and love for the land. The new economy will be about supporting the home, the community and the Nation. We must implement in our infrastructure a total traditional education immersed in the language. We must restore the sacred lodges in all our communities, places of higher learning and spiritual connection. We must maximize

the opportunities for our children to be on the land with Mother Earth, making an annual journey to the sacred sites to restore and strengthen our spirit as a Nation. (para. 56-57)

**Engagement with what Indigenous peoples have asked of us.** I begin this section by recalling the words shared by Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) and Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016), who warn us against seeing the elements shared here as a checklist or recipe for settler decolonization, anti-colonialism, and solidarity work, and who emphasize relationships and continuing dialogue. I recall Kennedy's words about being guided by our own hearts and our own spirits in the work that we agreed to do, which is between us and spirit. Listening in Indigenous sovereignty gives us an opportunity to explore and consider potential dimensions and principles for our work that have been shared by Indigenous peoples. Here, I explore the following such dimensions and principles: truth telling, learning, and acknowledgement; changing our life(style); practicing humility and listening; taking responsibility for our work; working to educate and challenge other white settlers; decolonizing our hearts and minds; deconstructing, resisting, and subverting colonial governments, systems, and institutions; using our gifts; being discerning; being willing to risk and give; engaging in direct action; working through our emotions; using our privilege and providing practical/logistical support; remembering who we are; restitution, reparation, repatriation, and land return; and persistence.

***Truth telling, learning, and acknowledgement.*** Many Indigenous scholars and activists recommend that settlers focus on learning and acknowledging the truth about settler colonial history and its ongoing dynamics. Ward (2015) says,

We cannot build relationships on illusions. We cannot turn this blind eye to the real atrocities that have happened for 500 years in the Americas, and then say we can be friends... Because what you're asking of us is for us to turn our back on our ancestors. You're asking us to forget about the genocide of a hundred million Indigenous people. You're asking us to forget about the stealing and abusing of our children. We can't do

that... So if we're going to talk about our relationship, we have to start acknowledging these things. These are the barriers right from the get-go; right from the very beginning. These become the barriers that ensure we're not going to have a good relationship. You have to acknowledge the history of colonialism. And when you do, that's when we can start from a good place. (22:25-23:45, used with permission)

Simpson (2013a) believes it is important for Canadians to “take it upon themselves to learn a more faithful history of this place and to teach their children to recognize these injustices and to understand how they contribute to the colonial legacy” (p. 56). Waziyatawin (2008) suggests that non-Indigenous allies work with Indigenous peoples on public education truth-telling campaigns that acknowledge the genocide and ongoing colonization occurring on Dakota lands. She says, “Our non-Dakota allies can also facilitate the truth-telling process by talking with their families, friends, and communities in support of this project” (p. 93). Lynn Gehl (n. d.) emphasizes the importance of allies learning and reading more about their roles, being “aware of their privileges and openly discussing them” (p. 1, used with permission), and understanding oppressive power structures that marginalize people. Benally (2013) states that solidarity activists need to build a settler consciousness and an understanding of settler privilege.

***Changing our life(style).*** Xhopakelxhit (2014) recommends “leaving behind the ways of life that are destroying our culture” (p. 6). According to Simpson (2013a), “Every day individual Canadians are given opportunities to make different decisions and to live differently. We can consume less. We can choose alternative energy over oil” (p. 56). Recall also the insights Simpson (2013a) gained from Elder Robin Green, who emphasizes a lifestyle of taking as little as possible, giving up as much as possible, and being gentle with the earth; learning to manage ourselves to ensure continued survival and the promotion of life.

***Practicing humility and listening.*** Ward (2015) emphasized the limits of his status as guest and helper on Stó:lō lands, and the necessary restraints to personal power that this entails,



suggesting that the role of non-Indigenous peoples as colonizing occupiers requires even more restraint. This humility is also reflective of practices recommended by Gehl (n. d.) who urges settlers against taking the space and resources of Indigenous peoples and taking time at community events and meetings (used with permission). Gehl (n. d.) states that the role of an ally is to constantly listen and reflect rather than thinking that one knows better, and to understand that the needs of Indigenous peoples come first in Indigenous solidarity struggles (used with permission). Indigenous Action Media (2014) likewise urge accomplices to listen more than speaking or planning, and to avoid advancing their own self-interest or imposing their own agenda. Benally (2013) suggests reaching out to the people whose lands are the site of struggle in order to have meaningful discussions and ask advice about how to be effective and supportive of the local struggle. Solidarity activists need to communicate with local Indigenous peoples and listen to the people whose lands we are on in order to understand our role, even when that is hard to do. Nonetheless, Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) notes that it is not actually humble to be “coming from an apologetic place all of the time,” especially when it causes non-Indigenous people to believe they have no role in the work and feel absolved of their responsibility.

***Taking responsibility for our work.*** Part of listening, as noted above, involves reading Indigenous literatures and considering what Indigenous peoples are saying. Many, many Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers have made their words accessible in order to inspire change, often speaking directly with settler audiences. Nonetheless, a number of Indigenous activists challenge white people and settlers to take responsibility for their own work, not expecting Indigenous peoples to give them answers, educate them, or hold their hands.

Xhopakalxhit (2014) notes that although Indigenous peoples don't "want to be dictated to or told what we should be doing by settlers" (p.9), nonetheless, "if you are organizing then you need to make decisions and act on them without being guided every step of the way, this causes stress and creates bad relations" (p. 9). Indigenous Action Media (2014) say, "While there may be times folks have the capacity and patience to do so, be aware of the dynamics perpetuated by hand-holding. Understand that it is not our responsibility to hold your hand through a process to be an accomplice" (p. 8). Ward (2015) describes being asked by an occupier to come and teach non-Indigenous children about colonialism. A friend who was with him answered, "That's not our responsibility to have to go teach your children about what you've done. We already have 500 years of colonialism to undo. That's our responsibility" (24:10-24:20, used with permission).

***Working to educate and challenge other white settlers.*** Chickadee Richard (2013) challenges non-Indigenous people to "educate one another—your family, your communities, your nations" (56:50-56:55). Tasha Hubbard (2013) added,

I'm really happy that Chickadee said that because again, it's always put on us [Indigenous peoples] to educate everybody. And we're only individuals. We can do so much. But that's what we need is people talking about what they're learning, sharing it. And I know it's not easy. I just went home and you know, half my family make their living from either the tar sands, or the oil, or the potash... You know, those are really difficult conversations to have. I'll say it right now, they're hard conversations because people see their livelihoods being threatened. And yet, it's about exposing the injustice that comes with those livelihoods, the inequality that comes, the impact that it has. So absolutely, that's a huge thing that can be done as far as taking responsibility for this as well. (1:03:40-1:04:47)

Following Malcolm X, Alfred (2005) suggests that white people who wish to engage with networks of Indigenous resurgence work toward breaking down the prejudice of white communities. Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write, "To avoid the worst, we need our Canadian allies—including church, union, community, and environmental groups—to help us to educate

the Canadian population about our rights as they are recognized internationally and about Canada's colonial position toward us" (p. 221).

*Decolonizing our hearts and minds.* Corntassel (2006) writes, "Settler populations can begin by decolonizing their thinking" (p. 37). Sakej Ward (2015) says

What we can provide as Indigenous people is anti-colonial critique, we can explain the problems of colonization, the experiences that we've had. We can tell you what a relationship to this land looks like. We can tell you what the proper relationship with Indigenous people should look like. But it's up to you to have this personal quest about decolonizing yourself as a colonizer. (28:33-29:15, used with permission)

Alfred (2005) says,

Memmi, who was so powerful in his exposure of colonial mentalities at play during the Algerian resistance against French colonialism, spoke of the fundamental need to cure white people, through revolution, of the disease of the European they have collectively inherited from their colonial forefathers. (p. 28)

Because, as Alfred (2005) says, the enemy lies in "a certain way of thinking with an imperialist's mind" (p. 102), it is necessary to address behaviour patterns, choices, and mentalities "that developed in serving the colonization of our lands as well as the unrestrained greed and selfishness of mainstream society" (p. 102); the "cultural, psychological, and spiritual foundations of Euroamerican arrogance" (p. 103), and "the delusions, greeds, and hatreds that lie at the centre of colonial culture" (p. 35). Waziyatawin (2009) asks settlers, "Are you willing to constantly engage in critical self-reflection and routinely have your white colonizer programming challenged?" (p. 154).

*Deconstructing, resisting, and subverting colonial governments, systems, and institutions.* Alfred (2005) says, "Onkwehonwe-Settler relations cannot be obviously reconciled without deconstructing the institutions that were built on racist and colonial exploitation" (p. 155), including a radical rehabilitation of the state. Xhopakelxhit (2014) urges settlers to "confront your peers and the racism within colonial NGOs and [organizations] that are rendering

the Indigenous of the lands invisible in the struggle” (p. 7). Similarly, Indigenous Action Media (2014) state, “The work of an accomplice in anti-colonial struggle is to attack colonial structures and ideas” (p. 7). Flowers (2015) writes,

In our struggles of freedom it is essential that we maintain a treaty-like relationship wherein Indigenous peoples and settlers are linked together but neither interferes in the matters of the other. When the state interferes in our business, then it is the obligation of settler subjects to oppose the misconduct of their government. Not for *our* benefit, but because that is what it means to live lawfully in a treaty relationship. (p. 37)

Similarly, Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write specifically about what changes need to happen in the way the Canadian government relates with Indigenous peoples. They say, “When Canadians are made aware of the issues—and of the injustices that are being committed in their name—they can demand that their political representatives find honourable solutions” (p. 219). They reiterate the joint calls of the Defenders of the Land and Idle No More, calls for the repeal of Bill C-45 and other legislation that infringes on Aboriginal and Treaty rights, as well as environmental protections. They call for greater consultation and proportional representation with regards to any legislation related to environmental protections and collective rights; following the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, particularly the right of refusal and of free, prior, and informed consent; honouring the spirit and intent of historic treaties; stopping the extinguishment of Aboriginal title and recognizing section 35 of the constitution; and creating a comprehensive national action plan and inquiry regarding violence against Indigenous women, in which Indigenous women are involved in all aspects of the process (Manuel and Derrickson, 2015).

*Using our gifts.* Kuokkanen (2007) writes, “For indigenous people, the world’s stability, its social order, is established and maintained mainly through giving gifts and recognizing the gifts of others, including the land” (p. 7). She explains, “The gift logic articulated here is

grounded in an understanding of the world that is rooted in intricate relationships that extend to everyone and everything” (p. 7). Chickadee Richard (personal communication, December 20, 2015) believes,

There is a lot of things that we need to do, and not everybody can do one thing. There’s all of us with many, many facets of gifts. The skills that we all have, we can use our skills. It’s like that puzzle-- there’s a puzzle there and each and every one of you is a missing piece of that puzzle. (13:45-15:30)

Xhopakelxhit (2014) says, “Creating a culture of resistance and support requires us all to know what our strong suits and talents are and to cultivate them so they benefit the cause in a manner that is respectful and meaningful” (p. 6). Also recall here the words of Mills (2016), who writes that we are each sacred persons who have gifts others need. Using our gifts, recalling Kennedy’s (personal communication, April 9, 2016) words, is related to us coming to this world for a purpose and having work to do that is our own. She says,

It’s impossible to [just] say “I’ll just be accountable to Indigenous people.” There have to be choices made along the way because your heart and your mind have to guide you. And there has to be space to do that. And a lot of this allies stuff almost seems to me like a measure of slavery. We can’t fix the relationship by reversing the roles. It just won’t work. (D. Kennedy, personal communication, April 9, 2016)

***Being discerning.*** A number of Indigenous scholars emphasize the importance of discernment in the way settlers understand and practice our work, and also in our choices of whom we work alongside. As has been noted, Tuck and Yang (2012) contend that settlers must understand decolonization to be “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (p. 35), and to bring about “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 1). Metaphorizing decolonization to include other foci often results in it becoming “entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually furthers settler colonialism” (p. 1). Recall Tuck and Yang’s (2012) settler moves to innocence to be avoided by the discerning decolonial activist because they represent attempts to get “off the hook from the hard, unsettling work of

decolonization” (p. 4). Tuck and Yang (2012) also describe the danger of exclusively focusing one’s decolonization work on decolonizing the mind: “to allow *conscientization* to stand in for the more uncomfortable task of relinquishing stolen land” (p. 19), thereby creating no tangible disruption of settler colonialism.

Being an ally to Indigenous struggles requires that one be discerning about whom we support and with whom we work. Gehl (n. d.) recommends choosing to support leaders or groups that serve the needs of the peoples, especially those most oppressed, and gauging community response to the efforts:

Do the community people find this leader’s efforts useful, interesting, engaging, and thus empowering? If not, allies should consider whether the efforts are moving in a questionable or possibly an inadequate direction, or worse yet, that their efforts are being manipulated and thus undermined, possibly for economic and political reasons. (p. 2, used with permission)

Gehl (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of remaining attentive to structures of power and oppression, as well as lateral violence, supporting and seeking guidance from those who are critical thinkers and understand these dynamics (used with permission). Indigenous Action Media (2014) suggest evaluating organizations one is considering supporting based on questions such as how they are funded, “Who is getting paid? How are they transparent? Who’s defining the terms? Who sets the agenda?” (p. 7), and working with organizations or campaigns in which “local grassroots Indigenous People [are] directly involved with the decision making” (p. 7). Xhopakelxhit (2014) warns, “Indigenous activists are not super human mythical indigenous beings who are all knowing and all wise” (p. 3). She says, “We are all inherently flawed...It does no one any greater disservice than to put them on pedestals” (p. 4).

***Being willing to risk and give.*** Leanne Simpson (2013a) emphasizes the costly choices involved in resisting colonialism and in working out the implications that “Canadians are living

on top of someone else's home" (p. 57). Chickadee Richard (personal communication, December 20, 2015) described the great respect she has for a number of allies, based in part on their willingness to risk and give. She recalls Peter Kulchyski, many years ago, during an awareness-raising action saying, "Let us [non-Indigenous peoples] go out there, let us be on the front lines instead of you. Instead of you, let them arrest us" (3:30-3:37). She says, "That's a generous step, because we're always a target on any kind of front lines" (C. Richard, personal communication, December 20, 2015). Xhokapelxhit (2014) says, "Like it or not, and try as you might to refute it, settlers have privilege and more protection when it comes to interactions with the authorities than we do" (p. 7). She explains that because settlers have more leeway in the justice system and with the police and courts, "Commitment and bravery are key to bringing this into the next level by ramping up your resistance and putting yourself in front of the indigenous. Those who want to be on the frontlines should optimize their commitment for maximum benefit to the cause, this requires trust and sacrifice" (p. 7). Waziyatawin (2009) challenges dedicated colonizer allies to "stand on the front lines with us" (p. 151). She asks, "Are you willing to do whatever is necessary to assist in our liberation struggle, including killing, dying, or life-imprisonment?...are you willing to take on a lifetime of ambiguity, uncertainty, moral torment?" (p. 153). Recall Benally's (2013) words that accomplices are willing to take the same risks.

***Engaging in direct action.*** Indigenous Action Media (2014) say, "Direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We're in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence" (p. 9). Idle No More and Defenders of the land (2014) have called upon non-Indigenous peoples to engage with Indigenous communities in "coordinated non-violent direct actions," (p. 358), believing "alternatives will only come to life if we escalate our actions, taking bold non-violent direct action that challenges the illegitimate

power of corporations who dictate government policy” (p. 358). Recall Coulthard’s (2014) belief in the importance of direct action for Indigenous resurgence.

***Working through our emotions.*** Working through our own emotions, using our support systems and other white settler activists outside of our support and solidarity work with Indigenous peoples, is key. Earlier in this chapter, some of the emotions of the settler condition were noted. Indigenous Action Media (2014) write, “While guilt and shame are very powerful emotions, think about what you’re doing before you make another community’s struggle into your therapy session” (p. 3).

***Using our privilege and providing practical/logistical support.*** Indigenous Action Media (2014) urge their accomplices to “find creative ways to weaponize their privilege (or more clearly, their rewards of being part of an oppressor class) as an expression of social war” (p. 6), rather than “resigning their agency, or capabilities as an act of ‘support’” (p. 6). Xhopakelxhit (2014) says, “it helps no one if you are destitute by choice. Prosperity helps the grass roots!” (p. 8). Benally (2013) suggests engaging with people of our own class and own races and not distancing ourselves from our privilege and the different access it gives us. He suggests settler activists not reject our positioning, but rather engage and fight within these in order to destabilize and bring down colonial systems so that Indigenous peoples’ struggles can be more effective. This way, settler activists “can assert themselves and take initiative rather than sitting on their hands, waiting for the word from some token person” (21:15-21:26). Xhokapelxhit (2014) writes of settler privilege and our “ability to acquire certain items” (p. 7). She says, “let’s put that to good use” (p. 7). Xhopakelxhit (2014) recommends “doing what is necessary to ensure that those who are working hard on the front lines are being supported” (p. 6). She suggests supporting Indigenous peoples in their travel to events; lending or donating vehicles, equipment, electronics,



and tools; providing access to office equipment; and providing childcare to radical Indigenous parents so that they can attend events. She also recommends support with event promotion in order to make sure events are well attended, and tangible support for traveling Indigenous activists such as places to stay, food, bedding, and transportation.

*Remembering who we are.* Lynn Gehl (n. d.) says that allies are “fully grounded in their own ancestral history and culture” (p. 1). She says, “Effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride; otherwise the ‘wannabe syndrome’ could merely undermine Indigenous people’s efforts” (p. 1, used with permission). Xhokapelxhit (2014) cautions settlers against believing that they can become Indigenous, while Sakej Ward (2015) says,

Really, as hwulunitum, you have your own indigenous identity. You have your own. You have to go back further than us to find it. You have to go back to pre-Roman imperialism, pre-Christian imperialism, and you can find your ethnic identity, whether it be Pict, Celt, Scotty, Hun, Goth, Gaul, Nordic, Rus, Tartar. Whatever your ethnic identity is, you had an Indigenous identity prior to the conquest of Roman imperialism. It was imperialism that erased our identities--our true and authentic identities...I know enough about the Celts and Picts to say that they had Indigenous-like teachings. They understood concepts like interconnectedness. They understood concepts like respect for the land and reverence for the land and reciprocity. It was built into their teachings. So there is something there that tells me that if hwulunitum will go back to their Indigenous identity, maybe that’s the basis where we can define relationships. We’ll find that common ground to speak on...For hwulunitum I think it’s really important to understand that identity. And that becomes your decolonization work. How do you decolonize from that Roman imperial influence that you’ve had for 2000 years, depending on where you were at the time. (25:26-27:50, used with permission)

*Restitution, reparation, repatriation, and land return.* Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write, “It is the loss of our land that has been the precise cause of our impoverishment” (p. 7).

Taiiaike Alfred (2009) elaborates:

Logically and morally, there is no escaping that the real and deeper problems of colonialism are a direct result of the theft of our lands, which cannot be addressed in any way other than through the return of those lands to us. There are at least two aspects of this large problem. The first is comprehension of the economic dimension; the continuing effect upon our communities of being illegally dispossessed of their lands. The second is

the social dimension; the political and legal denials of collective Indigenous existences. (pp. 182-183)

Nii Gaani Aki Inini (2016b) emphasizes that the perpetrators of the genocide of Indigenous peoples must find their way forward in and of themselves to “share in this responsibility in helping to restore what they took away” (para. 71). Alfred (2009) argues that “Without massive restitution made to Indigenous peoples, collectively and as individuals, including land, transfers of federal and provincial funds, and other forms of compensation for past harms and continuing injustices committed against the land and Indigenous peoples” (p. 181), injustice will be furthered. He writes, “Something was stolen, lies were told, and they have never been made right. That is the crux of the problem” (Alfred, 2009, p. 182), and restitution must be a cornerstone of creating a just and moral society, lest we advance colonialism rather than decolonization. Alfred (2009) concludes, “What was stolen must be given back, and amends must be made for the crimes that were committed from which all non-Indigenous Canadians, old families and recent immigrants alike, have gained their existence as people on this land and citizens of this country” (p. 182). Waziyatawin (2008) suggests land reparations as a method of justice that challenges the oppressive economic system. She suggests that one place to start would be with publicly held lands. Waziyatawin (2008) says, “In addition, private land owners can individually commit themselves to Indigenous land return” (p.150). Simpson (2013b) says, “Land has never really been a part of the Canadian Reconciliation discourse. And this is a critical problem because Indigenous people will not survive as Indigenous peoples without homelands” (24:22-24:32). Simpson (2013b) reflects on dispossession in urban environments. She says,

This morning I went for a run in a stolen 400 hectare rainforest in downtown Vancouver, and it was just begging to be returned to its rightful owners... There are pockets of wilderness in every single Canadian city that were stolen from local Indigenous people. The Forks in Winnipeg, Toronto Island, Hyde Park, Rouge Park. And you know what, when an individual, even within Canadian law, steals a really expensive car and gets

caught, they still have to give it back. They don't get to keep it because it's worth a lot of money and they really like it. And so for us, this stolen piece of wilderness, for Mississauga people, is the Kawartha Highlands Signature Park, which is this piece of 375 square kilometers of wilderness about 50 kilometers north of Peterborough, where as signatories of the Williams Treaty, we now have treaty rights and an interim agreement. And the Elder that I work with believes very strongly that this area should be given back to us. His grandfather's trap line and hunting grounds are in this area, and it's been in his family for generations. He also believes very strongly that the province has designated this a provincial park to alienate Anishinaabek people from our settler allies who very much enjoy camping and canoeing and kayaking in the park. And so my Elder thinks that by designating the very few wilderness areas that we have left in the province as a protected area, that Ontario doesn't have to worry about resistance because this tiny group of settlers that supports us will not support us gaining land that is designated as a protected area. (25:47-27:51)

Recall Tuck and Yang's (2012) contention that decolonization must have as its vision the repatriation of land and life. Coulthard (2014) says, "Land has been stolen, and significant amounts of it must be returned. Power and authority have been unjustly appropriated, and much of it will have to be reinstated" (p. 168). According to Alfred (2009),

When I say to a settler, 'Give it back,' am I talking about them giving up the country and moving away? No. Irredentism has never been in the vision of our peoples. When I say, 'Give it back,' I am talking about settlers demonstrating respect for what we share—the land and its resources—and making things right by offering us the dignity and freedom we are due and returning enough of our power and land for us to be self-sufficient. (p. 182)

Christi Belcourt (2016) says,

If Canada and Canadians are serious about reconciliation, then they will give us lands back. We're not so cruel to say 'you can't live here anymore.' But there is no way our ancestors ever agreed to give 100% of the lands to them. No way. And that's exactly what it is. 100%. Because even the little reserve lands, in *The Indian Act*, it says right in there that it's lands held by the queen for the use of Indians. (47:00- 47:35)

**Persistence.** Indigenous Action Media (2014) describe parachuter allies who "rush to the front lines seemingly from out-of-nowhere. They literally move from one hot or sexy spot to the next" (p. 4). They also describe the floaters, who "hop from group to group and issue to issue, never being committed enough, but always wanting their presence felt and their voices heard

[and] tend to disappear when it comes to being held accountable or taking responsibility” (p. 5).

Xhopakelxhit (2014) urges settlers to never forget and never give up. She notes that Indigenous activists do not have the luxury to “give up and join the mainstream culture” (p. 11) because “we are by our very heritage and birth born political and into a lifetime of racism, oppression, and hard times” (p. 11). Therefore, she says,

If you commit to this path then ensure you are on board for the long haul. Breaks are of course good and needed for mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well being for all of us but never forget we live in a terrorist state bent on destroying our lands and waters and the future of us all for profit. (p. 11)

### **Social work, Indigenous social work, anti-colonial social work, and decolonization.**

Indigenous social work scholars have led the way in articulating Indigenous, anti-colonial, and decolonial alternatives to colonizing practices of social work and social work education (e.g., Yellow Bird, 2008, 2013; Hart, 2002; 2007; Sinclair, 2004; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009). As settlers engage increasingly with this literature, it is my hope that more will frame their social work education, practice, and scholarship within the context of Indigenous sovereignty. Yellow Bird and Gray (2008) challenge social workers who would work with Indigenous nations/peoples to serve Indigenous communities’ “drive for self determination, empowerment, and the complete return of their lands and other resources illegally stolen by colonial societies” (p. 59), “to develop aggressive programmes of decolonization that can be used to enlighten and reform members of the mainstream society” (p. 59), and to believe in Indigenous sovereignty and “speak the language of the Nation they want to work for” (p. 60). As anti-colonial and decolonial social work are underdeveloped among settlers, this study becomes important. The five white settler occupier participants who have ties to social work, as will be seen in the findings chapter, provide examples of how their social work education and practice have been connected with their decolonization work.

In this chapter, I have engaged (primarily Indigenous) knowledge and relations in order to explore colonialism in the lands occupied by Canada, to explore anti-colonialism and decolonization, and to listen to what Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers are saying that might help guide the work of white settler occupiers pursuing decolonization and anti-colonialism. In the next chapter, I explore concepts around doing research in Indigenous sovereignty. I apply what was learned in this chapter, by listening in Indigenous sovereignty, to the data analysis methods in order to prioritize these themes that were engaged by research participants. Following this, I share the research findings, the stories of white settler occupiers in their journeys of decolonization and anti-colonialism.

## Chapter 3

### Doing Research in Indigenous Sovereignty

What does the goal of behaving like we are on Indigenous land, of living in Indigenous sovereignty, mean for the way we, as white settler occupiers, do research? How can I do ethical research in these lands given the research questions and aims of my study? This chapter describes my journey in answering these questions for myself, and articulates the research methodology and methods that have resulted. Lewis (2012) argues that academics and activists committed to social justice who carry out their work on Indigenous lands, “in centers of power and privilege that benefit from processes of colonization” (p. 228), are obligated to incorporate an anti-colonial analysis in our ethical research considerations. He adds,

An ethical orientation to activist research must...be one that recognizes colonialism as a force of oppression and domination to be resisted, and one that takes concrete steps to subvert colonial privileges and ally with Indigenous peoples in resistance through research and action. (Lewis, 2012, p. 236)

Centering an anti-colonial analysis in the research, I articulate and utilize an anti-colonial research methodology. In this chapter, I begin by discussing the colonizing dynamics of mainstream research and the appropriateness of and the need for an anti-colonial research methodology based on my social location as a researcher and the focus of the study. I then examine relevant research methodologies, seeking contributions to the anti-colonial research methodology, beginning with Indigenous methodologies and Indigenist research paradigms as reference points. Finally, I articulate the anti-colonial research methodology I use, along with the methods of this study.

## **Colonizing Dynamics of Mainstream Research**

As has been argued by numerous scholars, mainstream research has been colonizing in process, dynamics, impact, and content (Alvares, 1988; Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008; Harding, 1998; Hart, Straka, and Rowe, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Shiva, 1988; Smith, 1999; Tuck & Fine, 2007; Tuck & Guishard, 2013). When Smith (1999) says that the term *research* is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1) in the eyes of Indigenous peoples, it is for good reason. Tuck and Guishard (2013) write, “Social science research is complicit with logics of settler colonialism, promoting, at times, the projects of Indigenous erasure, the subjugation of peoples of color, and White supremacy” (p. 14). In this section, I discuss this generally and historically, and afterwards draw from literature describing ways specific colonizing dynamics manifest in mainstream research.

**Historical contexts and functions.** Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi (2008) say, “the historical trajectory of the application of statistical methods in the study of society developed in relation to European contact, colonization, trade, and domination of peoples thought to be beyond modern civilization” (p. 5). They explain that statistical methods in the social sciences were born “when mathematical statistics and evolutionary theory met in the racially bent eugenic mind of Francis Galton” (p. 5). Research and study of race, according to Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi (2008), “Was motivated by the need to support the racially stratified industry and the colonial efforts; but to the watching world it sounded like the carefully thought out result of experience and reason” (pp. 15-16). Harding (1998) states, “the distinctive patterns of knowledge and ignorance characteristic of modern sciences are in significant part products of European expansion” (p. 59). Harding (1998) argues that early scientific “research projects were selected not because they were intellectually interesting...but to solve colonialism’s everyday problems” (p. 45). She also

argues that the rise of European scientific traditions occurred simultaneously with the *de-development* of the science and technology traditions of peoples who were being colonized by Europe. In essence, according to Harding, modern sciences have received a ‘free ride’ through the resources which were taken from the colonized at direct expense to their own local sciences. Harding (1998) explains that raw materials which served the growth of European societies and their sciences were taken; labour was extracted from these cultures and populations were decimated which meant fewer people available to support local projects; local scientific and technological knowledge was taken to benefit European culture; and local industries and trades were destroyed to make room for European replacements which colonized peoples would then purchase. It is not at all surprising, then, that “the benefits of modern scientific and technological change are disproportionately distributed to elites in the north and their allies in the South, and the costs disproportionately to everyone else” (Harding, 1998, p. 60). Smith notes the “absolute worthlessness” (p. 3) of research to Indigenous peoples and its “absolute usefulness to those who wielded it as an instrument” (p. 3). It is no wonder that Smith (1999) has asserted, “The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples” (p. 1).

**Identifying settler colonial practices in mainstream research.** Mainstream research is most often done in accordance with the habits, practices, and values of settler colonialism. In order to resist and transform the colonizing practices in mainstream research, as I seek to do in the anti-colonial methodology I use in this research study, I first identify some of these, building on my previous work regarding the characteristics of white colonial settler epistemes (Carlson, 2010), and connecting these characteristics to critical literatures about mainstream scientific research. Characteristics such as control and power; extractivism and land exploitation; white



supremacy, hierarchy, and othering; abstraction and reductionism; and individualism and ownership will be discussed drawing from the literature. In doing this, I recognize that many of these characteristics are interrelated and thus the elements and themes below often cross categories.

***Control and power.*** A number of scholars note the functions of control within mainstream scientific research. Bajaj (1988) critiques Francis Bacon, one of the founders of western science: “the Baconian project of orienting all knowledge towards a search for power, towards control over both man and nature, and at the same time insisting that this knowledge has some unique validity, is inherently violent” (p. 63). He says, “Baconian truth...necessarily requires an ‘other’ in the form of nature, society of man, on whom the power is to be exercised, through whom the ‘truth’ is to be made manifest” (p. 63). According to Alvares (1988), “The massive investment made by western civilization in modern science has been because of the possibilities such science affords for control” (p. 84). Smith (1999) describes the increasing government policies that crept and intruded into the lives of those in Indigenous communities, policies which were legitimated by research. Kovach (2009) says as much: “Research is imbued with a power hierarchy, with the researcher having final control over the research design, data collection, and interpretation” (p. 125).

***Extractivism and land exploitation.*** Alvares (1988) writes, “Much of science has passed under the slogan of the conquest of nature. We are given to believe that we are in control of nature...this alleged control justifies the scientist’s authority” (p. 83). Serious physical harm in the form of pollution and ecological imbalance results from the application of science to the fabrication of machines and industrial processes which are usually at odds with life processes and natural events (Alvares, 1988). In addition to harmful impacts on the land, one might argue

that western research in general is extractivist: mainstream researchers generally go in, ask questions, look around, and take away information. They extract stories, measurements, observations, and survey responses: *data*. Most often they give nothing back but their word that the research will be used to advance knowledge. Kovach (2009) says,

A critical analysis points to a power dynamic sustained by societal and institutional structures that allow the privileged to take, take, and take. Seen from a decolonizing lens, ethical infringement through research is an extension of the Indigenous-settler colonial project. Much has to do with divergent beliefs around ownership of knowledge stemming from collectivist and individualist orientations that hold deep philosophical assumptions about how a society should work. (p. 142)

Smith (1999) writes, “It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations” (p. 1). Simpson (In Klein, 2013) says,

The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Extracting is taking. Actually, extracting is stealing—it is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment. That’s always been a part of colonialism and conquest... The canoe, the kayak, any technology that we had that was useful was extracted and assimilated into the culture of the settlers without regard for the people and the knowledge that created it... But the extractivist mindset isn’t about having a conversation and having a dialogue and bringing in indigenous knowledge on the terms of indigenous peoples. It is very much about extracting whatever ideas scientists or environmentalists thought were good and assimilating it. (para. 12)

In the age of research ethics, there is now usually consent on some level, but most often little thought of responsibility or reciprocity and cultivation of relationship. Also generally missing is the dialogue in order to ensure that research regarding Indigenous peoples is done on Indigenous peoples’ terms and in accordance with their own ideas of what will be beneficial to them.

***Abstraction and reductionism.*** Sprague (2005) writes, “Abstracting from observations, creating categories and labeling them, is an important aspect of intellectual work ...[that] can

lead to reification of researchers' terms and objectification of the people they are used to describe" (p. 21), Shiva (1988) discusses the reductionism of science:

Reductionism provides the assumptions and criteria which guide modern science. The basic assumptions are ontological and epistemological. The ontological assumptions of reductionism are: (a) that a system is reducible to its parts; and (b) that all systems are made up of the same basic constituents which are discrete and atomistic; and (c) that all systems have the same basic processes which are mechanical. The epistemological assumptions of reductionism are: (a) that knowledge of the parts of a system gives knowledge of the whole system; (b) that 'experts' and 'specialists' are the only legitimate knowledge-seekers and knowledge-justifiers. (p. 235)

Alvares (1988) describes the impact of foundational philosophers of science on the abstractionism that permeates mainstream modern science, citing Lewis Mumford's critiques of Galileo and Bacon:

Mumford argues that Galileo's 'crime' was the extinction of what he calls 'historic' man: Galileo's method involved the elimination of all subjective elements...For the first time objectivity was defined in a specific, highly distorted, way. Later, such 'objective knowledge' became identified with modern science. Still later, such a stipulatory definition was enshrined within a positivist worldview...A society that values reason as its prime instrument for grasping truth will also tend to move along a continuum of either more or less dependence on the principal character of reason, abstraction. (Abstraction and restriction are two sides of the same coin in the process of abstraction, one restricts reality by abstracting certain features and ignoring others). Such a scale of restrictions has been inoperative with other civilizations like the Chinese or the Indian, which only give a subordinate position to reason in their scheme of things. (p. 74)

This fragmentation of life such that detached intelligence becomes a supreme value to the exclusion of experience is a function of abstraction (Alvares, 1988). Alvares (1988) says, "Abstraction involves restricting experience to zero. Abstraction means zero history...the scientific experiment is, in fact, an exercise in pure abstraction" (p. 75). He writes, "Abstraction increases control by homogenizing its subject matter. It eliminates the basis of diversity, the personal and the historic, creating an artificial reality which can be completely controlled" (Alvares, 1988, p. 85).

***Universality, objectivity, and neutrality.*** Rather than being seen as a European culturally based science, *modern* western science is presented as universal science. Smith (1999) says “In the nineteenth century the scientific drive assumed that there were universal models of human society and human nature” (p. 86). Shiva (1988) writes, “The ontological and epistemological components of the reductionist worldview provide the framework for a particular way of doing science, which is projected as the ‘scientific method’; that is, as the only reliable and objective way of discovering the facts of nature and correctly understanding nature” (p. 235). Harding (1998) speaks to the claims of universality and objectivity on the part of modern science as a disvaluing of local knowledge and concerns and a legitimization of outside experts. Alvares (1988) argues that western or modern science has an inherent functional violence-disposition which “vetoes or excludes compassion, . . . require[s] the excision of values, [such that] in actual operation, both the method and its metaphysics require mutilation or vivisection as an integral part of science” (p. 72). Among the deceptive characteristics involved with western science and the academy is the “god trick” written about by Haraway (1988), which refers to the illusion of transcendent infinite vision of disembodied scientific objectivity. Relatedly, there is deception involved with scientific writing which omits an authorial presence and presents knowledge in such a way that it is seen as factual and objective rather than related to a subjective writer with a particular social location. Sprague refers to this as “hiding the researcher” (p. 23).

***White supremacy, hierarchy, and othering.*** Dynamics of white supremacy, hierarchy, and othering are seen in many aspects of mainstream research. Smith (1999) writes, “New colonies were the laboratories of Western science,” and “theories generated from the exploration and exploitation of the colonies, and of the people who had prior ownership of these lands, formed the totalizing appropriation of the Other” (p. 65). Thinking of Eurocentric methodologies

as the most legitimate and valid methodologies is a function of arrogance and supremacy, as is thinking of academic or ‘empirical’ knowledge as the most unbiased, true, or valuable knowledge. Alvares (1988) writes,

The basic feature of colonialism—intolerance of other cultures—has remained with science even after the colonies were given up...colonialism added a new burden on modern science: it was compelled to claim a monopoly in knowledge in order to retain its claimed superiority. This monopoly is based on the premise that all other forms of acquisition or accumulation of knowledge, all other epistemologies, are worthless, antiquated, magical, and must be eliminated. (p. 91)

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) argue,

The process of producing and validating what is knowledge in the academy can be a colonial exercise. Rather than heralding a knowledge that allows learners to develop a counter culture, a colonial process can actually reward the knowledge that inserts learners within existing hegemonic structures and practices. Therefore, a decolonization project in the academy must be aware that the colonization process and colonizing tendencies accede a false status to the colonial subject through the authority of Western canons. (p. 299)

Harding (1998) describes the cognitive cores of modern science and technologies as containing distinctly European features that become apparent if one is able to transcend one’s own conceptual framework. Indeed, Harding (2006) writes, “Modern Western sciences and their philosophy have a ‘white supremacist unconscious’” (p. 29). As Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) explain,

*White logic*...refers to a context in which White supremacy has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts. White logic assumes a historical posture that grants eternal objectivity to the views of elite Whites and condemns the views of non-Whites to perpetual subjectivity; it is the anchor of the Western imagination, which grants centrality to the knowledge, history, science, and culture of elite White men and classifies ‘others’ as people without knowledge, history, or science, as people with folklore but not culture. Therefore White logic operates to foster a ‘debilitating alienation’ (Oliver, 2004) among the racially oppressed...Conversely, White logic fosters the obverse feeling on Whites (elite or not): a sense of superiority, a sense they know things. (pp. 17-18)

Because “mainstream social science...tends to assume the position of privileged groups, [it helps] to naturalize and sustain their privilege in the process” (Sprague, 2005, p. 2). Krumer-Nevo (2012) describes *othering* as the

Harsh and harmful distinction between the ‘we’ who are perceived as subjects, who have emotions, rationality, capabilities, experiences, knowledge, and will, and the Others, who are perceived as objects lacking in complexity, motivation, rationality, and capabilities, and who serve as the carriers of what is undesirable in ourselves or repressed and buried in our unconscious (Kristeva, 1991; Pickering, 2001). (p. 186)

They indicate that knowing the other is a common goal of qualitative research that risks becoming a source of domination when “it becomes a mode of subduing her in a network of interpretations and representations” (p. 299). Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) write, “Representing the Other is always a process of dominance and control, in which the person represented is reduced to an object” (p. 299). They write,

Research thus always performs in the arena of the politics of representation. When studying people who belong to marginalized groups, in terms of their material, social, and symbolic resources, these risks become particularly acute. When the gap in social power between the researcher and the researched is very wide, the representational vulnerability of the research participants is great. Giving the researcher their stories has made the participants dependent on the latter’s interpretations, ideologies, and writing styles. (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 299)

Tuck and Fine (2007) contend,

‘Science’... Has systematically worked similarly to bookend indigenous colonization: Pathologizing and criminalizing those who haven't assimilated or who ask questions. Artificially bookending indigenous experiences falsely distils colonization as an event relegating contemporary native poverty, illness, and depression as an ‘Indian problem.’ (pp. 149-150)

They point to the work of Grande (2004), who emphasizes that “the ‘Indian problem’ is not a problem of children and families but rather, first and foremost, a problem that has been consciously and historically produced by and through the systems of colonization: a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and

fuelled by global capitalism” (Grande, 2004, p. 19). Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) note four features of Othering (also related to abstraction, reductionism, objectivity, and neutrality) that are often present in academic research: *objectification* or the reduction and subjugation of their common humanity, *de-contextualization* or behaviour abstracted from context, *de-historization* or an exclusive focus on the present devoid of the historical context, and *de-authorization* or creating text that is supposedly authorless, objective, and autonomous. Those *othered* have historically been victims of painful experimentation, whether this be ‘other’ races or animals who are thought of as wholly different from humans (Alvares, 1988).

### **The Need, Possibility, and Responsibility of White Settler Occupiers’ use of an Anti-colonial Research Methodology**

The existing colonial practices in mainstream research listed above speak to the need for anti-colonial methodologies. Yet hegemonic academic practices may reserve the designation *methodology* for Eurocentric empirical and qualitative ways of doing research. After all, it was not long ago that a senior professor told me there was no such thing as Indigenous research methodologies. Nonetheless, when I look at definitions of *methodology* in some of the literature, I believe it is very fitting to consider an anti-colonial research methodology. Carter and Little (2007) believe a methodology “provides justification for the methods of a research project” (p. 1317). Drawing from the work of other scholars, Carter and Little (2007) state that methodology is “[an] ‘analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry’ (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161) or ‘the study—the description, the explanation, and the justification—of methods and not the methods themselves’ (Kaplan, 1964, p. 18)” (p. 1317). Tickener (2006) thinks of methodology as “a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed” (p. 20); while Weldon (2006) cites Harding (1987) and Ackerly and True (2006) in

concluding that “methodology is epistemology in action...[and] our approach to developing knowledge” (p. 63). Ackerly, Stern, and True (2006) define methodology as an intellectual process guiding reflections about the relationship among ethics, method, epistemology, and ontology. This chapter, I believe, demonstrates that all of these can be true of anti-colonialism as a research methodology. Absolon (2011) writes,

As western scientific research methodologies get taken to task by Indigenous re-searchers and critical non-Indigenous re-searchers, allied methodologies emerge and are guided by emancipatory, liberatory, anticolonial and anti-racist principles... anticolonial, critical, feminist, multicultural and Indigenous critiques have introduced new and relevant theories and epistemologies of research to include socio-political and historically critical perspectives. (pp. 29-30)

Anti-colonial research approaches have been described by Hart, Straka, and Rowe (2016) and by Max (2005). These works include a focus on the roles of non-Indigenous ally researchers working on research directed by Indigenous peoples who involve Indigenous research subjects. However, when the research study is the dissertation research of a doctoral student, the academy imposes limitations such as the expectation of individual scholarship and the expectation that the principal researcher is the student. How can an anti-colonial methodology be used when this researcher is a settler occupier doing research in contexts of Indigenous sovereignty? And when the research subjects are also white settler occupiers? This is the context in which I seek to articulate an anti-colonial methodology. In doing so, I am tailoring a close-as-possible fit between the anti-colonial goals of my research, the lens or perspective of my research, and the methods of my research. In the remainder of this section, I first return to the discussion from an earlier chapter regarding the possibility of white settler occupiers engaging in anti-colonialism (Dei, 2006, 2009; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2016; Memmi, 1965) to explore its ramifications for white settler occupiers engaging anti-colonial research (Kempf, 2009). I then



discuss the issue of anti-coloniality in research relationships between white settler-occupier researchers and research subjects.

As has been discussed, anti-colonialism is conceptualized in different ways, some of which leave little room for the meaningful participation of white settler peoples (Dei, 2006, 2009; Memmi, 1965). Anti-colonialism centres and foregrounds Indigenous epistemologies, resistance, and experiences, including those of being colonized and marginalized (Dei, 2006, 2009). Therefore, because white settler occupiers generally do not share this set of experiences and epistemologies, they will face major limitations when engaging in anti-colonialism, necessitating caution, dialogue and accountability with Indigenous peoples, and a focus on Indigenous sovereignty. Despite this, anti-colonial engagement is an ethical opportunity and obligation for settler occupiers living on Indigenous lands (Alfred, 2005; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2016; McCaslin & Breton, 2008). These conclusions also apply, in my mind, to white settler occupiers using an anti-colonial research methodology. Although we will do this work in limited, imperfect ways with numerous blind spots, reproducing colonialism through our research even as we make strides towards resistance and transformation (Kempf, 2009); this is our opportunity and obligation. To do otherwise would probably mean more harm and less liberation and a research strategy with less congruency when our research has anti-colonial aims. It would mean continuing to reproduce colonial dynamic in the same ways we always have, and as fully as we always have.

Can I be ‘colonial’ or ‘anti-colonial’ in my relationship with other white settler occupiers? A parallel arises from critiques of the concept of *reverse racism* from structural anti-racism theory. James (2007) says, “A key component of racism is power—structural and institutional power” (p. 357). He argues that individual acts of discrimination (or unkindness, I

would add) do not constitute racism when they are not supported by “a system of inequality and oppression constructed within a society” (p. 357). Settler colonialism as a structure does not support colonial discrimination against white settlers as such. The colonial context involves white settler occupiers invading and taking over Indigenous lands, setting up their own laws and systems, and reproducing these systems socially, politically, and relationally: anything else can be seen as colonial equivocation (Tuck & Yang, 2012). But there are additional contexts at work here. The research project is anti-colonial in its content and aims. It is occurring in a colonial context on Indigenous land, in Indigenous sovereignty, and in a settler colonial nation along with its colonial norms and values. As will be discussed, it occurs in dialogue and consultation with Indigenous peoples. It draws on Indigenous literatures and the work of Indigenous scholars, and is advised by an academic dissertation committee that includes Indigenous members. As will be seen, the content, research questions, and the experiences of the participants draw heavily on input, relationship, and dialogue with Indigenous peoples. Even while I conducted interviews with white settler occupiers, there was a constant Indigenous presence and relationality in the space and in the conversation. Is this presence related to in colonial and/or anti-colonial ways? A number of existing research methodologies and accompanying philosophical orientations have important contributions to make through their theory and research methods which resist and transform such elements of mainstream research as have been listed in this section. In the next section, these methodologies are considered, highlighting themes that contribute to my articulation of an anti-colonial research methodology.

### **Contributions from Related Methodologies**

For me, living in Indigenous sovereignty means Indigenous peoples are centered and that I am accountable to them in my work. Centering Indigenous peoples and knowledges is a

requirement of anti-colonialism as the organizing methodology for this research. Anti-colonial thought has been developed largely by colonized, marginalized, and Indigenous peoples, whose critiques of colonial thought and ways can and have informed research frameworks, perspectives, methodologies, and methods. Having been socialized into colonial epistemes, white settler occupiers like myself are somewhat imaginatively challenged regarding non- and less colonial ways of doing research. Further, our discernment around colonial ways is often compromised through denial and other defensive strategies (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, Indigenous peoples and other marginalized peoples who have faced colonial oppression can often hold up a more accurate mirror reflecting the nature of white settler epistemes. In articulating an anti-colonial methodology, then, I begin with Indigenous methodologies and Indigenist research paradigms as reference points. From there, I draw from other types of anti-oppressive methodologies and research approaches that contribute to the articulation of the anti-colonial methodology I use in this research. The few additional methodologies examined may not be anti-oppressive per se, but contain methods congruent with anti-colonialism and with this study.

**Indigenous research methodologies and Indigenist research paradigms.** Although Indigenous peoples have always conducted their own forms of inquiry and presented oral scholarship on the findings (Helander & Kailo, 1999), it was not until the 1970s that Indigenous critiques of western research (Sinclair, 2003; Smith, 2005) have been included in the western academic scholarly literature. In the 1980s, publications regarding Indigenous methodologies began to appear (Sinclair, 2003; Smith, 2005), and in the early 21st century, this literature has dramatically increased (e.g. Absolon, 2011; Hart, 2007, 2009; Kovach, 2009; Lavallee, 2009; Wilson, 2004, 2008). Indigenous methodologies and Indigenist research paradigms provide a

mirror to colonizing methodologies and offer considerable input into anti-colonial methodologies by foregrounding Indigenous peoples' epistemes and providing foundations for dialogue out of which anti-colonial methodologies can emerge. However, as Hart (2009) emphasizes, an Indigenist research paradigm is "for Indigenous people, by Indigenous People, and with Indigenous people" (p. 169). Indigenous methodologies place Indigenous worldviews and ontologies at the centre. Hart (2009) describes Indigenous ontologies as being predicated on the recognition of a spiritual realm and the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical realms. They hold maintaining respectful, accountable, and reciprocal relationships as primary; and understand relationality to extend beyond the human level (Absolon, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous epistemologies, or ways of knowing, also undergird Indigenist research paradigms, and are connected to oral story-telling, Indigenous languages, and experiential insight (Hart, 2009). Indigenous methodologies are wholistic in that they address emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, past, future, participatory, and experiential dimensions. As has been noted in a previous chapter, Hart (2007) describes the connectivity between the mind and heart, and listening in ways that attend to being emotionally and spiritually moved among his principles for Indigenous research. While respecting individual self-determination, Indigenous research paradigms transcend individualism by also focusing on respect for and accountability to communities, and on collective Indigenous control of the research (Hart, 2007).

Reciprocity can be practiced through gifts, offering Tobacco, and through the sharing of the research in a way supportive of the community (Hart, 2007; Michell, 1999). Michell (1999) explains that when asking for a story or information from a research participant, one will be receiving. Unless one reciprocates in some way, the balance will be disrupted. Rather than exploitive taking, Indigenous methodologies present offerings in sacred acknowledgement and

gratitude for what is being given. Wilson (2008) suggests that the researcher should be asking, “What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal?” and “Am I being responsible in fulfilling my role and obligations to the other participants, to the topic and to all of my relations?” (p. 77). Trustworthiness, another value of Indigenous research, reflects that knowledge and emerges through the research are gained people who live in ways emanating from their understandings (Hart, 2009).

Trustworthiness is also strengthened through relational and community-based knowledge as well as knowledge that emerges from one’s own life experiences (Hart, 2009).

Another strong practice of Indigenous methodologies is that of situating the presence of self and one’s standpoint in the research. As researchers, we are a central presence in the research and will do well to reflect upon and observe our location, who we are, what we know, where we are from, what our purpose is, our relationship with others, and what our motivations are (Absolon, 2011; Hart, 2007; Kovach, 2009). Indigenous methodologies are described by Smith (2005) and Wilson (2004) as being part of a larger decolonization movement in Indigenous communities. Indigenous research involves anti-colonialism (Absolon, 2011). Absolon (2011) emphasizes, “Indigenous re-search is about being human and calls all human beings to wake from the colonial trance and rejoin the web of life” (p. 31). Land and place are situated within Indigenous methodologies: “place links present with past and our personal self with kinship groups...our knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our experience with our places” (Kovach, 2009, p. 61). Kovach describes place-name stories as “repositories of science” (p. 61) that hold Indigenous identities and reveal histories and relationships.

Kovach (2009) argues that the power hierarchy within research can be mitigated through a researcher's choices in methods: as a general rule, the more structured the method, the more control the researcher maintains. In order to shift the power hierarchy, Kovach states that Indigenous research often uses methods such as “story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews... [which] allow participants to share their experiences on their terms...[and] act to give power back to the participant and the participant's community” (p. 82). Open structured methods in Indigenous research encourage researchers to respond intuitively to the stories, sharing their own understandings and being active listeners. With the sharing of stories as method, according to Kovach, come responsibilities such as bringing forth memory and human emotions and opening the door for healing, transformation, and decolonization to come forth on personal or general levels. Kovach (2009) elaborated on a conversational method for Indigenous research, which involves “gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition” (p. 40). Although conversational methods have been used outside of Indigenous methodologies, when used in Indigenous frameworks, the method is linked to tribal knowledge, is relational, most often has a decolonizing purpose, involves Indigenous protocols, is informal and flexible, is collaborative and dialogic, and is reflexive. Kovach describes having known the participants of the study in which she utilized conversational methods previously, which served to build on her credibility and trustworthiness as a researcher and enabled deeper conversations and richer insights. Kovach (2009) explains that when the conversational method is used in research circles or one-on-one, highly contextualized stories may be generated. Kovach struggled with data analysis since many approaches such as thematically grouping stories serve to decontextualize and fragment the data while keeping the researcher in control of determining the analysis. When the research participant's story is intact, however, it speaks for itself. Kovach believes that

ongoing conversation is an important part of data analysis within Indigenous methodologies as a further strategy of mitigating the researcher's power. Weber-Pillwax (2001) indicates that in her practice of Indigenous research, interviewing as a method is a process of total involvement, drawing on longstanding connections and relational accountability. Hart (2007) explains that preceding the formal section of interviews, he reconnected with participants through a discussion about families, well-being, and recent activities often over food or tea. He describes tobacco and gifts being offered. Some of his interviews became one or more days in length, tobacco and gifts being offered, and meals, sweat lodge ceremonies, and pipe ceremonies taking place as part of the process. In addition, Hart balanced university ethics protocols with Indigenous relational protocols, oftentimes following the lead of participants. His data analysis involved *narrative structuring*, drawing on the work of Kvale (1996), through which a coherent story and complete narrative is presented in the text so that the original meaning is reflected and the influence of changing the story by taking away pieces is minimized. The analysis was done through ongoing dialogue and relationship with the participants such that his thoughts and experiences were brought back to the participants, giving them the opportunity to provide feedback and direction. Hart wove the contributions of the participants together. Hart, Straka, and Rowe (2016) enact Indigenism in their Indigenist/anti-colonial research by confronting colonial processes, committing to Indigenous values and a holistic way of being, centralizing relationships, centralizing Indigenous knowledge, and creating positive change for Indigenous peoples.

Although Indigenous methodologies and Indigenist research paradigms include anti-colonial and decolonizing dimensions, they also involve affirming Indigeneity, and thus transcend being defined by colonialism. Absolon (2011) writes,

Just clearing the mind of colonial constructs is not enough. Decolonization is the common descriptor for unlearning racism and colonization and recovering

Indigeneity...Indigenizing your search is to move beyond the critiques and centre your search from who you are as an Indigenous person. (p. 101)

Thus Indigenous methodologies are not synonymous with anti-colonial methodologies.

Nonetheless, Indigenous methodologies have much to offer in the development of an anti-colonial methodology for use with settler peoples. As has been noted, the elements and methods of Indigenous methodologies tend to be anti-colonial. In drawing inspiration from Indigenous methodologies, however, the question of appropriation and the question of whether non-Indigenous peoples can and should use Indigenous methodologies arise. Kovach (2009) takes up this question, stating

I believe that anyone can employ a wholistic methodology...Indigenous methodologies require situational appropriateness, which means that they can only be actualized when the whole context is relevant...non-Indigenous people can employ some shared elements, such as respect, community benefit, relationship building and so on, but might not locate from similar cultural, spiritual, historical, personal or political experiences as an Indigenous methodology would entail. Situational appropriateness then asks the questions: Do you have an Indigenous worldview, history and experiences? Can you position your process in an Indigenous worldview and framework? If you can answer yes to these questions, then perhaps there is situational appropriateness and it is okay to employ Indigenous methodologies. If the answers are no, then perhaps a more general wholistic methodology is in order. (pp. 161-162)

Kovach's view that non-Indigenous peoples probably cannot appropriately utilize Indigenous research methodologies fully makes sense to me. I understand that as a white settler occupier researcher, it is not a fit for me to use an Indigenous research methodology. I still hold, however, to the need to maintain Indigenous methodologies as the primary point of reference for settler occupiers doing research in Indigenous sovereignty. What I learn from Indigenous methodologies will only serve to assist in decolonizing my ways of doing, being, knowing, and relating. Through Indigenous peoples and scholarship I have learned the importance of reciprocity, egalitarianism, standpoint and social location, balance and wholism, self-determination, knowledge as collective and relational, connection to community and



relationship, accountability, flexibility, and honouring Indigenous-based protocols and norms. I have also learned much about the philosophical underpinnings of anti-colonialism. All of these will be reflected in the anti-colonial methodology I am articulating. However, I believe it is important to acknowledge that even when I am learning about elements and values of Indigenous methodologies, as Kovach suggests, I will understand these in a different or more limited way than someone who has been socialized through Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being, and relating. Indigenous research appears to subvert all of the colonizing practices and dimensions of mainstream research outlined earlier in this chapter.

In drawing inspiration from Indigenous methodologies while at the same time wishing to avoid appropriating these methodologies as a white settler person, looking at definitions of appropriation also becomes important. One definition I found helpful was presented by Hart (2009): “Appropriation...is explained by Graveline (1998) as the misrepresentation or partial representation of an idea or artifact without recognition of the sources of knowledge or inspiration while gaining prosperity, success, and/or benefit from others’ ideas” (p. 27). Carey’s (2008) and Hiller’s (2013) studies provide examples of being heavily informed by, but not claiming to embody, Indigenous methodologies. Carey (2008) explains that it is not her intention to appropriate Indigenous methodologies, but rather to “engage in a dialogic relationship with Indigenist scholarship, and ask, what can we learn from this as non-Aboriginal people pursuing our own anti-colonial subjectivities, epistemologies, and methodologies?” (p. 58). Carey believes that Indigenist methodologies can inform the ethical obligations of white settler researchers and assist us in achieving best practice outcomes.

In keeping with relational and reciprocal principles of Indigenous epistememes, settler researchers will do well to acknowledge the gifts they are given through Indigenous peoples and

methodologies and find ways to give back. Kovach says, “Non-Indigenous critical theorists are strong allies for Indigenous methodologies. They can assist in making space for indigenous methods (protocols, ethics, data collection processes), but also for the epistemic shift from a Western paradigm that indigenous methodologies bring” (p. 86). Kovach (2009) provides the following suggestions for non-Indigenous scholars who wish to support Indigenous epistemology and engage respectfully with Indigenous research. First, Kovach suggests that we work towards decolonizing our minds and hearts, exploring our beliefs and values about knowledge, and examining whiteness and power in ourselves and in our institutions. Second, she suggests that we strive to understand the history of Indigenous peoples in the academy and be willing to engage in a time of trust building. We should avoid exoticizing and objectifying Indigenous knowledge. We will provide mentorship for Indigenous researchers, and co-partner on projects and publications. We will resist evaluating Indigenous academic work based on Western academic norms and will critique utilizing collective relationship-building rather than competitive approaches. We will do relational work, engaging with and taking direction from Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009).

**Feminist methodologies.** There are a number of perspectives from feminist research methodologies that are useful in my quest to subvert colonizing dimensions and practices of mainstream research in the anti-colonial methodology I will articulate. Feminist research, offering “distinctive methodological perspective or framework which fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines” (Tickener, 2006, p. 20), subverts systemic oppression. Further, feminist research departs from the individualistic ontology typical of social science: “Feminists start from an ontology of social relations in which individuals are embedded in, and

constituted by, historically unequal political, economic, and social structures” (Tickener, 2006, pp. 24-25). Tickener (2006) explains that Feminist research asks feminist questions, designs research useful to women using women’s experiences and evaluates its usefulness based on its potential to assist women in challenging oppressive conditions and improve their lives, all of which have applications to anti-colonial research. Subjectivity is valued as an asset with regard to the personal experience, standpoint, and positioning of the researcher and with regard to the analysis (Tickener, 2006), resisting universality, hierarchy, and othering. The relationship of the researcher to the research participants involves equality and dialectic involvement with an awareness of power differentials, subverting power and hierarchy. The aim of the research is social change, policy application, and empowerment of women such that the researcher is engaged in political struggle toward emancipation (Tickener, 2006), subverting oppressive systems. Feminist epistemology rejects the idea that scholarly communities are the only or privileged source of insight and knowledge (Weldon, 2006). Collins (2000) describes characteristics of a Black feminist epistemology such as lived experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal accountability, subverting extractivism, individualism, and objectivity.

Standpoint theory and its concepts are important to Feminist methodologies, and yet standpoint theory “can arise out of any oppressed group” (Harding, 2004, p. 3). Harding describes standpoint approaches as operating out of the assumption that all knowledge is situated knowledge, and they avoid the god stance. Standpoint theory is based on the premise that examining questions from the perspective of marginalized groups has epistemological and analytical advantage and “provides a better, fuller picture of social reality” (Weldon, 2006, p. 79) as “some social phenomena are not visible from the position of the powerful group” (p. 64).

Drawing on the work of Harstock (2003) and Harding (1998), Weldon indicates that standpoint theory reveals the limited and partial nature of dominant accounts, and forces their revision. Standpoint theory then, subverts universality, objectivity, and neutrality as well as othering. Feminist methodologies also have much to offer in articulating an anti-colonial methodology, some of which is similar to aspects of Indigenous methodologies. From feminist methodologies, I incorporate into my research an emphasis on social relations rather than individualism, challenging hierarchy, valuing standpoint, reflexivity, egalitarianism, liberatory aims, a focus on emotion, ethic of caring, accountability, and challenging the myth of neutrality and making visible the author.

**Critical race and anti-racism research.** Critical race and anti-racism research methodologies offer a number of features that can inform an anti-colonial methodology for use by and with white settler occupiers. This is not surprising in light of the key roles structures of racism have played in colonialism. Although there is much diversity within critical race theory with its differing emphases, objectives, and arguments, according to Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas (1995), it is unified by two central interests: understanding “how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained” (p. xiii), and a desire to change this arrangement in the interest of human liberation. Seminal theorists of critical race methodologies, Solórzano and Yosso (2002), state, “A critical race methodology offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color” (p. 23). A critical race methodology “foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process [including intersectionality of race, gender, and class] (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 131). Dei (2005) says, “We operationalize *anti-racist research* as research on racial domination and social oppression, and proceed with an objective of providing local

subjects with an opportunity to speak about their experiences within the broader contexts of structural and institutional forces of society” (p. 9). He suggests, “The research purpose is to understand social oppression and how it helps construct and constrain identities (race, gender, class, sexuality)...” (p. 2). Dei (2005) explains,

Anti-racist research is research explicitly committed to promoting anti-racism objectives, and particularly to challenging domination and power relationships in society through the promotion of social justice, equity, and fairness. Such research gives saliency and centrality to minoritized peoples’ perspectives...it is research that also challenges exploitative relationships and, in particular, the tendency for dominant research to pathologize, stereotype, label, and re-victimize marginalized peoples. (p. 13)

He indicates, “anti-racist research requires a new paradigm shift away from colonial research to a genuine relational approach with local subjects to uncover power relationships in knowledge production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination” and that “genuine collaboration in anti-racist research means working on a shared, collective vision based on mutual trust and respect and meaningful dialogue among all partners” (pp. 9-10). Dei (2005) emphasizes that anti-racist research will not denigrate, patronize or infantilize research subjects but rather respects and affirms their knowledge, recognizing them as “subjects that resist oppression” and as “creators of knowledge” (p. 10). In anti-racist research, “the researcher becomes a learner and must view research as a process of self-discovery and self-examination” (p. 6). Dei (2005) also emphasizes the researcher’s responsibility to the research subjects, and the researcher’s responsibility to the use of the knowledge such that “anti-racist research shifts conventional research away from its parasitic nature” (p. 12). In anti-racism research and praxis, one is often at odds with and rupturing the structures one works within; such that researchers need to be purposeful in ensuring that “working partnerships, including collaborative ones, do not lead to coercion, co-optation, and control” (Dei, 2005, p. 10). Thus far, we see that critical race and anti-racism methodologies resist power, control, extractivism, white supremacy, hierarchy, othering, objectivity, and

ownership. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) list several types of storytelling resistance as methods found in critical race methodologies: personal narratives, third person stories or narratives, and composite stories. Racism and white supremacy are central practices and epistemic elements of settler colonialism. Thus, critical race and anti-racism methodologies have an important place in the development of this anti-colonial methodology. Elements that will influence my research methodology include understanding and subverting white supremacy, disrupting and transforming racial privilege and marginalization, commitment to social justice, centering and respecting the knowledge of people of colour, focus on racial/ethnic identity, attention to power relations, knowledge as collaborative, the importance of social location and subjective identity, the use of narrative, flexibility and participatory methods, use of interviews, and a critique of authorial control.

**Participatory action and activist research methodologies.** Stouder, Fox, and Fine (2012) frame participatory action research (PAR) as a practice that contests privilege. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) emphasize the role of participatory action research in democratizing research and challenging the concept of objectivity and the concept that research is a process reserved for those in the academy: “PAR offers a counter-story; a radical imagination of a public science; conducted by and for the people most intimately affected by inequity” (p. 181). They see PAR as actively challenging the invisible and privileged ideological constraints of individualism and meritocracy. Tuck and Guishard (2013) argue that PAR disbelieves a number of notions, including the requirement of distance between the knower and the known in order for objectivity to be attained, that the researcher as an expert can observe more about the subject’s life than the subject can see, that researchers can be neutral and value-free, and that research is conducted in order to ‘discover’ new knowledge that contributes to a knowledge base. Instead,

they suggest that research subjects have valuable insights and significant knowledge regarding their lives and the systems they come into contact with and are able to engage in a process of “co-constructing knowledge for social change” (p. 15).

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) distinguish participatory research by its “shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action” (p. 560). The topic/issue formulation of the research develops in response to a community-articulated need or problem, and the research is a community-initiated process (Zavala, 2010, citing Mora and Diaz, 2004). As Watkins and Shulman (2008) state, PAR “trusts community members’ capacities to generate significant questions for research, to gather relevant ‘data,’ to work together toward understandings, and to embody these in action, creatively transforming their situations” (p. 270). Watkins and Shulman recommend that the research question arise out of dialogue with others. They write, “If your research question has arisen from your own personal experience, it is necessary to dialogue with others to see how their experience may or may not overlap with yours, and to find the terms of inquiry that are general enough to capture experience beyond, yet alongside of your own” (p. 302). They suggest asking “What are the questions a group or community itself has and would like to explore through research? Is the research project of possible benefit to the co-researchers and their community or does the benefit go entirely to the academic researchers and others?” (p. 303). Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest that participatory action research involves a move from mere ‘informed consent’ for a privately conceived study to “engaging in a collaborative process of generating the questions and procedures to be used in the research with others in a community” (p. 303). They recommend that the structure of interviews remain open and flexible enough that questions can be recast by the participant to reflect the participant’s experience, a

process that has been called a ‘counter-interview,’ which places the researcher and participant on more equal footing and promotes dialogue and a mutual search for understanding in a context of trust and good will. They also point to a relational accountability with co-participants in that the researcher and co-participants honour the relationships developed during the research and continue to challenge the oppressive structures addressed in the research well after the research is completed, possibly collaboratively. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) state, “At its best, participatory action research is a social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world...” (p. 563).

Tuck and Fine (2007) understand the “radical possibilities of PAR spaces as spaces in which sovereignty can be recognized, practiced, theorized, and cultivated...[which] involves the cease and desist of Eurocentric, colonizing power formations” (p. 163). Tuck and Guishard (2013) resist settler colonialism through their article which discusses an ethical framework for decolonial participatory action research. Although, they write, “there is nothing about PAR that intrinsically serves as a cure-all or magic bullet for the many biases and moral quandaries that plague social scientific inquiry, especially those that derive from complicity in relations of settler colonialism” (p. 15), decolonial PAR “seeks to be accountable to real people, to tangible relationships, and it disbelieves the permanence of the settler-colonial nation-state (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 16). It “attend[s] to the lines of power that course through settler-colonial nation-states (pp. 16-17).

Lewis (2012) states that in activist research, dialogue with the organized group of people with whom we are forming a political alignment through our research is essential to each phase of the research process: conception of the research topic, data collection, verification, and



research dissemination. Activist and militant researchers are ideally embedded within social movements and thus engaged in relationships and resistance (Lewis, 2012, p. 228). Reflexivity, in this context, means that the researcher is part of the setting, context, and culture being researched and engages one's feelings and one's reasons and hopes for action (Lewis, 2012, citing Fernandez, 2009). The researcher engages in a relational ethics of struggle as both an activist and academic, and engages collaborative affinity and solidarity (Lewis, 2012, citing Routledge, 2009).

I draw a number of methods and principles of my research from participatory action and activist methodologies. These include connecting research questions to expressed community needs and problems (research is community-initiated); orientation toward community action; collaborative learning/consciousness-raising; continuing dialogue with a community throughout the stages of the research project and beyond; relational accountability; and dialogue with an activist group. Although it is ideal to have the research evolve out of community and engage shared authorship and ownership, I contended with the limitations of doctoral dissertation research. Pure PAR generally requires that the researcher be invited by an intact group who have identified their own problems and goals they would like the research to address and a process that evolves organically, whereas the academic thesis process requires that the researcher develop the research problem and methods in advance (Cullen, 2008). My topic is predetermined and chosen by myself as a doctoral student. However, as will be demonstrated below, there are a number of factors in the way I conceptualize the research that might mitigate this shortcoming. First, conceptualizing my life and journey as relational leads me to recognize that my interest in the topic of settler decolonization has been heavily influenced by those I have encountered in my life. Thus, I may view my choice of topic as a collective choice formed in relationship with many

peoples. I have wonderful teachers and mentors who have inspired me to do this work. Although a physical local community has not invited me to engage in this research, as was noted, there have been calls for this type of work from Indigenous scholars and activists who encourage settler peoples to undertake processes of decolonization and to work within settler communities to educate these communities and raise consciousness about colonialism and decolonization (e.g. Alfred, 2005; McCaslin & Breton, 2008; Richard, 2013). I have been fortunate, in recent years, to have connected with groups of activist white settlers-occupiers who have undertaken anti-racism and anti-colonial work. I have consulted with these groups and have gotten input that affirms the usefulness of the research to group members. I have also received input into the research questions, process, and methods.

**Narrative methodologies.** Many of the emancipatory methodologies already described emphasize and utilize storied methods and converge with, or are compatible with, narrative methodologies. Here, I focus on narrative methodologies and methods described in the literature that are most relevant to the way I use narrative in this study. Chase (2005) sees narrative as “a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole” (p. 656). Narratives can “explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, and confirm or challenge the status quo” (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Chase (2005) writes,

When it comes to interpreting narratives heard during interviews, narrative researchers begin with narrators’ voice and stories...this is a move away from a traditional theme-oriented method of analysis in qualitative material. Rather than locating distinct themes across interviews, narrative researchers listen first to the voices within each narrative. (p. 663)

According to Creswell (2007), “narratives may be guided by a theoretical lens or perspective” (p. 55), as is true in this anti-colonial methodology. Chase (2005) asks, “What kinds of narratives disrupt oppressive social processes? How and when do researchers’ analyses and representations

of others' stories encourage social justice and democratic processes?" (p. 667). She considers the role of narratives in both large-scale social change as well as "small-scale, localized social change" (p. 669). Riessman (2008) describes a number of types of narrative analysis. Her *thematic analysis* is of the greatest interest to me with regards to this study. The title of this style of narrative analysis may be misleading to scholars who equate thematic analysis with grounded theory types of cross-case analysis. The difference, for Riessman, as was also noted by Chase (2005), is that her thematic analysis does not theorize "from component themes (categories) across cases." Rather, the stories are kept intact, and the theorizing is done within the context of each particular story. For Riessman, this is a defining feature of narrative analysis itself. The focus, in Riessman's (2008) thematic analysis, is the content, or what is said, rather than "'how,' 'to whom,' or 'for what purposes'" (p. 58), as are more prominently emphasized in other styles of narrative analysis. She says, "Investigators in the thematic narrative tradition typically pay little attention to how a story unfolds in a conversational exchange or the questioner's role in constituting it" (p. 58). Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) classify narrative approaches using two dimensions as continua: *holistic vs. categorical*, and *content vs. form*. A holistic approach, which is used in the present study, treats the unit of analysis as the narrative as a whole, so that "sections of the text are interpreted in the context of other parts of the narrative" (p. 12). Whereas, in a categorical approach, "an utterance or section [is] abstracted from the whole...the original story is dissected, and sections or single words belonging to a defined category are collected" (p. 12). The form versus content continuum distinguishes between a focus on the structure of the story and the explicit and/or implicit content of the story. My approach to narrative analysis within the schema of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber is

primarily *holistic-content*, meaning that I am treating the narratives as a whole and focusing on their explicit content.

This research study also utilizes a narrative analysis approach shared by Creswell (2007), “in which researchers collect descriptions of events or happenings and then configure them into a story using a plot line” (p. 54). Researchers analyze participants’ stories, and then restory them into a framework that makes sense. Creswell (2007) writes, “The chronology of narrative research, with an emphasis on sequence, sets narrative apart from other genres of research” (p. 56). He says,

Within the story may be *epiphanies* or turning points in which the story line changes direction dramatically. In the end, the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and *historical context*, and including the important themes in those lived experiences. (p. 57)

Chase (2005) distinguishes between the authoritative and supportive voices a researcher may use in relation to narratives. For example, sociologists and psychologists may emphasize their own interpretations. Whereas, researchers writing with the supportive voice push “the narrator’s voice into the limelight” (p. 664). Chase (2005) writes, “The goal of this narrative strategy is to bring the narrator’s story to the public” (p. 665). In this, the researcher may function more as an editor and annotator. And yet, “The researcher makes decisions about how to translate and transcribe the narrator’s story, which parts of the story to include in the final product, and how to organize and edit those parts into a text or performance” (Chase, 2005, p. 665). These narrative analysis strategies were all used in this study.

### **Anti-colonial Research Methodology and Methods**

After the research methodology discussion offered so far, the reader may have begun to envision how an anti-colonial methodology for this research study might emerge. Recall definitions of *methodology* discussed earlier. From these, I define methodology here as a unified

set of principles, values, perspectives, ethics, ontologies, and epistemologies that guide and justify the methods and procedures. In many ways, the methodology relates to questions of *why*. The anti-colonial methodology that I use in this study seeks to resist the colonizing elements of mainstream research articulated previously while simultaneously affirming just, decolonizing, liberating, and emancipatory theories, ethics, epistemologies, ontologies, and methods. Centering Indigenous methodologies as a reference point, here I draw from the methodologies discussed in the previous section to articulate the value framework of this methodology. Once again, the methodology is designed for the context of a white settler occupier conducting research with white settler occupier subjects in Indigenous lands and sovereignty. Also, as I present the value framework here, I direct the reader to the previous section, *contributions from related methodologies*, for references to literature supporting its values and principles.

**The value framework the anti-colonial methodology.** Here I outline eight values and principles of this methodology. They are as follows:

1. *Resistance and Subversion of Colonialism.* Just as critical race research resists and subverts racism and white supremacy (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and feminist research subverts androcentrism and patriarchy (Tickener, 2006), anti-colonial research resists and subverts colonialism in process, dynamics, and outcome. It contributes toward anti-colonial change in and with peoples, relationships, organizations, communities, institutions, governments, and the land. It acknowledges and problematizes the reality and impact of historical and contemporary colonialism and it recognizes the illegitimacy of the current settler presence on the land. It ultimately works towards the building of a new society on the terms of Indigenous peoples, which could mean vast changes in the distribution of, and our relationships with, land.

2. *Relational and Epistemic Accountability.* Anti-colonial work on the part of settler occupiers is work that requires relational accountability with Indigenous peoples. Standpoints, epistemes, perspectives, and experiences of Indigenous peoples are honoured, foregrounded, and valued. It is important that settler colonizer peoples who engage in anti-colonial research maintain relationship and dialogue with Indigenous peoples in general, and regarding our research. It is important to listen to and take seriously the input and feedback of Indigenous peoples in this process, and to read literature by Indigenous scholars for input into our work, and to engage in contexts, when invited, in which Indigenous knowledge is shared. Simultaneously, settler peoples critique, resist, and subvert white settler occupier epistemes as they engage in research. It is important that anti-colonial researchers draw upon literature by Indigenous scholars in our understanding of colonialism and our complicity in it so as to minimize our blind spots. Indigenous peoples are invited to have input at multiple levels to multiple aspects of our research, and research is congruent with the well-being of Indigenous peoples as they define it.
3. *Egalitarian, Participatory, and Community-based Methods.* Anti-colonial research is as participatory and egalitarian as possible. Research subjects and community members are involved in multiple levels of the research (data collection, analysis, dissemination) and ideally also contribute to the shaping of the research. Ideally, the research is initiated based on an expressed need of a community and the self-defined well-being of Indigenous peoples. Wherever possible, co-authorship occurs in a way that acknowledges those who contributed significantly to the research, which is likely a large number (consultants, subjects, activist communities...). Anti-colonial research seeks to disrupt

hierarchy, othering, and marginalization in multiple spheres, and particularly colonial hierarchy. In order to make the work accessible, with co-researcher/participant permission, disseminates the research as widely as possible. The knowledge generated through the research is seen as public knowledge (while respecting the wishes of participants who do not wish to be identified and the data participants have not given permission to be included in the final report and research dissemination). The researcher embodies humility and does not elevate the self as the expert. This value resists greed, ownership, individualism, hierarchy, power, and control.

4. *Land/Place Engagement and Accountability.* As connected to relational accountability to the Indigenous peoples of the lands and waters where we reside and research, anti-colonial research is accountable to the land herself. Anti-colonial research acknowledges, respects, and engages with the protocols and natural laws of the Indigenous lands where it is conducted. It attends to narratives of place and place-based memories, and to specific water and land-based histories (Kovach, 2009). Research avoids causing further harm to the land and works directly or indirectly to return lands to Indigenous peoples. Further, anti-colonial research honours relationship and connection with non-human beings on the land.
5. *Reciprocity.* Anti-colonial research values reciprocity. Rather than focusing on taking, anti-colonial settler occupier researchers focus on what they can give, contribute, and collectively build. Researchers take the time, energy, and resources in order to give as much or more than what they receive. As Simpson indicates, an alternative to extractivism is responsibility, relationship, and deep reciprocity (in Klein, 2013, para. 15-16).

6. *Self-Determination, Autonomy, and Accountability.* Anti-colonial research seeks to safeguard the self-determination and autonomy of those involved in the research. Those involved with the research are given multiple options regarding their involvement, their identification, and their participation. Research methods are less structured and are flexible so as to afford for this self-determination either in advance of the data collection or spontaneously throughout the process. Methods are chosen that allow for maximum self-determination and control on the part of the research subjects. Participants participate in the construction of their data and have the final say regarding how they are represented in the research. This resists power, control, and hierarchy. Where peoples are involved in the research process who are not from the white settler occupier researcher's own culture/social location, efforts should be made to learn and observe protocols, cultural norms, and languages of participating peoples (particularly Indigenous protocols, norms, and languages). Efforts are taken to meet those who contribute to the research in a location that is convenient and comfortable for them.
7. *Social Location and Reflexivity.* Anti-colonial settler researchers examine and explicitly state their own social location with regards to the research and with regards to colonialism. They explore the impact of their own social location on the research, and engage in critical reflexivity regarding the ways in which they enact white colonial settler epistememes. Researchers are explicitly present within the text of research reports. This resists objectivity and neutrality.
8. *Wholism.* Anti-colonial research is wholistic. It attends to the heart, spirit, and body in addition to the mind. It attends to values, emotion, history, and context. In this way it resists abstraction.



**Values in practice (or methods).** As has been noted in the first chapter of this study, this research originated out of my own wish to learn more about what it means to live in a way that reflects my reality that I am living on Indigenous lands, in Indigenous sovereignty. I undertook the research so that I, and other white settler occupiers, might initiate and deepen our anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work in order to contribute to social change. I believe one way to inspire this would be to learn from the lives of white settler occupiers who have been doing this work over a period of time and as a major life focus, and as time went on, it became increasingly clear to me that this could only be done well if the study also included dialogue and accountability with Indigenous peoples. The research questions of this study have been developed through my own thoughts and through consultations with Indigenous scholars, Elders, and/or activists as well as consultations with white settler occupiers. It is, again, *what can we learn about living in Indigenous sovereignty from the lives, thoughts, and work of white settler occupiers who have engaged heavily in anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work?* A sub-question, as the research unfolded, became *how can one do research in Indigenous sovereignty, when the research involves a white settler occupier researcher, white settler occupier research subjects, and anti-colonial aims?* In defining the concept of research *methods* for this study, I am referring to the specific procedures, the *what* and the *how* of the research. Although I view the research methods as having been relationally constructed and influenced by dialogue, the academic doctoral program mandates that I am a sole author and organizing researcher of the study. This is in many ways contrary to participatory and anti-oppressive methods, and compromises my ability to fully reflect anti-colonial values. It also means, however, that I am responsible for the choices made regarding the research study and needed to make decisions that reflect my values and way of being in the world. At the very least, it has meant that I needed to

make decisions that I could live with given a set of requirements, protocols, and limits. In short, the methods described here fall under the categories: community consultation; research subjects; inviting, receiving, and engaging the stories; engaging and preparing the stories; sharing the stories; and evaluating the research.

*Community consultations.* In integrating values of resisting and subverting colonialism, relational and epistemic accountability, responsibility to the research community, and egalitarian and participatory research methods, I engaged community consultations at a number of points before and during the research process. These consultations helped disrupt colonial research practices such as power and control, extractivism, hierarchy, white supremacy, othering, individualism, and ownership. As has been noted elsewhere, this research responds to calls from Indigenous and settler activist authors. In many ways this research has evolved in relational ways, through a lifetime of conversations, teachings, learnings, events, and relationships. However, as I prepared to write the proposal for this research, I wanted to engage specific and purposeful discussions that would help me to design the research in ways that felt relevant and useful for communities. Consultations occurred with Indigenous scholars, activists, and/or Knowledge Keepers, and also with white settler activists. In requesting this input, I offered, depending on the contexts, food, gifts, and/or tobacco. As it is important to me that I name and acknowledge those involved and some of the input they provided, I outline this in more detail in Appendix A and Appendix B. Readers interested in greater detail regarding the consultation processes and input will find information in these locations.

Many of the ideas that came forward as part of the initial consultation phase were represented in the original research proposal. The research interview questions were based primarily on these consultations. The idea for the research feast (described in the ‘sharing the

stories' section) was based on the consultations as well. In addition, a number of people who were invited to be research subjects were recommended through this process, and some of these became research participants. This period of consultation is very important to the study as it embodied aspects of the participatory nature of the study connected to whether the study responds to an articulated need on the part of one or more communities and connected to attempts to maximize the usefulness of the study to the communities. The consultation with Indigenous peoples connected to the relational accountability emphasis of the study in that white settler occupier decolonization and anti-colonial work is seen in the context of colonial, treaty, and anti-colonial relationships between Indigenous and settler occupiers; and that this study on white settler decolonization and anti-colonial activism occur in dialogue with Indigenous peoples. The consultations also connected with resisting extractivism, hierarchy, control, white supremacy, and individualism. An additional process of consultation occurred during the data analysis phase of the research, and it will be described in the 'engaging and preparing the stories' section below.

***Research subjects.*** In this section I describe the research subjects, or participants, of this study. Research subjects were invited to take part in the study based on a number of factors which were influenced by my own judgment and the community consultation process. Marshall (1996) describes the desirability of purposeful, or judgment sampling in qualitative research. The researcher "actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523), and develops a framework for assessing this based on the researcher's knowledge of the research area, demographic areas, "known public attitudes or beliefs" (p. 523) and expertise of potential research subjects, and potentially a broad range of variation. These concepts were all used in my selection of research subjects. I wanted to include only participants

for whom decolonization, anti-colonial, and/or solidarity work is a major life focus, and participants who do not appear to see their work in a paternalistic charity-model framework. Because I was wishing to inspire greater numbers of white settler occupier peoples to engage with the work, I wished to invite diverse participants so that readers would be more likely to see themselves and their gifts, beliefs, and aptitudes reflected in the research narratives, and thus add to the potential of the research to inspire a greater number of people to engage in such activism. I hoped to include people from across Canada, but I knew I would face funding and time limitations regarding extensive travel. Community members seemed to agree with many of these ideas, and also suggested that I invite participants who had been involved in their decolonization, anti-colonial, and/or solidarity work for at least a couple of years, who do their work in a variety of ways, and who are of varying ages. A number of community members I consulted with also made recommendations regarding particular people I should invite as research participants, and a number of these were invited and accepted. Further, being that this study is doctoral research in a Faculty of Social Work, my committee advised that I include participants with social work backgrounds. This might provide examples of pathways for decolonization and anti-colonial activism that have been taken by social workers in their lives and/or social work, and will lend itself to a discussion in my dissertation report regarding applications of the study to social work and social workers. My understanding of whether a potential participant met these criteria and added to the diversity of the group was influenced by the input of others who know them and by their writings and reputations. I should also note that some of the invited research subjects were known to me in various capacities. Kovach (2009) explains, as has been noted, that when research participants have known the researcher, this can serve to build on the researcher's

credibility and trustworthiness from the perspective of the participant, and can enable deeper conversation and richer insights.

Although I am unable to share exact demographics of the research subjects due to the presence of subjects who requested to have their identities disguised, I share some information here, much of which is included in participant research narratives. There were fourteen subjects in total. I had set out to include 8-12 participants, a range arrived at based on my previous experiences of conducting research and what these experiences have taught me relative to finding a balance between a small enough number to allow for in-depth interviews and narratives, and a large enough number that will allow for variety in regards to participants' activism, experiences, and perspectives. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find the accessible presence of more than enough people who fit my criteria, and of additional participants who would add to the diversity of the sample. Of the participants, seven identify as women, and seven as men. Participant ages range from their thirties to their sixties. At the time of the interviews, six participants resided in Ontario, one in BC, and seven in the Prairie Provinces. Most identified as cis-gendered, straight, or heterosexual. They came from a variety of economic backgrounds, with most having been raised middle class. Some did not have university degrees, while several hold PhDs. They came from a number of faith backgrounds, most having been raised some version of Christian. Five have, or are working on, social work degrees. They had been involved in their anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work for a variety of time periods, ranging from two years to about forty years. There is also a fair bit of diversity in how they conceptualize their work, the spheres in which they do their work, and their views and experiences around controversial areas of involvement.

*Inviting, receiving, and engaging the stories.* Once selected, potential research participants were invited to take part in the research by myself, verbally or through email, using a script approved by the Research Ethics Board. In some cases, another person who knows and recommended the potential participant made an initial contact with them, and if they expressed interest, I followed up with a direct invitation. I chose this method due to the relationality of the study. Once a participant had made an initial commitment to take part in the study, we discussed the timing and location of the interviews most convenient and logistically possible for the participant. I sent a consent form and a list of interview questions in advance so that participants could view these and ask questions in advance of their interviews. Interviews took place in locations such as the participant's home, their friend or relative's home, a university space, the participant's office, or a rented unit. Food was provided for participants, and cloth gifts significant to the study (sewn by myself and Carolyn Dyane) were also given to participants in the spirit of reciprocity. Although they were presented with the gifts after the interview, participants were not told about receiving gifts in advance so that there will be no risk of participants engaging in a process in which they normally would not want to take part due to the gifts offered.

Participants were invited to take part in two interviews ranging from one hour to three hours in length. This is in line with Riessman's (2008) statement, "it is preferable to have repeated conversations rather than the typical one-shot interview, especially when studying biographical experience" (p. 26). A few participants requested one longer interview instead due to their own logistical needs and this was accommodated. When participants arrived for their first interview, we discussed their consent forms (See Appendix C). I answered any questions or concerns, and we completed their consent forms before commencing with the interview.

*Semi-structured in-depth interviews.* As was noted, I utilized an interview guide, and the interview questions were developed based on my own thoughts, my research consultations, and the suggestions of my advisor. I chose the semi-structured in-depth interview format in order to meet the needs of the study and to balance the values of the study. Accountability to those with whom I consulted meant I would need to include a long list of interview questions in order to ensure their interests and recommendations were honoured. And yet less structured interviews are preferred for maximizing the control and autonomy of the research participant to tell their story in the way they wish (Kovach, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Because of the narrative methods used in the data analysis, I knew I would need very involved and extensive data. In the end, I balanced these priorities by creating an interview guide that includes seven somewhat open-ended questions, with numerous follow-up and sub-questions (see Appendix D for the list of interview questions). This way, participants could address umbrella questions in the ways they wished, and I could ask follow-up questions to make sure priority areas had been addressed. There were times, for clarification or for interest, I asked follow-up questions not on the list related to content that had been shared. The semi-structured approach is common in narrative research: “Most experience-centred narrative interviewing is semi-structured” (Squire, 2008, p. 48).

The interviews were filmed when participants consented, and audio recorded. The filming was done for two reasons. First, I anticipated that there may be areas in the audio recordings where the participant’s words or meaning is unclear, and I believed video would help clarify these passages. Second, participants had the option of consenting to have their interview footage used in a parallel film project. Although there is a danger that consenting research subjects, intimidated by the filming process and its implications, might not share their stories as

freely as they might have without the filming component, this is understood and mitigated in a number of ways. Lowmax and Casey (1998) contend, “it may be methodologically problematic to simply ignore or negate the role of the research process in video-based methodology” (para. 2.5). They explain that in most research, the researcher “becomes part of the social world that is being studied” (para. 4.1), but in video-based research, “the camera too, is socially significant given both its ability to preserve interaction for re-presentation and participants’ awareness of that ability” (para. 4.1). Lowmax and Casey (1998) build a case that the presence of the video-recording researcher need not be considered as problematic or contaminating, but can be an interesting and useful resource.

Mitigating factors of the impacts of filming in video-based research are explored in the literature. For example, Heath and Hindmarsh (2002) recommend cameras are left stationary to “ensure that the participants are distracted as little as possible by the recording equipment” (p. 108). This was practiced during the filmed interviews of this study. Lowmax and Casey (1998) believe naturally occurring strategies such as engaging in preliminary informal chat helps to “organise a non-formal environment” (para. 5.9), putting research subjects at ease. This was certainly a practice during the filmed interviews of this study. Stronger mitigating factors of this research, in my opinion, involve the choices given to research subjects. They could opt out of having their interview filmed. They could opt out of being contacted later for their participation in the film project (thus declining to have footage used in the film project). Further, it was made clear to research subjects that they would have an opportunity to give final consent to anything written, using their data, in the dissertation itself. Despite what they might say during a filmed or not-filmed interview, it would not appear in the dissertation or in the film project without their opportunity to approve or reject its use. They were notified that anything would be able to be



edited out from what they share, either by myself as the researcher, by the film project team, or as initiated by themselves as research subjects. I also note here that the filming of consenting research participants' interviews was approved by the University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C for consent form).

The wholistic orientation of this study meant that in addition to asking interview questions, I was listening with head, heart, and spirit (Hart, 2007). I noticed when I was being emotionally or spiritually moved by what was shared. For me, the content was often riveting. I routinely got goose bumps or was moved to tears by what was said. Further, before interviews, after interviews, and during breaks while sharing food, we were able to spend time chatting and relationship building. My experience of interviewing led to the building of some solid relationships and collaborations, and deepened relationships with those I already knew. It is my hope that during the interview process participants received as much as they had given through their involvement. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) write, “ narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter” (p. 9).

***Engaging and preparing the stories for sharing.*** After each research interview was completed, it was transcribed by Lea Soliman. I reviewed each transcription while listening to and/or watching the footage, in order to make corrections, which I was most often able to do because of my knowledge of the subject matter and my experience of doing the interviews. There were a number of passages that were clear only after viewing the video footage to read facial expressions, body language, and lips. The process of reviewing the footage and transcriptions was important, as I was able to absorb more when I was not interviewing. Research subjects

were given copies of their transcriptions for their own records. Some also requested DVD copies of their interview video for their family records.

*Narrative analysis, anti-colonial style.* There were two main phases in the narrative analysis process. In the first, I created a framework for the narratives based on rough chronology and life story form, as recommended by (Creswell, 2007). Content included in this stage was based on the research question, the research goals, the interview questions, and the community consultation recommendations, while allowing for flexibility so that the strengths from each participant's data could emerge. I aimed to create a meaningful and inspiring whole (Chase, 2005; Creswell, 2007), and to foreground the research subject's voice (Chase, 2005) by taking a supportive voice as a researcher (Chase, 2005). As was consistent with my own interests, the recommendations of those who participated in pre-research consultations, and the recommendations of Creswell (2007), I included a focus on epiphanies, or turning points of the stories. I read over a few of the participants' data several times, making drafts of narratives, and attending to issues of chronology, plot, interest, emotion, and inspiration. Through this process I settled on a general narrative structure as follows: 1) identity and early influences, 2) learning and early activism (including epiphanies and shifts that brought participants to their work, usually occurring in adulthood), 3) anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work and continued learning. The last section was generally the longest, and included descriptions of the types of work the participant has been involved in, what they have learned through their work, how they have worked through emotional aspects of the work, the way they conceptualize their work, their vision for their work, any major unique areas of content, and their reasons for being involved and sticking with it. I basically copied all content from the extensive data related to each of these areas, and then re-worked, paraphrased, quoted, and whittled it down to my desired

length of around six pages. Again, my focus here was the creation of a coherent life story of involvement that is compelling and inspires readers toward initial or deepening involvement.

The second stage of narrative analysis experienced several incarnations. Initially, I had designed the research to involve Indigenous co-analysts. I believe that the data analysis, as the meaning making of a study, is a critical arena for accountability. After my committee informed me that in a doctoral study, which is based on individual scholarship, the student does the analysis herself, I thought through alternative ways of building accountability into this part of the analysis. At first, I thought I would compare that data of each participant to anti-colonial political priority areas. As I became increasingly compelled to focus my research around living in Indigenous sovereignty, I felt this was not enough. I developed a plan. I decided that I would further centre elements from the pre-research consultations with Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers, and would engage the themes I would find in Indigenous literatures regarding what Indigenous peoples are asking of, and recommending to, settler occupiers in their decolonization work. I then set out to write a major literature review section (*Listening in Indigenous sovereignty*) that would double as a template for this stage of the data analysis. I offered tobacco and gifts I had sewn to Leona Star-Manoakesick, Aimée Craft, and Dawnis Kennedy, and invited them to meet with me and provide their perspectives regarding this document. We met over food I provided, and they shared important insights that helped guide the remainder of my data analysis. From our consultation I took many things for my own life, for many aspects of the research, and for the analysis process (some of these are cited as personal communications throughout this document). I changed some of my wording to more accurately reflect what I was doing, I became more cautious about presenting the template as a checklist or recipe instead of as relational and individualized, and I determined to write more of myself and

my own journey into multiple chapters of the research. My hesitation to engage with the completed narratives in an evaluative or critical way was affirmed during the consultation. I wanted to respect and not criticize the lives and choices of research subjects, knowing that we all have unique gifts and contributions. During the research consultation, Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) asked, “Does it have to be critical to be a critique? Does it have to be deconstructive to be academic? Is that the only method of engagement?” She shared,

I don't think it has to be that way. You can critique without being critical by being able to show the value of work. I'm critiquing by stating the worth of this work. You call it raising up, raising up another's words. And that takes the same kind of intellectual rigour and critique as deconstructing and tearing down somebody's work. And I think it's a measure of diplomacy too. It's an Indigenous mode of engagement. Do you ever hear people that have that really important thing [to say]? They'll get up, they'll speak. The next person won't start, “I don't agree with that.” If you see people entering really traditional [spaces], you can feel and you see that that they're really serious about what they're doing. They're serious about speaking in front of the spirit. And they really want to do it in a good way. They pick one thing or two things that they can agree with [from] what the other person said. And sometimes it's marked what people don't say.

I took what I had learned during the consultation, and the areas of engagement discussed in the accountability literature review, and I went back to each participant's data, looking for content related to these areas of engagement. I integrated what I found into the narratives about engagement with the land; engagement with Indigenous peoples; Engagement with Indigenous knowledges; engagement with Indigenous resurgence, nationhood, sovereignty, and decolonization; and engagement with what Indigenous peoples have asked of us. This ensured that content from these areas was included and strengthened in the narratives. This is the more politicized aspect of the narrative analysis that invoked relational accountability and research in Indigenous sovereignty. This second stage of data analysis is consistent with Creswell's (2007) view, shared earlier, that narratives may be guided by a theoretical lens (in this case, an anti-

colonial lens), and Chase's (2005) position that narrative may encourage social justice and disrupt oppressive social processes. It is also consistent with the work of Solis (2004) who analyzes narrative data for specific types of content.

I note here that the social work data analysis, a much smaller section of my study, is presented in a separate chapter of the thesis. It is based on the narrative content of five individuals regarding their social work education and social work practice. This is done to provide a focused treatment demonstrating the relevance of the study for social work. In this chapter, readers are encouraged to understand the social work-related content in the context of the participants' larger narratives, and links are made back and forth between the two. This allows for consistency with the holistic orientation, in which these sections of text should also be "interpreted in the context of other parts of the narrative" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zibler, 1998, p. 12).

Participants had the option of writing their narrative together with me. In the end, none of them chose to do this due to their own time constraints, and I wrote drafts on my own. Nonetheless, upon receipt of the draft narratives, most participants opted to provide specific requests for edits, which generally added to the clarity of the narratives. Because some participants did not wish to be identified in the research, I have disguised aspects of their identities in their narratives after conversations with them. After completing the drafts of the narratives, I shared each narrative with the participant whose data it was based on. Participants reviewed and either approved, or requested edits on elements of the draft, edits I subsequently integrated into the narratives. Some of the changes that were requested by participants included changes to further disguise them, changes to give more context or clarity for readers, changes regarding language and terminology, and changes to spellings of Indigenous names.

As personal narrative is one aspect of my research study, I briefly discuss how my own stories are included in this document. Recall Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) statement that personal narratives are a type of storytelling resistance found in critical race methodologies. Alexander (2005), citing Ellis and Bochner (2000), describes personal narratives as "critical autobiographical stories of lived experience [which] offer (public) audiences access to personal experience with the intent of politicizing aspects of human experience and social sense-making" (p. 423). Citing Mutua and Swadner (2004), Denzin (2005) describes critical personal narrative as counter-narrative, and as a "central genre of contemporary decolonizing writing" (p. 946). Personal narrative can be a way of locating the self in the research (Absolon, 2011), and introducing the storyteller (Wilson, 2008). In this study, I use personal narrative in all of these ways. I have written many aspects of this document in personal narrative style, based on what I want to learn through the research, what my own life history has been with regard to the work, how I have gone about the study, and my own thoughts and experiences related to a number of aspects of the study. During a research consultation, Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) commented that the research would be strengthened if I articulated what I wanted to learn through the research in my own voice, with my heart and spirit. Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) shared that part of the contribution I could make in my study would be to share my own thoughts, my "process of coming to a definition for [myself] of that engaged and respectful ally."

***Sharing the stories.*** The research narratives, as well as my own stories, as noted, are contained within this written dissertation. Aspects of the research and some of its stories were shared in December 2015 at a research feast to which were invited all of the people who had any involvement in the research. The purpose of this feast was to give back to the community, to

share some of the research process and findings, and to ask for the help of the group in sending the research forward in a spiritual way. The feast involved food, gifts and tobacco for the Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers involved, and a giveaway for everyone involved. It was a beautiful and affirming event during which I receive much positive feedback. The research and additional data not used in the narratives have the potential to be shared in additional formats in the future such as a book, journal articles, and a film project. There was so much deep and rich data shared by participants, and I am committed to sharing their stories, with their consent, widely, and in as many ways as possible.

***Evaluating the research.*** In the conclusion chapter, I evaluate the research based on questions such as: Did the study answer the research questions? Did it meet its aims and purpose? I also consider evaluation strategies relevant to the methodologies and methods on which I draw. Kovach (2009) notes that “validation of knowledge differs across cultures” (p. 148), such that Indigenous knowledges ought not be evaluated according to Western assumptions. She emphasizes the role of truthfulness, community, and relationality in evaluating research. Hart (2009) describes the concept of *trustworthiness* as a means of evaluating research using an Indigenous research paradigm. Riessman (2008), from a non-Indigenous perspective, uses a framework of trustworthiness to evaluate narrative research. She utilizes the concepts of *correspondence* in evaluating the participant’s story, and the concept of *coherence* in evaluating the researcher’s representation of participant narratives. Watkins and Shulman (2008) propose a re-working of positivist concepts of validity in the context of participatory action research to include the concepts *contextual* validity, *interpersonal* validity, *interpretive* validity, and *catalytic* validity. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will take up these evaluation strategies in more detail in relation to the study.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings, Reflection, and Discussion**

#### **Introducing the Narratives**

The content presented to this point has served as context for this chapter and the next in which the findings are presented and discussed. In the first chapter, I introduced the research and I shared about myself as a researcher, including some reasons why this research is personally important to me, so that the reader might understand the perspective from which the research has been engaged. In the second chapter, I shared what I have learned from literature, conversations, and oral presentations about colonialism, anti-colonialism, decolonization, and relationships of non-Indigenous or settler peoples with Indigenous lands, peoples, knowledges, and nationhood. I also shared some of what Indigenous peoples have asked settlers to do in order to work toward decolonization. In the third chapter, I shared my journey of finding a good fit in the way the study is conceptualized and carried out. I detailed the research methodology and the research methods, describing approaches, decisions, and processes around the co-construction of the narratives shared in this chapter. Throughout these chapters, I have searched to find good ways to enact my accountability to Indigenous sovereignty as I have interviewed and engaged Euro-Canadians, white settlers, colonizers, invaders, occupiers, Wasicu, Aamitigoozhiwag, and Wemistigosiwuk who have shared the stories of their involvement in anti-colonial and/or decolonial work.

As I prepare to share these stories, I wish to reiterate some of the context through which the stories have come forward, and discuss in more detail the ways I have chosen to present these stories. The research began with an idea borne of my experience and the mentorship and teachings that had been shared with me up to that point. As someone who has struggled to



deepen my anti-racism, anti-colonial, and decolonial work over two decades, I knew what a lonely journey it can be, especially from my early work. I knew how much I would have benefitted from hearing the stories of a variety of people who had been doing the work longer than I had and in different ways than I had. I felt hearing these stories would help me to feel less alone and to know that others have struggled with similar challenges in their work. I felt the stories would also help to enhance my ethical practice in the work, my understanding of the work and the varying ways it can be and has been done, and to help guide me in the ways I might move forward in deepening and focusing my engagement. I also knew, from the teachings that had been shared with me, that there is danger in considering anti-colonial and/or decolonial work of white settler occupiers outside of relationships and dialogue with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous sovereignty. Therefore, I engaged a process of consultation that would inform the research values and methods. Without repeating my description of this process at length, I wish to remind readers that the stories that were shared in the interviews came forth after questions were asked, and that the list of questions reflected my own thinking as well as the recommendations of Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers in addition to local non-Indigenous activists. Despite the many questions interviewees were asked, there was also freedom for them to say and share what they wished.

There is a danger of misrepresentation and of re-colonization in centering stories of white settler occupiers within the context of decolonization movements. Such movements have been largely initiated and led by Indigenous peoples, with white settler occupiers playing peripheral roles. There is also a danger of reinforcing the saviour complex deeply embedded within colonial culture. It was my sense as the interviewer that there were times those I interviewed were aware of this danger, and wished to maintain a stance of humility, sharing information conservatively.

There were times that information was shared only after a fair bit of nudging. Some seemed to feel uncomfortable listing examples of their decolonization work and discussing in detail the emotional struggles they encountered in their work. How can these compare with centuries of Indigenous suffering and resistance? They cannot. Comparison is not the purpose of this study. Neither is it the purpose to draw attention away from Indigenous resistance and resurgence, which clearly must be centered. It is not my purpose to celebrate Euro-Canadian accomplishments and activists as white saviours emerging out of the ruins of our colonial disaster. Rather, it is my hope that these stories be read as the narratives of those who have imperfectly traveled a challenging road and have been willing to share their mistakes, learnings, insights, and other aspects of their journeys with others who wish to consider, initiate, or deepen their own decolonial engagement. It is hoped that the collective set of lifeways shared in this research provide a glimpse into some of the possibilities and options of how the work can be done, and perhaps how similar mistakes can be avoided. Rather than being seen as appeals for pity, it is hoped that the detailed descriptions of emotional processes be read as spaces that provide guidance and support for settlers struggling with the emotions of the journey so that care of settler emotion need not fall on Indigenous peoples.

In this chapter, I introduce, present, and discuss the narratives. In the following chapter, I present the social work analysis, which involves interview content of the five research subjects who have (and/or are working on) social work degrees, regarding the relationship of their anti-colonial and/or decolonial journey with their social work education and practice. Therefore, in the narratives of this chapter I have only briefly mentioned this content. Those seeking a more complete understanding of these five interviewees will consider both chapters together holistically. The narratives are static; the humans who shared them are not. Most of the

interviews took place in 2014, and many of those interviewed have undertaken substantial anti-colonial initiatives since and/or have had significant shifts in their understandings. Furthermore, the narratives represent only a portion of the interviews, and the interviews represent only a portion and representation--what was shared--about the lives and work of those interviewed. The prioritization of these portions in the narratives is detailed in the methodology chapter, and I wish to reiterate that many of these choices involved relational accountability with Indigenous peoples and the land, in accordance with the *listening in Indigenous sovereignty* section of chapter two.

I want to frame these narratives for the reader through what was shared with me in my consultations with Indigenous scholars, Knowledge Keepers, and activists, input that shaped the way the narratives were written. Chickadee Richard (personal communication, August 17, 2013) shared, “there are seven billion ways to decolonize. All are valid and valuable, and all form part of the whole.” Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) questioned whether people doing good decolonization work need to be strong in all areas, while Dawnis Kennedy (personal communication, April 9, 2016) explained that some people will be really strong in one area, while others will carry a little bit of everything. She said, “That has to do with their walk, what they have and what they need for the work that they’re called to do.” Aimée Craft (personal communication, April 9, 2016) reminded me that as I hold up the work of those I interviewed, readers can take away what fits for them, what they need to work on, and/or what they lack. Leona Star-Manoakesick (personal communication, April 9, 2016) added that we’re not going to take everything of what we read, but rather bits and pieces for our bundle. I encourage readers see the content of these narratives as points of engagement, and as the ways in which particular people, each with their distinct experiences, knowledge, and values, have done some of their

work. I encourage readers to pick up what feels important to you, and to leave the rest. In the remainder of this chapter are the fourteen participant narratives, followed by my reflection and discussion.

## **Monique Woroniak**

**Identity and early influences.** “What is he doing?” eleven year old Monique asked her father when she saw Elijah Harper holding up a feather on CBC news, blocking the Meech Lake Accord. Monique says,

I didn't understand how he was alive, because I thought all Indians had died. The only other people that my father could point to who were Indigenous and who were alive were the individuals that we drove past when we went to go visit my grandmother on Boyd, which is off of North Main...Until that point, all Indigenous people were dead, and then at that point, there was Elijah Harper who was alive, and individuals who were having a very difficult time on Main Street.

Monique's elementary school education had depicted Indigenous peoples as living in the 1800s, and her experience as a child demonstrated,

Society is not set up for an Indigenous person and non-Indigenous person to have a friendship, it's just not. It's not supportive in that way...[There are] sets of privileges, and sometimes geographic distance, and not-shared histories...I grew up in a place where it was ensured that I would never see anybody.

Now in her thirties, Monique is a librarian, aunt, partner, atheist, and settler Canadian woman of Ukrainian and French ancestry who was born and raised in Winnipeg. The daughter of a teacher librarian and a Canada Post worker, Monique grew up in a working class family whose ancestors had been farmers in Canada, struggling in relative poverty with little education. Monique's family socialization taught her that “if you work really hard, the things you achieve are what you deserve,” which she refers to as her *hard work* and *you deserve it* baggage.

**Learning.** Her interest in Canadian history and politics would lead Monique to do undergraduate work in political studies with most of her electives in Native Studies, because she

“knew enough as an eighteen year old to know...you weren’t going to understand anything about Canada unless you understood something about that.” As she learned about Treaty Land Entitlement, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples, and read more, Monique began to feel angry at the public education system of her youth. She was “somebody who liked information, so [she] was just angry at not having been told the full picture.” Monique also began to realize that rather than simply deserving their status because of hard work, her family had benefitted from being on and working “land that, of course, was effectively stolen from other people.” Later, she would understand that her *hard work* and *you deserve it* baggage “makes no sense...because I see members of the [Indigenous] community work so incredibly hard, and don’t have the things I have.” Monique felt isolated with her new knowledge, “not having a lot of people in [her] immediate social circle that were taking any of that kind of stuff in school.” By the time Monique went to graduate school in order to become a librarian, it had become clear to her that her career would be infused with Indigenous solidarity work. She says “that was sort of where it was all going to come together, so I tried my best out there in Halifax to focus everything I was doing and thinking of on that area.” When she returned to Winnipeg, she found work in the public library system in a position through which she worked directly with the Indigenous community.

**Solidarity work and continued learning.** Monique feels that her solidarity work began in 2012, when she began to hear about and attend memorial events, vigils, and community gatherings related to missing and murdered Indigenous women. Monique says, “I knew from the beginning that my affinity would be around solidarity work with Indigenous women. That’s sort of the bedrock for all of this for me.” Attending gatherings of “community members coming

together around honouring their missing sisters and wives and friends” made a big impression on Monique, who reflects:

I remember being witness to just astonishing strength and bravery. I have no reference point for that kind of strength in my own life, even though I thought my own personal family has been through a lot. I just had no reference point for what these women had been through, and how generous they were with inviting others in.

Monique would show up at events, introduce herself, and offer to help. She would look for a moment when she could approach someone, and she might say, “My name is Monique, and I know so and so,” sharing her response to the event. She’d say, “If you see me around and you see something that I can do to help, please let me know.” She was surprised and grateful when her offers eventually led to invitations and opportunities to assist with the planning and support of events and initiatives, opportunities that were precious to her. She would help with logistics, material support, and with getting the word out; areas that were within her skill set and knowledge base. At such events, people need to be fed, and things carried around, and Monique felt these were easy things she could help with so that event leaders would be able concentrate on other things. Monique’s work around missing and murdered Indigenous women meant that she was exposed to “large amounts of pain and people that have been through just really horrendous stuff.” She listened to and witnessed this pain. Her deepening solidarity work with Indigenous women brought about a new wave of anger about the apartheid she experienced as a child:

I just think [about] all these people that I’ve missed out on--that maybe I could’ve met different kinds of people. It’s like this whole swath of society was not there for me. So mostly I was angry, and I still am, depending on the day.

Monique has come to see her work as totally connected to relationships, which “make everything possible.” With the advent of the Idle No More movement, she widened her circle of relationships, organizing with expanding groups of people:

Everyone’s sort of figuring each other out-- who’s going to do what, and trying to get to

know each other on a personal level at least a bit because it makes the work easier and also more joyful. That was my approach to the stuff around Idle No More – and it was pretty easy in terms of being open to listening to what people were asking you do, because everything happened so quickly. All of the sudden a round dance was called in and so there were ways to help with that, and then, something else was called so there were ways to help with that.

Monique says, “January 28, 2013—I’ll never forget that. I was just really honoured to be asked to speak at the Leg(islature) at one of the round dances.” Her work has also involved pushing information out into the community through social media, using her librarian skills to put together educational resources for the Idle No More Manitoba website, responding to information requests, and working on an educational website for settlers.

In addition to Monique’s affinity for history, she carries other personality traits and gifts that have served her in her work. She has a “helping personality” and hates to see people in pain, although she is conscious to not try fix or solve something, or operate out of a “white savior complex.” She is also a person who is “generally very curious about people” and likes to hear and share stories. As a librarian, Monique loves literature. She says, “we’re in a Golden age for Indigenous authors being published, so you learn a whole other set of stories from fiction and poetry and things.” Monique also says,

I like organizing things, I like things to be in order. I’m a librarian and all that, so to the extent that pieces of that have been needed at certain moments, certain individuals in the community have come to see me as somebody that can help out with logistics and maybe getting something done quickly, or certainly research--that kind of thing. And I care about children very much, that’s something that I see as just a huge fundamental priority as a movement, and finding out ways that we can support families.

Monique thinks about the children who attend events and actions, and has hope that what they learn by attending events might enable them to create a different reality in the future.

A focus on “the land [I’m] living on now and who lived there before, and what exactly transpired to make it so that they are not living here now in the ways in which they did

previously” has anchored Monique’s work. She says, “I can’t separate the work in the movement from that, because so much of the oppression that’s going on today, and what was wrought upon Indigenous people historically was about displacing them off of the land.” Monique says,

I don’t see how anybody can do Indigenous solidarity work and not be asking those questions about the history and learning about it. Because what we’re doing every day in the work, is we’re interacting with the descendants of the people who were here... They’re here because their ancestors made it through enormous obstacles. It’s astonishing! And now we have these fellow community members.

Monique has thought about her relationship to the displacement of Indigenous peoples:

Whatever flier made its way to the Ukraine that got someone on a boat, saying that there’s free land in Canada for whoever wanted to work it--they worked their butts off, fine. No one’s going to say they didn’t, but they were able to do that on land that was effectively stolen from other people. So, now I’m here 4 or 5 generations later, and still have my nice little parcel of land I’m living on. It’s a very difficult thing to reconcile.

Monique discovered that she lives on land that is very near the borders of Rooster Town, “a primarily Métis community that was here from the late 20s to the late 50s, and then was forcibly removed and displaced by the city of Winnipeg.” Monique says, “when I learned about the neighborhood where I live...it really localized it for me.” She says,

For me, the next step of all of this is what to do with that actually...All of it’s linked back to reading that treaty, and reading treaty histories, knowing more and more about the histories of the Métis populations that lived on those lands, and talking to people...I think it helps inform some specific choices on what to focus on or not.

For Monique, solidarity work involves listening, asking questions, and taking direction, through “projects or ideas that come from Indigenous peoples themselves.” She says,

There’s all kinds of non-Indigenous activists that can think up a hundred ideas to do over the next three years-- we could blockade over here, we could demonstrate in front of this building, we could throw this potluck, we could bring in this speaker. And it’s not to say that they’re bad ideas, but place and person matters in this. I think what works is supporting the ideas that are already in the [Indigenous] community and that are coming out of the [Indigenous] community.



It is an “extraordinary amount of listening” that is required, which “for some non-Indigenous people comes easier than for others,” Monique says. She says,

White non-Indigenous people are generally not socialized to be quiet ...I think it has to start there, whether you listen by reading a lot of things, that’s a way of listening--choosing to read things that you wouldn’t normally read. Or whether it’s when you’re actually in spaces with Indigenous peoples and you listen...And you listen to the broad range. I think it’s a very natural thing to want to hear those Indigenous voices that you feel you have more of an affinity with, then you don’t really listen as much to the other ones. I find myself guilty of this at times, hear[ing] an Indigenous individual advocating for a particular choice, cause, or decision that is not where my politics are at and doesn’t feel good to me as an individual, and a privileged individual. I just think it’s really important to listen to that and understand where that’s coming from...When it comes to the Indigenous community, I just think that there’s just been too much silencing, and whenever I’ve chosen to not listen to something, it inevitably ends up feeling wrong a couple weeks later, maybe [I] missed some information that would’ve been good to know. I think that listening and keeping an open mind, particularly if you’re someone that comes in with a set of politics or passion for your own politics.

Monique asks for direction in her work, “and if people say, ‘oh, no, you’re helping, you make your decision about how you’d like to do it, you just need to get that done,’ great, that’s [her] direction.” Other times, “there’s very specific direction, not just related to cultural protocols, [but] related to strategy.” Monique says, “Another way of listening is to ask questions.” She asks about anything from what will be most helpful, to how to sit during a ceremony. She says, “[It’s] never gone wrong, and it goes back to that wonderful generosity, you immediately get an answer—‘we could really just use 100 plates,’ or ‘Monique, just tap into your heart.’” Monique says, “It always ends up in a better place. As soon as you stop asking questions, everything falls apart. That’s been my experience.”

Monique believes it is a responsibility of white non-Indigenous allies to be involved in educating the Canadian public. This, she says “is a massive, massive project, and it involves everything from mainstream lobbying, policy work, and getting curriculum changed, to some really in-your-face street interactions around certain issues as they come up.” Monique says, “I

think [education is] the key issue. I think after that, everything else starts falling into place, but it's impossible without it...I just don't see how it moves forward without it."

Monique has encountered a few areas of struggle in her solidarity work. Although her book learning prepared her to know that going into a solidarity situation and trying to control things in the way she was socialized to do "is just replicating the type of behavior that [Indigenous people have] suffered under for generations," giving up control is not always easy for her. She says,

I definitely got the controlling thing, got it from society and got it from family too...In my work life, and even as a kid growing up, and a student, I tended to be in leadership roles, and so I think I was doubly socialized, and you think you can see solutions after sitting in a room for an hour. "So those two people need to talk, because they've got it, what they said 20 minutes ago. We should be something around that..." As somebody that was always encouraged to see those things and then take it and run with it-- you can't do that. But knowing it, and being in rooms and walking the talk there is totally different.

Because she is aware of her personality and her socialization, Monique has been "just very cognizant" of issues of control. Monique says,

The way in which it influences my work is that probably in my weaker moments, I think I pull back or hold back when I probably shouldn't have, where I pulled back too much, where there's something I could have offered in a moment, where it would've been okay to leap in a little bit more, that there was enough of a relationship there that it would have been okay. But I find myself sort of second guessing...I act very differently around some of the organizing when I'm with a group of strictly non-Indigenous women. I'm way more game for putting up my hand and saying "Yeah I'll take that! Give me that chunk I'll lead it!"

Monique says,

There have been other times too, though, that in my head I feel like-- "oh, it would be better if we did *this* --I think it would work better," and I've failed to pull back on that. And instead, will try to couch it as a suggestion--"Well what if we did *this*?" And if it's not getting picked up by the group, and I'm having what I call a particularly "weak day," because it's a weakness, I'll find myself 45 minutes later in the meeting, just rephrasing the same thing. And usually if it's not picked up on in the second time, unless it's a really weak day, I know it's just not yours to remember, it's not yours to drive. But those are hard. ...Because if [you're] doing Indigenous solidarity work with any kind of competency, you really can't do that for lots of reasons, and not because you're kind of a

jerk if you do-- there are reasons tied to the specific ways in which people continue to be oppressed, that you just do not do that.

Concern about avoiding taking control should not, however, become an excuse for non-Indigenous people to do nothing, according to Monique. She says, "The effect there is that the Indigenous folks are doing all the heavy lifting, and there is no actual solidarity work happening, because everyone non-Indigenous is just thinking 'well it's just not my place.'" Monique is getting better at reigning in her need to control. She says, "It doesn't feel like I'm grinding at something so much when I'm being quiet." Monique also struggles with feeling that she isn't doing enough to create change. She says,

It's sort of like [I] count up the hours in a week and I think, "well how many hours did you spend really?" And I always think it's not enough...I wish I could quit my job, and then I think, "well maybe you *should* quit your job-- like why are you scared of quitting your job? You just won't have as much money--well that's a pretty stupid reason to be scared of quitting your job, in relation to the need."

Monique has given time, money, and energy to the work. She wants to be able to give materially for a long time, and says, "I guess my limit there is I do it as much as I possibly can without depleting things so that I can keep doing it." If the conditions were right and she felt it would create a big change, Monique would also consider going to prison for the work. She struggles with the idea of giving up land for decolonizing change. Monique says,

I'm not brave enough to give up my piece of property here in Winnipeg--it's the honest answer right now. In my head I can see that it's the right thing to do, it makes sense to me when certain segments of the Indigenous population talk not about reconciliation, but about restitution as being the prerequisite to any kind of reconciliation. And part of that restitution being just to give the damn land back.... But if there was a knock on the door half an hour from now, and certain parties to Treaty 1 said, "We need this land back now!" I don't know what I would do... If somebody came in and said, "we've got an opportunity here to turn over parts of Treaty 1 that were never delivered, and we decided to start with your 8 square blocks--well I'd be terrified, because I'd be without a home.

Exploring creative land sharing solutions and land justice strategies are a next step of learning and growth. For Monique, "the land question...just sort of hangs there." She says,

I think it comes back to that education piece, because what non-Indigenous Canadians could do, if they did understand the issues, they could create situations where they could place enormous amounts of pressure on whoever needed that pressure. I think in most ways, as difficult as it is and as important as it is to get people to even know that residential schools existed and the impacts; this one is a whole other ball game. You need to understand, depending on where you are in the country, the problematic nature of your being on the land that you're on. Especially in a society that prioritizes owning things. Not that all non-Indigenous Canadians own land, because many don't, [but] we still benefit from being able to rent it. That one is not happening without education... I don't see non-Indigenous Canadians applying any pressure without even understanding what happened in the first place. Then I think after that education piece happens, then we can talk about that and maybe now we're in a position to listen respectfully to what Indigenous people living in [the] Canadian state want in particular areas, and say, well what do you want?

Monique has heard “stories with individuals find[ing] land and then giving it back.” She says,

There's a lot of restitution to be done here, so that Indigenous peoples can enjoy, even retroactively, the benefits of a land base that they haven't had for generations. And I have no idea what that would look like. I'm sure there are members of the Indigenous community that have an idea of exactly what that would look like, and I think listening to that would be a pretty amazing thing. It will look different everywhere in Canada, because again it goes back to that “what happened on the land that you live on?” Restitution leading to reconciliation is going to look different everywhere in Canada, because [of] the nature of the oppression... The specific nature of the oppression and the specific tools of the oppression played in just slightly and sometimes not-so-slightly different ways across the country. So the reparations, at least in my head, I would think are going to look different... It looks different depending on where you are – in the North or in the South. We talk about Crown land, we talk about private land. And it really depends on what individual communities and nations will push for... I feel like someday, whoever is living where we are sitting right now, we're eventually going to get to a place where there's a discussion about who should be living here, I think that's where it's headed... It's going to look different, and depending on who's making the claim and what they want-- maybe a particular band doesn't want a bunch of little 1945 houses that need a crap load of work down the street, and it's of no use-- we don't want it here, we want land somewhere else. Or maybe it is more of a resource-sharing thing, or whatever it is people want. I do think it is so fundamental. I mean the wealth of this country is in this land, and we just can't get away from it.

Although Monique has heard messages given in activist circles that guilt is “not a particularly useful emotion,” she believes it can be an instructive reminder. Guilt is a reminder that “I'm in this house because someone's not in this house... and in a lot of ways I participate in it.” “It's a legitimate thing--... colonialism is an ongoing, active form of violence, and I benefit

from it. So I don't think it's inappropriate to feel guilty," she says. Rather than eliminating or denying feelings of guilt, Monique is interested in figuring out how to work with it and how to find balance so as not to get paralyzed or to crumble under the weight of it. Monique also experiences profound sadness in her work, "especially around issues around missing and murdered women, and certainly residential schools. There's just disbelief and sadness." "But the flipside of it," she says, "is that great hope thing, because of the fact that horrendous things happen, and the community is still amazing." She thinks of Indigenous activist Althea Guiboche who feeds homeless Winnipeggers on Main Street through her project *Got Bannock*:

She's so gracious. She thanks you for coming, helping, feeding people. But I just think it's amazing that she says "Thank you." I always thank *her*... You can see what she did just by deciding, "I'm going to start feeding people once a week, and I'm going to do it every week, for a year now, and I'm not stopping." And just to go spend an hour with that kind of energy that is somehow – it's in the street, but it's not of this place. It's just being generated by this one human, and the people that choose to gather around her, and the people that are there to receive things. I've never had as many experiences like that as I've had over the last few years... those amazing, amazing moments and sets of feelings that are the result of people's actions... The community is amazing, people are always doing something that is just astonishing. And you can't quite figure out how it is they do it, but they keep doing it.

In order to be able to continue with the work over the long haul, Monique finds that there are periods when she has had to do a bit less—especially when she is having a tough time in other areas of her life. She receives the support of her long-time activist partner. She feels that she has gotten back so much more than she has given in her solidarity work. Hearing Indigenous women speak "so clearly and so bravely about things that they had been through" has given Monique "more courage or sense of urgency around being honest with things that [she] had been through in [her] life." She says, "I've just been dealing with way more of my own personal stuff ever since I started participating and listening." The work has also gifted her with the ability to give up control, and she has seen huge benefits when she has let go a bit.

Monique's vision of the just future she is working towards is one in which Indigenous voices are at the center, leading and sharing. She can't see justice without "some kind of mass return of lands," and without the revitalization and resurgence of a diversity and range of Indigenous governance structures. It is a future in which the environment is privileged over development, and the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples happen on the terms of Indigenous communities. Monique has been told that if non-Indigenous Manitobans are able to "come to the table with really open hearts and curious minds and a lot of kindness, knowing some good facts and a good sense of history," there would be a place for them. Whatever process leads to this just future, Monique believes it has to go beyond the official leadership, and "be born out of the very, very Grassroots, of the most Grassroots level."

Monique is involved in her work because of the injustices she sees. She feels that it is easy for well-meaning, kind non-Indigenous people to be insulated from seeing the injustice, and to not be motivated to action. Relationships with Indigenous peoples also motivate her. She says,

Unless you have relationships with people, and those people matter to you, you don't really have a sense of how wrong it is...when there's something that unjust, that wrong, happening to somebody they care about, they're motivated to do something.

When Monique learns more about the specifics of history, "those individual stories and instances of what happened," as opposed to "just generally knowing that the land was stolen," "it just fuels that motivation fire." Monique does her work "for the Indigenous peoples,...for their ancestors, and what happened to them and what they were prevented from having, and for all these children that are to come." Monique's work is for everyone, and she looks forward to a day when non-Indigenous people have deep solid relationships with the First Peoples of this land. Her work is also for the future generations in her family: "I want them to grow up in a Canada that looks different than the one I grew up in...and that's going to be a great thing for everybody."

## **John Doe**

**Identity and early influences.** John Doe self-identifies as a boringly straight white male in his late forties who is an artist, activist, anarchist, atheist, problem-with-authority, and generally totally stubborn person. Although he is “semi-university educated,” John describes himself as mostly self-taught. He grew up in a prairie province rural community, parented by “good white NDP-type folks” of working class backgrounds, union involvement, and the mild Canadian brand of socialism. John’s ancestors were helped by Native peoples when they settled on the land, and in his community, intermarriage, long-term relationships, integrated families, and close working relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples were not altogether uncommon. Both John’s mother’s and his father’s family lines had unique and deep hunting and fishing connections with Native and Metis folks, and John grew up “around Indian kids.” John’s father picked up hunting and trapping values from his Indigenous hunting buddies, which were in turn passed on to John: hunting “wasn’t for sport, where you just go out and shoot your guns off, and be a man. It was [to] love and respect the land...[to] value anything that you took the life of and use as much of it as possible.”

Nonetheless, John observed much racial inequity, division, and anti-Indigenous racism in his community. John’s father was a tradesperson who was often called upon to repair the sub-standard work of previous white contractors in Indigenous peoples’ homes on reserves. John would accompany his father on some of these work trips, and he was struck by scenes of extreme poverty and desperation. Questions about the disparity between what he saw on reserves and the way his family lived would haunt him into adulthood. John did not escape the “hard coded colonial attitudes toward Indigenous peoples” that impacted systems around him. He says, “growing up, I know I’ve engaged in racist assumptions, said and thought terrible things, didn’t

stand up when I should have, let things go too many times.” He picked up the “default flatness” so prevalent in Canada, characterized by being able to witness something that is wrong and not question it: “We just sort of let it go. We’re not encouraged to stand up against it.”

Although he is quick to acknowledge the presence of racism in his immediate and extended family, in the case of his parents this existed alongside of some unarticulated-as-such anti-racism and anti-colonial thought and action. John’s mother, “essentially a kind of feminist” working mom who was sympathetic to liberal causes, worked to change the hiring and training practices of her employer such that Indigenous folks had greater opportunities for training in trades and were hired for other-than-menial jobs. His father was a proponent of social integration, and John relays that upon being newly hired in one workplace, his father

Walked into the lunchroom, and all the white guys are on one side of the room playing crib, and all the Native guys are on the other side of the room playing crib – total segregation happening. Not because it was enforced by law, but that’s just socially how it was. So he put a little notice on the bulletin board-- we’re going to have a cribbage [card game] tournament, why doesn’t everybody get together and play cribbage? And so, in his own way, he brought folks together.

John indicates that his parents approached this work in everyday ways from a general human decency perspective of care and respect rather than politicized radical perspectives of actively tearing down colonial walls.

**Early activism and learning.** John’s early activism began over a decade ago, and focused on anti-globalization and anti-poverty work. He attended various trade protests around the world which became increasingly difficult to access due to distance and to heightened police security and repression. With an entry point in political hardcore, punk rock, and rave music scenes, John was also engaged with alternative living movements (e.g. forming collectives, radical sharing, back-to-the-land, and do-it-yourself movements). These mostly-white groups were often inspired by Indigenous understandings and ways of life, and nature-based, involving



sustainable agricultural practices and reduced consumption. Members reflected “different levels of appropriation” and assumptions of the ways of Indigenous peoples. John himself sought “the best possible thought that I could draw on from any of my own traditions...without me necessarily mimicking anything or denying the fact of where I am in society currently.”

John emphasizes the role of art in shaping his liberation and anti-oppressive understandings during this period and beyond. When his friends would ask about the essays he was reading related to particular aspects of liberation, he might say, “well, I’m actually looking more at Rothko paintings,” and they’d arrive at similar conclusions. The critical ways of seeing John developed through art have impacted his ability to apply the same clear focus to the world itself, informing his activist engagement. He says, “believe it or not, that’s the background of my skills and so I bring that into activist work as well.”

His transition into anti-colonial and decolonization work was a process that was influenced by a desire to apply his ideals and skills closer to home and with greater frequency than was possible with international anti-globalization events. He increasingly understood that locally, Indigenous peoples have been “getting the blunt end” of structural oppression related to racism, poverty, environmental destruction, and resource extraction and that they have been at the front lines of activism locally and across Canada. Thus, he saw anti-colonial work as work at the intersections of protection of the land, protection of Indigenous rights and sovereignty, human rights, anti-poverty, and anti-capitalism. His transition was undergirded by a process that picked up speed in his twenties, a process of collecting knowledge that would address his childhood questions about the social inequities he observed. During the early stages of his interest in radical-left and anti-colonial thought, John attended a gathering of solidarity and support for the Mohawks of Kanehsatake and Kahnawake in their resistance to the plans of the

town of Oka who sought to build a golf course on Mohawk traditional territory. Having attended the event as a curious young person, John says, “it connected to a lot of stuff I was focusing on and reading at the time.” The resistance signaled a turning point of increased awareness for him and for a number of Canadians because, being explicitly racist, Oka tore off the veil and exposed the pithy core of white settler Canadian attitudes. It became blatantly clear that work needed to be done regarding the attitudinal and institutionalized racism and colonialism of the Canadian state. John and his friends on the left fringe began to question themselves about why colonial injustice had not been a focus among them. The resistance inspired them to seek out more knowledge. They shared books by white authors such as Noam Chomsky, and sought to learn more about what led up to Oka. As their work became more accessible to him, John became increasingly exposed to and inspired by Indigenous authors, filmmakers, and artists.

**Anti-colonial work and continued learning.** The anti-colonial work John has been involved with has included educating himself and others, solidarity work around Indigenous sovereignty and land defence, involvement with scientists and activists in environmental racism conferences, and memberships in an Indigenous solidarity group and a decolonization group. When John’s Indigenous solidarity group began, they “asked Indigenous activists to come in and speak to us on these issues of ‘what does solidarity mean to you guys? What should we be doing?’” The Indigenous activists recalled that the other non-Indigenous groups with whom they had worked were no longer around. They said, “That’s an issue for us that you don’t stick around, that you don’t put in enough time to make a change.” They said, “Because you’re privileged you can kind of shop around for causes and leap from one to the other, and if we’re not fashionable, away you go.” This resonated with John, who realized “the issues involved with colonization go so deep, they can’t be solved overnight.”

For over a decade, John has been working with Indigenous activists on their territories on issues related to their sovereignty. He and his group have done much work with Asubpeechoseewagong Netum Anishinabek nation (Grassy Narrows), who have erected a long-standing blockade. He supports the grassroots activists' efforts to embody sovereignty in their territory, battling mercury poisoning and environmental racism and carrying out their responsibility of protecting their traditional lands from being exploited and damaged by commercial resource extraction companies. In light of his childhood experiences, beginning to work with Indigenous people was a comfortable fit: "It just felt right to be back working with people who lived on the land." John wanted to help alleviate suffering like that he had witnessed as a child. Indigenous activists with whom he worked expressed love, friendship, and patience toward him, and the friendships and connections created were deeper than what he had experienced in previous activist work. He says, "Folks I've been working with are sensitive to each other and try to look out for each other. If we transgress, we try to make up quick and be ok." Many of the Indigenous people he has worked with have been women whose perspectives have informed their approaches:

We're bringing our children, we're bringing our aunties, we're bringing our mothers and grandmothers to these protests, right on the front line. In order to do that... we're trying to be careful and care about each other and respect each other, and so certain kinds of aggression won't be tolerated in those spaces.

John and his group have operated out of a "taking direction" model in their solidarity work. They listen to what the existing Indigenous leadership is asking of them:

Instead of arriving at their territory on the scene where the activist work is taking place, engaged with all your plans and methods already figured out--come[ing] in say[ing] "oh, we're well familiar that this is about this issue. We know all about this because we've been working on it forever, and this is how we've always conducted it and so we're just going to kind of carry on like this"... Arriving somewhat humbler and asking the people who are facing these things right on the front line, "what help can we give you? And you tell us what you need from us, and we'll try to help you with that, as best we can in

whatever way, shape, or form.” *They* determine, *they* ask us to carry out whatever we can do. And we might say, “well we have people who can work on *this* issue or *that* issue, or work on *this* facet of it... these are the ways that we can help.” A good part of it is following their lead.

John also spends time reflecting on his solidarity work. He says, “I’m going to analyze what we do. Pause, reflect, assess, and then change what we need to and go on.”

John sometimes wonders whether his atheism might cause rifts between himself and any of the traditionalist Indigenous activists with whom he works. Despite his awareness that anarchism operates, in some ways, as a political religion in which he puts his hope and faith in the people, he wonders how this squares with his observation that a feature of “a lot of Indigenous folks’ activism, in the past few years especially, has come from that [spiritual] reconnection.” He recalls a conversation he had after ten years of working with a ‘very good Indigenous comrade’ in which she observed, “technically, your views are probably more akin to the geologists and scientists that work for the lighting companies or oil companies than the religious side of things, than my spiritual side.” John replied,

In one sense that may be true. Maybe I would share something closer to what they understand of what the world is or how it came to be. Having said that, what they accept of the world and where they want it to go, I’m 180 degrees in the opposite side of their life practices and what they do in their efforts. I’m much more inspired about your understanding and vision of where you think the world should be, and that’s where I’m at. That’s why I work with you. I don’t work for them, and I work against them.

John says, “I completely respect their beliefs, I really do. I’m not an anti-religion atheist.” After spending time with the Indigenous comrades with whom he is in relationship, John has received an understanding of some of the spiritual sayings and teachings they have shared. He is happy to help out at the blockade camp when events or ceremonies require support:

Cutting wood, making tea, cleaning up, a bit of cooking, a bit of maintenance, tending fires. A fire-keeper is an honoured role, has a deep significance traditionally and a specific set of duties attached to it, I’ve been told. Without me claiming to fully embody

what it means to be a traditional fire-keeper, I was asked to perform that function in the most basic sense from time to time.

Entering into close, caring friendships with Indigenous people has personalized his work.

When you hear all the standard assumptions about Natives being spewed, now it's not just happening to some poor anonymous brown person; you know these folks, you know their hearts, you know their minds. The folks that I'm so lucky to work with, they're so solid, beautiful, and humane. It makes you want to continue to challenge those assumptions.

In his personal decolonization work, John has sought to address his "good solid background in Canadian racism." He works to address his colonial socialization and integrate anti-colonial principles into his daily life. John notes that it is taking years to deconstruct, isolate, and flush out his colonial conditioning, which he sees as a product of being raised where colonial perspectives are "the water you swim in." Such perspectives include missionary notions of "how we can go in and make their [Indigenous peoples'] lives better," thinking that as Euro-Canadians we understand Indigenous peoples' problems and are in a position to apply instant solutions, mythologies around pulling one's self up by one's bootstraps, and British empire ideas about us being the superior people and Indigenous people, the primitives. His decolonization work has been aided by learning from Indigenous filmmakers, authors, artists and theorists. He has read works by Ward Churchill, Taiaiake Alfred, and Leanne Simpson. He has watched films by Alanis Obomsawin, and has been transformed by the work of Indigenous artists including the Walking With Our Sisters Collective. John says of the Walking with Our Sisters exhibit,

It changed me, and that's interesting because I think I'm pretty familiar with the topic, but it was so personal... You've got a collection of people contributing to this work of over 1700 vamps, moccasin tops, decorated by people who did it because they felt an empathy for the issue. Professional artists that contributed and then a lot of work that were made by people who knew people that are directly affected, or have gone through this personally, which I couldn't even pretend to know what that's like. It's, by hand, created to share with us. The feelings are mixed and overwhelming... You're being informed on a level that you can't even put into words.

John's educational work with others has been varied. Through the decolonization group, he has taken part in discussion groups in which he and other non-Indigenous people teach one another and gain skills to address racism and colonialism in everyday conversations. He has sought out opportunities to address colonial perspectives when educating people with little background in English or in Canadian history who have attended classes he taught. He and the Indigenous solidarity organization he belongs to have sought to educate the general public through demonstrations, banner drops, and through an educational road blockade in which they distributed pamphlets to the drivers of cars that passed through. A series of these actions have helped spread the message of Six Nations folks who were demonstrating to raise awareness regarding their rights to lands on which the city of Caledonia, Ontario had been built, and on which Henco Industries, Ltd planned to build a residential subdivision. In order to do this, the solidarity group first educated themselves about the issues involved by inviting Indigenous speakers and activists to "tell us where they're at, tell us what we can do, and make suggestions on how we can approach things better." Their intent was "getting information to people that they won't be getting over the news, from the standard newspapers, radio, television, and providing it directly to them, using a protest to actually do that."

John says he is "supplementing no income with activist work." As is not uncommon for artists, John is supported by family who believe in his art and activism. John has sought to create anti-colonial change and educate others through his work as a musician, artist, and documentary filmmaker. He understands educating other white people to be a major responsibility. When he reads the racist comments sections under news reports about colonial resistance, he sees an opportunity to respond and try to change those attitudes. Such comments reflect a "massive chunk of settler Canadians" who are "completely removed from any meaningful contact" with

Indigenous peoples, so they “return to the familiar media-provided stereotypes.” John believes that relationships between Indigenous and white settler peoples are simply not encouraged foundationally and structurally in society. Thus, John works to assist white settlers in making these connections.

Because John believes in the importance of listening to Indigenous peoples and asking them what we can do, he stresses that one should carefully choose solid people with whom to work. After all, he says, the answers you get depend on who you are talking to. John has observed that Indigenous peoples represent a broad spectrum of perspectives. Some may be indifferent to political issues. Others are actively engaged in “mak[ing] deals with governments and corporations”, while still others are grassroots activists who avoid such deals. It is the grassroots activists with whom John aligns. One such activist suggested caution in aligning oneself with the chiefs and Indian Act systems: “Do you trust *your* politicians?” she asked. Although all of John’s goals may not be 100% the same as the Indigenous activists with whom he works, he feels many are close enough to work together.

John is critical about the now in vogue phrase *free, prior, and informed consent* and some of the practices that surround it. He sees it being used as a pretense for the powers that be to continue a *taking* relationship. He says,

When the Indigenous peoples of a territory say *no* to the offers from federal or provincial governments or corporations, that *no* should be respected. This doesn’t mean exploiting their poverty by trying to divide communities with strategic injections of cash, blatantly disinforming that populace or returning every year to put pressure on the band. Trying to grab the remaining resources on their land and leaving them with the polluted desolation that destroys their contemporary hunting and gathering ways of life is genocide, no matter the slick marketing language used by government and corporate swindlers that strain the meaning of the term *partnership*. Some Indigenous folks are asking to be left alone: “stop exploiting us, stop exploiting our lands.”

John has reflected on some emotional aspects of his anti-colonial work. His dissatisfaction has motivated him: “It’s not right. It’s not good, so let’s work on it and change it.” John has experienced the love and caring of those with whom he is in solidarity. He has also felt a great deal of pain and regret in rare moments when his relationships with Indigenous peoples do not work out. During one of the environmental racism conferences he helped to organize, John delivered a paper that was complicated by little time for preparation and little time to present, his presentation being cut short because of translation time. An Indigenous woman took offense to his paper, contending that the stories he was sharing were not his to tell and that the communities they come from should have been more overtly acknowledged. Although she did not know John or where he was coming from, John says, “I don’t blame her. This was an Indigenous woman telling me something, that I fucked up badly, I’m going to listen.” Although he felt she had been wrong about him in some ways, he did not want to disregard what she was saying. Rather, he tried to understand and process where he messed up. He attempted to apologize, which did not go over well, and regrets not being able to have cleared things up. John has also experienced feelings of guilt for not doing more in his work: “I should be rearranging my life to do more...I don’t push myself as hard as I probably should.” At the same time, John has himself experienced burnout in his work and has

Certainly witnessed a lot of fellow activists who’ve burnt out...Some folks, depending on the kind of issues they’re dealing with, mental, emotional, what have you, have burnt out and never come back. This has usually been the folks that I’ve witnessed who have thrown absolutely everything they had into the cause, and I understand why they’d think of that way to do it.

In the end, though, John realizes that “if you run yourself ragged, you are going to be requiring more help than you can give...You want to be in a position to help, and you have to take care of yourself.” He advises that activists take note when the quality of their work starts to suffer,



which is an indication that it is time to “step back, reflect on it, take some time, correct it, and keep moving on.” He says,

Everybody has their own capacity, and you can only work within that. You should understand that it’s true for other people too who may not be living up to your standards, and that you may not live up to theirs. It’s all good work.

John Doe does anti-colonial and decolonization work in order to be an agent of liberation for himself and others. He believes that he has lived an immorally cushioned life at the expense of Indigenous peoples around the globe as much as in Canada. He says, our “economy is based on ripping them off, steal[ing] their labour, their resources every chance we get in order to prop up our own comfortable life.” This is gross negligence on the part of settlers and rich countries, and John feels an ethical obligation to Indigenous peoples. He is moved to do something to try and make life better, to address and redress the situation. Living in a society that is “rolling on the foundations of colonialism” and actively blocking Indigenous sovereignty, John feels we need to halt that momentum. In the face of “colonial state violence and oppression...imposed on Indigenous societies of Canada,” John asks, “when do they get a break?” He says, “I want to be an ally on their side and put a complete stop to those destructive forces and break out of that pretend-that-you-don’t-know-what’s-going-on attitude, to make changes.” “We have to make up a lot for all the shit that we’ve done,” John says. He plans to “hang in there as long as [he] can,” knowing that the work he does is life-long. He still has the energy to continue, and is not satisfied with where things are at. He is motivated by absolute and total anger, and by love. John wishes to see justice for the Indigenous people with whom he has entered into close friendships of care and deep connection.

## Joy Eidse

**Identity and early influences.** The granddaughter of Dutch immigrants to Southern Ontario, Joy Eidse is a forty-one year old married, heterosexual, middle-class, recovering Evangelical mother, daughter, sister, artist, and social worker. Joy sees herself as someone who has gained from the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands, people she had very little contact with during her childhood. She says, “my grandparents became farmers and were able to become somewhat wealthy, and that’s been passed on to me.” Joy believes her social justice sensitivity has been influenced by the teachings she received through the church:

I remember sermons from when I was a really small child, [they] were really black and white in terms of good and bad, and justice and injustice, and right and wrong. I was a pretty receptive kid to that kind of stuff and took it to heart...I was pretty drawn to the teachings of Jesus in terms of his perspective on *the least of these*, the poor... That resonated with me from a pretty young age... I feel like that foundation made me continue to pursue good, and to not give up on that.

Joy’s Pentecostal church upbringing also taught her that anyone outside of her specific Christian group “would [not] make it to heaven, [and] needed to be evangelized and converted,” which she believed into her early twenties.

**Learning and early activism.** Joy’s process of coming to understand colonialism in Canada occurred in tandem with a re-examination of her faith tradition as she began to realize the church’s harmful effects on herself and others. The first time she considered her relationship with Aboriginal people was around the age of eighteen, due to a difficult experience while touring Alberta on a church missions trip. “The Heal our Land Tour was about relationship between Aboriginal and white people, coming from an Evangelical Christian perspective...with the idea that the way to heal would be to pray and to evangelize,” Joy says. She describes an uncomfortable moment during the trip:

At one point I remember we drove out to some reserve area and there were fences and signs. The leader said, "I think we're just going to go *through* the fence, and stand on the land and pray." And I remember feeling pretty uncomfortable, but we went out there and stood in a circle and prayed, and a couple of people came up from the reserve and were pretty upset with us for being on the land. I was pretty uncomfortable because we had crossed the boundaries. Our leader talked to them and I didn't catch what was all going on, but then we left afterwards and I remember him specifically talking about how "one person was fairly reasonable and okay to talk to, [but] the other person," he says, "has been drinking, and was not happy with us." So it was because he was drinking, that's why he wasn't happy with us. That was my first feeling that something's not right in this relationship. I feel like we'd done something wrong in this instant, but it was obviously much bigger than that, in my mind. So that was kind of the beginning for me, of a decolonizing process.

After Joy met her partner, a Native Studies student, they became involved in a church community in Winnipeg that operated a charitable drop-in centre and soup kitchen. Their role was to serve food and talk with people, and "hopefully to evangelize them at some point, or to find out what their needs were." This work was often from the perspective, "make sure it's a genuine need and they're not just trying to get something from you." They observed that so many of the people who attended the drop-in centre and soup kitchen were Aboriginal, and they wondered why it appeared the most vulnerable people in Canada were from this background. They also sensed "the stereotypes that we had been told about Aboriginal people were being embedded in us just by interacting in that space alone, and so we needed to broaden our connections." Thus, Joy's partner suggested they move up North to see the communities where urban Aboriginal people came from and relate with Aboriginal people in a different context. Because they intended that the journey also entail a process of reconsidering their identities as Evangelical Christians in light of the growing information they were exposed to, they decided, "When we went to go up North, we were not going to evangelize in any way." After moving to Norway House, they visited the churches in the community to see if they could find a connection, but found the local ministers to be perpetuating messages that Aboriginal languages

and cultures were evil. Thus, they decided not to attend church. They suspected that the harm caused by Christianity through colonization might be due to its entanglement with Western culture and capitalism, and they set out to untangle it and find its core. As Joy read authors such as Adam Smith, she wondered, “What’s the theory here? This is just common sense.” She says,

And it wasn’t until part way through the process that I realized “I am so blinded by this that I can’t tell that this is a theory. I can’t even tell what a different theory would be.” And so that’s the point at which I was like, “I can’t be evangelical in any way because I can’t separate what’s my culture and what’s religion.”

This was a significant shift for Joy, who had wanted to be a missionary since the age of five, and had trained to become a pastor.

In Norway House, Joy encountered different relationships with Aboriginal peoples than she had experienced in Winnipeg. She says, “everyone was related to each other and they all had homes and families and people to care for them,” and thus “nobody was needing me for anything, really, and in fact I was the lonely person that needed some community.” Joy attended a group for women and found that as the only white person in the group, she was being supported and mentored by the Indigenous women.

After moving back to Winnipeg, Joy began a Bachelor of Social Work program. Around the same time, Joy and her partner received government funding to invite people into their home who were at risk of homelessness. The combination of housing Aboriginal and newcomer peoples at risk of homelessness and being in school taught Joy about the dangers of paternalism. She realized that her ways of supporting the folks they housed were sometimes quite disrespectful, oppressive, and colonizing. She would take on the attitude, “I’m gonna save you,” and “I feel responsible for you.” She would make decisions for people, take control of things, and impose her idea of what they needed, believing “they were not capable.” Joy learned the importance of remembering, as an aspiring ally, that “this is as much your process as the people

that you are aligning yourself with.” She learned the paternalistic perspective of “we’re going to help you” while making assumptions about what will be helpful can actually make things unsafe for Aboriginal communities. Whereas walking with the community, supporting in ways that are invited, while focusing on ourselves and our own decolonization process, is safer.

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** Joy conceptualizes her work primarily as decolonization practice, which for her is a very personal process. Joy believes that change has to start with the individual. This means,

Understanding my identity, my historical role, and my current potential attitudes...It means I’m aware of who I am and where I come from, and the impact that that has on my decisions, and on my way of being, and on my way of practicing....[It means] I’m a bit more in charge of what my actions are because I’m conscious of it.

Joy says, “starting to identify myself as a member of the colonizing community has been part of my process in terms of having a Dutch and English heritage, which means my community has colonized the planet, basically.” Decolonization also means, for Joy, “taking responsibility for re-educating ourselves on our own history [and] re-educating our kids on our history.” Joy’s re-education has involved understanding European colonizing beliefs, such as the idea that they

Had a mandate from God to go and take over the world...because they had the truth, and there was one truth...so they, which were my ancestors, went out and found some land and decided that they were the only people that really mattered, they could live there and take that land...So I think that they probably perceived the Indigenous people and the land as less than human, and according to scripture, they were here to dominate and rule over them, so they had every right in their own minds to push them off the land, to kill them, to change them however they wanted, and so they stole this land, and then became wealthy on it and continued to do it, because “might” makes right in European mindset.

Joy’s decolonization practice infuses the parenting of her young boys. She says, “this is my family and I’m responsible for how my children turn out.” It is her goal to “raise kids that understand the big picture and have really good skills of empathy and open mindedness, being

able to be self-critical.” She has homeschooled them, and has spent time deconstructing kids novels and games. Joy says,

I’m quick to pass on, “oh I read this book as a kid,” or “I watched this movie,” or whatever. And then I sit down with my kids with a new perspective, and I’m shocked by how blatant the messages are and how clear the indoctrination is. And having to deconstruct that has just brought it up at a whole other level.

Joy has realized that many classic novels come from Britain and perpetuate a colonial perspective. She worries about the heritage she is passing on to her kids, wanting them to know who they are, to be “proud of their heritage, and yet honest about it too.” She says, “at some point you have to decide what parts you are going to embrace because you can’t just turn around and hate yourself because you’ve been bad to someone else—just flipping it on yourself is not the answer.” When living in Holland, Joy discovered, “I felt really at home there, people were really blunt, nobody beat around the bush, and I just loved it.” Although parenting young children has limited Joy’s availability to attend some justice-related events, they sometimes attend as a family. Joy also supports her partner’s anti-colonial work:

My partner is involved in a Hydro Justice group for Northern communities, and I’m 100% supportive of that work and support him by making sure that he has freedom to go to those things. People with young kids will understand that’s a piece of work, is to make sure that you can help people attend those kinds of things and do the work that they want to do in that process.

With her religious background, Joy finds symbols very meaningful. Her experience in the arts has influenced a number of decolonization projects she has been involved in. Joy says,

It’s a natural way for me to express myself. I think sometimes relying too heavily on words can be dangerous [and]...the arts community is a lot more about not trying to educate or evangelize or change people...Sometimes using symbol is a way that can be really honest, and can be moving, and it can invite people to interpret beyond what your intended message may be... It leaves room and it gives respect to others.

Joy has been involved with an artistic collaboration about water and the state of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg. The project focused on “seeing water as a life source and seeing water as

fundamental to our existence.” Along with a support group of white anti-racism activists she has been part of, Joy made an artistic submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. She wanted to dispel the idea that the TRC is “an Indigenous thing that has little to do with those who weren’t there,” and emphasize the role of Euro-Canadians in reconciliation. Joy says, “That felt really right to me in terms of being able to express something in a very meaningful [way]... Having an invitation like that was a really good, clear place to respond to.” Joy’s contribution to the submission was fabric art involving “quilts that were maps of places [she’d] lived and the closest Aboriginal community to it.” This helped her work towards understanding the land differently, and she has re-considered her land ownership. Joy says,

I don’t know a ton about my particular little square of land on College Avenue... The other property, out near Rose Isle, we’re just learning about. We did some research recently, and of course there was very little written about who lived on the land before the Mennonites, but there was talk about conflict between the Mennonite Farmers and the Aboriginal people in the area, and I know from other texts that weren’t specific to that particular spot that the Aboriginal people were farming in that area at one time, and were kind of legally pushed off the land by the government who started making rules to make it impossible for them to survive as farmers there. And then that land was given to the Mennonite community, which is my husband’s family, who became quite wealthy as a result, and the Aboriginal people in that area are now relegated to the reserves and the two communities don’t mix... We bought this property a year ago, and its 40 acres and it’s beautiful nature. I definitely have mixed feelings about that piece of property and the ownership that’s in our hands right now, and feeling like we’re really going to need to be conscientious about what we do with this piece of paper that says we own this land and what we do with this land. It feels like it’s entrusted to us to some degree, and I don’t know who entrusted it, because it wasn’t entrusted willingly by the people that were there before. It feels very complicated, that relationship. I don’t know what the clear answer is, if I was just asked to just give it up, could I do that? I don’t know. Like, I can’t really imagine what scenario would happen that would make it really clear to me what the right answer would be in terms of what to do with the land that I own, other than at this point, I feel really comfortable in being as good steward as possible with that land, in terms of the nature that is on that land, and caring for it.

Joy has taken part in organizing educational workshops through The Centre for Anti-Oppression Studies related to white privilege and becoming an ally. As Idle No More movement was gaining momentum, Joy and a group she belonged to aspired to be allies in the movement,

and planned a teach-in to “look at our role in that whole process...around anti-racism and white colonial perspectives, and looking at how people of non-Aboriginal descent could participate in this movement.” Joy reflects on these educational events:

There was so much discussion generated and people just couldn't get enough. It was very hopeful for me to see that people from all walks of society and professions were engaging in this and taking it as a really serious thing to move forward on, from the non-Aboriginal community... I participated in that as a learner as much as somebody helping to organize, and so that's been a good process because I am not an expert.

Joy also does educational work by “trying to speak out when things are really overtly biased in work and family situations.” Joy is trying to gauge when to speak up and when speaking up causes too much damage to relationships. Having been a radical evangelical, Joy struggles with decolonization work involving intensity, because “intensity, at times, can be more damaging, even with the right intentions.” “That's exactly what my history has been,” Joy explains. She sees danger in putting “the mission above the people, ...where your ideology and your truth for the day become all-encompassing at the expense of people around you, of the relationships.” This means Joy has shied away from doing some types of activist work, not wanting to “fix somebody, or change somebody, or convert somebody to my ideology.” She also tries to balance the time she spends working for justice with her accountability to her family and community, not wanting these relationships to suffer because of her work. She says,

In family contexts and in workplaces, when somebody will say something that I feel is pretty racist... or just ignorant in some way, and I've really had to think through, okay, what is the process right now for me to speak up as a self-identified ally, as a person who is processing this herself, as a friend of this person, as a family member who values my relationship with them? What does this look like exactly, so it doesn't come down as this hard line like, “you've used the wrong word in this sentence therefore you are now outside of my realm of understanding in terms of what is right and just in this situation,” and that can cause rifts.

Joy is realizing the need to “come with the same amount of humility” in her interactions with people of her own community as she would when interacting with Aboriginal people; seeing the



work as a process they are engaged in together and her perspective as one that does not judge or measure where the other person is at.

Joy feels her privilege allows her to “work the system for good.” Despite the academy being a “very colonized model of education,” it fits for her, and she finds it easy to function in that world. Therefore, Joy feels that perhaps her success in school will give her “a bit of power to make some changes in it, and to be able to speak the language in a way that could be translated.” Similarly, her “history in right-wing Christianity” might allow her to “bring information to that group of people in a way that they could accept it.” Because “Euro-Canadians dominate the systems,” Joy feels “we need to be responsible for taking charge of those systems that are oppressing, and determine what it is about them that is oppressive and correct it.”

A number of emotional processes have characterized Joy’s work. She has felt guilt about the negative impact she likely had on the people at risk of homelessness who stayed with her, intensified because she is someone who “really, really just wants to do the right perfect thing every time and not make any mistakes and never hurt anyone’s feelings.” When she thinks about the harm she has done, she doesn’t know if she’s “a safe person for [Indigenous people],” and she has found herself pulling away from relationships with them, “partly out of that same anxiety.” She hopes this dynamic changes as she figures things out. Joy has felt anger “on a regular basis about the ignorance and continuing oppression by the European community in Canada.” And yet she wants her anger to be productive. She wonders,

How do I affect change among my people if I’m just angry at them? Because if I experience that towards me, I certainly wouldn’t feel inspired to change or to learn more. How do I have some compassion for where people are coming from because I was in that place, I did things that were really awful, totally [with] good intentions. How do I know their intentions aren’t good and they’re just coming from a similar place?

Joy has also faced grief. She says,

Learning about residential schools, I feel like every month a new thing comes out about what happened in those schools that's just really, really awful and devastating, and I grieve this horrible thing, but I still feel like I'm grieving from a distance...and I'm not sure what to do with it.

Some of Joy's experiences of guilt and anger have begun to shift as she has grown to "recognize if I can be okay [with] myself as a human being that's not going to get it all right the first time, there's a chance that I'm going to be much more okay with other people and gracious with other people." Despite the emotional struggles that have characterized Joy's journey, she sees the joy and peace in her work as she discovers different ways of knowing. Having grown up in the church and been taught to view spirituality as separate from the natural world, Joy's work and the teachings she has gained through it have helped her to heal this fracture in her in her life. She says, "The way that I interact with nature and other people now, in a new way of understanding, is going to bring me more life, and be kind of a healing factor in my life."

Joy and her partner have limited the time they spend earning money through employment in order to "give time to other things that don't pay," such as their decolonization work, while still "trying to be responsible parents and taking care of their children." They have discussed being willing to look at giving the land they own if it were to come up in the future. As far as being willing to risk physical harm and jail time, Joy says, "It would have to be a family decision [because]...those would deeply impact my kids...My children's mother being harmed is a traumatic thing for a child, and going to jail would mean time away from them."

Joy envisions a future in which all people are respected and able to have agency in their own lives. It is a world in which Aboriginal people are seen as "human beings that are worth consulting with when making decisions that impact their lives," and Euro-Canadians are humble about our history of perpetrating oppression, taking ownership for social ills rather than blaming, and learning to ask questions and listen to answers. She wants to see Euro-Canadians take

responsibility for our side of the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal people. Joy does her work because she wants to know that “what I’ve done is valuable in life, [and] has not been actually awful and harming.” Joy does this work for herself, for her family, for her community, for her culture, and for all of Canada, “because we’re part of this process.”

## **Murray Angus**

**Identity and early influences.** Murray Angus is a fifth generation Canadian whose Scottish ancestors populated lands after the signing of treaties in southern Ontario. “They were living on Indian land,” Murray says, and “when the kids got bigger, they wanted their own land, so there was a subsequent migration, my grandfather, out to Manitoba,” where they established the town of Angusville. Murray himself grew up in the only white family that lived on the reserve side of the river on the outskirts of Thunder Bay, Ontario in a small log cabin with no running water. He says,

My neighbors were all the people on the reserve, Fort William First Nation. Those are the people I grew up with, as much as I grew up with people in the white town. And that was probably one of the two most formative things shaping my life, because as I grew up, I had one foot in both worlds, literally, daily-- back and forth, and I fit into both.

As a child, Murray spent much time with a neighboring family who had eleven kids:

The house was teeming, but there was always room for me. So that was my other home. And the mother, she’s one of my mothers to this day, but I grew up mostly with three of the oldest boys...and it was the best place in the world to have grown up. We had a lake in front of us and miles and miles of bush behind us.

Murray reflects on the way they had grown up with the land. He says,

We lived *on that land*. Our footprints were on *that particular place*, and I can go back there. I walk through this park, and I can just run my hand over it because there’s a memory behind every rock that sticks out of the ground, and every tree, literally. I’ve never felt a relationship with somebody that was so integrated with the land. We became who we are because of what we did on that land. Wonderful feeling to have, and it gave me only the slightest glimpse of what people must feel, who live their entire lives and have had generations living in relationship to a certain piece of land. It was that first experience of my own, of seeing how it could be impossible to have an identity that is

separate from that piece of land. But Stevie and I had shared land, and it was on that land and out of that land that we became the people we were, and I love that. And we can't separate ourselves as blood brothers and creatures of that land...I go back there, and I walk through the park, and I stand in the place where my father died...my roots go really deep in that place.

Murray credits his mother for his most important foundational values. He says,

On the surface, she was the most compliant, lovely person, and was deferential to all around her, unless her principles were at stake. And was it ever interesting to see her stand her ground on things that she really wasn't going to negotiate... One of the principles that I saw her live out most clearly was the way people deserve to be treated with respect, irrespective of their background... That left a deep impression on me. When there was a tough situation, she would not base her decision on her personal interests. She decided on what to do in response to what she believed was the right thing to do, and that came from her faith.

They attended "the downtown upright Presbyterian establishment church," and rather than remembering sermons, Murray most remembers its class-based social exclusion:

All I could see looking down on all those fur coats down there, was that *my* people back home on the reserve side would never belong here, and that offended me hugely. That just offended my sense of God, and the relationships that we're all intended to have... the message I got from my mother was "God belongs to everyone," or "everyone is equal in God's eyes." And I saw a church that professed to embody those beliefs not being for everyone... I used to go back in my late teens, early 20s, and just sit up in the balcony and just stew as I watched this play out below me--just to keep the anger going, stoking the coals of it, because it felt right to keep that flame going.

As he was growing up, Murray absorbed attitudes from the messages he heard around him. He says, "Even before we've had our own experience of it, our attitudes are shaped." Growing up in Northwestern Ontario culture, "soaked in racism," Murray found,

There were no messages in my white society that carried as much weight in terms of the number of places you heard it from [and] the consistency of the message, than messages about Indians... What were the messages? There were two. One is *Indians are at the bottom*. Well you could just look around you, and that was verifiable, economically and socially... They were noticeably living in poorer conditions than people across the river in the city... But the second message was *that's where they deserve to be*. That was embedded in everything, and it was in the air... You would inhale it. You couldn't not inhale it if you were white. There was consensus on that point. *Indians were on the bottom, and that's where they deserve to be*. They were less valuable, that's the inference.

The difference for Murray, was that at the same time as he was getting these messages from society, he was having experiences of his own through his relationships with families and children on the reserve. He says, “as I began to tune into things in the world, going back and forth between the reserve and white community every day, I became very conscious of the fact that those messages about Indians didn’t square with my experience.”

Murray was not unaffected by the racism around him, however. Like other children, he engaged in racial and ethnic jokes and put-downs, and rarely challenged his white peers. At that stage in his life, it was his primary goal to blend in and belong. He says, “There would be occasions when, in my relationships with people on the reserve, I would see the white attitudes coming out in me...and it would make me feel horrible.” He recalls being ashamed, as a middle school student, to be on the “Indian school bus,” to the point where he would wait for the bus on the “far end of the block, away from the school.” He wouldn’t invite his white friends home. He says, “I couldn’t bring the two worlds together just because I was conscious of it, and it didn’t meet the standards of the white society.” The internal and external conflicts waged. Murray says,

Those were my friends they were talking about when they were saying, “Indians aren’t worth as much as us.”...For me, that was something that I wasn’t willing to buy into...That just never sat well with me, I knew people too much for that to be true. And I remember reaching a crisis point where I had to personally make a decision for myself... And it takes a lot to stand up against the weight of all that stuff.

“What am I going to believe here?” Murray asked, “am I going to trust my own experience or am I going to concede to those powerful messages?” And Murray remembers the moment when he decided, “I’m going to trust my experience here.”

**Learning and early activism.** Murray sees this moment as “the beginning of [his] critical consciousness,” which sent him on ten-year journey of seeking to find answers for himself about the messages in his society: “*Why are those messages out there? Why are they*

*pervasive? Why are they consistent? Why are they being perpetuated?*” Another major turning point for Murray in becoming an activist occurred in 1973, when he reflected on the question, “what was the attitude of people in my white world, Northwestern Ontario, towards the treaties?” The people of Fort William First Nation had signed the Robinson Superior Treaty in 1850, which “locked them in and set in place a degree of marginalization that they were still living out.” Murray wondered how people in his own society “account for ourselves in relation to that.” He saw that treaties represented our “one kick at the can” as a society to define a just relationship with Indigenous peoples. He says,

Nobody was saying that that was a good deal. Even white society was willing to concede, “I guess we sort of got the best of them. But that was then, and it wasn’t on us, not on our hands. So we’re benefitting, but we can’t do anything about it because that was previous generations,” Implying that in our time, we wouldn’t do it the same way. We regret it, sort of, and we would do it different because we’re morally better than that. That was the way that people absolved themselves of guilt and any kind of societal accountability for the relationship that was forged with the treaty.

However, for Murray, this stance was “blown totally out of the water” when

Robert-Bourassa, in 1971 announced the project of the century in Quebec--to dam up the rivers into James Bay, flood vast areas, generate hydroelectricity, [and] sell it to the States. The Cree that were going to be flooded weren’t even told – they heard about it on the radio. And that just taught me something so important. *In our time, we’d do it again.* And that was all the proof that anybody would need. Its one thing to say people don’t matter. It’s another thing to say people don’t even friggen exist. That’s the way that the Cree were handled, as if they weren’t even there. How much more racist can a society get?...It still outrages me just to recall that, and our society was going to prove no better than people that sold the treaties 100 years earlier.

Murray saw the “explosion of oil and gas exploration in the western arctic,” and major plans for development, yet nobody was talking with the Indigenous people out there. “So I became an activist in the 70s, as a student,” says Murray. He says, “back in 75, 76 we had a local group here that was formed just to hold public meetings and meet with MPs, just representing the local constituents.” His first summer job was working for the Canadian Association in Support of

Native Peoples (CASNP), doing research and assisting with lobbying during the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

When Murray went back to school, he used his degrees as a vehicle to continue to work through and find answers to his core questions. While working on a Master's in Religious Studies at Carleton, he took on his church, unpacking his own faith tradition in a critical bent. After completing this degree, Murray began a Masters in Social Work program at Carleton, and focused on the Federal Government's Land Claims Policy of 1973. He knew "the relationships forged in treaties or land claim agreements last forever," and Murray did not like the way "mainstream Canadian society had been choosing to deal with the people it encounters in the Northern parts of the country that have not been treated." He was "piecing together how the world worked to account for *why Indians were at the bottom and kept there*," and his search for answers revealed, "Those values and those attitudes towards Indians couldn't be sustained unless somebody was benefitting from their continuation." He says, "If we think of some people as less valuable than ourselves, then their interests are less important, their needs are less important." This means "We can behave towards them in ways that we would not find acceptable towards people like ourselves." Murray concluded,

That's the payoff for sustaining those kinds of attitudes toward people. It gives us license to abuse them economically, culturally... That's the core of it, the unethical core. And what does that translate into? Land. Resources. We can take from them because they're not as important as we are. That gives us our moral permission. Well that's [a] pretty self-serving morality. But it allows us to do it... And we need those resources--we'll decide. And that provides a distorted moral justification. It's not said explicitly in those terms, but that's what those attitudes create room to do.

Murray connected this unethical core and "the relationship between the corporate world and the government's function to create the conditions that ensure a profitable private sector." He says,

“In a capitalist economy, that’s what you do. You give yourself over to that as the engine for society, and you have to ensure that it has what it needs.”

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** Much of Murray’s decolonization work has occurred within the context of his thirty-year career as a co-founder and long-time staff member of Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS), an Ottawa-based college program that serves Inuit youth. During his time working for CASNP, Murray had contact with Inuit leaders, and he had intentionally followed development and land claim issues related to the Inuit, Dene, and Yukon First Nations. In 1981, he was hired by Peter Ittinuar, the first Inuk Member of Parliament, and he attended meetings on Parliament Hill and sat in on land claims negotiations concerning the Inuit. He did work supporting land claims because he sees them as a primary point of leverage where “Aboriginal people get to negotiate their relationship to the rest of the country.” It has to be done right, Murray says, “in a way that treats people with great respect, honours the fact that they have their relationship with the land, and it’s not just ours to exploit.” He says,

It’s one of those places where I will do what I can to stand in the way of my own government doing something that I disagree with, that will intentionally or effectively end up marginalizing people. Because you can’t go back. That’s the story of land claims and treaties, you can’t redo them.

Soon after he left his position with Peter Ittinuar, Murray was approached to teach young Inuit and prepare them to negotiate and implement land claims, work which would evolve into the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program. At NS, Murray says,

We’re not neutral, we’re very clear on that. The whole function of what we do is to affirm the Inuit experience historically, politically, economically--and that’s always satisfying, because that’s what I want. I want Canada to understand that point of view. We’re in a situation where we can affirm it for young Inuit, because they grow up in a world that’s quite ambivalent about the legitimacy of their own point of view...They leave taking it for granted that their experience is what matters...and they’ll never look back, they’ll never back down. And that to me is decolonization, where they own their own life, their own story, and they leave determined to keep making their own story...They understand their own experience of colonialism and appreciate the efforts



[of] the previous generation to react to that history of colonialism in the arctic... negotiating a land claim settlement--the largest in Canadian history, negotiating a new political territory for themselves, negotiating Aboriginal rights in the constitution, negotiating space on the satellite to be able to broadcast television in their own language. What's been accomplished in one generation has been, in my view, one of the most impressive stories in Canadian history...where Inuit as a whole have come, in terms of all of the successive waves of Europeans that have come into the North-- beginning with explorers and whalers, and missionaries, traders, RCMP, the military, government administration-- and all the ways that those outsiders have ended up taking away power of one kind or another from people themselves... This was the last generation that was born on the land in igloos, after the Second World War. But they took on the Canadian system and decolonized it. They pushed back.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut helps “young Inuit learn about the dominant society so that they’re more equipped to negotiate the relationship with it that they want.” It also offers young people just out of high school a year of personal and collective identity formation and empowerment. They learn about Inuit political organizing in the face of colonization. Murray says, “When the land was threatened, people started acting. They just felt they had to act because the land was everything.”

NS students have been involved in cultural performances, attend standing committees to support Inuit organizations on Parliament Hill, and engage in counter-demonstrations when animal rights groups do not take into account Indigenous hunting rights and practices. After completing the eight-month program they go home “determined to contribute in one way or another to the Nunavut project.” “They’re so passionate about home and their own territory because they’re so impressed with their own people,” says Murray. He has lived and breathed the NS program. He says, “Virtually all my energy has been confined to the Inuit world and to this program in particular.” Murray was named to the Order of Canada in 2009 "for his varied contributions to building awareness and respect for Canada's Native people and their traditions, and for the role he has played in empowering Inuit youth as founder of Nunavut Sivuniksavut."

Murray’s work has also involved educating others through his writing and church work. His book *And the Last Shall be First* addressed Native policy. He has also written a number of

articles, including two pieces published in the book *Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada*. Now a member of the United Church and one of the most progressive congregations in Ottawa, Murray is involved with the Right Relations group. This group works to raise consciousness among the congregation in an ongoing way through films, speakers, and literature. They network with other churches, connect with and support TRC events, and raises funds for justice initiatives. They “keep each other informed about things going on, opportunities for relationship building, and participation in Aboriginal events, lobbying, and education.”

Murray believes Euro-Canadian people have a responsibility “to recognize [racism] within ourselves and be responsible for managing it.” In doing his work, Murray has learned to “listen more than talk.” This is difficult for Euro-Canadians because “we’re so full of answers before anybody asks us the question.” Murray says, “We’re very good at filling space, that’s our cultural norm.” “A certain humility can go a hell of a long way in giving people space,” Murray says, “If you want to be in a relationship that rights the balance, just shut up for a while.” He says, “It’s relationship, it’s not management.” Murray believes listening to Indigenous peoples, “who actually have a relationship with the land” is crucial to our survival.

During his early days as an activist, Murray observed that in solidarity groups there seemed to be white people who did not like their own culture, did not like their own identity, wanted to be like Native people, and wanted Native culture for themselves. Murray was uncomfortable with them as “people who don’t know who they are.” He believes in white people owning who they are and using their power to create change. He says,

If you’re a middle class white guy, use your power! It’s your fucking government. Don’t try to be an Indian, they don’t need it! That’s meeting your own need.... White should be white. I just think we have to recognize where we fit in the system, and deploy our resources and our power to the greatest effect... Governments listen to people like me more than many other people. Don’t throw away your power, own who you are. Use it to effect the change that you want.

Having worked for most of his life with the NS program, Murray wonders whether his views have narrowed. He has “the ultimate best of both worlds... circumstances that are quite luxurious, while still doing something that [he] believes is making a difference.” He says, “I’m extremely thankful for that, but it has made me wonder at times how much of an activist I am anymore, and just what is the impact of being so bloody comfortable.” He asks himself, “would I be doing things differently out there in the world, taking more chances, having a more critical view of things than I currently do?” and “Has the comfort associated with this career reduced my motivation to do more radical things?” In the early years of the program, he and his colleague did make sacrifices, working 24 hours a day, and taking home low wages so as not to look like they were “feathering [their] own nest.” But later, when NS was incorporated and affiliated with Algonquin College, they no longer had control of their salaries and the pay scale shot up. Now, Murray feels, he’s “not being tested very much in terms of sacrifice.” Murray wonders what things will look like when he retires soon and has less income and more time.

New developments on the land where he grew up have caused reflection for Murray. In 1919 there had been a transaction through which a strip of Fort William First Nation was turned into parkland. Cottagers, including his family, were allowed to lease some of this land. These cottages are now being knocked down and the leases closed off, and the band might pursue a land claim. Murray would be happy to see the land returned to the band. However, he says,

If I was still living there, I can’t say for sure I would feel as unambiguous about that. Because I know the people on the reserve, it wouldn’t be as threatening... but still, it would mean losing control, and being there at their convenience, which is, well that’s the way it should be. So I won’t be there to be in that kind of dynamic, but I can’t begrudge it. That should be how it is. I mean the reserve was surveyed off as about one-fifth the size of what they had agreed to, to begin with.

Murray asks, “How do Canadians feel about living on somebody else’s land?” He answers,

“Well, we don’t like to think about it because there’s no solution that comes to mind that leaves

us with much.” But “if we’re willing to concede that it’s theirs anyway,” it might “provide us all with the basis for some kind of re-negotiation of a relationship.”

One of Murray’s big regrets is not having learned Inuktitut. He says, “My whole work was a reaction to how much my society was running over them, intruding into every nook and cranny of their society.” He thought, “One of their few remaining safe havens, where they can have privacy and keep us out, is language.” Murray says, “years later, I had to humbly accept that I was wrong,” because “people have more respect for outsiders that want to make the effort to come inside their world and not just intrude on it without knowing it.” He says,

If I had been smarter and more respectful, I would’ve made every effort to pick up the language, because I could’ve, everyday I was with people who spoke it. That was laziness on my part, that was not showing the kind of effort and kind of respect that, a good person would’ve done.

Anger continues to be a motivating factor for Murray’s work. He says,

It’s my great lasting motivator... That’s what has spurred me on – a sense of outrage at the way my own society treats Indigenous people, both in terms of attitudes and behavior. And how our government’s actions reflect that. I just find it outrageous for me, in terms of my own sense of fairness. So that has never really left me as my reason for being involved.

One of the most painful aspects of Murray’s journey has been finding racism in himself. He says, “it was always one of those instances that you wish you could just rewind the tape.” Although it would “hurt like hell,” he has been “able to be forgiving of [himself]” because he believes racism is in all Euro-Canadians and “that’s what we inhale from the moment of birth.” But mostly, Murray’s work has been characterized by passion for the content of the courses they teach at NS, and deep satisfaction about the work they do and the impact it has in Inuit youth. He says,

The thing that gives me the deepest personal satisfaction is watching how committed they are to a healthy family life...it’s absolutely wonderful to watch. If you want a reason for hoping for the future, you can just pay attention to what some of what these young people

are doing, just exuding talent...doing wonderful, amazing things, and they're doing it very purposefully, with a full understanding of the historical context for it.

Murray's vision for the future is a just situation in the context of Nunavut. He envisions a future in which Inuit have enough political power and economic clout to negotiate the relationship they want with the rest of Canada. For this to happen, they will need their "own resource base so they can negotiate from a position of strength." Murray says,

Right now the federal government still owns 84% of the actual land in the Nunavut Territory, so Nunavut, like the NWT, and like Yukon, are pushing for the feds to relinquish that ownership and the control over those lands so that the territorial government will be the beneficiary, and the people of Nunavut will have their own capacity to set their own priorities more and defend themselves.

His work is "motivated by that original belief that we're all equal in the eyes of God." When he sees Indigenous peoples "being treated as less equal than others," he takes spiritual offense.

Murray says, "I'll stand against that every day of my life...I can't fix that, but I can use my life to stand against it."

### **Kathi Avery Kinew**

**Identity and early influences.** Growing up in Toronto, Kathi Avery Kinew spent her childhood summers in the bush around the Lakes of Muskoka, and grew to be "quite connected to the land." She also spent time on the boardwalk on Lake Ontario, and felt close with the water. Kathi says, "My spiritual places are all with water...and trees, and rocks." The phrase "here other campfires burned," carved into a lakeside cottage fireplace by her uncle, was emblazoned into her heart, mind, spirit, and memory as an early signifier that this is Indigenous land, Indigenous people were here long before us, and that they are to be respected. Kathi laughed at herself as "a total WASP" with ancestors from the British Isles. She comes from a family of storytellers, with liberal parents who taught Kathi to be respectful, to listen, and to be understanding. A child of the sixties, Kathi saw that the world was changing and wanted to be

part of changing it. Although her parents had great respect for people, were supportive of change, and “didn’t think forced impoverishment of the original peoples of the land is acceptable,” Kathi felt they didn’t understand her involvement in Indigenous advocacy work. As someone who would later marry and have children with Tobasonakwut Kinew, Kathi would become assimilated into, and become a member of the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation. She says, “I feel very Anishinaabe, but I respect that I’m not.”

**Learning and early activism.** When Kathi began university in the mid-sixties, she got involved in the US Civil Rights Movement. She “marched in Toronto for Selma,” and saw Canadians begin to wake up to the need to recognize First Peoples’ rights here. “Kahn-Tineta Horn [a Mohawk activist] was turning people’s heads around,” and in 1965, Fred Kelly, who would become Kathi’s brother in law, “led a silent march, through Kenora that really woke people up. He travelled to all the nearby reserves and they all came in by busloads.” “That’s when people started coming on board,” Kathi says, and newly formed organizations such as the Indian-Eskimo Association (IEA, which later became the Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples, or CASNP) started to change Canada. Kathi joined the IEA, attended meetings, and supported actions. Through this she built friendships with Indigenous people, including her future husband. In 1968, the summer following her first year in a masters in social work program, Kathi worked a summer job with the YMCA Geneva Park Camp. She lived on the reserve of Mnjikaning First Nation, brought youth from the Reserve to the camp, and worked at building relationships between the two communities.

Kathi learned much by witnessing history being made around her. Indigenous veterans had come back after the Second World War and questioned why they didn’t share the same rights of the Canadians they had served alongside in the trenches. When Trudeau became Prime

Minister, elected on his campaign for a “Just Society” and people said “Yeah, let’s do something about this,” Kathi says, then “what happened was way more exciting and way more self-determining.” She explains, regarding the “Choosing the Path” consultations the Government established with two Members of Parliament asking for change to the Indian Act:

It was like a traveling commission...and I went to the ones in Toronto and Ottawa and watched. This was probably the first time anything got out to the public to hear Indian leaders themselves, because it was followed by radio and TV...And what [Indian leaders] said was, “Honor the treaties, implement the treaties, recognize Aboriginal title, recognize Aboriginal rights, and resolve land claims.”...And then [in] the spring of ’69 the White Paper came out. People were astounded, shocked, that they hadn’t been heard.

This prompted increased activism on the part of Indigenous peoples. Kathi says,

We were hanging out then, my husband was very much in the activist movement—Delia Opekokew and other people in Saskatchewan—[and] we were traveling around the west. And they were...recognizing that they had all been through something similar in the Indian-Act-Indian-Agent-Residential schools, although at different places. They knew where their force of will was coming from, and they recognized this will not stand. And at the same time, Dave Courchene [Sr.] here in Manitoba, and Harold Cardinal in Alberta, and other people were all organizing... So they were successful in burying [the White Paper] and then Harold Cardinal came out first with the *Red Paper*, and Dave Courchene later with *Wahbung*.

**Work and continued learning.** Kathi had been taking Ojibwe language lessons, and in 1970, she “moved up to the Kenora area and started working for the reserve [Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation] and for Treaty 3.” Kathi’s father “didn’t think it was such a good idea that I get involved with and fall in love with an Ojibwe person,” but, Kathi laughs, “it was too late then, anyway.” She was already very much in love with Tobasanakwut, who she found to be a brilliant man. Kathi felt at home in Lake of the Woods, surrounded by lakes, rocks, and pine trees like those she had cherished during her childhood, and began to visit older people on the Rez and learn from them. She was made to feel welcome and experienced no barriers there. Kathi fell in love with the people of the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation as an extension of her love for her husband, and had a great time working for Treaty 3. She says,

That was when it was becoming clear that there was mercury poisoning in the Wabigoon River... My husband was the Executive Director and then President of Grand Council Treaty #3, which later became Grand Chief. So we were always responding to First Nations and what they needed to be done—bridges to be built, and highway speeds to be lessened, and a whole lot of those things. So my husband was constantly going to Queen's Park to change things, or Ottawa. I didn't go on those trips, but I helped him in the background. And then I did treaty research. I saw first hand those archival documents and I worked with the Anishinaabe people and some lawyers... I wrote reports, we promoted communications, we'd write for the Treaty #3 Council Fire magazine, that Tobasonakwut founded, and I followed the lead of the people and the leaders. We recorded the Chiefs' assemblies, and the resolutions became our work plans--that's what we did for eons. We were constantly writing proposals to get money for First Nations or for new initiatives, and then writing reports to make sure we carried through, the same way that people do things now.

When Kathi worked on land claim research in the archives, she saw for herself

The dirty dealings. I saw the instructions to the surveyors—"when you survey the reserves make sure they're far as possible from the probable line of settlement and any known minerals." That's what the surveyors had for their mandate. I spent years in the archives and also talking to the elders and listening to what they'd say-- through interpreters and directly about what happened. So, that was the 70s and 80s for me.

This firsthand learning instilled in Kathi a sense that she "knew what had to be changed, and what the truth was." Kathi was taught by many First Nation leaders, usually men, about Indigenous nationhood, "political science, philosophy, traditions of Anishinaabeg." She says, "It was all advocacy for self-determination, for treaty rights. Aboriginal title, Aboriginal rights, and land claims." They were fighting to be recognized as nations. She says, "Treaty 3 is so strong about treaty and those were my teachers." Kathi learned that her

Husband's father went to jail with a whole bunch of men from our reserve and from the Lake of the Woods just for living according to Treaty, for cutting down wood, for fishing commercially with nets, and also making a living in the bush for their families. For hunting, trapping, they went to jail. Well where was the recognition of Treaty Rights? They understood their Treaty because they spoke their language, but residential school was taking that away... So people, even though they lived under such an oppressive state, they knew what their rights were. And then it seemed like the more English the kids got, the less they understood what's a treaty, or that we have Indigenous rights, that we are the original people of the land – where did that go? It's still there if you sing pow-wow songs... it's still there if you go to ceremony, but it ain't in the schools.



In the late eighties, however, they were able to start an Anishinaabe language immersion preschool program in Winnipeg. In 1981, Kathi helped organize a Treaty #3 Gathering at Animik Washing, Northwest Angle #33, which Governor General Ed Schreyer attended with Anishinaabe artist Jackson Beardy, arriving by helicopter. During that Gathering, initiated by Tobasonakwut, the oral promises of Treaty 3, which had been written down by Metis interpreters at the time of the treaty were read. The oral promises say, ““you are to be free as by the past,”” but this is, “not even mentioned in the white Queen’s document that’s typed up.”

With a husband who was Grand Chief of Treaty 3, Kathi says, “we were all involved in fighting of the constitutional changes.” Over the years, Kathi saw phenomenal and incremental accomplishments as well as disappointments and setbacks. A pivotal moment was when Peter Lougheed “stuck in that one word, *existing*, into Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution act—*existing* treaty and Aboriginal rights. We’re still winning court cases [from that].” Kathi says,

When I got involved since the late sixties, and then to see in 1982, that short time it got into constitutional law? It’s unbelievable! Nobody foresaw that...Everybody was working, trying to change the way the Indian Act worked, and we did get rid of the Indian Agents, which was another phenomenal change. And I don’t think even the environmental movement, or labour rights, or anybody can stand up to the achievement that First Nations made from where they came from during that period.

In the nineties, when Kathi came to a point where, she “couldn’t see the forest for the trees,” she decided to begin an interdisciplinary PhD program. She “believed in self-determination from the baseline of [her] spirit,” and determined to focus her studies on self-determination and governance. Kathi recalled the way wild rice “was the most phenomenally unique thing that I saw from living in Treaty 3 and being there, getting to know people, and how it really energized the community, leading up to the August harvest.” This became the focus of her thesis, titled *Manito Gitigaan: Governing in the Great Spirit’s Garden* (University of Manitoba, 1995). She interviewed Elders, rice gatherers, and leaders from Treaty 3, and

provincial and federal bureaucrats as part of her study, and described how the Anishinaabeg of Treaty 3 protected *manomin* as a gift (and responsibility) from the Creator, and not a provincial Crown resource.

While a student, Kathi was also raising her two children, born in the eighties, who became integrated into her activist work. She says

Our kids grew up marching on the Leg with signs, and going to land claim and other political meetings... They've listened to elders their whole lives...we always brought our kids on the reserve in the summers and all the holidays, ...it was because their dad was fighting for rights.

As a family, they attended demonstrations and were at the Manitoba Legislature when J.J. Harper was killed in the late 1980s, and when Elijah Harper raised the feather to prevent the Meech Lake Accord from being signed. Tobasanakwut was also resuming his traditional path, attending sweat lodge ceremonies with his uncle when the ceremonies were being revived, while Kathi was attending Anglican Church and taking the kids to Sunday school. Her son saw that they were practicing different faiths, "and he didn't like the dissonance." The more Kathi "learned about residential schools, the more [she] left the church behind" and they all followed the traditional path. She says, "with the kids we did smudging, and pipe ceremonies, and sweats...and then my husband started bringing me and the kids to the Sundance, so it became more of a regular part of our life." Kathi keeps to the fringe at ceremonies, not out front. She attends sweat lodge ceremonies, full moon ceremonies, and smokes her pipe every full moon. At pow-wows, Kathi won't dress up and dance, other than dancing Intertribals when everyone is invited to dance. At the Sundance, she doesn't dance either. Instead, she says, "I'm a supporter, I keep the camp, I keep the grandkids," and she helps to prepare feasts. She says, "I try to show my respect that way. That's theirs." With the lodges being revived after decades of being taken down by RCMP and priests, people of all walks of life are now attending. She hears leaders say,

“A lot of people are coming in now, they’re recognizing that we have something.” Kathi says, “There’s so much strength there, so much positivity. That’s what’s going to make the people whole again and get rid of the colonized mind and spirit.” She says, “We just have to make sure that families gain from that strength.”

Kathi has worked for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs since 2000 on many initiatives. Recently, they did *Ka Nisi Tatowin na?* (Do you understand me?) research in which they, “[Went] around in Manitoba asking First Nations health directors, Elders, and youth, ‘what’s it going to take to make our people healthy?’” They heard, “‘We’ve got to rebuild and strengthen our languages and ties to the lands and waters, because people need to have a grounded identity [connected] with the elders, with our traditional medicines, to be who we are born to be.’” Kathi says, “That’s where we’re going now, First Nations research.” She and her colleagues have promoted the First Nations OCAP (That First Nations have Ownership, Control Access, and Possession of their information/data) principles for research with Indigenous communities toward collaborative and respectful research relationships that change “the power imbalance in research so we’re no longer subjects, we’re the real actors.” They have worked to encourage more First Nations youth to become academics, and have worked on initiatives around murdered and missing women, youth development, and “bringing our children home *again* from CFS,” a field in which she worked with peoples of Grassy Narrows and Whitedog in the mid-1970s.

Kathi has been an instructor in the Native Studies department at the University of Manitoba for over nineteen years, where she teaches both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Her purpose in teaching is “to get students to see that there is another way of thinking, another way of seeing the world, and that the original peoples of this land have so much to offer.” Kathi sees her teaching as advocacy work, and says, “I’m very biased...I wouldn’t be

unbiased about treaty and Aboriginal rights.” She was horrified to see that someone observed at a meeting with deputy ministers in Manitoba that “they did not know there was a Section 35,” something which reinforced for her the importance of her teaching work:

They (i.e. Deputy Ministers) did not know that Treaty and Aboriginal rights are entrenched in the highest law in the land. That’s scary. So you have to continually be working at this... You’ve got to goddamn fight everyday, to remind people, to teach people, to reach out to people, and you have to tell them. And that’s what I like about teaching... if you can tell them enough, if you can show them enough, if you can get them talking to people, they do a 180...So I’m trying to change the world now, 35 people at a time.

Kathi teaches students to memorize by rote Section 35 of the Constitution Act:

They have to repeat it, the existing Treaty and Aboriginal Rights. “The Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed,” and then I go into what does that mean, who are the Aboriginal peoples? “Recognized and affirmed.” And then I always tell them, “but not yet implemented.”

Kathi says,

I bring that up with academics as well, that they should know. They don’t have the excuse that the general public has, or people that just out of high school, or people that just coming to the country have – academics don’t have that excuse.

It is exciting for Kathi to see the change in students, particularly immigrant students who most have not been taught these things before.

Now a grandmother, Kathi attends protests, makes financial contributions, supports advocacy groups, and volunteers at community events on the Rez. Being close to the US border, border crossing rights have been an issue for her reserve, and Kathi envisions continuing to take part in walks and protests for these rights. She would be willing to go to jail for her activist work if the cause were worth it to her. She has been willing to work for lower salaries to ensure she is doing work that aligns with her values and creates social change. She says, “but I’m not a 1960s Weatherman. I don’t believe in killing people for a cause. I think you’re admitting failure if you have to do that.” In the face of the “terrible anger and frustration that [Kathi has] felt at many

tables,” Kathi tries to find a way to be creative. One area Kathi wishes she would have been stronger for her over the years is analyzing and disrupting the colonial socialization she inherited. She says, “I just jumped in and I didn’t always know or understand some things that were culturally different, but I was just living it. So I’m sure I was very disrespectful in a lot of ways, throughout time, but I tried to learn.” She says, “I just kind of lived and absorbed, but I think I should have done better.”

The anger Kathi has experienced on her journey has been an impetus for her work. She says, “I don’t think all anger is bad, sometimes anger makes you continue.” Kathi says,

The more that I learned of my husband’s life-- I was so in love with him, and it made me angry. He met so few non-Native people that had any respect or kindness... And it just enveloped me. And then to have some of my relatives now so oppressed and suffering from addictions, or suffered from suicide, it’s just builds anger.

After seeing the structural barriers faced by those she loves, anger arises because it is continuing with the next generation. She says, “why should my son have suffered from it? His dad suffered enough, his grandparents suffered enough, why should my daughter be prevented from doing things? Because they’re Anishinaabe?” She feels anger about the ignorance of many Canadians: “Why don’t you people know this already? Why don’t you understand... You have to know this, this is reality, this is the truth.” She is sad to see that many of the issues she worked on in the sixties, seventies, and eighties are “still with us”:

If you look at the agenda of Treaty 3 now, or The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, it’s treaty rights, inherent rights, natural resources... how are we going to keep our rights to the rice and the fish and the animals and how are we going to keep the water clean, and the flooding at bay? How are we going to get compensation so that we can move ahead?...It’s still the same Crown government and societal thrust towards assimilation.

As a result of the actions she has been a part of and supported, Kathi has seen the Canadian government agree to many attempts at bilateral talks for which Indigenous peoples never have enough resources to “keep up with thousands of bureaucrats who can bring legal and other

arguments to the table.” She says, “the oppressor was willing to come to the table and cool things down and pretend that they were moving ahead, and dissipate the energy. It takes a lot of energy to keep going.” Nonetheless, Kathi finds much joy in the thrill of “organizing things that work, and influencing young people.” She sees young Indigenous community leaders working for cultural continuity with the youth, parenting in very involved ways, and teaching the youth to respect women. Kathi says, “if you’ve been oppressed for so many decades, you forget that there was resistance, you forget that there were achievements and there were Ogichidaa, Ogichidakwe [warriors].” She wants the youth to know that “Our greatest warriors have not died, we are them (that was the theme and phrase used at Onigaming in their 1990s joint education partnership with Harvard University) ...you have strong resisters and leaders now, and you are part of this.” She was thrilled with Idle No More, which “was brought up through the grassroots,” which made it “the people’s movement again...people feel alive again,” She saw round dances on her reserve on the icy bay in -40 degree Celsius temperatures: “It was totally everybody saying ‘this is us, this is who we are.’” She says, “the most hopeful thing I saw was that August 2014 march...after the finding of Tina Fontaine’s body. All these soccer moms and dads from all over Winnipeg came out and brought their kids...they wanted to show solidarity.”

Kathi feels that she’s “in a good place, and still growing, still changing.” She says, “Maybe it was easier when I was younger... but that doesn’t mean you quit now”:

You don’t siphon off your life, I don’t think you can. I think everybody I know that’s involved is – it’s just taken for granted, this is what you do--you go to ceremony, you have to get out on the street, or you have to be at the table. You have to constantly change things for the better. It’s part of your life.

“Our life was committed to changing Canada and changing the situation of First Nations people, and recognition,” Kathi says, and she continues to work for healing, reconciliation, and the strengthening of Indigenous families and nations. She was inspired by a concept presented by

non-Indigenous Australians at a conference she attended: “*We understand, we stand under...we’re behind you and we’re supporting you underneath.*’ And Indigenous people lead the way.” This is how Kathi sees her role, as background work. She won’t be at the forefront unless she has to. She says, “We have to protect Mother Earth, we have to protect the people, and grow the spirit...So the best way to do that is to get involved, and visit, and talk, and work together.” “How could you not be involved in this?” Kathi asks, “It’s the most Canadian thing you can do. This is the country of the original peoples.” She believes that Indigenous rights are fundamental: “Indigenous people have a special role as the original people to care for this land, and keep that land going...Indigenous rights are treaty and inherent rights and they need to be respected.” Kathi believes that “the only hope now is that Indigenous people continue to take on their role as caretakers of the land that we all love, and more and more people come back to who they were born to be.” She says,

It’s a big world, and it’s not putting WASP people or any other non-Indigenous people down, to build Indigenous people up again, allowing them to live what I call their legacy, and to be who they were born to be. It makes us better and it makes our country better. Because we’re saying we want to learn the original teachings that belong to this land. Because what I believe is, *here other campfires burned.*

## **Franklin Jones**

**Identity and early influences.** Franklin Jones is a white settler Canadian student and musician in his thirties who grew up in a white lower middle class monoculture suburb of a prairie province city. He is a “cis-gendered heterosexual, able-bodied... son, family member, friend, partner,...and a bit of a black sheep” who says he “never really felt like [he] belonged anywhere.” Franklin’s right-wing neighborhood was known as a centre for the Canadian chapter of the KKK in the 80s, with a culture in which “it was cool to be racist.” As a child, he witnessed violent anti-Indigenous sentiment and discrimination. “The true history of what happened on

Turtle Island” was never taught in school or at home. Franklin recalls being seven during Oka, and says,

My dad [told] me “the Natives are rising up!” And he was scared. He was like “they said they were going to poison the water supply!” This is from my dad who I’ve never heard say an overtly racist thing, but at the same time his mind was blown at the possibility...I remember that being told to me as a little kid and I was terrified.

When more Indigenous peoples moved into his neighborhood following the opening of subsidized housing, “It was not met warmly. A lot of people felt there was more crime that came in.” Franklin says, “Anything that happened in the neighborhood that was wrong, someone got jumped, or someone’s car got broken into, was all because of the Indians in the next block over... those folks got blamed for everything.” As a child, Franklin developed friendships with a number of Indigenous youth. He was a child who felt strongly and connected through his heart. Being subject to male socialization against emotion and vulnerability meant, “there were people that tried to beat that out of [him].” He says, “I had to deal with a lot of abuse for that, but they couldn’t take that away, it’s just like part of who I am.” As a result of the abuse, Franklin experienced being “pretty numb...[and he] battled with a lot of depression and thoughts of inferiority.” As someone who has always questioned things, Franklin’s teenage involvement with music accompanied a rebellion against the conservative right-wing mentality around him:

A lot of the bands in the 80s from the UK had a very anti-authoritarian, left-leaning radical message about opposing racism, and I remember when I heard that, it really struck a chord with me because I realized that something was very wrong with my neighborhood. I started playing in bands, started thinking differently. There’s a lot of things that you witness as a kid that you know in your heart are wrong, but until you actually read something or hear something when someone else says it – and nobody ever did that [when I was young] in an effective way; so I had to reach outside the neighborhood for that in terms of media, film, and music.

**Learning and early activism.** Franklin left his neighborhood and began working at a leftist bookstore. He says,



That was definitely a life-changing period for me...my mind was just opening to a whole new way of thinking... They had speaking events, and the whole environment was operated collectively. Being a young kid thrown into that, I had no idea that this could even happen. So I started reading books by Ward Churchill and Dee Brown, like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, and Gord Hill, and reading about historic and ongoing acts of resistance against colonialism.

While working at the bookstore, Franklin “got to know quite well a group of about five or six Indigenous men that lived on the streets and the various shelters in the wintertime:”

[I’d] take smoke breaks with them, chill outside with them, and hear their story and hear what’s been going on with them. At the time I started to romanticize it because I had [been] so sheltered--it wasn’t until I was a teenager that I actually realized there was poverty. I never saw it. Everyone in my whole neighborhood wouldn’t have looked twice at these folks and maybe during a period of my life, I wouldn’t have either...Develop[ing] relationships with them really, really changed my life.

Franklin naively thought, “Oh we’re equal friends and there’s no power difference, we can just cast aside all the things that make us different.” He says, “I didn’t know how to be an effective supporter, or an effective ally. I didn’t know anything really.” He says,

There weren’t a lot of boundaries in place and some of the relationships became quite dependent,...unstable and unhealthy. People are in very real need and real crisis and you have more means than they do, and you care about them and they care about you, and you want to help them and they need help... You have a group of Indigenous folks who are really just getting by, and there was lots of violence, lots of addiction, problems with other gangs, problems with the police.

Franklin witnessed, the way the police “treat people that people with privilege don’t care about.”

During one instance, Franklin and his Indigenous friend were outside when police came to address someone they knew who had passed out and was asleep on the sidewalk. When Franklin and his friend tried to intervene after police had escalated the situation, Franklin was told by police to go back inside while his friend was threatened with arrest. He says, “they very visibly treated us completely different based on who we were...it really just very fully clicked in my mind.” Most of these friends have passed on now due to overdose, suicide, and extreme winter temperatures. Franklin says, “Spending time with them...there were many different moments

when I knew I would never be the same. I'll never forget those guys, and I miss them." His time with them shifted his focus toward anti-colonial activism. Franklin learned, "If you're going to try to organize or resist the way things are in this world...Indigenous struggles are at the forefront of it." Indigenous solidarity is "the real core struggle against oppression in this land."

**Anti-colonial work and continued learning.** Franklin's friendships inspired him to become involved with anti-police brutality activism and prisoner support and literacy programs within a psychiatric lockdown facility, spaces that would reveal "firsthand the disproportionate amount of Indigenous prisoners and what they were going through." They met with mothers and recorded them reading books to their kids. They would then rip a cd, add a message to their kid, wrap the book and cd, and bring it to their kids "so that they can read along with their mom in jail." When he began to see that "one of the ongoing or visible effects of colonization is resource extraction without informed consent," Franklin attended demonstrations in support of Indigenous-led resistance to resource extraction. He and his band began to raise funds for legal fees for Indigenous groups that "were arrested or came in conflict with the law" due to blocking resource extraction on their lands, including the Tyendinaga Mohawk, Grassy Narrows Anishinaabe, and Elsipogtog Mi'kmaq. While on tour, they used their time on stage with the microphone to speak about the blockades and the roles that settlers can have, and about missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Franklin says,

We had these rich conversations with people after...this exchange of energy and ideas. By the end of the tour we raised something like \$800 from those shows to send to the legal defense, and that felt good...That felt like a good use of privilege.

As someone who has been unfairly granted "an easier, safer life, and at the expense of the original people of this land" through colonialism, Franklin says, "I always just want to feel like a respectful guest, that's how I want to walk as a settler on this land, and to not ever feel that sense

of entitlement." Franklin feels colonialism has taken from him "the ability to connect to this land in a real way." He seeks to respect territory and respect land, learning whose traditional territories he is on, and acknowledging this publicly, with feeling. When travelling, he learns how local Indigenous peoples prefer that white settlers refer to their lands. He says, "I don't know where else I can go right now, so how can I be where I am right now in the best way I can be? That's what this is all about for me."

Franklin's is involved in a lifelong learning process. His understandings of white privilege and of his role in the colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples have grown. He has sought to deconstruct and analyze "the tone in which things were shared with us or the misinformation we were fed as children." He says, "It was important for me to understand my role that I was playing in the oppression of Indigenous people." Franklin is a student in an access-based BSW program that has helped to deepen his anti-colonial understanding.

Franklin believes white settlers have a powerful role to play in decolonization by educating other white people. Working interpersonally, through relationships with friends, family, colleagues, and communities, Franklin tries to push "for deeper understanding of colonialism and to try to involve people in the struggle against it." He notes that many white people are "used to getting everything and not thinking about where it comes from." "Having grown up with that and having been told that they deserve that, that's a part of their identity," Franklin says. He believes "white people can say things and do things in the struggle through our privilege that maybe other folks couldn't say, and I don't think it should be up to Indigenous folks to educate white people all of the time." When Franklin addresses racism in his conversations with friends, family, and coworkers, it is within the context of love and respect in an effort to share more of who he is. When those close to him say racist things, it puts up a wall

in the relationship, and Franklin cares enough about them to talk to them in an effort to bring the wall down. Nonetheless, in these discussions, he may notice a change of tone or added tension. It has altered some relationships. Sometimes doing this work has meant losing friends or opportunities, and yet it remains important to Franklin to “not take the day off because it feels inconvenient.” If settlers would become informed of the real history of what happened on this land and its continuing impact, and “could actually just really just open up our hearts to each other, and try to deprogram the socialization that we’ve had,” Franklin says, “it’s nice try and imagine what kind of a world we’d live in.” As we increasingly see “a settler population that’s well-informed of the history of colonialism, a real history of what happened on this land and how it continues to impact things,” then “a social movement would happen.” Thus, one of the biggest things he does is “that interpersonal work with other white settlers.”

Franklin has gone to “as many Idle No More protests as possible.” He says, “when there’s a protest or when there’s a rally and they’re asking for people to come, I can do that.” Franklin’s experience of round dancing at a busy city intersection during rush hour was life changing. At one of the rallies, Franklin took seriously a pledge he and other white settlers took at the legislative building to “do something when you see racism, to not let it go.” As a youth educator, Franklin integrates his anti-colonial practice into his employment.

Franklin has been invited to take part in Indigenous ceremonies, which have become a part of his decolonization practice. He supports the ceremonies by helping to set up, giving people rides, and working as a *scabe* (helper). As he attended, he says, “I started to feel things that I couldn’t explain, . . . there was something bigger at play. . . It was of this land, and it was coming from the land.” His ceremonial involvement has awakened spiritual and relational aspects of himself and has given him a sense of belonging and connection that has been healing:

The relationships I've developed through ceremony, the feeling of connecting with people in a real way, to feel welcomed...I feel like it provides me with this knowledge of myself, and knowledge of my place on this path I'm on...Realizing that mistakes happen in terms of the greater struggle of how to do effective support work, I know that involving myself and being invited to ceremonies, it keeps my heart good, and it keeps my spirit good.

Rather than working from his head based on what he has read in anti-colonial books, Franklin's relationships have led him to work from his heart. He says,

I've developed a lot of really amazing personal relationships that I value so highly, and a system of support--the feeling of just complete love in my heart for folks. When a white activist is trying to do this work without any sort of personal or emotional tie to it, I think there's so many more mistakes that can happen. It's hard to describe the difference I feel now. I feel like it's become way more personal.

His participation brought a greater commitment to the struggle and has helped him to become a better man to himself. He says, "I'm treating myself better...it's brought me a lot more compassion towards myself, and it's let me be more gentle and warmer and kinder in my life."

His participation has also brought a sense of peace he had not previously known. He says,

I felt I was walking in a better way...I was communicating through my heart, and I was living my life with more courage, and I wasn't afraid of what people thought about me in the same way...It's something that's such a hugely positive protective factor that's now my life, which is a guiding force in how I try and do everything, and [how] I try to be in my relationships and in my activism.

Franklin's ceremonial relationships have also helped him to heal emotionally from issues related to his male socialization. He now had a community that felt safe. He says,

Part of my decolonization work is ... giving myself permission to feel things and to communicate my feelings, to do that with other men in my life and show them that they can do that around me. I have experienced a lot of trauma from men in my life, like through violence, peer-to-peer violence. I grew up that way, so I've had a hard time developing close relationships with men. I realize that sometimes I start putting on a guise around other men, because I feel like I need to protect myself. And I feel like in the last few years especially, I felt like I could have these really amazing emotional connections with other men, and that's something that's new, that I've never really felt comfortable doing...so decolonizing as part of me is also recognizing that emotional part of who I am and the nurturing side – the compassionate side. And those parts always existed, but sometimes I felt like I needed to keep them locked away.

Some of Franklin's white activist friends have criticized his participation in Indigenous ceremonies, saying he is appropriating another culture. There have been times when Franklin himself has hesitated when invited to participate because of his own fears of appropriating. Once, after having helped to build a Sundance arbor, people had gathered to drum. When he was encouraged to drum with them, he said, "Oh, I can't. I can't do that. That wouldn't be right." The person who invited him "laughed at [him] so hard, [and said] 'it's just hitting a drum! That's so funny.'" He is careful not to "do something I wasn't invited to do, ... pass teachings off as my own, or share them without permission." Franklin does not wish to use his ceremonial participation "for any kind of instrumental gain," such as trying to absolve himself of his complicity in colonialism, as a strategy to develop relationships, or a short cut to gaining the trust of Indigenous peoples. Relationships should develop in genuine and natural ways, rather than being forced or strategic. He has seen white activists "wear the ceremonies they go to like a badge on their sleeve.... 'I did this, I did that' and just inject it... 'Hey I'm cool, don't worry, I'm not one of the shitty white people, I go to sweats!'" Franklin is careful to "be 100% up front" about who he is, and when he shares anything about the ceremonies, he speaks of his own experience and journey. He says, "You never forget, nor should you, that you're a white person, and I don't ever want to forget that. But that doesn't mean that you can't experience things in an emotional or spiritual way within ceremony." Franklin understands that "what you've been invited to do by somebody might rub somebody else the wrong way." There are differing ideas of what crosses the line into appropriation, and he uses his heart to feel what is right for him and well as remains open to criticism, feedback, and questioning. He believes that as long as it's done with respect, his participation is part of him being on a good path. While it used to get to him, now, he says, "when I encounter other white people that are very critical of me going to

ceremonies, I understand that it's actually part of their process. It actually has nothing to do with me." Franklin has been taught that "This is the spirituality of this land...if your mind and your heart and your spirit is open, it's no surprise you feel it calling to you."

"When you're doing this kind of work you, need to be humble," Franklin says, "walk soft and show your worth by being really solid, doing what you say you're going to do, not overstretching or over-committing yourself, not taking up a bunch of space or feeling like you have an answer." Franklin believes that solutions need to come from the grassroots, with settlers taking direction from Indigenous peoples about how to proceed. This can be tricky with "so many different ideas on how to move forward from different Indigenous individuals, communities, and groups." Also, he says, "sometimes [Indigenous] folks get really tired of having to tell white people what to do all the time. Just like, 'what do I do now? What do I do now? Did I do a good job?'" It is good to find something to do "that doesn't always necessarily require really intense direction, but you know it's welcome." Sometimes this means taking initiative to work with other settlers, or responding to calls from Indigenous peoples such as, 'We need people at this blockade,' or 'we need this many people at this protest.'" Franklin believes it is important to "really look at ourselves" while doing our work, considering why we are involved in particular ways, how we do our work, being "as supportive as [we] can possibly be, while being completely honest about what [we] can and can't do." It is important that we don't do our work for personal gain, "for some sort of congratulations," or "to achieve innocence, because we're not innocent." "Resistance involves a lot of different means and ways and approaches and they're all useful and they're all important," he says. Different types of support work require different levels of risk. Franklin recalls a march he attended in support of land defenders out East with 40 others downtown during rush hour traffic. He says,

Nobody external to that could have dragged me away from being there. They would've needed to arrest me to get me to leave, because I knew in my heart that that's where I needed to be at that moment in time. There's a lot of factors that contribute to that. Potentially it's who you're with, and what's going on, and where you are with your life at that moment. But I think unless people with privilege are willing to put themselves in risk, nothing will change. That could mean losing job opportunities because you're the shit disturber at work, or it could mean being arrested at a blockade. If people aren't willing to do those things, then it'll just continue.

“What are you willing to give to change a system that is destroying the entire world?” he asks.

“What will you say to your kids? What will you say to your grandkids about what you did?” He says, “For myself, I'll have to continue to just listen to my heart and see where it takes me.”

“I think it's really important that we defer to Indigenous types of knowledge [and] ways of being; perhaps especially when they come into conflict with where we're coming from. And that's part of our work,” Franklin says. Having been a vegan for over a decade, he had particular beliefs about animal treatment and has opposed hunts. Reading the book *Night Spirits* invoked a struggle within Franklin as he began to understand that Indigenous peoples have their own hunting practices based on their own knowledges, which he had not taken into account. He realizes, “I live in such a way that is completely disconnected from the land, and I'm disconnected from how food is procured...that's actually part of my socialization.” When Franklin has traveled to Indigenous communities, the issue has manifested itself when he has been offered food. As “someone that doesn't eat meat or dairy typically,” he says,

I turned down food once. That was a mistake...And it's such a privileged thing to be a vegan, especially when you're going up north. That's a clear example, but I think it's fairly symbolic of holding on to your rationale, understanding of the world, and feeling like it's superior even when you don't want to imply that...I would **never** refuse food now. I've had relationships begin with me refusing food, and that's so significant, to have someone as a guest and you're giving them food that you made, you hunted, or that you got from the store, and someone can't eat it because they think it's wrong to do that.



Part of Franklin's internal work has involved processing the guilt he has felt as he has learned more about colonialism, his own mistakes, and the colonial dynamics he has enacted often out of obliviousness due to his own privilege. He says,

At some point, you learn things and then you feel that, and you're like "Holy Shit!" When you actually learn what actually happened, you continue to learn what happened, and then you look up, and you actually learn what's happening now, it is – it is actually staggering to open your heart to that, and it's very important to do.

He feels it becomes counterproductive when supporters "internalize [guilt] to such a degree that they just hate themselves...and potentially remove themselves from the struggle." Yet, he says, "Guilt is an important thing to feel, at some point, for what we're implicated in. And if you don't allow yourself to feel that, you're probably never going to do anything." Franklin's implication in multiple forms of oppression has caused him to go "through large periods of just really hating who I am." He says, "I think when you hate yourself, you're actually less effective as an activist and you're not treating others well...you're not taking care of yourself, [and] you can't really do much for anyone else, or any cause." Understanding the structural reasons for what is wrong in society has helped Franklin to cope with guilt, and his participation in Indigenous ceremonies has also helped him to work through these feelings. Anger is another feeling Franklin has been working through, anger towards police and politicians, and "anger at these institutions and what they're doing to the world--doing to people and the land." He wavers between hope and hopelessness "because you see the world on such a frightening and disturbing course," and yet "you also see people resisting that, people that always have resisted that, and those victories...It makes you want to try to have more courage and to struggle harder, to stop certain things."

Humour and humility have helped Franklin in situations where his work has brought him face to face with feeling of being "other." When he attends particular ceremonies or travels to Indigenous communities, he may be the only white person present and he becomes hyper-aware

of feeling very white. After a Sundance meeting one year, everyone was dancing. He says, “it would’ve been wrong not to dance, but we didn’t know how, so we just looked like complete idiots, and everyone was laughing at us.” He says, “Humour is such a huge part of it. It feels good to make people laugh with my ignorance or stupidity sometimes, as long as people always know it’s never intentional.” Nonetheless, “fear(s) of being – of feeling ‘other’ are very real for settlers and white people, and it’s a real barrier for them to actually put themselves out there.” “They’re scared because they don’t want to do the wrong thing,” he says. “As the dominant culture, we’re not used to not knowing what to do,” he says. But this is an important dynamic to work through, because the alternative is to do nothing. “I think doing something, and making a mistake as a supporter is still better than doing nothing,” Franklin says, “that’s how people learn.” He says, “I think that we should face that fear. It’s okay to be uncomfortable.” He says,

You’re going to feel “other” – and you’re going to feel silly, and you’re not going to know what to do and you’re going to feel like the dumb white person, which is what you are. And that’s okay, and that’s an important things to feel, we never feel that.

Franklin says, “we’re so used to being the dominant group, and the dominant group is rarely questioned, which is how it maintains itself.” “As long as you’re there with respect and humbleness, you’ve come to be there in a good way; if you don’t know what to do, people will tell you what to do,” Franklin says. Because he only goes where invited, he says, “when I experience those feelings of doubt, I fall back on ‘I’ve been invited to be here, it’s ok.’”

Franklin believes the way of life of white settlers causes “a loss of hope, a loss of connection, and a loss of purpose,” resulting in mental health struggles. He says,

I think a lot of people that struggle with those things are drawn to activism... For me, there have been different times in my life where [I] have dealt with a lot of anxiety, depression, thoughts of suicide. I think having things to feel connected to, building those connections through various causes... different identities within those causes, has brought me a lot of strength and connection.

Being involved with activism gives him something to believe in. He says, “being with a group of people that are trying to do the right thing can save people, can save their lives.” He says,

Being at a demo[nstration], or a protest for something that you believe [in], being with other people feeling the same things, on our own paths that brought us there that day or that night. That feeling of marching down the street. We’ve lost that—that feeling of actually being free. Those moments bring a lot of hope and a lot of love.

Franklin says he sometimes wonders “what my life would have been if I had just gotten a job at the hammer factory and had a truck and two kids.” He suspects that “the older you get and the more pressures that are put on you, the easier it is to walk away from things.” “We’ll always have that, as white people, as an option with this struggle, is to walk away from it,” he says. Yet, “once you know the things that you know and you open your heart to them, you can’t turn your back on it.” It becomes, “actually the struggle for your soul.” Franklin says, “I’m most definitely a product of this colonial culture that I’ve been socialized in, so I need to actively resist that.” Franklin does his work because “I have so much privilege that by doing nothing, I’m actually causing harm.” He says, “to be a decent person, to look in the mirror, I have to be involved in this. There’s no option.” “I think it’s really a question of what kind of world you want to live in,” Franklin says. He thinks of children growing up into the hate, inequality, and fear of systemic and individual racism. “To try to be a part of the solution rather than the problem is really deeply ingrained in who [he] is,” and he says, “I don’t see that ever changing, I see that actually deepening over time.”

## **Paulette Regan**

**Identity and early influences.** Six-year-old Paulette Regan had her back up. She had been overtaken by a powerful gut feeling that something was wrong. She just couldn’t understand why they would be so cruel, and so without a thought, she marched right up to the older schoolyard bullies who had been taunting a young black girl and told them to leave her

alone. This remains a very vivid memory for Paulette, as her first, but definitely not last, experience of witnessing injustice and feeling a responsibility to take action. A Euro-Canadian settler woman who is now a grandmother, Paulette's early beliefs and values were profoundly shaped by her mother who, she says, taught her that "truth and justice always come from the heart." Single and living in poverty in the 50s and 60s, Paulette's mother faced numerous struggles with strength, courage, and grace. Although she was not educated in the formal sense, she carried much wisdom and was fierce in her willingness to stand up and speak out when she saw injustice or racism. Her mother was a holistic person whose head, heart, and spirit were well connected. She treated others with respect, kindness, love, and generosity and had a close circle of friends who supported one another in their struggles. Their door was always open for visiting and the sharing of meals.

**Learning and decolonization work.** Paulette describes her learning journey as a gradual process of decolonization in which she went from having no sense that Vancouver, the place she called home, was on Indigenous land to realizing that "that the real history of this place was all around me, and I just hadn't seen it before." Her learning about colonialism and Indigenous territories in Canada began while earning her BA and MA as a mature student in the history department at the University of British Columbia. There she did research work for Dr. Arthur J. Ray, a prominent fur trade scholar, in the late 1990s. She combed through archival Hudson's Bay Company records, and learned about the ongoing relevance of history as well as the injustice, oppression and unequal power relations that have defined the relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada. She also began to question the then widely accepted notion that historians should be *objective* or *neutral* interpreters of history rather than active participants in social and political change. It was during her years in the history department at UBC that

Paulette met and began working with her long-time friend and colleague Brenda Ireland (Anishinaabe Metis). Together, they later developed and co-facilitated intercultural workshops that unsettle diverse audiences by teaching the history of colonialism in Canada in a decolonizing environment.

After finishing her master's degree, Paulette began doing historical and archival research for the land claims of Indigenous bands and communities. She says,

That was such an eye-opener, because--I certainly knew about treaties and I knew there were land claims processes, but actually working on the cases... gave me such a much deeper insight and appreciation of why this history still matters today.

Following this, Paulette worked with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in Vancouver, assisting them with policy negotiations on a wide range of Aboriginal title and rights issues. There she had wonderful and generous teachers. From the chiefs she worked with, and especially from Millie Poplar, who had worked with prominent Indigenous political leader George Manuel, she learned about the critical importance of Aboriginal title and rights and how to analyze issues through the lens of Indigenous self-determination. Sometimes this learning occurred in painful or conflictual ways. At one point when working on a policy-related project, Paulette's Indigenous colleague was angered when Paulette drafted a policy paper without consulting the group. As they talked about what had happened, Paulette began to see that by taking charge in this way, her action had unconsciously been re-colonizing not decolonizing. She learned the value of checking in, staying on the same page as the group, and working in partnership with humility and vulnerability.

Paulette began her doctoral studies in the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria and determined that she would not focus on telling Indigenous stories, but rather would explore her own story. She explains,

One of the very first things that I did when I was beginning the doctoral work [was to present] my really early thinking around this whole piece about what's the role of non-Indigenous people in decolonization... and [I] talked about my own experience in that.

The response Paulette got from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who attended the presentation was that she had to keep doing this work because it is “the big, white elephant in the room that nobody ever talks about.” Much of the discourse had been around Indigenous people decolonizing, and Paulette noted, “there's colonizer-colonized, oppressor-oppressed, perpetrator-victim, who's missing in this equation?” It became apparent to her that decolonization had been viewed as solely the responsibility of Indigenous people and she wondered “well where are we in this? Aren't we supposed to be doing some work too?” One result of Paulette's doctoral work has been her book *Unsettling the Settler Within*, a book of critical reflection on these themes. Paulette began working directly with residential school survivors, and for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. While much of her earlier work had given her an intellectual understanding of colonialism, working with survivors really spoke to her heart:

When you're sitting... talking with a survivor, the face of colonization, the impacts of that process--the living survivor is sitting right in front of you, and that's a whole different experience. So, in my mind, that's when I really started understanding it in my heart, not just in my head.

Paulette feels that the teachings she has been given by survivors are an incredible gift that reminds her of what is really important in her work with the TRC. She says:

Listening to survivors and being around survivors... absolutely ground[s] me totally in what this is all about, and they do it in such a beautiful way...there are the powerful stories and experiences, like their life stories, ... humor and laughter and warmth and kindness and generosity and caring, and all of those things that remind me that as a human being, I need to make sure that I'm nurturing those qualities in myself.

**Practices and perspectives of her work.** Paulette sees her decolonization journey as ongoing. Her work has involved asking troubling questions, being willing to go into uncomfortable places, learning history, being in relationship, and teaching. After growing up in

her neighborhood with no knowledge of the history or the territory, she is now mindful everywhere she goes of

Whose territory is this? ... What is here? What's the history of this land from that perspective? And of course now I see that across the country— where once I would see a [conventional] map of Canada... that's completely changed because I'm very aware--in B.C., where's Gitksan territory? Where's Stó:lō territory? You just have a totally different way of sort of understanding the land.

Paulette is learning to integrate her head, heart and spirit so that she brings all of who she is to what she is doing. For her, there are many different ways that people can take decolonizing action, including both internal and action work, personal and political. Her internal process has been one of questioning and being curious about her emotions and reactions. Paulette observes that non-Indigenous people “very much set aside the emotional aspect. We're the neutral helpers, or the neutral observers, or the neutral arbitrators.” Paulette has noticed that during negotiations, for example, “maybe somebody would say afterwards, ‘that felt really uncomfortable,’” and she would think to herself, “there's something in this idea of unsettling.” In her view, emotions such as guilt, anger, shame, and denial are worthy of reflection because of what they can tell us. “Rather than stuffing them away and saying ‘oh I'm not going to think about that, it doesn't matter’ or ‘I don't want to go there because it's uncomfortable,’ Paulette recommends wondering, ‘what does that mean?’” She says,

We don't value reflection. People just sort of run from one busy thing to another... But I just came to realize how absolutely important taking that time to actually process something and think about it, and think about what that says about myself--what questions it raises for me, and then... to say, “oh okay, well isn't that interesting, I wonder why I'm feeling like that.” Often the questions that will come into our minds are not comfortable questions. They're all about the colonial relationship and our role in it, and how we want to say, “well but that's not me, all those other folks out there--they're the ones that are the colonizers, but not me because I'm working with Indigenous peoples.” ... What can I learn from my own uncomfortable feelings about myself and about my own decolonizing struggle?”

She says, “It’s not just Indigenous people that are struggling. If we want to be involved in changing the relationship, then we also have to be willing to engage in the struggle.”

Being in relationships with Indigenous peoples has been an aspect of her work that has brought joy to Paulette’s journey. She notes the many non-Indigenous people who say, “well, I don’t really know any Indigenous people.” She says,

Okay, well why not? And you can’t do that in a contrived or false way. It’s not about saying, “Oh I have to go out and find an Indigenous person to get to know.” You have to figure out what points of entry into that relationship are authentic and genuine, and often that’s at the community level... there is a lot of alliance building and a lot of solidarity work going on around a whole bunch of different issues, where there are areas of mutual concern. I think in those contexts it’s really important for us to recognize that we might not always have the same issues, but we learn where we can work together and where it’s important to respect difference. We can’t just assume that because we all oppose the pipeline, or wherever the issue is, that that makes everything that we want the same – because it doesn’t.

In her relationships, Paulette has found, “Happiness, humor, ... the ability to enjoy each other’s company and to be able to laugh at some of the stuff that you’re going through, and to be good friends together.” She says,

All of those things are very important because those are the elements that help us to build strong relationships. When I was doing the work around the unsettling, people would say to me, ‘oh, isn’t that gonna be kind of a tough sell for people?--I want you to feel really unsettled and deal with all these difficult emotions,’ but I think that is only one aspect of it. There are all these positive emotions, the ability to be caring and to be kind, and to have good fun together-- all of those things are so tremendously important, and I’ve had a lot of that too.

While some people do on-the-ground activism, Paulette’s activism is often behind the scenes, and is rooted in the power of education and learning: “research and writing...that’s what I bring to the table, and my activism is around that piece...the sharing of ideas, and the writing of pieces around that.” Paulette emphasizes the tremendous amount of learning that has to take place because settlers often have very little historical understanding, without which they will not be able to understand current land struggles. She says,



I have a huge focus on knowing history because there are so many times that I've talked to people, especially around the residential school history and legacy, where people will say, "I didn't know that history." And that leads to those troubling questions that we need to ask ourselves—"why is that? Why is it that we know nothing about this history, and what does that tell us about our relationship with Indigenous peoples?" For non-Indigenous people, it's really about recognizing that the very foundations of this country are rooted in Indigenous history, and Indigenous presence, and Indigenous lands on so many different levels... Learning to recognize simple questions – whose territory do I live in? What do I know about this history? How is it being taught in the schools? What are my kids learning? What are my grandchildren learning? How is this reflected in our everyday lives?

Paulette explains that without historical understanding, most Canadians will read a story in the media about land conflicts, for example, and have "a limited ability to be able to truly understand what the issues are and where that stems from." She says,

OKA didn't happen out of nowhere. Caledonia didn't happen out of nowhere, so I think it's really important for people to understand that, and to understand why those things matter in their lives today. Because people have this tendency to say, 'it was history, it's past, what relevance does that have for today?' Well, it actually has a tremendous amount of relevance because it's about how we live today and...what kind of society that we want to live in.

Paulette enjoys co-creating teaching and learning environments in which the truth about what happened can be shared and people can be taken through an unsettling process, for example, the workshops she has done with Brenda Ireland. One participant in their workshop shared, "one of the things I found interesting about the workshop is you and Brenda model what you're talking about." They hadn't thought about that, seeing the workshop rather as "A crash course in colonial history." Paulette says,

We found several things that really were very important. One was the drumming of the [historical] facts...it was just like, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom... Because all of this is rooted in history... We were really convinced that history actually really matters in all of this. We were approaching this like Brenda had her own work, and she's an educator as well, so we'd bring what we were doing as individuals into this work and it sort of all got folded in together. But one of the things that we realized was that you can't just leave people there. You can't just overwhelm people ...because people would get very emotional, and it's hard! It's a hard history to hear. And then Brenda and I usually always talk about some of our own stories, we'll tell people some of our own

experiences. So you can't just leave people hanging there, like 'okay, here it is,' and dump it on everybody and say, 'well, good luck with that!' That's not responsible, right? So, we realized that that's why the action piece is so important... So it's about taking people through the unsettling process, but then also getting them to talk about and think about how would this apply in my own life and my own work, and really own it themselves. People ask me all the time, "well now I know this history, what should I do?" And I always say, "I don't know what you should do, but maybe here's some things that you can think about in terms of finding the answer for yourself," because I can't possibly tell other people what they should be doing. Everyone has a different way that they approach this, and they have different skills and strengths and gifts. It's just creating an environment where people can start to think about that. And then the other element of it that we realized was so completely important was Brenda will do ceremony, and she brings what she does as an Anishinaabe Métis woman around this, and the things that she was taught by her elders. So it creates a space in which people feel safe enough to risk. Because it's important to provide safety for people in a sense that you want them then to be able to risk exploring things that they might not want to explore otherwise. It's really about making sure that people are okay to be doing that, and making sure that they're well looked after.

For Paulette, decolonizing action is best done reflectively, in relationship and dialogue with Indigenous peoples. She says,

As non-Indigenous people, we have a very difficult and problematic history of rushing in to take action—"well here's the problem, so now here's how we're going to fix it"...I want to make sure that I'm checking in with Indigenous folks that I'm working with, and I'm not sort of just running off in isolation and figuring [it] out, and then running off to do that. That's not what it's about. For myself, it's about remembering 'how do I approach the work? Am I doing that with humility? Am I doing that with respect? Am I doing that with a willingness to admit I don't know?' We think we always have to know everything! I think for settler people, there's real power to be in this place where we don't know [and are] willing to learn.

Instead of rushing to act, Paulette suggests going into uncomfortable places, and

Just sit[ting] with that for a little bit, and explore it a little bit, and maybe talk to some of your Indigenous colleagues that you're working with about that, and be willing to sort of explore it a little bit—[for example,] what would it mean if I weren't in control? Because of course so much about colonization is about being in control, that for me, it's about being curious about that...—'well isn't that interesting? Let me unpack that a little bit more and explore that.' Because that whole idea about control, that's linked with power. And when you're working in these intercultural contexts, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together, I think that has huge implications for how you're going to approach the work...If it's about—"I don't want to do this unless I can be the one in charge," understand that that comes from people's own feelings and how they manage their environment. When we are willing to explore that more, and ask ourselves some

questions about that, and when we're thinking about that in terms of decolonizing contexts, this whole issue around need to control, need to be the one in charge, need to be the one who makes the decisions, that's why so many Indigenous people get really tired of working with non-Indigenous people. Because inevitably it always comes back to – they want to be the ones in charge. Well, maybe that's not such a good idea because we haven't always done such a great job where we *have* been in charge. That's why I talked earlier about the importance of approaching the work with humility, vulnerability, and a willingness to stay in the discomfort of our own struggle, because I think for us as a decolonizing way of living, those are absolutely the kinds of questions that we need to ask ourselves. And if we're not asking ourselves those questions, then it's "is this decolonizing behavior or re-colonizing behavior?"

Paulette says,

Sometimes when they try to work with Indigenous colleagues, there will be places where there's tensions and there's conflict in the group. And instead of being willing to go there in a respectful way, to say "can we talk about this? I'm not really understanding what's happening here." But do your own work first, not to just go to our Indigenous colleagues and say, "Well I'm having trouble with this, so can you help me sort it out?" We need to do our own work, and then we need to come back and be in dialogue in a respectful way. To say, "I realize that maybe I could've handled that differently. Can you help me understand how that might look, or what I've done?...I need to understand so that I can work in a respectful way, so that we can work together," Being willing to admit we don't have all the answers. We don't always know everything, we're not the experts...And if we need to apologize, we need to do that too... if you actually want to keep working in relationship, I really think it's so critical for us to be able do that and to explore that.

Paulette's own personal touchstones in her work are "humility, vulnerability, and the willingness to stay in my own struggle." She says, "if I'm moving away from that, then I'm probably going into directions that I shouldn't, and I need to ground myself again." She is "constantly having a little check-in with myself and with others" about "how are we, how is it going?...What worked for you in this process, and what didn't, and how can we do things differently?" She asks herself, "Is this decolonizing, or re-colonizing?" Paulette says, "It's so easy to get into [burnout], especially for those of us who are slightly workaholic and very committed." She says, "it's always been about getting done what needs to be done, and it is very difficult to do that without getting really unbalanced in one's life." She has had to learn to take better care of herself by getting exercise, eating well, getting enough sleep, and having strong

connections with friends and family, her own support system, so that she has someone to talk with when things aren't going well. She says,

We can't do the work well and we can't support others if we're not looking after ourselves... When I'm writing, it's really important for me to take a break because I just know otherwise what I'm going to write is not going to be all that constructive. I'm far better off to take a 20-minute break, walk around the block a few times, get some fresh air, and then I come back and I'm good to go again... You're going to do a much better job at it if you're able to look after yourself.

The vision of the future that guides Paulette's work is one in which the historical injustices of the past have been addressed, structural and institutional changes have happened, and non-Indigenous people have learned how to live in a way that respects Indigenous peoples' rights to be self-determining. Paulette wants to do work that matters; work that honours what her mother taught her, honours the people she works with, and reflects her own values, identity, and passions. She is committed to the work long term because it is not yet finished. Decolonization is multidimensional, dynamic, relevant, and complex; it is also a life journey in which she continues to learn new things and be challenged along the way.

## **Steve Heinrichs**

**Identity and early influences.** Steve Heinrichs is a thirty-nine year old Russian Mennonite white settler Canadian husband and father who was born and raised on unceded Coast Salish Territory in a part of Vancouver that was heavily populated by Euro- and Asian-Canadian peoples. As a child, Steve remembers staring out onto an ocean inlet, curiously named "Indian Arm," from his home. He wondered about peoples who were there before him, with no thought about living Indigenous peoples. When he asked about Indigenous peoples, "there were no responses around the table," and Steve says, "the news didn't talk about Indigenous peoples unless it was a fishing controversy in B.C, or a blockade, or the Gustafsen Lake reclamation when I was a teenager." Steve would listen to family conversations and was troubled by aspects

of his family's history, particularly the *Mennonite myth*, which said, "we were a persecuted people that went to lands that were empty, and we were a blessing to the larger community there because we were hardworking and we were able to create breadbasket farmland for people." When Steve asked, "But who was there when we went into those spaces?" his grandparents seemed to take attitude of "we don't go there." Steve now lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Treaty 1 Territory, on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota peoples, and homeland of the Metis Nation. He is a "first generation immigrant kid," a human being, and a treaty person with treaty responsibilities. He works with Mennonite Church Canada as the Indigenous Relations Director, and is a "follower of the Jesus way."

**Learning and early activism.** Steve has been grappling with the realities of colonialism in Canada for over ten years. An early point of transformation in this journey was being taught by Professor Dave Diewart in seminary, who raised issues of settler colonialism with colleagues and students. Dave operated a 'for-the-community-space' in the Downtown Eastside where, among other things, he held classes connecting Biblical traditions to international and Canadian realities of genocide and colonialism, inviting grassroots Indigenous activists and settler allies to present in his class. Steve says, "For a bunch of Evangelical Christian kids... it was earth-shaking stuff."

When Steve began working with Palestinian Muslims through Christian Peacemaker teams, something he would do for several weeks every winter for six years, he was exposed to "language and frameworks that [he'd] never heard before coming out of [his] Christian milieu, like *undoing racism* [and] *anti-oppression*." Steve says, "I don't know how anyone can do work in the West Bank, where you're dealing with concrete realities of settler takeover of Indigenous people's lands, and not have their eyes open to realities in other places." He recalls being with

“Palestinian shepherds who were trying to protect their land from being expropriated by armed Jewish settlers with AK-47s,” and being struck with the thought,

“This is BC! Sure, we can’t map everything from one situation onto another, but that’s what happened in this British Columbia land that I name as home.” It was the politics of domination and violent expropriation that removed peoples from their lands, and that’s what’s happened in this place that I call home.

In 2005, Steve and his partner Ann became more intentional about learning the colonial history of Canada. While learning about residential schools and “watching all those National Film Board movies talking about fly-overs in Labrador and relocations here in this community, and the sixties scoop,” they became “the proud parents of this beautiful Stó:lō girl [Abby].” Upon adopting Abby, Steve and Ann determined,

In order to be good parents to Abby, we knew we had to go on a journey, that this was going to be a life’s work of building relationships. We couldn’t be parents to a Native child if we didn’t have peers around us who are Indigenous who could speak into our own lives, who could be aunts and uncles and friends to Abby.

They relocated to Northern BC, and Steve took a job as a pastor in a small, mostly white mining community in Yinka Dene territory, where they could have frequent contact with Indigenous people. The neighboring First Nations community welcomed with open arms Steve’s attempts to build relationships, and Steve came in wanting to “learn the history and learn how I can be a good neighbor.” His work revealed the blatant face of racism in some of his white parishioners, many of whom treated the handful of Indigenous parishioners differently, adhering to “dirty Indian” racist stereotypes, and even making violent statements such as “Custer had the right idea, we should just get rid of them all.” Steve came to realize that most parishioners did not know “the history of why our relationships were like they were.” They observed “alarming socioeconomic factors [common in] Indigenous communities,” but had no idea what was causing these, and had no desire to learn. Being a young pastor who is “supposed to be a shepherd to the

people there in my community,” he deeply desired to continue learning about settler colonialism. Steve wrestles deeply with being a Christian in a context of Canadian colonialism. He says, “there’s a lot of problems there, and I can’t avoid it. I can’t say ‘that wasn’t me.’”

Steve’s work in Northern BC was complex, and he made mistakes as he sought to navigate difficult terrain. The church partnered with young adults from Vancouver who wanted to engage missions trips to “serve the Natives” by leading Vacation Bible School programs for Indigenous children. Worried about some of the parallels of such a program with residential school dynamics, Steve sought guidance from the (largely self-professed Christian) Indigenous community. When the community expressed its desire for the program to continue, Steve was troubled by the dynamic of “young, white Christian folks hanging out with even younger brown children doing basically an evangelization program.” Steve wrestled (and continues to wrestle) with how to “honour Indigenous peoples and communities that name themselves as Christian, recognizing the fact that many wouldn’t, if it wasn’t for the heavy hand of colonialism.” In the end, Steve arranged that the white teens from Vancouver spend their afternoons “with the Elders, hearing their stories, watching documentary videos such as ‘Muffins for Granny’...hearing the story of Babine Lake First Nation--how they were dispossessed of language, culture, lands.” He says, “I had no notions that this was clean, and I don’t know how to do that one in a good way, especially when I have both communities saying that they want this.” Steve’s biggest regret of that experience was that he had neglected to invite the Indigenous parishioners, Elders, and parents to be a fuller part of the children’s programming, resulting in the reification of the colonial pattern of a predominantly white leadership. He worried about the message this would send to both the Indigenous children and the white teens. Steve also, as a pastor in northern B.C., did work with Indigenous high schoolers, “trying to animate some conversation and

awareness...about colonialism.” Although they didn’t seem to otherwise have the opportunity to explore these things, Steve wondered, “as *church white pastor guy*, was I the proper one to do that work?” At times Steve tried too hard and led in a way that exemplified his stereotypes of what Indigenous people would want, rather than following their lead. When Steve sought to bring together Native and non-Native men to hear each other’s stories over breakfast, he played Indigenous flute music through a sound system, and, on one occasion, led the circle in a song about the creator using a drum. While some appreciated his efforts to embrace Indigenous culture, others gently teased him: “This is great music! I feel like I’m back in rehab,” or “You’re more Indian than us!” Steve realized this was their way of saying,

Just take us where we’re at. Respect us where we’re at. So some of us like to wear cowboy hats, and cowboy boots, and we listen to Johnny Cash, and we like Pentecostal Christianity, and we don’t do traditional stuff right now...and we’re still Indians, right?

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** Steve views his work as both decolonization and Treaty relationship work. In his work, he seeks renewed relationships with both Indigenous peoples, and with the land. Steve’s decolonization journey is largely one of education. He seeks to educate himself, to engage with his family’s education process, and to inspire significant pockets of the Mennonite church community through education that embraces decolonization and relationships of solidarity. As the parents of “three kids, two of whom are Indigenous—one Stó:lō, one Nuu-chah-nulth,” Steve and Ann work as a family to explore their respective roles and experiences with regards to colonialism. They attend Indigenous-led activist events, expose their children to Indigenous-authored children’s books, and engage their children’s questions and emotions. This work is “an offering to our kids,” saying, “we are taking you seriously, your stories. We are coming to a greater awareness that you two beautiful Indigenous kids would not be in our home if it wasn’t for colonialism.” Steve and Ann want to



learn more about their daughters' communities in order to explore what it means for Abby and Isabelle to grow up Stó:lō and Nuu-chah-nulth. They try "to figure out ways to be in deeper relationship with their birth families...to do that respectfully and well...[and get] to know their stories and share their stories with them." Steve says,

This weekend I'm going off to [Big Falls]...They're protesting a Hydro dam that's going there, but they're also talking about [Enbridge] Line 9. It's an Indigenous-led gathering in Treaty 3 that's having ceremony and that's connecting all the dots...the spiritual pathways, the political action ... Abby's coming along with me and that's an opportunity for me to say, "How can we learn together?" and to process things with her as well.

As Steve and Ann learn more about their histories as settlers, they "invite Aiden [their biological son] into that so that he can have pride in the good stories that are there, but a deep awareness... around the stories that are not life-giving." In their process of learning, Steve has discovered that his ancestors and his daughter Abby's ancestors are woven together in a history of dispossession and settlement:

In the 1920s they were contemplating draining a lake in between Abbotsford and Sardis - Sumas Lake- in order to make farmland...And the local Stó:lō peoples were resisting that and saying, "No, this is where we live." They had villages around the lake. They even had homes and fishing sites built on that lake on stilts. And that's where my daughter's great-great grandparents lived--right on that lake. And so they were dispossessed, removed--no doubt many of them ended up at Coqualeetza Residential School right there in Sardis. And then my family is welcomed in half a generation later to that place by Mennonites who were already there and settled that land in 1929 when there was no lake.

In his current role with the Mennonite Church, Steve aims to include "a critical lens to it." He says, "That's working on justice pieces,...[and] finding ways to carve out space for Indigenous voices to speak into our work." He raises awareness in the Mennonite community in a number of ways. He has organized learning tours around events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools and has engaged Mennonites in exploring Indigenous theologies and how these can challenge western Christian traditions. He has supported Indigenous-led actions and engaged in conversations with survivors of day

schools, who were not included in the residential school settlement. Steve's denomination had two day schools in Manitoba and he found "people were reluctant to talk about it" due to their fears of legal and economic kickbacks. After conversations, though, they decided that rather than privileging themselves, they would need to do the right thing and privilege Indigenous peoples.

So, Steve says,

Over the last two and a half years, we've been in conversation with day scholars and those who are leading a movement for recognition and reparation... We had Ray Mason gather with a group of 20 of us for a day of teaching on this, we've had him come and teach in our institutional office. We've had delegates, myself included, show up at day-school conferences... and I can say we were [among] the only white folks there.

Steve has worked on producing short educational films specific to the Mennonite community. For instance, he and others accompanied Ovide Mercredi and a small delegation to London, England around the anniversary of the Royal Proclamation to make a statement about recognizing Indigenous sovereignty and jurisdiction over lands. They filmed the journey and created an education video about Indigenous sovereignty and "allying ourselves with movements that are protesting and resisting resource extraction within Indigenous traditional territories."

Steve aims to deconstruct dominant Mennonite myths and help Mennonites to understand that "we too actually were involved in dispossessing Indigenous peoples from lands, sometimes right on the forefront, sometimes second and third wave." He says, "I see myself as a facilitator trying to gather people, small pockets from different places, to be present in circles where Indigenous voices are privileged and we can learn, ask questions, and be in this conversation together." Steve helps to mobilize action groups in various churches that focus on growing awareness, attending Idle No More rallies, and building relationships with Indigenous communities. One of the more mature action groups has entered into a relationship with the Young Chippewyan Cree over a number of years. Steve explains,

Sometime back in the 1870s, the Dominion Government allotted a piece of land [to the Young Chippewyan Cree as a reserve] just south of Laird, Saskatchewan, and that place had ties to the Young Chippewyan traditionally – there were sacred burial grounds and gathering places there. In the late 1880s... the Young Chippewyan Cree were looking for food, they were starving, and so they went off to potentially find some of the last remaining buffalo in Southeast Saskatchewan. While they were off, the government expropriated that land and gave it to Mennonite settlers... That story wasn't known to the Mennonite settlers until the 1970s when a friend of mine, Leonard Doell, was trying to nurture relationships with the Young Chippewyan Cree. [He found there was a need to] deal with the concrete land injustice that the Young Chippewyan Cree have experienced and that the Mennonites have actually benefitted from.

The two communities built trust, and had a covenanting ceremony in the early 2000s, agreeing to work towards healing and concrete land justice. So a group of Mennonites and Lutherans have raised “some tens of thousands of dollars to do a genealogical survey to support the land claim of the Young Chippewyan Cree. Although “there hasn't been any concreted land transaction that's gone on yet,” Steve says, “they're working towards that.” Land reparation is “one of the most difficult conversations to have... the fears are most pronounced because right away they're running to ‘am I going to have to give my land back?’ But Steve sees this work as very hopeful. And there are pockets of people within his church community who will talk about reparations. He says, “I have a guy in a community who has fifty acres of land, who is in conversation with Mi'kmaq folk on the East Coast about returning all that land except for half an acre so that he can be in relationship with the people.” In 1992, the Mennonite church had established a “Jubilee Fund based on the Biblical call to redistribute the land.” Each year, the fund contributes \$5000 to support the land reclamation efforts of an Indigenous community. For example, recently an Ontario community used the grant to buy a plotter to map out their traditional territory.

Through his position with the church, Steve has facilitated the publication of a book and numerous pamphlets, magazines, and study guides. He edits a quarterly magazine called *Intotemak*, which aims to inspire Mennonites to explore “our stories, our history, why we have

the relationships we have with host peoples.” It extends the conversation beyond “decolonizing relationship with Indigenous communities [to] the land itself.” It has contained articles, for instance, about the Enbridge pipeline, and about Shoal Lake as Winnipeg’s water source. With input from Indigenous and settler peoples, Steve created a *Paths for Peacemaking with Host Peoples* booklet offering practical how-tos for Christian settlers new in the journey. The book *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*, which Steve edited, brings together Indigenous and settler voices to address settler colonial legacies of fractured Indigenous communities and the fracture of Indigenous lands, and takes seriously Indigenous knowledges, bringing “Indigenous ways of knowing and being into the conversation.” The study guides Steve develops are intended for small group study, with the hope of leading to action.

Steve has provided leadership towards structural changes within his organization. When he started in his position, it was called *Native Ministry*. Steve advocated for a change in title to *Indigenous Settler Relations* in order to reflect mutuality. Steve was asked to assist with visioning statements for the Mennonite Church Canada, and the board approved wording such as

Foster in our church an awareness of Indigenous peoples and settler identities; that is the history, the problems, and the promise of our relationships both past and present... Equipping our churches to begin important peace initiatives relating to past and present Christian colonialism of Indigenous nations, for example residential and day schools, [and] the failure to honour covenants and treaties...Receiving and seeking ways, as a national church, to be an ambassador of Indigenous-settler reconciliation through the larger church and mainstream society...Fostering intercultural and inter-religious dialogue with Indigenous lifeways, respectfully finding ways to receive good news from traditional circles so that our Christian faiths can be refined and rooted in this land...

Steve is thankful that his church has been willing to name decolonization and make such changes that may not seem radical, but are fairly unique within the context of church institutions.

However, because much of the work Steve is doing with the church is educational, Steve

hesitates to see this work as benefiting Indigenous communities. He says, “Until we’re at the place where we’re really redistributing power and privilege and resources...we’re not there.”

Steve’s personal passion is “to do more activist kind of front line work.” Issues around “Indigenous peoples renewing, revitalizing, and regaining jurisdictional control on lands” resonate strongly with Steve. He is inspired by Justice Murray Sinclair’s challenge to settlers: “Your responsibility is to repair what was broken, to return what was lost.” He hears “so many Indigenous voices saying, ‘All this other stuff flows from the land, flows from a relationship with the land.’” He says,

Within my Christian community we resist that with all our might...even though we will reap all the economic benefits of that land to the high heavens...that’s where I would like to see my church go more, to animate pockets of non-violent militant Mennonites who are able to support that work.

Steve is also exploring ways to connect with the land in his own personal life. A friend taught him, “you can’t love the land unless you actually know the land, and you can’t know the land unless you learn from the land and listen to the land.” He is learning:

The stories of a variety of creatures who have called this place home...what are the Cree and Anishinaabe, Lakota, Metis stories in this place? Getting to know the land via their stories, their lenses...getting to know the bioregions, the actual diversity of life that’s present here. Taking time to be on the land and ask questions--‘what is the land saying?’

Steve has been taught by Indigenous friends and elders to view himself “first as a human being, as a creature in relationship with other creatures before the creator.” He is taught he’s interconnected with non-human nations, and that it is important to learn the Treaty relationships of the particular place where he lives. He says, “Leanne Simpson talks about treaties being made not only by the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous communities and nations, but actually with the fish nations there.” Steve says, “this land has a spirituality.” He says,

When I ride my bike and I go to work, I stop just over Omand’s Creek at the bridge there, and I stand and I pray and I listen. And I don’t simply ask, “God, what are you saying to

me through the land?” I do something which seems very foreign to me-- is coming from Indigenous teachers who are telling me, “Ask the water! Ask the river, what’s it saying?” And so I’m just trying to be quiet and listen... So I need to cultivate spiritual disciplines that reconnect me to the land, and I don’t know what that all means... We are so disconnected from the land, especially my people because we’ve been hopping around from land, to land, to land – that’s part of our spirituality, we’re aliens and strangers. So I feel that disconnection, and many of us settlers do. In our desire to reconnect we screw up a lot of the time... This feeling of dislocation that settlers generally have, and the many different ways that we go into finding roots in these spaces, or conversely to downplay our lack of roots, to numb ourselves to the fact that we are so rootless in these spaces, with our continual moving. I think my soul is impacted by the fact that I don’t recognize that I’m in promised space, that stories of beginnings come from these very places. Steve is quick to acknowledge there is “so much happiness and joy and laughter that

comes in the midst of doing this work,” and “whole worlds have been opened to me as I’ve gone on this journey.” Nonetheless, his work can also be incredibly difficult. Steve faces anxiety when going to predominantly Indigenous gatherings, and says he often has “to give myself a little pep talk: Don’t be so insecure, don’t be scared, this is good work, and you always find welcome.” He believes this reflects not only his introverted personality, but also his worries about messing up. Steve gets equally anxious “when I’m going to my predominantly white church, and I fear the kinds of questions that are going to be asked--that I’m going to be expected to be an expert on Indigenous-settler realities, which is so far from the truth.” He says, “in some ways the work that I’m doing cuts against my personality...[but] it’s the right thing to do...It’s not about simply finding your gift, it’s that we need to fill gaps as well...sometimes this work is hard.” He says, “there’s a bit of a cost to [this work], and you can have more fun and success, and a [higher] salary doing other work.” The work “can fracture personal and collective relationships where I’m not as popular as I once was within my own community.” Steve says,

I feel angry because within even the dominant community that I have, you’re seen as a shit disturber, and you’re seen as sometimes a troublemaker for trying to narrate a different past and present. It was within my very first month that I took on this job, I was invited to Steinbach to speak at Grace Mennonite Church. They asked me, ‘tell us about the kind of work that you’re doing.’ And I decided that instead...I’m going to talk about the local history of this space and how we were given an East and West Reserve by the

Canadian government as the expense of Cree and Métis people. That is going to be my sermon for this morning, and tie it to a Biblical text...The pastor responded as soon as I sat down and said, “Thanks for screwing up my Sunday!” in front of everyone, but he did it with a bit of laughter. And I find out [later] that he is one of the allies of the community that’s saying we’ll take this seriously.

He says,

But there is a lot of negative feedback that you have to deal with...I spoke a couple of weeks ago at a community and there were a few folks that have decided to no longer go to that church, because they allowed me to come and speak there on the issues that I spoke on. I hear that, and I feel crappy about that. You can feel alone in the work that you do.

He advises those coming into the work to “grab onto the hope, get some good friends, [and] learn a sense of humour.” When things get difficult, Steve takes “solace in the story of Jesus...[who] was an Indigenous Palestinian born in occupied Jerusalem, [and] was resisting and proclaiming liberation for the captives.” Steve is guided in his work by the “prophetic tradition of the Judeo-Christian scriptures,” which describes “radical equity and radical sharing [and] has concrete sociopolitical ramifications that the land is shared, and there is no want.” He is also guided by the Treaty vision. Steve says,

There are no notions of cede or surrender within Indigenous Elders’ understanding of what Treaty was all about in respect to the land. Michael Asch [in his book, *On Being Here to Stay*] says it’s not about attaining shared jurisdiction of the land, it’s actually living where Indigenous peoples have jurisdiction and governance, and we are following their lead... [This has] very tangible sociopolitical ramifications--it means that there should be more funding for Indigenous languages than there is for French Immersion programs. It means the Canadian nation will obligate corporations within this nation state to respect the duty to consult.

Steve feels it is a function of colonialism that he speaks English and not Halq'eméylem, the language of the Stó:lō people on whose lands he was raised.

Steve is engaged in decolonizing and Treaty relationship work because it’s the right thing to do, and because the God he wishes to emulate,

is more concerned about decolonization than anyone, is more concerned about issues about oppression and injustice, and 17 different pipelines flowing from Fort McMurray, or Hydro dams at Big Falls, or the 70 plus percent in CFS being Indigenous kids. That gives me hope and animates my personality, coming from a deep spiritual well.

Steve believes, “God is like a mama bear who sticks up for the children that are getting hurt.” He says, “God is for just relationships and wants people living in equity and radical respect.” He does his work out of a felt personal and spiritual obligation to his girls and their communities. He says “I want my girls and my son to be able to look at us – Ann and I, when we’re older and say, ‘we’re proud that you tried.’”

### **Adam Barker**

**Identity and early influences.** *There is no one lower in society than a liar and a thief, because they take something that doesn't belong to them.* His father, a career police officer, shared this sentiment with Adam Barker. Adam was born and raised in the middle class white suburb of Stony Creek, Hamilton, Ontario; the taken-for-granted reality that he assumed to be the backdrop of everybody’s life. Inspired by the strong ethical sense of his parents, as a youth Adam was a proud, patriotic, nationalist, card-carrying member of the Liberal Party of Canada who aspired to fulfill his social responsibilities by becoming a lawyer and then a politician. This changed when, through a series of educational encounters, Adam became aware of the real history of Canada and its ongoing processes of colonialism in which he is implicated. During his time in Mr. Hall’s high school Native studies class, Adam learned that his society is invasive and occupies stolen Indigenous land. His father’s words about liars and thieves took on a new meaning for Adam, who was determined to “be responsible to that important lesson he had given me, that you don’t just take things from people...I didn’t want to be the one who took things.”

**Learning.** Indigenous scholars have had much influence on Adam’s path. During his BA program at McMaster University, Adam enrolled in Indigenous Studies courses at the urging his



professor, Dr. Sylvia Bowerbank, due to an essay he wrote for her class. Accustomed to doing well in school, Adam floundered in these courses, failing exams and being confronted by classmates. His new learnings caused his worldview to wobble and he started “to lose the support and stability of the made-up world [he] had been raised in,” leading to struggles with anxiety and depression. In his fourth year at McMaster, Adam attended a talk by Taiaiake Alfred, a Mohawk scholar who ran the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria. Adam had read his book and approached Dr. Alfred to tell him he was thinking about applying for the program. A few days later, Dr. Alfred introduced Adam as someone who is “going to come to our program.” Adam says, “It was very clear to me that it wasn’t a formality, that it was sort of a demand.” Nonetheless, Adam worried that his application could result in him “taking up a spot that should be going to an Indigenous student,” so he discussed his concern with Dawn Martin Hill, head of the Indigenous Studies program at McMaster. She encouraged him to apply, saying, “when I, as a Mohawk woman, engage these issues, people dismiss me...when it comes from you, and you have nothing personally to gain from it, they can’t dismiss that.”

After what he had already learned, Adam thought he really knew something coming in to the Indigenous Governance Program (IGOV) at the University of Victoria. He was in a classroom with a majority of Indigenous students. Confrontations occurred in class, often as a result of Adam’s oppressive practices in the classroom and his arrogant assertions that he had the answers. At times he talked over classmates and dismissed experiences they shared when these contradicted his theoretical understandings. This culminated in a crisis point when he nearly dropped out after coming back to Ontario for the holidays one year:

I remember lying on my bed and crying, and saying, ‘I can’t do this! They hate me because I’m white’...Emotionally I was not handling it...I used to have nightmares of going into that room and having [his classmate] sitting there and being ‘No, you’re wrong! No you’re wrong! No you’re wrong!’

Adam returned at his partner Emma's insistence, since they had already bought his return plane ticket. He found a way to continue, due in part to guidance he received from Paulette Regan, a white settler person working on a PhD in the program. Paulette's use of the term *settler* helped Adam to make sense of what he was grappling with. She advised him that discomfort was an expected and appropriate experience for someone on a journey of coming to terms with his own complicity with colonialism. He says, "If I'm questioning everything about my belonging in this land and what it means to be here...discomfort is an indicator that I'm going the right way. So I used it as my compass. I followed the discomfort." If the first phase of Adam's learning process was characterized by the shock and discomfort of coming to an awareness of the colonialism; the second phase was characterized by his effort to find grounds for his innocence. He says "I went through a lot of years of trying to find ways to justify my behavior, justify my way of being on the land that made me legitimate, that gave me sort of an authentic identity as a Canadian." The third phase, then, which began towards the end of his IGOV program and continues into the present, has been an acceptance of his complicity and a commitment to work toward justice. Although he still finds himself lapsing into pursuing innocence, Adam credits his turning point into the third phase to the influences and teachings of his IGOV instructors Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, and to his IGOV classmates. In particular, his classmate Chawwinis Ogilvie (Roots), a Nuu-chah-nulth activist, he says, "relentlessly pursued me to stay vigilant with myself." Nonetheless, when Adam entered his collaboration with Harsha Walia on a *New Socialist* publication special edition with good intentions, he again approached this work as someone who thought he had everything figured out and therefore was no longer implicated in colonialism. Harsha gently and persistently called him out on this. Adam says, "boy did I learn a

lesson that day, I got schooled. And I refused to think about it for the longest time because it made me so uncomfortable to realize that I could try so hard and blow it so badly.”

Adam’s partner Emma has deepened his analysis by bringing nuance to his blunt political stances. Within the context of an intimately trusting relationship, they challenge one another. Adam and Emma lived in the UK during his doctoral studies, a time of reflection, which, he says, “ultimately has brought me back and re-involved me in a very active and embodied way in the struggles here, in what is, however illegally or illegitimately, my only home.”

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** Adam’s vision for his decolonization work is the restoration of Indigenous nationhood, which will ensure the land is taken care of and that current processes of resource extraction and cultural homogenization are replaced with dynamic and life supporting ones. He says,

The process is [that] land needs to be restored to Indigenous nations, Indigenous nations need to have the chance to have full and sustainable healthy political and cultural lives, and settler people need to reposition themselves as fitting into those frameworks.

“Indigenous nations are already on the path to resurgence,” says Adam, and this will occur in complex and multiple ways in accordance with the will of diverse nations. Adam sees his role as making space for this process rather than imposing his ideas as to the forms it should take. Instead of seeking to replicate Indigenous decolonization practices, as a settler, Adam sees his role as a saboteur of colonial systems, opening space for different things emerge.

Adam considers his decolonization work to have begun in 2006 when he joined the Indigenous People’s Solidarity Working Group in Victoria and became involved in education campaigns and awareness raising about issues such as mining in Indigenous territories in BC. Adam also became involved in the New Socialist Group while in BC, and used his writings to bring an understanding of settler colonialism and settler personhood to the group. When Adam

worked for the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, his goal as someone who sees the harm education systems do to Indigenous peoples was to “do everything I can to be throwing wrenches into the machinery of this big culture-destroying machine.” He took a harm reduction approach, hoping he could slow down the destruction. This work caused Adam to question the false dichotomy between reformist and radical work that disrupts colonialism, seeing that these roles can be complementary and we can honour one another’s work in each realm.

Adam has done educational work within his personal relationships by engaging in decolonizing conversations with other settlers both in Canada and in the UK. Adam engages the colonially oppressive things settlers say as a matter of responsibility because people with privilege may lash out violently or “have an emotional response where they cry and try to center themselves as a wounded subject,” and Indigenous peoples should not have to deal with this. Adam has “tried to bring an understanding of both the existence and the urgency of ongoing colonialism and struggles for decolonization in North America to people in the United Kingdom,” and has made sure “that all [his] students knew that Canada is not that happy, peacekeeping country of people saying ‘eh’ and wearing toques and playing hockey.” He’s had conversations outside the classroom with “all sorts of random people across the United Kingdom” who will acknowledge their imperial history, but don’t always see their responsibility.

Being in the UK when Idle No More hit Canada afforded Adam a unique social media-mediated way to listen, and to “hear really clearly what people were doing and what they wanted.” He noticed, “There were a lot of well-meaning settler activists who hadn’t done a lot of interrogation of their own positions,” and Adam decided to participate through social media, putting his voice out there and “getting involved in conversations and creating online videos.” Upon returning from the UK, at a teach-in with the Biskaabiyaang Collective in Thunder Bay, a

city with a serious anti-Indigenous racism problem, Adam was able to translate some of his academic expertise into something meaningful to guide public discourse. During a community panel in “very white, fairly well-off, and fairly conservative” Burlington about missing and murdered Indigenous women, Adam spoke of the role of settler colonialism and gendered violence, and the way these are enacted in everyday ways in which settlers are complicit.

Adam has learned the importance of educating other settlers by building long-term relationships rather than being in and out of their lives. Existing relationships of care create “a common ground on which to engage.” He brings to this a willingness to “go into hard emotional places with people” and a sound analysis. Because he is a passionate and emotional person who cares deeply about doing the right thing, he is able to create an empathic connection and spark movement in others. Adam and his partner also focus on building strong, solid, long-term relationships with other settler people who are already doing decolonization work. He puts time into maintaining those relationships and being supportive and good to people. They offer encouragement, positive energy, and “make sure people are aware they’re valued.” Adam says,

We’ve built this little family of people who are always ready to sort of jump in and help each other out...we’re people who trust each other and care about each other, and we’re going to fight for each other and with each other.

“Many of us go into these dark places,” Adam says, “it’s not something a lot of activists like to talk about...people bottom out and there’s no care there for them.” When others are struggling and doubting the importance of their work, Adam tries to “be the person who can step up to somebody else and say, ‘what you do matters to me.’”

Adam is a naturally talented speaker, and as a youth was often “pushed into positions of leadership.” He connects his ability to dominate a conversation to his white male privilege, being allowed to speak when “other people might be silenced.” Adam tries to use his privilege to say

what needs to be heard, and to work towards dismantling it. At the same time, he has realized he uses his command of conversation to control social situations in which he feels uncomfortable. He is learning to listen and just exist in social relationships, and to take more of a support role in his activism. He says, “I’m actually very proud now that I support different actions. I’m rarely the person at the front anymore. I don’t seek to be the person making headlines, I’m not trying to plan actions.” This works better for Adam, who is “absolutely rubbish at organizing.”

Adam views his academic teaching as a way to engage in transformative decolonizing struggles through personal relationships. He teaches

in a way that allows students to see opportunity for them to participate in building a different world, even as [he] insists that they understand their complicity in and responsibility for settler colonial racism, dispossession, inequality, and genocide.

He sees his academic publications as essential to his wider activism, as spaces to reflect on, interrogate, and strategize around his decolonization work. Adam has embraced the field of settler colonial theory as one who understands settler colonialism “from the inside.” He says,

Even as I move into a phase of my work where my primary preoccupation becomes working on settler colonialism, trying to dismantle it as a settler person, transforming my own identity as a settler person, transforming settler society, . . . nothing I do would be possible without those relationships [with Indigenous peoples].

For Adam, Settler Colonial Studies provides a space where settlers can “stop making it the job of Indigenous critics to figure out what’s wrong with us, and to start figuring out how our machinery of colonization runs, and start taking it apart ourselves,” because “Indigenous thinkers have a much bigger job to do of reconstituting their own cultures and nations and identities and undoing the damage of colonization.”

Decolonization, for settler people in Canada means “a fundamental reorientation of our relationship to the land we live on,” according to Adam. Settlers need to change the way we think about the land, building new relationships, economies, and political practices. Indigenous

communities on whose lands we live “have particular sets of relationships and responsibilities and ways of interacting with the land,” practices which can be supported by settlers through what we bring as outsiders. Knowing that he is living on Haudenosaunee territory is Adam’s “anchor and starting point,” the “referent that has to be maintained above all else.” He says,

understanding what the natural resources are that Indigenous communities used, and how their relationships to those things were part of a relationship to the environment can give you clues as to the ways to exist on this land in a sustainable way.

Adam emphasizes that rather than taking on Indigenous views of the world, settlers can stand next to Indigenous peoples, adding different perspectives without imposing. He says,

That means a lot of watching and thinking, and being deeply considerate of the implications of your actions...and then try to fit in. Not to integrate in, not to assimilate in, not to disappear and submerge in, but to fit your difference in alongside in a way that enhances all of those relationships...[and] improves everybody’s quality of life.

Settlers use all kinds of means to try to “mediate our illegitimate status on the land...displace[ing] the Indigenous relationship to the land.” Trying to go “back to the land” disrespects that “Indigenous people have been driven off the land.” Rather than doing things that Indigenous peoples are prevented from doing and trying to become indigenous in his own way, Adam aims to “support pre-existing indigeneity in a way that...enhances the Indigenous relationship rather than detracting from it.” We need to replace “our current processes of extracting resources, using up the land, and pushing people aside...with one that’s rooted in land as a living thing.” Reorienting to the land means ceasing to think of land as property, which is difficult. He says,

I would love to have my own house one day, and that means that I’m thinking about land as property because I’m thinking about the part of it that’s fenced off that makes it mine and not someone else’s. And instead, to start thinking of land as how it’s interconnected and what makes that fence and what makes that property line an imposition on the land.

Adam says, “property does not give you exclusive ownership and right to do with the land what you will.” Rather, we have a responsibility to ask, “what does the land want me to do with it?”

In 2013 Adam was involved in an Indigenous-led land-focused action, in which a sacred site formerly known as Mount Douglas was re-united with its traditional name, Pkols. Chief Eric Pelkey came forward with a clear vision and had the support of his community and WSÁNEĆ nations. Taiaiake Alfred and Jarrett Martineau helped with coordination and reaching out to settler solidarity groups, groups that took part in a respectful way without taking over, offering specific contributions that were strategically helpful. Having been raised around police, Adam chatted with the police presence, putting them at ease. Shortly afterwards they drove away. This empowering, symbolic event had a resonating effect that inspired actions across Canada.

Adam engages in relational, cognitive, and emotional processes of growth and learning that are informed by Indigenous peoples and undergird his decolonization work. He says,

The ability to try and displace colonialism from my life only becomes possible because of the fact that Indigenous peoples and literatures and ways of thinking that have over time become centered in my life. The understandings that I’ve come to through my interactions and relationships with Indigenous communities are the wrecking ball that smashes through the structures of settler colonialism and produce for me the option of rebuilding something different. Those relationships generate possibility.

Adam has learned about pre-colonial Indigenous societies and how these connect with vibrant present-day resistance and resurgence. He has learned about Indigenous political systems, treaties and agreements, and relationships with land. He says, “if given a choice, I would rather live as an immigrant or a guest of that Indigenous system, than as a citizen of this one.”

Adam’s work on himself goes beyond building awareness. It has been important to him to take his work into the realm of interrogating and transforming himself in his private life, every day practices, and relationship with the land. Adam says he has learned to



unflinchingly look at myself as a colonizer, and see the things in myself that could potentially be decolonized, that I could carry forward into a different sort of relationship, but also to admit and accept the things that are very colonial about myself.

He says, “I’m going to try and continue to root these things out in myself as time goes [on].”

Over the years, a number of Adam’s Indigenous friends have encouraged him to reconnect with his roots: “Everyone’s got an indigenous heritage somewhere and you should go back there and reconnect with that—you’ll understand yourself better, where you’re from.” A friend of his went back to seek her roots in Ireland and said, “as soon as I set foot in Ireland, I knew this was where I belong.” Adam has spent a number of years in the United Kingdom, from where his grandparents had emigrated. He felt nothing like what his friend described, but did come to a realization of how strongly the forces of settler colonialism had shaped his identity to the point that “as a settler Canadian, I have more in common with settler Americans than I do with any British people.” His grandparents had been changed from being British to being settler by accepting colonial discourses that “legitimize your belonging on someone else’s land.” Adam observes that “indigenous to somewhere” statements can be used by settlers to “claim some kind of authenticity and indigeneity” and to avoid one’s implication in colonialism. Adam has concluded that in his entanglements with colonialism, he is indigenous to nowhere. He sees no authentic indigenous reality in Britain, where relationships with land are mediated through systems of private property, capitalism, and industrialization. He is faced with the fact that

All I’ve got is this, which means I have to double down on my responsibility here. I can’t claim a connection to somewhere else, all I’ve got is this one, and the claim that I’ve got here is violent. And so what does that leave me with? No option but to confront it.

Some of Adam’s core emotional struggles related to his work and learning have involved anger, anxiety, and despair. He says, “One of the things that got me into all this politics in the first place was how pissed off I was...at the injustice of the world.” Adam believes “a great deal

of productive energy comes out of anger” and he has worked to “learn how to direct it properly.” Adam says, “when I’m becoming involved in something, and I get this hot, sick feeling in my stomach, and my heart starts going, and I start sweating” it often has to do with “entering into a situation where I [do] not have the control.” In such situations, Adam may use his anti-colonial knowledge to create an excuse to withdraw from engagement, such as “I don’t want to take up space from an Indigenous person.” Both dominating actions and withdrawing from actions, he now sees are “methods of trying to maintain control of how I’m going to engage with people.” Becoming aware of this gives him an opportunity to acknowledge his anxiety and “choose whether or not [he] was going to act on it.” He steps back, takes a breath, and faces his fear in the moment. Despair has been a periodic aspect of Adam’s work due to crises of faith and failures. When things seem to get worse and not better, despair may come up, and his “own personal struggles and the larger struggle for decolonization [may] become conflated.” At its worst, Adam is “not sleeping and not eating and mostly lying in bed and crying because [he’s] so emotionally broken.” Adam has carried with him an unhealthy constant questioning of “Am I doing enough? Am I good enough? Oh God, have I failed? Have I screwed things up? Have I hurt people?” When he faces failures, Adam is helped by remembering that people doing decolonization work are up against the “fundamental basis of oppressive power over an entire continent,” and thus, failure is often not about personal deficiency. Being “isolated from the harms we’ve caused” is part of settler privilege, and yet people in Adam’s life have “put it right in front of me and made me see myself ... see the grotesque damage that resulted from me just being me.” Adam has learned to let go of his ego in order to do the uncomfortable and emotional work of listening deeply when people tell him “your assumptions are wrong, the things that you care about and value are wrong...wrong in that they hurt people.” He says, “the first thing that you feel when

you start to go through that is a lot of guilt.” Adam believes settler guilt can be “powerful as a transformative moment, but you can’t live in it, and you can’t carry it around” because it drains energy that “could be put into something productive.” He tries to use feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment to figure out where he has gone wrong, acknowledge and work on it, and then let the feelings go. Knowing his own patterns of emotional ups and downs has helped Adam to pace himself, taking advantage of the period when he has a lot of energy by doing as much as he can so that he can ride this momentum when he struggles. He is also helped by community:

In my darkest times when I was looking for that way out, it was the fact that there were people who needed me who I just couldn’t let down...this individual who I loved and who loved me and made that known, needed me to do something. That was what kept the despair from completely taking over. It’s that heart to heart that makes the movement function. That’s ultimately what wards off despair... Things turn around, you find things that hearten you again, you get your perspective back.

Adam has faced risks and losses by being involved in decolonization work, many of which have already been noted. When considering what he will give up for his work, he recognizes that “when you lose something...you’re [also] burning a resource” that may not then be available for future support and activism. In his academic career, Adam has wondered whether to think of tenure as “a strategic or tactical end,” earning him more freedom and security. But he goes back to his understanding that

The process is land needs to be restored to Indigenous nations, Indigenous nations need to have the chance to have full and sustainable, healthy political and cultural lives, and settler people need to reposition themselves as fitting into those frameworks rather than the other way around. I don’t care about tenure in that process.

In the present political reality of Canada, “No one who stands up for Indigenous rights or the concept of decolonization is safe,” he says, due to increased government surveillance, paranoia, and the classing of Indigenous peoples and their associates as terrorists. The question is, for Adam, “how unsafe are you willing to be in the moment...and what’s the potential return?”

Protest rallies may carry a greater risk, but if the rally is well organized, produced along good lines of solidarity, and will raise awareness, he says, “I’m very willing to do that.” Adam says,

I’ve committed far too deeply into this to think that I could ever walk away now, so if I’m always going to perpetually be at risk, I can imagine scenarios in which I would be willing to give up a lot more than I have at this point. I can imagine scenarios under which I would be willing to go to prison, [or] in which I would be willing to put myself at risk of violence. I can imagine a lot of scenarios where, if I had land, I would be very, very willing to give it back. I think that if there was a mechanism by which I could do that, that’s one of the most fundamental concrete things we should actually be trying to do is to transform property back into a land base for Indigenous nations.

Adam’s decolonization work is done for Indigenous peoples and nations, but “not as a gift or a favour.” Confronting colonialism is the only ethical way Adam knows to exist on Indigenous lands and to uphold his obligations and responsibilities to Indigenous peoples. He also does his work out of love. Adam says,

I would rather risk that everything I’m doing is wrong, that everything I’m doing won’t ultimately mean a thing, rather than sit on the sidelines and watch these people that I love really struggling. That would break my heart. Maybe ultimately the things that I’m doing are self-serving in that way, maybe that part of what I’m doing is for my own fulfillment. All I know is that I care far too much about far too many people not to try something. And that trying something has ended up being the preoccupation of my entire life.

His work has resulted in being happier, more centered, and more certain he is doing good things with his life than ever before. He is changed by his engagement, and the work never gets old. As long as there is still work to do, Adam doesn’t see an end to his involvement.

## **Josephine**

**Identity and early influences.** A child of newcomers who arrived in Canada shortly after the Second World War, Josephine grew up with no sign of First Nations people around her. She says, “I didn’t think they existed anymore--they were part of, like the Romans or Greeks, antiquity.” Josephine grew up in the suburbs of a major Canadian city and also lived for six formative years near wooded land. As a child, Josephine would go to the bush to think and read.

She says, “I’m so rooted in that part of Canada, that to take me out of it now would be like ripping roots out of me.” She also grew up with a felt connection to the green land of her family’s roots and history. Josephine did not speak English until she went to school. Thus, she says, “my very earliest experiences were of being a stranger, of having huge barriers between me and the world around me.” Josephine couldn’t understand others, was unable to make friends, was seen as “the immigrant kid,” and was called a Nazi. A child with a strong spiritual awareness and a keen intellectual life, Josephine read *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* at around the age of twelve, which, she says, “put me in a crisis for most of my life about my own ethnic and cultural identity.” The heavy sense of guilt associated with this lineage has been a motivating factor in her passionate fire for social justice. At a young age, Josephine determined that in her life, she would do what she could to stop oppression, would help other people, and would never stop learning.

**Learning and early activism.** A social work professor now in her fifties, Josephine has experienced oppression in a number of identity areas, experiences that have helped her to relate to structural oppression. Her innate affinity for social justice has led her to pursue knowledge and activism around a number of types of oppression, to complete her social work degrees, and eventually to a strong focus on understanding colonization in Canada and Indigenous ally work. Josephine began to learn about colonization by attending her first Indigenous solidarity event in Queen’s Park for leaders from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation had been imprisoned for resisting the exploratory drilling of a mining company on their territories and faced accruing legal fees. Josephine says, “It was very moving, and I did a lot of reading about those issues [afterwards]...I began to see more of how [colonization] works through governmental policies.”

When Josephine accepted an Assistant Professor position in a prairie province university, the early days in her new city made clear its racial divide. She says,

To see [Indigenous] people in wheelchairs and with amputations was a profoundly shocking image for me. And it's one that didn't leave me, because I didn't understand how this happens in Canada. It's like a war zone where there are land mines. How do we have a part of Canada where people have lost limbs? How did their diabetes get to a point where so many people have had to have amputations? And so many people without prosthetics, without proper wheelchairs? It's a powerful image, and a painful one that really propelled me forward.

Attending a Truth and Reconciliation National Event also had a profound impact. In light of her ancestral connection with the Holocaust, Josephine felt that being Canadian was her wonderful refuge identity that “stood for freedom, and social justice, and human rights, and diversity, and multiculturalism.” She says,

I grew up with this really idealistic view of Canada as the good guys and... then I went to the TRC National Event and it completely unsettled me. It devastated me, and it made me realize that there was no escape for me in any of my cultural, ethnic identities. It really hit home for me that Canada has also perpetrated this Holocaust, and it left me really not knowing who I was.

After listening to a painful and transformative women's sharing circle at the TRC event, Josephine determined, “I need to be part of what happens to heal this.” She says,

I had to think about what's my role and what is my responsibility in this? And I started to think about colonial history around the world, and realized how white Europeans have been perpetrators of so much around the world--which was kind of sobering. What's interesting is there was so much of it that I already knew intellectually. But for me a very key part of the process is bringing that into my experience, and really being confronted at a deep level with what that means. Where I am in all of that, and what is it calling me to do?

Josephine also attended an Indigenous research methodologies workshop led by Lee Miracle, who utilized Indigenous ways of teaching. This caused Josephine to reflect on the privileging of pedagogies she was comfortable with in mainstream education:

I had read that Indigenous people teach through stories and grasped that intellectually, but I couldn't follow the thread a lot of the time. Lee Miracle would be talking about

something and then she'd tell a story, and I had no idea about how that was connected to what she was saying. I was trying to figure out--what is she trying to teach through this story – and it didn't make sense to me. The whole time I thought, "I feel really stupid, I have a PhD, I'm sitting in this room feeling really dumb. And it's really stressful. And I wonder if it's how my Indigenous students feel in a Western classroom." That was a vital moment for me, and has always stayed with me--that awareness about different ways of teaching, different ways of being.

Josephine began to understand that systems of oppression are maintained in multiple everyday ways in which she has a role and responsibility. She seeks to continually come "to truth, in a deeper and deeper way, about how I continue to be part of the colonial process," Josephine takes seriously her responsibility to inform and educate herself by engaging with Indigenous knowledges. She has made it a practice to watch the Aboriginal People's Television Network regularly and to connect with Indigenous peoples. She says, "I subscribe to Indigenous blogs, I subscribe to Indigenous news sites, I go to lectures, I read books, I talk to people—I try to listen to what the community around me is saying."

**Anti-colonial work and continued learning.** Josephine sees herself as someone with a "unique set of gifts and life circumstances" who has her own purpose and placement in the world. Among the gifts that contribute to her work are her innate sense of justice, her discernment around injustice, her active intellectual life, and her ability to care and communicate caring. Josephine's anti-colonial work starts with herself and radiates outwards to her home, her family, her interactions with colleagues, her academic work, and her work with students. In recent communities where she has lived and worked, she has built friendships with Indigenous colleagues and has sought to remain in dialogue with them regarding her work. As she spends time with them, she hears their perspectives, gains understanding, and begins "to be an ally in some of the things that they were facing, to speak up." Josephine believes her role in reconciliation starts with one to one relationships, such as the relationships she has with

Indigenous co-researchers. She believes non-Indigenous peoples may easily go off base with their work if it remains too intellectual. She has learned that the relational and dialogical aspects with Indigenous people are key to keeping us on track. The personal friendship connection becomes intrinsic to the work, creating “a prototype for a new society.” Josephine also builds relationships by showing up at community actions:

My starting place was always to just show up, and keep showing up... Then as you march, that's how you start building the relationships. You get to know people. I built some good relationships that way, and people started to get to know my face, and I started to go up to people and introduce myself and get to know who people were... That's essential to anti-colonial and decolonizing work –making those relationships and just being there without any agenda other than to show up and support, as a visible ally.

She says, “what I do for fun is demonstrations and protests...I love putting my body there, and my energy and my time there with other people.”

Josephine also takes responsibility to educate and connect other white settlers to ally work, which can be challenging given their varying levels of understanding and openness. She uses her “privilege of education in a way that helps support the goals that I'm hearing Indigenous people wanting.” She tries to find ways to express concepts like *self-governance* in ways that make sense to white people. She also invites white people to events. She and a friend “went to our health club of elite white women and invited them to come to the Walking with Our Sisters exhibit.” When her mother came to visit for the holidays, Josephine invited her to a local Indigenous organization and introduced her to people there, who gave her a book. Josephine says,

She took it back to her hotel and she read a chapter each night, and her consciousness got raised--my 88-year-old mother. Then she went back to her condo, where everybody who lives there is older and is racist, and she challenges the hell out of them now. She has more facts...she explains stuff to them.



Josephine has attended sweat lodge ceremonies and other Indigenous ceremonies in the community and on campus. Josephine says, “I have found myself very nourished by ceremony. [It’s] very connecting for me. I’m just amazed at how the whole view of a world is embedded in ceremony.” She says, “ I am very aware that I’m a visitor, a guest, a participant who brings my whole self to that, but it’s not mine.” She finds that attending Elder teachings and ceremonies sustains her work and gives her energy.

Understanding colonialism as a disconnection from land, Josephine sees that attachment to land inspires a sense of responsibility and caring for land. She spends time on trails, offering tobacco under trees and picking up garbage. She often walks with Indigenous friends, listening and learning. She says, “Being in nature removes stress for me...I’m trying to come into a different relation with the land...and to let go of some of the previously western ways, and I think it’s just happening a little bit at a time.” Josephine wonders, “what’s my home, as a settler?” Living on other people’s land, she reflects that Indigenous peoples “welcomed the first settlers and had a vision of sharing the land with them.” Although settlers have not respected this relationship, Josephine believes that invitation remains. She says,

I think that’s part of being a treaty person, that if I can live out my side of that treaty relationship and be respectful of the land that I’m on, I can actually be at home on that land...and I deeply appreciate that. I think that the more I love and respect the land that I’m on, my understanding is that there is more space for me on that land.

Josephine thinks of herself as being young on her journey, and continues to struggle with her colonial programming, fears, racist thoughts, and with interpersonal situations in which colonial dynamics come out. She accepts correction and guidance by Indigenous friends, colleagues, or Elders when she is off track, which is usually offered in gentle and subtle ways. At one point, Josephine was collaborating with an Indigenous colleague on a research project and was concerned about lapsing into relating with him in colonizing ways. She initially asked him to

tell her when she was doing this, but when she saw his hesitant response, Josephine reflected further. She came back and instead asked how *she* would know if she was shifting into a colonial way of being during their work together. Her colleague explained that Indigenous people may let her know by withdrawing in various ways, or through various types of teasing-- knowledge which was incredibly valuable to her work. “The people that I am closest to, they’ll find a way if I can hear it, they’ll find a way to let me know,” Josephine says, “So I have to learn how to hear it, and that’s my responsibility.” Her colleague has reminded Josephine of the importance that settlers doing this work stay in dialogue with Indigenous people, and this has become a part of her process. When Josephine works with a group led by Indigenous peoples, if she doesn’t understand or agree with their vision, she’ll seek to learn more. At the same time, Josephine is discerning in her work and when she hasn’t felt good about the direction the group is taking, she just stays away and engages somewhere else. She says,

There is a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives. I don’t need to align myself with everything or with every group. I need to find the people that I feel I can most effectively work with in a way that doesn’t push against some of my other values.

For example, when she notices that a group is operating out of oppressive colonial gender relations, “those would be groups I would just choose not to be so close to.”

Josephine believes that we are each responsible for our own reflexive individual healing work, and that the more we do this work, “the more we’re able to be safe friends and colleagues.” She is committed to healing work regarding her own privilege, and says, “There’s a real unpacking and dismantling and breaking-apart work. There are parts of it that are about breaking apart my understanding of myself and my understanding of my world. Sometimes it has to crack right apart into the pieces.” Josephine has begun to understand some of the everyday ways in which colonial processes are maintained, and “all of the barriers that prevented

things from changing...the layers and layers, and layers at every level from the very micro right up to the larger policies and laws that keep it going.”

“The work touches my heart a great deal,” says Josephine. She experiences feelings of fear, vulnerability, anxiety, guilt, sorrow, disconnection, and joy. Josephine describes feeling vulnerable in a largely Indigenous crowd when anger and pain about colonialism were being shared; and then the shame of recognizing that these feelings are a result of the racism she has absorbed from her environment. Josephine has also noticed that she and other white people often have anxiety about doing the wrong thing or of proving to be an unreliable and harmful person. Josephine has been in spaces where she has heard Indigenous people talking about being betrayed by allies, and feels it is important to let her anxiety come up so that she remains alert to the risk of doing harm. Sometimes, she says, “If I’m feeling really hurt by something that has happened, I do need to pull in for a bit, but it’s not for that long. I have to figure out how to reengage differently then.” She feels being hyper-alert and excessively introspective about one’s privilege and awareness can result in flaunting one’s awareness to impress others. It is more helpful, in Josephine’s experience, to just *be* in the work and to focus on how she can be of help. She works through her difficult emotions and learns to live with them because she sees that reconciliation won’t happen if “some of us aren’t willing to step out and to risk being wrong.” She reminds herself that these emotions will come up, and that is important to manage them. She says, “when I get to that space, I always go back to the relationship part and [think],

If you’re in authentic, close relationships, then there’s room to recover, hopefully, from most mistakes because there’s trust that’s built. It’s about a relationship, and if an action creates hurt, there are ways to recover from that. There are ways to heal.

When she feels like retreating, she will also root back to her spiritual values and her commitments, and may attend Indigenous community celebrations that bring her joy.

Josephine uses her privilege as an academic to be as informed as possible so that she can help other white people understand and learn. She strives to “use that education in a way that helps support the goals that I’m hearing Indigenous people wanting.” At her partner’s initiative, they have used their economic privilege to provide practical support to events. She says,

We did Idle No More during some really brutally cold days, and we would just walk down to the mall, go to the Tim Horton’s, and we would bring back those big things of hot chocolate and of coffee, because there were older people and there were young children who were really cold, and we would start handing it out... This is someplace that we can put out just a little bit of money, we can make a little bit of effort, and we can make people more comfortable in the work that they’re doing.

Josephine has also done the very practical volunteer work of “just being there at meals and serving the elders;” work that helps her get out of her head and ego and “keeps [her] connected to the right values.” Josephine has struggled at times with finding the balance of maintaining enough privilege to be able to put it to use in her work. In one of her workplaces, she was pulled aside and told that her advocacy for Indigenous peoples was starting to hurt her. She understood this to mean that she could lose credibility academically with her colleagues if she went beyond a certain point as an ally, and therefore have less capacity to influence the workplace and colleague’s attitudes. She says,

There’s a part of me that says it’s important to protect my ongoing position where I can create change – that role. And then, there’s that other role that says, “oh you’re just copping out.” So that’s part of the internal struggle, is when do I speak up, when do I pull back?... I would be willing to lose my job on a key issue, but it would have to be an issue that I think would so compromise my integrity to stay.

“On the one hand,” she says, “I’m working to actively dismantle my white privilege... but on the other hand, I’m using that white privilege to dismantle my white privilege.”

Josephine has been willing to be in uncomfortable and risky situations for her ally work, and to face losses. As a new and junior faculty member, “in a politically fraught moment with potentially serious risks and repercussions for [her],” Josephine spoke up and challenged non-

Indigenous faculty members to take responsibility for their roles in colonialism. When Josephine was one of two non-Indigenous people attending the Indigenous methodologies workshop with Lee Miracle, she felt hostility and distrust being directed at herself, as well as feeling incompetent and stressed. She says,

That was really difficult... [it's] part of dismantling some of my privilege and the things I take for granted about my identity, and it's coming face-to-face with the harm that people like me have done through research... I let myself get slapped down a few times, which happened in that workshop, but I chose to just accept it and to learn from it.

Josephine has made sacrifices in order to help Indigenous students succeed, investments that are at the detriment of spending time on other aspects of her career which also give her satisfaction and joy. She says, "I'm never going to have the money I should have because when we see needs...we're always buying groceries for students, like those kinds of things." Nonetheless, there are some limits to what Josephine is willing to give up for her work. Josephine says,

As a more mature person...I do need to have some protection for the years when I'm not working, and for my spouse. I have other responsibilities in my life that I need to think about and balance in that work. I'm not willing to give my health up because again it violates the idea of wellness and wholeness. My belief is that the moment that we start to unbalance, we're not only less effective but we're potentially dangerous. We risk being unbalanced then in everything we do. I don't believe that I'm so important that only I can do stuff. If that's true, then the moment is not ready for something to change. Because change never rests on one person.

Josephine reflects on how much she has gained and learned from her friendships with Indigenous peoples. She says, "They make me a richer, fuller person, with a different understanding of the world; they make me a more compassionate person. They make me wiser, because when people open their hearts we understand their lived experience better." She says, "[I've] gained such profound value from being invited into a closer understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being that are so different from the ways that I grew up and the society I grew up in." Her work is motivated by her "expanded view of who I'm connected to and who are

my brothers and sisters.” She considers “how good my life is on the backs of other people,” and says, “I can’t have a good life if my neighbor is not doing well.” Josephine asks, “How do you let things happen to your friends, your students, the people I care about? Because it becomes personal then, it becomes about people I care about.” The teachings Josephine learned in the church also motivate her through her understanding of being called to the work and trusting her emerging path.

Josephine notes that being a white person doing ally work with Indigenous and racially marginalized people, she can leave the work if she is tired, whereas they do not have this choice. Thus, it has become an ethical decision for her to stay in the work. Josephine has made life-long commitments to her ally and anti-colonial work, which are “a very integral part of who I am as a human being, how I understand my mission in the world.” At this point, having the knowledge she has, Josephine feels “I can’t not be engaged in it...I couldn’t turn my back on it...I can’t go back, I can only move forward now.” Realizing that racism and colonialism hurt all of us, she does her work for everyone.

### **Susanne McCrea**

**Identity and early influences.** Susanne McCrea is an artist, writer, mother, grandmother, environmentalist and activist, and ally of Indigenous people of this land. She was born and raised in an upper middle class neighborhood in Winnipeg by “very humanitarian-minded” parents who campaigned in the sixties against the racial bigotry of other parents who sought to influence the private school she attended as a child. Her father, a broadcaster and actor, “found some connection of value with people in almost every circumstance, encouraging [Susanne] to have a really broad social spectrum.” When Susanne transitioned to public school, she would have a few Indigenous schoolmates and would see the disparities between her relatively privileged life and

theirs. In grade eight, when Susanne dated an Indigenous boy who had been in fourteen foster homes, she noticed that his foster family dynamics were not right:

He had never had a birthday party. And these people locked the boys out of the house when they weren't home, so they couldn't go home at lunch time, they couldn't go home after school until the people got home to let them in...He doesn't ever get a new sweater.

She says, "that did have a real impact on me, that whole experience of knowing those children... at that time I just remember being so heartbroken for that boy." As a child, Susanne's beliefs and intuitions were respected and validated, and she faced little pressure to conform to Western religion. She was able to come to her own notion of spirituality, with some understanding that her ancestors were once a tribal people who lived in harmony with the cycles of nature.

**Learning and early activism.** A single mom at nineteen, Susanne went to journalism school and began a career in broadcast. When her mother built a retirement home near Pine Falls and Sagkeeng First Nation not far from a pulp mill, power dam, and Atomic Energy facility, Susanne says,

People in Sagkeeng were complaining that their backyards were eroding...And then a lot of our neighbors started to get cancer from eating fish, or at least that was the apparent correlation. We started getting slipped media reports of radioisotopes that were being spilled into the Winnipeg River, and pretty soon AECL [Atomic Energy Canada Limited] was talking about the proposal to bury radioactive waste under the Precambrian shield as a way of disposing it. That started a number of meetings with neighbors and people in the communities in our house...We started to plot and scheme what we could do to support a campaign to deal with some of this stuff, and ultimately, I ended up being involved very seriously in a campaign to stop the radioactive waste from being buried in the shield. That led to associations with people in the city, and some of them were activists. [It] also lent itself to relationships with people in Sagkeeng that had the same concerns.

She says, "Eventually there was a big environmental hearing, and a bunch of us were able to stop [Atomic Energy Canada from burying waste under the Shield]." Susanne says,

So far, they haven't been able to completely decimate the East Side of Lake Winnipeg, we still have the largest intact track of Boreal Forest in the world, and I've been involved in campaigning to protect that land...The best thing we can do right now is just hold them

off until we have a way of stopping them because they're just going to keep coming. That's why we have to keep having young people come up.

At the age of thirty-five, Susanne moved on to manage the Manitoba office of Greenpeace.

There, she connected with media and did outreach work and direct action. As she started getting out to the land more, she realized the importance of considering not only the land and water, but also “the fact that there are [Indigenous] people who live there, and that those people have a lot more right to say what happens on that land than we do.” She was able to help create a written policy about consulting Indigenous people for the organization. However, she did not always have the freedom to support community requests in ways she would have liked.

**Solidarity work.** Susanne says, “everyone is going to have a different angle on their work with Indigenous solidarity, and mine's mostly in the environmental realm.” She believes, “the main problem is taking away the land mass and moving people into prisoner of war camps and calling them the reserves.” Therefore “where the fight is really going to be fought...[is] on the land, directly on the land.” Leaving Greenpeace marked a shift, and Susanne began working with The Boreal Forest Network, now just *Boreal Action*, which is the North American affiliate of the Taiga Rescue Network, a European network of organizations across the circumpolar Boreal. It is “a Grassroots organization that had a mandate to support Indigenous-led campaigns on the ground,” Through which Susanne “got more of an international exposure to Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led campaigns, how allies could interface with those campaigns, and what was in fact helpful and appropriate.” This access to extensive and international networks has become a key aspect of what she has to offer in her work, as she is able to link ideas and needs with those who can help. As the Executive Director of Boreal Action, Susanne has done support work for Grassy Narrows First Nation in their ongoing logging blockade,



bringing additional international media attention to the struggle at pivotal moments. Susanne describes the early days of the blockade:

I can remember when I first met Judy [Da Silva]. She has a big family and...her daughter was pretty young, and I remember her saying, "I can't watch these logging trucks go back and forth by my door every day full of logs, and have my children see this and not do anything about it." ... The blockade was the culmination of some things that had gone on for numerous years. So the young women went and threw logs down, and they blocked the road. At that point we had this international network of people around the whole Boreal Forest area... We were able to inform people by email around the world, at 4:30 in the morning that there were trucks coming down the road at four in the morning and we wanted them to send faxes and emails and phone into the little local MNR office in Kenora and say, 'get these trucks off the road!' And so the actual beginning of that blockade was really exciting and significant--to be able to get the message out that the world is watching what's going on in this little place was something that we were able to help with, and that felt great...that just felt amazing to get people to email and fax and phone from Europe and Russia.

As a supporter, Susanne set up speaking events and media support, "getting spokespeople on the radio and television and newspapers." "It's been such a really beautiful example of how I think a lot of things should go," Susanne says. The blockade at Grassy Narrows "was a great opportunity to form relationships that were really appropriate with the community." She says,

I think a lot of people over the last 12 years have learned how to be allies and how to be supporters through that experience of a community that really knew what they wanted from people. I give Judy Da Silva a huge amount of credit for helping to develop some people that have worked on other things since then. So that's been one of the most enriching experiences that I've had, and our kids have known each other since they were little, and many other families that are both from there and from the city, even people on an international basis... In spite of how difficult the circumstances were, the joy and welcoming from community members, the feasts that we shared out there, the people that brought food, and the various people that came out to show support by staying in the blockade and doing karaoke in the temporary round house that was built out of tarps in the middle of January, singing together. This is life, right? It's not just, 'oh we're going to win this campaign and then we're going to go back home to our own families and communities.' It's community building and it's chosen family.

Susanne's involvement with campaigns that address damage to the lands and survival of a number of Indigenous nations by Manitoba Hydro has occurred over a number of years, and through several of her positions. She says,

When Wasquatim [Dam] was being posed, [I was] working with community members and getting to tour South Indian Lake, which was devastating and probably had the most impact on me of any community I've ever been to in the sense of really seeing the impact of humans on other humans and on nature, just to get power in our homes! It's pretty shocking. And the more I investigated that, the more I became convinced that they [Hydro] knew what they were doing and that it was a sacrifice of a small number to serve a larger number in somebody's idea of a justification.

Community members of South Indian Lake First Nation were

Put into Hydro shacks as they're called--they're just little plywood buildings. [They were] told to tear down their log homes that were all up and down the banks of the area that got flooded and were told, "we'll build you homes." And then they got put in these things that you couldn't live in the middle of the winter, and had wood chips in the ceilings so fireplaces catch the places on fire. And there are holes in the walls and [they are] not properly insulated. Having 80-year-old women hauling slop pails out in the middle of the winter. I just felt sad for humanity that people could be put in this position and lied to the way they were. [Then] they slapped Hydro meters on a place and charge them \$400 a month to try to keep themselves warm, and cut them off in the middle of the winter if they don't pay. And they change the direction of the water so that the places where children used to play, now the water ran in a different direction. The ice wasn't thick enough--there were drownings, and they didn't warn parents [that] this is going to be a dangerous area for your kids now.

Another community Susanne has worked with is Hollow Water First Nation. She says,

We started working with [the late] Garry Raven in Hollow Water First Nation a long, long time ago... We hosted a lot of gatherings at his place to develop materials around what could guide the principles for the province going forward on these communities-- what did they want, what did they not want... We did family gatherings where we would invite people from the city – families with children to come out [to Hollow Water First Nation] and just spend 4 days hanging around at a skill-share, cross-cultural atmosphere where Garry would do a pipe ceremony and explain what he was doing and take kids out picking plants... It was reciprocal, the community would share things with us, and we would share things with them.

Susanne shared her skills in media support, helping "voices from the community be heard in the city, nationally, and internationally." She feels that one of the greatest impacts of these gatherings was on children, including her granddaughter. She says, "You're in your classroom and somebody makes a nasty remark about 'that Indian kid' or something about a reserve, or a racist crack; the kids'll be like, 'that's not true, you don't know what you're talking about.'"

Different situations require different approaches and different types of support work.

Susanne believes that one's personality and gifts go hand-in-hand with what they can offer:

I've learned over time that it doesn't make any sense to engage other than in the ways that you have the most skill, and that there are other people that can step up and take on other aspects of the work more efficiently because that's their gift and that suits their personality... Do what you do best and that's where you're going to be the most effective. And because these things are escalating so quickly and so seriously, we would be wasting our time if we weren't using our skills the best way that we knew how.

After working on a few initiatives to stop toxic industry through environmental reform, Susanne has re-evaluated the effectiveness of this type of work and her role in it. She says,

You can try and go against that and spend all your time lobbying government, and in the back room with industry officials, but that doesn't suit my personality nor does it make the best use of my gifts... There are professors and people who can do this well, and I think they should be doing it. It's not the best use of my time because I haven't seen that working within that colonial system really makes any difference whatsoever, in the long run... I think that the basis for a long-lasting change is on the ground supporting the Indigenous people who live here, who have a long-term vested interest in the outcome and have much more to lose than the corporations that come in and just harvest and send the money out of the country. So from a practical standpoint, as well as a spiritual and emotional and human aspect, it's going to do more good in the long run... We aren't really getting very far with environmental reform and the earth is in huge trouble.

Susanne sees herself as a concerned person who does support work for "people who are operating community-led Indigenous campaigns to protect their rights on the land from resource extraction." Rather than focusing on urban campaigns, Susanne says,

My relationship has always been very much about people living on the land, because I think that a lot of the problems that happen in people moving into the cities are all directly related to losing the land and losing the rights and the resources on the land. So that's where my relationship started, with a common connection to the lands and waters.

In her work, Susanne seeks ways to "disseminate information and to magnify the voices of the Indigenous people with whom [she's] aligned." She shows up with a camera crew, helps build capacity, offers media spokesperson training, helps publicize events and information, has participated in environmental hearings, has organized petition campaigns, sets up social media

sites, and puts information out on websites and listservs. Susanne has sought to bring people inside is by including Indigenous artists in events:

We do believe in putting art into a lot of our events as a way to de-intellectualize some of these things, and as a way to get to the people through the heart. We've had a number of Indigenous poets come and do spoken word at cafés ... I think these things are critically important in terms of getting people out of their heads and getting people to feel things.

Having been involved in her work for some time, Susanne has reflected on successes and pitfalls. She says,

I think a lot of organizations that try to interface with Indigenous communities, in my opinion go about it the wrong way. Their intentions are good, but they don't really know what they're doing. So they make contact with chiefs and councils rather than with people inside communities that may have concerns, assuming that the chiefs and council represent the views of the community members--which may be true, but may also not be true, any more than we feel that our governments represent us...It never really made sense to me that they would go directly to what is essentially a colonial patterned government to form alliances.

Susanne has learned to look for community members that have concerns about what's happening to their environment by asking around. Susanne says, "It's crazy racist to think that just because somebody is Indigenous, that somehow means that you should follow them." She says,

You could be following them totally down the wrong path if you pick the wrong people. Even if they are community members or Elders, people are people, so use your discretion about who you choose to be in solidarity with. I tend to be in solidarity with the people that are the Grassroots people, that are on the ground, that have integrity, that I feel like I've got somewhere on the same page with...You have a right to be discerning in who you want to work with... not getting all wrapped up in the romanticism.

Another pitfall Susanne sees that may happen among educated white people who have read books and listened to political theories is "what we might be working toward might actually not fly on the ground or fit with how Indigenous people see their sovereignty." She says, "a theory is only as good as it can be practiced...[don't] take those theories and try to impose them.

Susanne's spirituality has affirmed her path of solidarity work. Susanne says, "I always felt my dreams were instructing me...I used to dream about the mountains crumbling, and the

fault lines going, and earthquakes, and land changes, and the earth shifting and never being the same again.” Around the time she started to do “more serious support work,” she had a “spiritual moment when [she] recognized that [she] was on that path irrevocably.” She says,

I was walking near the Forks... somewhere near the riverbank, and I heard drumming and singing. I was drawn to go and find it, and I felt like I knew it, I'd heard it, it was extremely lucid. It was only after a few minutes that I realized it wasn't really there. I was being called down to the river... I heard it and I felt it, and I recognized it as a call.

Susanne reflects on the spiritual history of her European ancestors:

It's been hundreds and hundreds of years that we've been colonized as a people. Finding out things about our own ancestry--our own spiritual practices from hundreds of years ago, that we were a tribal people initially, from our own countries... You start to understand that this was also done to us. But it was done to us so long ago. It's sad. We've been robbed of our own ancestral spirituality of the medicines. Our women in Europe were killed for 300 years, the wise women, the midwives, the medicine people. And then the universities were started and only the men with money were allowed to go to it. They took away a lot from us a long time ago... So for us to find an entry point, I think it's that place within yourself that knows who you are actually are. Because you're not who you've been told you are, you're not who you've been conditioned to believe you are... So it's way, way back there, but if you're a spiritual person you can draw on your own ancestors... To some extent, you're recreating what your ancestors did because not as much is historically known about that. But the understanding that there is spirit in all living things, the recognition of all the elements in spirit is very much the same. What I feel in my ancestral memory is that's a universal. If you have respect for every living thing, which includes the plants, the animals, the aquatic life, and the people, how can these values not be integrated into your everyday life and into everything that you do and are?... We know that the trees and the plants are virtually the same where my ancestors come from as they are here, and that plants have certain properties.

Through her journey of connecting with the earth-based spirituality of her ancestors, Susanne has noted the affinity with traditional Indigenous values and practices. She says,

I have certainly participated in Indigenous ceremony and teachings... and I think it's an honor to be invited and included. The teachings correspond with what I already strongly believe ... Even though we have our distinctions and we don't own another person's cultural teachings; at the root of all those things the understandings about creation and spirit is the same... I have a strong sense of who I am and where I come from and so I don't feel that I'm asking to assimilate into someone else's culture or teachings. It adds a rich character to my understanding of spirit. I think if someone gives me a teaching, then they think that I can honor that teaching, and so I've certainly accepted those things from people that I have developed love and trust and understanding with.

Through these teachings, Susanne has “stopped thinking about the land in terms of forestry.” She has also made a stronger connection with water as the women’s responsibility. She says, “the water is obviously intrinsically connected with the land...we very often forget about the watersheds.” Susanne says, “None of the support or awareness campaigns that we do in the city are as important as the Indigenous peoples’ relationship to the land here, and until the rest of us understand our connection to the land here, there’s not going to be a big improvement.”

As her work has been integrated into her life, it has involved her emotions. Susanne finds herself full of gratitude for “being where I am and for the people that I know and the connections that I’ve made.” Susanne says, “The people that you form relationships with, they’re in your life... Some of the people that I’ve done support work with, you go through some really crazy stuff together and they become like family.” She says, “In the end, it’s the most incredible, heartfelt connection that I’ve made with people that has given me an incredible amount of emotional energy to go on with.” Over time, Susanne says she has become more confident in what she says and in how she “represents [her] position vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples’ rights.” She says,

I feel now that people will back me up, that I don’t have to be quite as careful that I’m not covering everything or offending somebody. I feel like people know me and they know where I’m coming from, and I feel trusted and I feel supported. I don’t feel like it’s a landmine to navigate.

Susanne says, “I’ve heard it said that solidarity means that you have to take the same risks [as those with whom you are doing solidarity work].” While Susanne believes that this is not fully possible because socially privileged people can never share the same vulnerabilities as those who are marginalized, she has taken significant risks. She says,

I’ve been willing to give up a fair bit of income, I’ve been willing to sleep outside in the winter on a blockade, I’ve been willing to go to jail for things that I believe in--I’ve never

had to do jail time, but I've been arrested and put behind bars for short periods of time waiting for hearings and things.

She says, "I could've had a very different life from the one I chose, but I chose it with full consciousness that this fit my set of values." Rather than using her privilege "to have a \$300,000-a-year [job] working for a PR firm that tries to mitigate the damage done to their profile by an oil spill," she has done non-profit work for almost thirty years. Earlier in her journey, she struggled a bit with the "mistaken idea that I had to suffer in order to understand suffering." She says,

I think I may have gone a little too far with feeling that in order to relate, or to not feel--I don't know if guilt is the right word--but a sense that my privilege has been a matter of just being born into the right place and at the right time as a white person. I think at times I've given up too much. I remember one particular moment going to some event that we had organized, and I had some beater of a old bronco that [was] ready for the wrecker and I managed to get a little bit more life out of it. And I remember offering some people a ride home... We get outside and they're like, "Oh no, we have a vehicle." And it turns out they got this brand new beautiful SUV... I was like, "wait a minute here, maybe I don't have to live in poverty to be helpful and supportive, maybe in fact I could be more supportive if I had something to offer."

Although Susanne wouldn't have chosen to do different work, she might not have chosen to simultaneously give up "a lot of [her] own personal goals." Susanne has no retirement income, and is on shaky financial ground in the event that she can't work. Susanne says, "I am feeling the emotional strain of being worried about the future [as] a result of the choices I've made."

Susanne says, "If you want to decolonize, you got to get the colonization vibe out of your own [self]...in terms of questioning *is the world really the way that you grew up thinking it is? Is your history from high school, is that really the way things happened?*" "We have an obligation," according to Susanne, "to really listen to each other and ask questions, not to expect somebody in a disadvantaged position to explain it to us necessarily, but to find the truth of it within ourselves and to not react out of a place of defensiveness." Susanne believes the majority needs to realize,

There isn't this huge divide between us and the Indigenous people that are on the land here, in terms of where the earth is going if we don't support each other. I think the earth

people kind of have to come forward now and stick together, recogniz[ing] that this colonization is not serving them in spite of the fact that on the surface of it, they appear to have a greater privilege. But it's not serving them very well.

“If they could just find that this relationship here on the ground is actually one that could give us all hope for living on this planet together,” Susanne says, “that’s my vision of where the future could go.” “I don’t think we’re really being asked to leave at this point,” Susanne says,

We’re being asked to understand the relationship we have with Indigenous people, and the relationship they have with the land, and if we could be compatible in that way, and if the majority us could actually *get* that, then I think we might have a more just society.

Susanne sees it as a continuing priority for the future to try to shake middle class white people out of their complacency and to “help people find an entry point to engaging in these dialogues.” She sees the importance of outreach to “help other white people navigate their own decolonization,” because “critical mass is important...it would be a lot better if they were here and they really had more understanding of what’s going on in the land that they live in.” Susanne says, “Support networks across the country are much more solid than they ever were.” She says,

I feel that I’ve helped with that in my own part of the world, at least in terms of always being there to help network people...One of the most important things that we do is create a larger movement, create more people on the same page in more places. The problems are global, so while I do believe that working at your own place – your own home, your own homeland is really important, I think being able to network people across the country and across other countries even has been one of my greatest successes.

People “are going to have to step up and be really supportive on the ground,” Susanne says, as “people are standing up for their land all across the country.” Susanne says,

People are going to be taking back their land, people are going to be living more and more on their land, like the Unist’ot’en land, people taking back the grounds where the Hydro—Jenpeg Dam is, and people taking back Slant Lake and Grassy Narrows. You can only push people so far onto a little reserve with so much poverty and unemployment ... I think that you can only contain a people with that kind of a spirit so long.

As Indigenous people take back their land, Non-Indigenous supporters are needed to “go and be there and provide a presence, provide a safety net.” With racism being rampant,



Somebody better be there to watch, because you're going to get some redneck get out of the car and try to hit somebody. Or police violence happens too. But if there are witnesses, and witnesses there with a camera, if there are families there with cameras of all different nationalities, it's a lot less likely to happen. I think safety has got to be one of the primary roles for anyone who's doing support.

If Indigenous people could reclaim their sovereignty of this land, Susanne "would be quite happy to come under their protection." She says, "I think it would be a much better system than the one that we have now, quite frankly." Susanne says,

The people here on the land signed Treaties under duress. Treaties can't be signed under duress by international law. Treaties have to be signed by common understanding, in times of peace without duress, without coercion. So in my opinion, the Indigenous people that were forced to basically sign and get something, or get nothing and be subject to genocide, didn't have a choice. Consequently, I still believe they are the sovereign people of this land. Sovereignty means that resource companies can't come into your land and operate without your permission, not just consult you in some marginalized way. I have a strong relationship and understanding to what sovereignty really is, and I'm all for it!

Susanne does solidarity work because it is just part of who she is. She says, "life is an integrated thing and if this is what you believe, and this is the way you live, the line between work and life is very, very thin." She says,

I can't separate this deep affiliation and affinity that I have for the earth, and for life, and for ceremony, and for friendship, and real kind of Treaty building. And I'm not talking about the numbered treaties. A real sense of an ancestral connection, that's not something that you can say 'oh this is this compartment of my life.' It's a genetic thing, it's like in your genes, in your DNA, and it's not something that you can separate out.

Susanne says, "if we don't take a stand as we go along our lives, how have we lived it, and not only what are we doing to provide an example to generations after us, but how are we going to be accountable to them?" She says,

You start looking at it from an ancestral standpoint and digging back ... and what they would think about what's happened here on this land. I feel that I am hearing their voices and feeling guided by that sense of responsibility to be honorable, as tribal people to another tribal people.

Doing this work, for Susanne, is “just sort of a taking back of my life, a taking back of my path...decid[ing] that [I’m] ... going to take back [my] own tribal ancestry and pick it up...that’s who I want to be for the children that come after me.” “Not just for my own children,” she says, “but all the ones to come, and for the animals, and the ones that fly and the ones that swim.” Susanne feels “that it’s our responsibility to do what we can to support the people who were here before us. It’s their land.”

### **Dave Bleakney**

**Identity and early influences.** Born in New Brunswick on Mi’kmaq territory in 1959, Dave Bleakney is a trade unionist, humanist, and anti-colonialist of Irish, Welsh, and Scottish ancestry. He sees himself as “a product of [his] society,” including the colonialism, ignorance, Protestantism, and Eurocentrism it contains. Reflecting on his programming, Dave says,

I just recently discovered my first grade scribbler, [from] when I first started to learn how to print and write sentences. The first sentences that I learned to write as a five-year-old in school is, “I love my queen.” “I love my country.” “It is very good.” So there’s all these sort of messages to a child. There’s been a construction that completely denies any reality about the history of this place. How is it that a queen across the sea is *my* queen? These were important questions for me as a kid that I never really got straight up answers to. We’re conditioned to be colonialists.

When Dave’s mother told him of the Mi’kmaq people living in their village in her lifetime, Dave remembers wondering “What happened to them? Where are they? Why did they go?” He says,

I didn’t really feel I got a complete answer to that question. My mom said they had been moved to a reservation, but that wasn’t unpacked for me. Those childhood questions stuck with me...I always had this feeling that something wasn’t right... And as time has gone on I feel like I’m waking around a land of ghosts that haven’t been put to rest. There’s a lot of noise in these lands that needs to be let go. Because that energy’s still around, of oppression, and the famines and the disease and all of that stuff that happened here. So I’m always carrying this, even as a kid.

Dave’s innate sensitivity and curiosity have meant his early years were plagued with tensions between his socialization and his critical questioning. When questions about the origins of

Canada arose, the response Dave got in school was, “The British came and civilized everybody.”

Dave wondered how this was different from what Hitler did: “Didn’t he go and invade places and take land?” Dave was also indoctrinated with stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. He says,

Growing up, I heard a lot from other kids about Native people being on welfare and breaking the law, always being drunk, and never wanting to work. And so it perpetuated this myth that there was just this lazy group of people laying around in these lands and the British arrived and tried to help them not be lazy, but they just still wanted to be lazy.

**Learning and early work.** In the 1980s, Dave began to learn more as a result of Ronald Reagan, and as a result of “brave people [he] met on the street in Calgary,” when he moved there to look for work. He encountered the first actual Indigenous people he would ever meet on park benches, people who were “very kind, and human, and damaged.” Dave experienced a connection. He says,

I can’t explain it, I just felt more at home. I grew up in a small village, and I had to get out of there because it seemed so narrow minded to me-- a lot of people just talking about other people... And then I met people who didn’t gossip at all. That’s the thing that hit me, was the conversation was about observations, without judgment, and humor, and this resonated with me. In my culture, people are pretty serious, and there is a lot of judgment.

Around this time, Dave was paying close attention to the situation in Nicaragua, where the majority of people are Indigenous, and he was horrified by the actions of Ronald Reagan against the Sandinistas. This and other events brought Dave closer and closer to his anti-colonial work.

“Once Oka happened,” Dave says, “I don’t think there was any going back for me. I went beyond sympathetic questioning to ‘I’m going to try not to be part of that oppression anymore.’”

The murder of Dudley George in Ipperwash in 1995 also made a strong impression. He says,

[Dudley George was] protecting his land – trying to reclaim land that had been given temporarily to the government during the Second World War, that was to return immediately after [the war]. So they went and shot him. Not only did they shoot him, they refused him medical attention. He was dying, his brother had to drive him to a hospital, so they flattened his tires. So he had to drive to a hospital with flat tires and Dudley died. They hung that on one man, Kenneth Deane, who was suspended for the next seven years or so with full pay and benefits, and he never did any time for that. He

shot an unarmed man that was of no threat. But he was an Ojibway man, and that made it, you know. So Dudley George was huge for me...I think that was when I really [claps]. Yeah, that was a big trigger for me, and I think it went into a lot of anger and that eventually became more focused into doing something.

Dave has made his anger known to Ontario Provincial Police, and to Mike Harris who was the Premier at the time Dudley George was murdered:

When I run into OPP, or I'm ever in a demonstration and they start laying their stuff on me, I just look at them and say, "I remember Dudley George. Your systems, your tools, your toys, your guns, they don't mean anything to me because you guys killed Dudley George – you murdered him." I don't like to be a shit disturber, but I got satisfaction once. Mike Harris, who was Premier at the time, who was alleged to have said in a meeting, "I don't care how you do it, but get those fucking Indians out of there," [and] afterwards was when the shooting happened. But he had a golf tournament out here, a number of years ago when he was still Premier. There was a big crowd along the fairway just screaming at him. So he left the party...I was maybe 20 feet away from him. Just me and him and the guys he was playing with. And I just kept repeating, "You killed Dudley George, Harris. You killed him. You killed Dudley George, you know it." I wanted him to hear that, I wanted him to have a place where he couldn't escape from, just for a minute, because they're always isolated from that stuff. And I can't know what he was thinking, but he never looked up, the whole time, there was silence. Those four men played in silence, and he never looked up, and then he got his ball, and left.

Dave's relationship to anti-colonialism is grounded in "having many teachers, and also having watched, and listened, and learned." Dave has been inspired in his work by two Indigenous activists and teachers in particular, Arthur Manuel and Wolverine. He says

Wolverine took me out to his garden in B.C. and said, "The first rule in freedom is you have to be self-sustaining in food"...That stuck with me. Here's this old man out in the woods having carved this beautiful place, growing food... Some would call him a militant –he defended his territory, and went to jail for it, but militant about what? The only thing that I've ever seen him militant about is the earth, and beauty, connection, understanding, and peace. And he lives it every day with the soil.

In 1998, Dave attended a founding meeting of People's Global Action, a Zapatist-inspired global event. His learning was greatly impacted by spending time with "Indigenous people from the Americas, from Southeast Asia, and Polynesia." He says, "being together—those were places that I jumped a long way, where I started to understand this and see it more clearly, and people

were very generous and patient with me.” During a People’s Global Action meeting in Bangalore, India, Dave was invited to spend time with an Indigenous group that was being moved because a dam was being built in their territory. They refused to leave and some were arrested and later released following a public outcry. He was moved by their wisdom and their pity for those drowning them. Dave was surprised to find a similar stance of compassion and forgiveness in the *Prison Writings* of Leonard Peltier, a book that would also impact his learning.

**Anti-colonial work and continued learning.** Anti-colonial work, at its core, is about Indigenous peoples in these lands, according to Dave. He believes, “Indigenous people are not just another identity group that we need to be kind to...Actually, it’s a fundamental relationship to the land and title that we agreed to, that our ancestors agreed to.” It’s a contract that has not been honoured. Dave says, “the question of relations between settlers and Indigenous people is very much fundamental to our lives on this land, and potentially to our survival.” An aspect of Dave’s anti-colonial work involves supporting a number of First Nations during periods of intense struggle, supporting Indigenous activists and Indigenous-led activist events, and involvement with Defenders of the Land, a network of Indigenous communities and activists in land struggle across Canada. He has supported Burnt Church First Nation, Elsipogtog First Nation, Tyendinaga, and Barriere Lake, among others, in their struggles to protect and retain their traditional lands. The Algonquins of Barriere Lake have existed in their homelands since time immemorial, and have never signed a treaty or gave up any land. Dave says, “the State comes in and decides that they’re just going to develop—mine, cut the trees, destroy the place.” He says, “that’s a big one for us around here...if something happens in Barriere Lake, we’re going to get up there.” Dave has been transformed by this work. He began thinking “oh, we’re

coming in to support you and help you,” and left thinking, “wow, I would sure like my society to be governed the way theirs is.”

Much of Dave’s work has focused on educating postal workers. After seven years working on the night shift as a postal worker, Dave became The National Union Representative for Education of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). Dave and others have written curriculum for worker-based education that is delivered across Canada. Going beyond typical union education, they offer direct action training, a course on Indigenous worldviews, and a Turtle Island course on the history of the lands Canada occupies. The Turtle Island course is taught by Indigenous CUPW facilitators to a settler audience, and utilizes local historical examples of what happened to the people on the land. They also teach about the diversity of unique Indigenous nations. Dave describes the impact of such work:

One of our members from Calgary [got] up and said, “You know, I had all these biases and I took the Turtle Island course, and it changed my life.” Now, if [this] everyday, working-class guy, not really grounded in historical truth, and living in a city where First Nations people are frequently attacked, ridiculed, and dismissed as being lazy, or drunks, and all these stereotypes, can take a course for a few days, facilitated by Indigenous people and do a complete 180 on their understanding to the point that it changed their life, I think there’s fire there.

Finding spaces to introduce settler society to the notion of decolonization is important, according to Dave, whether that be “in academia, in schools, in unions, anywhere settler society gathers.”

Dave feels that education about history could help people get out of the “charitable Western you-poor-Indians, we were so bad, we want to help you kind of stuff” and understand that it’s actually “those people that are helping us right now, muddle through our craziness, muddle through our historical amnesia.”

When Dave teaches, he draws on what he learned in Barriere Lake and other communities, using an education circle. This creates an environment where “more participation

happens, more voices are heard, [and] more listening occurs.” Dave says, “there’s power in the circle, and that’s been a huge contribution to my work.” Dave’s educational approach is face-to-face, and based on invitation, questioning, observing, and explaining, not preaching. Rather than “beating people over the head,” Dave finds places where doors can be opened when he teaches. It is not easy for people to learn that “society had been a lie, and that we’ve only been given selective historical truths, and people aren’t always convinced by facts.” Dave tries to “leave someone with a question rather than a final statement.” He may ask, “Well I wonder though, I wonder if the people that wrote the history books had an agenda? And leave it at that.” Dave feels it is imperative that settlers hear Indigenous voices speaking about history and about working together to build a different society, so he arranges for speakers to come in and creates space for honouring and recognition. Dave says, “there’s always something going on here. We’ve supported Leonard Pelletier, the guy that’s been a political prisoner in a U.S. jail for all these years since almost the beginning, and we still send sustaining funding to his campaign.” At union functions, they “honour the land and the territory that we’re on, wherever that’s situated on Turtle Island; and remind ourselves that our ancestors made an agreement with Indigenous peoples on these lands that hasn’t been honoured.” He feels this may help people “understand that maybe we ought to think about assisting, standing with people.” When the Six Nations Confederacy occupation at Caledonia occurred, Dave says,

We happened to have a class of postal workers and many of them didn’t know anything much about it, other than what they’d seen on the news....So we went up and asked if they would be okay with sending us a speaker, and she came down and spoke to the group and really moved them. And so everybody wanted to go up there, so we did. We gathered supplies and we went up in motorcade, and there were postal workers, all settlers whether new Canadians or old--right there in the lines. And we got a lot of learning that day. So it tells me those moments can connect... It’s beautiful.

During the first months of the Idle No More movement, Elders, youth, men, and women were brought in for a lunchtime workshop in the new Winnipeg postal plant. Dave describes,

Canada Post is like a military operation. You have to be on time. You have a 30-minute lunch. So people came into the cafeteria to hear this workshop, and when the bell went off [indicating] that their break was over, they stayed. They sat there, they kept listening... There was something magical happening in that moment. Now if you'd gone out and polled all those people before and asked, "What do you think of Idle No More?" [They'd say] "Oh, Indians are drinking and they [don't pay] tax, and they go fish out of season"-- they'd say all this crap. But there was a very different vibe that they were coming out with after. And those people went back to work that day in a very different space.

A big emphasis in Dave's work has been deconstructing his own culture and learning from Indigenous peoples. He believes we have a choice of either maintaining or deconstructing the current paradigm. Dave's questioning nature has led him to deconstruct many dimensions of his own culture and to work toward a shift in values. "I think most people want a better life and a better world," Dave says, "it's just, we've been confused in our thinking of what that better life is." He asks, "Is a better life getting a 60 hour-a-week job? Is a better life getting a job in the tar sands and having money to spend on over-priced housing and eating bad food in restaurants?" Dave asks, "Who decides money is valuable?...Is a smile valuable? Is happiness of a child valuable? Is dignity in old age valuable? Then I'd say that we're very impoverished in this society." He says, "basing our society on job growth reproduces more consumption, more destruction, more consumption, more destruction, where does it end?" Everything is about possession. Dave says, "If I don't protect it somebody will steal it." "But what if there was nothing to steal?" he asks. "What if we could all read this book, everybody could have it?" he asks. "We're so insecure," Dave says, "that we need these things because we feel that's who we are, were naked without them." We are attached to meaningless things that "only have pretend value, we've created a make-believe game...you just can't eat a dollar."



“I’ve got a real thing with time,” Dave says, “I think time is bars, it’s like a jail, it’s like imprisonment.” He says, “we’re so motivated and constrained by time—that too is another form of European social control—breaking down time into increments and then speeding up our lives within it so time doesn’t work for us, we work for it.” He says,

When we ask Indigenous people to speak, we say this is when you start –you only have 10 minutes. And then if somebody takes 30 minutes, we get all worked up about it, right? And I’ve learned that it’s over when it’s over, and that if we listen with open ears, it doesn’t seem like any time has passed at all. But when we have our lens of our schedules and our cell phones, and “we got to do all this and that,” we don’t think about the value of something in our lives... So we let time govern us. That’s one thing I learned, and I struggled with it. It took me a long time to get to the point where I just listen with open ears, and if that Elder or that person feels they have more to say... I know I learn stuff if I just keep my ears open... We could all use a bit of that.

“We’ve got to figure that out, the nature of work, and what we’re working for, and our relationship to time,” Dave says. He sees that mainstream society is missing spiritual and relational connection, as well as true freedom. Our lives are so corporatized, Dave says, that it co-opts our time “so we’re too busy that we don’t have the chance to sit down and build a fire in the street in our neighborhood... and talk about stuff. Everything’s decided for us.” He says,

I don’t think this society is free – what, I’m free to choose Pepsi or Coke? Am I free to chose a water fountain? Fresh water in the river down here--to put a cup in it, am I free to chose that? No, somebody’s made that decision for me. But I can buy Pepsi or Coke. That’s not freedom, and I think lifting the veil off of that is something that [Indigenous] cultures do in very profound ways, for anybody caring to listen.

Dave is also troubled by our propensity toward lip service, in which we “say the right things and then do the wrong things.” He says, “we can say ‘I’m sorry,’ and smile while we have a knife in your back.” This was exemplified in Harper’s residential school apology. Dave says,

If you want to apologize and reconcile, then *do* the things that result in meaningful reconciliation. And stealing land, and polluting it and putting Indigenous people in jail and allowing their women to be killed, I don’t think is much of an apology.

Dave says, “our future as a species is tied up in this. So if we want to survive, I think it would be a good time to maybe consider that there’s some other options before us.” “We’re killing ourselves,” Dave says, “This is a slow mass suicide.” He says,

If I said to you, ‘I don’t want to live anymore, I’m going to go outside and kill myself right now,’ you’d probably phone an ambulance and the police in hopes that I would get help. But we kill thousands of people every day with greed, and environmental destruction, environmental terrorism and bombs – thousands, every day. And we’re going to kill the whole species, and that seems to be a suicide to be equally, if not more, concerned about.

Dave believes the changes in values we so badly need are already present in Indigenous understandings and relationships. Rather than continuing on our path of destruction, Dave wonders “what would it be like to actually engage with Indigenous worldview?” He says,

There are no peoples on earth that are related to the land and the water in the way that Indigenous people [are]. It’s a special relationship, and it’s that special relationship that’s going to save humanity. I’m deeply convinced of this. We can no longer continue in this relationship to the earth and the land and each other...So I don’t think there’s a choice now about the roles that settlers have to play, if we’re concerned about people that come after us, or even our children, or even our children’s children...Maybe it’s time, in terms of the survival of our species, that we can learn another way of being.

Dave doesn’t believe we need to give up who we are or take on Indigenous religions in order to learn. “I don’t want to become a pretend Indian. I want the people in my world to become human,” Dave says. Indigenous peoples have provided Dave with another path. He says, “It doesn’t mean my path is just like theirs, it doesn’t mean I want to be a guy who now braids my hair and wears regalia, as that isn’t my culture.” He does, however, want a culture of respect, dignity, and connection, as exemplified by Indigenous communities. Dave says, “the relationship to the earth is our survival...if we ignore that connection, we do it to our detriment [and to the detriment of] those who come after us.” He believes settlers need to “incorporate ourselves into a sharing of this land like we agreed to in the first place.” Dave honours the land by being attentive to choices of “what we eat, where it comes from, who grew it, whether it’s processed or not.”

Although Dave grew up Baptist as a child and “wasn’t particularly religious,” he sees spirituality as the power we feel when we “get down and put our hands on the earth, and empty our minds, and just feel that.” He says, “spirituality is an ingredient missing from our society. Spirituality is “ancestors walking around behind us that we don’t see, that have come before us to try to take us to a better place.” He believes “our spirits are connected to the land and life.” Dave has learned from Indigenous peoples that “all living things have value and have spirit, [which is] key to then maintaining a respectful humanity and relationship to the earth.” Meeting Wolverine was a big spiritual moment for Dave. Another was being given a stone by an Elder before he passed on. Dave says, “he didn’t know me, and within a minute of meeting me, he said, ‘You need this. I can see that you’re suffering, take it, use it.’”

The mistakes Dave has made in his work have caused him to grow and learn. Once, when he was involved in planning an action, he liaised with a Mohawk contact who had assured him that the community and the Elders were on board with the action. Dave later saw this was not the case. When Dave’s group got to the reserve, people expressed, “why are you using us again as your platform—using us and our people and our land? We don’t want you here.” Dave learned that “if you’re doing work in the communities, make sure that you’re doing work with the community and not one guy.” Dave has also learned that when non-Indigenous peoples are “called upon to support Indigenous peoples that we stand there under their direction.” He believes that when Indigenous peoples invite settlers in despite everything that has been done in our name, “we’ve been invited into a special place, and have to have humility... acquiescing in a way, understanding that this is their land and we are in their communities.” Dave points out that “every person is not the same, and every community is not the same.” He has seen situations in which Indigenous communities are split, and some are advocating over-development and

destructive capitalism. While Dave hesitates to critique in light of the track record of white people telling others how they should be doing things, he says, “you don’t want to detach when nonsense happens”--when the planet is being destroyed, or people are being sexist or abusive. Dave believes settlers “have to learn how to walk through those situations.”

Dave has experienced curiosity, sadness, nervousness, disappointment, anger, and shame in his work. When Dave first began his work, he says, “I can remember being a little bit nervous around Indigenous people. Because maybe I was afraid they’d be angry.” Later, he would find openness, humour, and a willingness to converse in Indigenous communities. In his work, Dave hears stories that make him cry, of “the crimes that are happening in the society, whether it’s people not having enough to eat, being confined, or being sent to reservations where [they have] less and less land, or whether [corporations] want to mine.” Dave says, “sometimes I get very sad, thinking ‘what if we don’t turn this around? What’s going to happen to my daughter? What’s going to happen to her kids?’” Dave experiences anger at the “deep unfairness” he sees. He says, “Oka really lit the fire under me—I could see, just the deep injustice of that, and the way they tried to portray the people in that community as somehow like a bunch of terrorists, or crazy people...Gustafsen Lake in B.C.” He says,

Every time I see a police officer harass somebody just because they’re Indigenous, I get really angry. And I feel helpless. And there have been times I’ve tried to intervene, and have, but when you do that you also face consequence for doing it. The missing and murdered women is an absolute shameful atrocity. I’m ashamed that anyone would call me Canadian. That’s not something I want to be a part of. How could hundreds and hundreds, and hundreds of women disappear in this country? And not be found, not get the same kind of attention... That makes me very angry.

Dave says, “I can’t even imagine what it would be like to lose your sister, to lose your land, to lose your way of life, to lose your language, to lose your children. Imagine, the theft of

children!” He says, “It makes me angry that we continue to violate treaties, that we continue to steal land, [and] that they’re trying to eliminate title to the land.” He declares,

It makes me angry that Indigenous people are under-represented in the job sector except for resource extraction, which tells me that the resource companies know they can divide communities by giving Indigenous people jobs to destroy their own land because they need the money. That makes me really angry, and that makes me really sad.

Dave says, “if [I’m] just angry, then I have to accept I’m a part of the problem too...I can be all righteous, but what have I done to change this?” He says,

It’s our responsibility as settlers to not make the mothers responsible for... getting justice. We got to tear down those walls in Parliament and make sure that happens. We can’t rest until that’s done. All those mothers and sisters and grandmothers, they deserve so much better and so do their families... Our ancestors agreed to something else.

Dave says, “we have to find our strength in those moments [of sadness] because nothing changes if we just cry.” He says, “I still get angry. I still get sad, but I try to channel it.” Dave says, “We have to believe we can win, we have to believe that love and truth will prevail.” Dave also experiences joy and empowerment in his work. He says,

When Chief Spence was standing up in Victoria Island, when they were doing the round dances at Polo Park in Winnipeg, it was all I could do to keep from crying from absolute joy. I felt liberated, I just felt absolutely free in that moment. So those tears can also be happy tears too ... I’m so inspired by those people who still stand, and tall, and say it humbly from the mountaintops. And they’re still there. They’re still supporting humanity to take a different path. That gives me hope.

He says, “I’ve gotten so much more back, so much enrichment inside, mentally and emotionally from this relationship than I could ever give.” Dave says, “I feel my humanity has grown.”

Dave says, “we’ve had examples on these lands that we can do things in a more hospitable, kind way, and respectful way, and stimulating way, and powerful way too.” He says, “so that would be my vision, that we honor the Two Row Wampum and actually come together to understand each other in order to save our children and to save the future, and the animals, and the earth.” Dave believes it’s time to “stand up, as settlers, and to listen to what’s being asked of

us.” He says, “I’d like to go to my grave knowing that I gave it my best shot...that maybe others would do the same and maybe my daughter would be proud of her dad for doing it.” Dave does his anti-colonial work because of the historical tragedy that we have to right. He says,

So I’m fighting. I’m not just fighting for Indigenous people, out of guilt. I’m fighting for my people – my community. I’m fighting for everybody. In small ways I make my contribution like anybody else, and I make it consciously, and I feel I’m a better person for it. I feel actually more grounded because of it, I feel freer because of it.

He wants “to do something honorable for something that’s been done in [his] name that’s very dishonorable.” Dave says he continues his work because, “I have a role and a responsibility--this land has provided things for me that haven’t been returned yet.” For Dave, Indigenous communities are “a voice in the wind...telling us that everything is possible, and that we all have a choice.” He says, “I wish my people knew that, I wish they knew they had a choice.”

## **Rick Wallace**

**Identity and early influences.** Rick Wallace is a white middle class Toronto-based Canadian settler who holds a PhD in Peace Studies and has been involved in decolonization work for at least twenty-five years. Rick’s mother grew up on a small fishing island in the Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia. He says, “when I look at where [my decolonization work came from], it’s very much rooted in experiences I had as a child visiting there.” Rick explains,

We were living in Toronto in a nice, split-level home, we would go down to visit [relatives] on this island... It’s hard to articulate it at 5, 6, 7 years old, but I could feel something didn’t feel right here. My cousins lived in a very different house, lived in a very different world than we did...there was a lot of alcoholism and poverty and lateral violence going on in the fishing community.

Disparities were also observed by Rick when riding through Saugeen First Nation on summer trips to his family’s cottage in Southampton, Ontario. Fifty-three year old Rick recalls,

My father plays golf and so we would drive through the reserve once or twice a week, to go meet him at the golf course. And going through a reserve in the 1960s ...it was horrific, there were literally one-room shacks. It reminding me of some of the poverty

that I'd seen in Nova Scotia... We'd get into our family car, we'd drive through this poor community, and then we'd go to [my father's] golf course--which of course is filled with white people on these nice lawns... that's the kind of thing that started to make me wonder at a very young age... There seem[ed] to be a very discernable group of people in Canada who seem to be leading a very different existence.

In spending summers on his mother's small fishing island, Rick also grew up near Bear River First Nation (near Deep Brook, Nova Scotia), not even knowing it existed. He asks, "How could I not know that?" He says, "[colonialism] really disconnects us from realizing that that relationship is still existent, it's seemingly invisible." Around the age of twelve, Rick thought, "I want to become a human rights lawyer, and I want to work on Aboriginal law." He says, "for 7 or 8 years that was my goal, because I could see something was wrong." Rick was also influenced by his grandmother's faith-based social justice activism, and she instilled in him,

We have a social responsibility to each other...we are our brother's and sister's keepers. If one person is suffering, in a sense we're all suffering... We have a responsibility out of love and caring... not to shut our eyes to it.

**Early activism and learning.** Rick's journey into decolonization work was marked by an accumulation of experiences that pushed him to a point of recognizing the dramatic inequality, broken relationships, and history of genocide impacting Indigenous peoples in Canada. Working with the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) in the eighties, Rick did solidarity work on behalf of the Inuit of Labrador in response to NATO low-level flight testing that was impacting the ecosystems of their traditional territories. He also did advocacy work with the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe around their land claims when clear cutting on their traditional territories threatened old growth forests. He says, "the environment was the pivotal issue, but this land belongs to First Nations people, so I was up there because of that." Through a former partner, Rick was connected to members and events of the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples (CASNP), which also taught him much. The Oka Crisis

highlighted the absurdities in the relationship between Canada and the Mohawks of Kanehsatake, for Rick, and was another instance that led to his work. He was struck by

The inability to actually hear the story of a community who had been in a 400-year struggle to get back their land which had been illegally taken, and then to have the nearby town propose that they'll build another 9-hole golf course on land that was sacred to them.

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** For Rick, “underlying decolonization work is the idea of rebuilding, revitalizing, [and] reconstituting trustful relationships.” The work has a very particular focus on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people here, which is different for Rick, from “the pro-choice, anti-poverty, or anti-nuclear work that [he’s] done.” He has learned from peoples in Treaty 3 that “Treaty isn’t just a partnership between First Nations and settlers. There’s a third party which is actually the land itself and the spirits of the land.” He says “colonialism [has] been a really detrimental, disrespectful, and destructive approach to our whole relationship in connection to the land...[and] the land itself has memories.” He observes,

Because people like myself, as Euro-Canadians, here are immigrants, it’s very easy to lose a sense of continuity with the land. We move around so much...our families get disconnected, our memories get disconnected, our sense of attachment...our oral histories get forgotten, even our family memories get forgotten. So I think colonialism really leaves for me a profound disconnect with the land around me, and I’m constantly having to work on it...Now that said, when I’m at High Park in Toronto, or when I’m canoeing somewhere, or when I’m hiking, I do feel that immediate connection with the land, which sort of circumvents the kind of denial that colonialism has created. But again, the land has a history, and it has a history with the peoples, and that’s not spoken about. So it’s kind of like we don’t really have the full relationship because we don’t have the full story.

Rick believes there are many ways to be involved in solidarity or decolonization work: “emotional, spiritual involvement, friendship involvement...within my own community, and together with First Nations communities.” Also, because “the world is made up of really contextualized localities,” and each community has its own dynamics, Rick believes the same



recipe for change will not work everywhere. Rather, the solution is “to create community processes by which communities themselves come up with their own solutions.” This can be challenging for Euro-Canadians whose cultures often emphasize “mechanistic, generalized, or homogenous ways” to deal with issues when what is really needed is “sensitivity, deep listening, and respect.”

Much of Rick’s decolonization work has focused on Indigenous solidarity, political advocacy, and education. He has supported the blockades of the Grassy Narrows First Nation Anishinaabe and the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe. He sees blockades as an effective means to protect land, bring attention to treaty violations, and put pressure on the government, changing the negotiating position. He takes part in demonstrations, and believes they have impact by bringing visibility in urban centres to issues such as the treaty violations of clear-cutting and mercury poisoning which may occur in more remote areas. Organizing public talks serves to “create spaces for First Nations communities to directly speak to people without it being filtered by the media.” Rick has provided materially to campaigns, such as the Sisters in Spirit Campaign, and to public events. He has used his privilege and skills to provide financial support and to access connections and create openings that help with logistics for a number of events. He has helped First Nations activists write funding proposals, and has circulated petitions, and produced radio shows to raise consciousness.

In Rick’s experience, the trust of First Nations communities has to be earned. History has given communities many reasons not to trust settlers, and trust is earned by doing—listening, participating, and being respectful of how the Indigenous community frames the conflict and what their priorities and processes are. He says, “If decolonizing work is about anything, it’s about giving up control and inverting the power relationship; and that can be a challenge

sometimes, especially when I may not fully agree with the strategy.” Non-Indigenous peoples might have common environmental or justice interests in the work, but each Indigenous community’s unique context—resources, time, epistemology, ontology, relationship with the land, and relationship to dreams means decision-making may happen in ways “very different from how an NGO works.” Therefore it is important that non-Indigenous peoples “recognize that communities have a lot of knowledge [and] not be patronizing, or not thinking you can come in with the answers.” It is important to

Listen very carefully and realize that there might be different agendas. . .there’s not necessarily one leadership, whether you work with the band council, whether you work with traditional [people], whether you work with the community activists. They could be at loggerheads. They could have different approaches. So you need to be very careful about how you approach that. You need to ask them what they’re looking for and what they need, you need to understand that if it’s on their territory, this is their struggle, and so you need to work by privileging their knowledges and understandings and realizing that it’s culturally different than you own.

Decolonization work may fail, in Rick’s experience, if non-Indigenous activists don’t take the time to develop trust with Indigenous communities and are in and out after short periods of time. It may fail when non-Indigenous peoples put their own priorities above those of the community, when they adopt strategies that could be dangerous for First Nations communities, when they promise things they can’t do, when they ask Indigenous communities to participate in initiatives they are directing while Indigenous communities don’t have equal say over the process and strategy, and when non-Indigenous peoples center themselves in media engagements.

Rick says, “Decolonization work isn’t only assisting and supporting First Nations communities in the struggles that they’re facing. It’s also about how we change our own dialogues as non-Indigenous Euro-Canadians or settlers.” This involves education that disrupts social discourses and narratives of silence or bias, and learning more about Treaty and our responsibilities within it; education that “gets us thinking that there is actually this historical

relationship and an ongoing relationship...about obligations, and that we can't continue to have this...settler-slash-let's-try-and-erase-Indigenous-peoples-in-this-country kind of attitude."

Rick says, "Treaties aren't just about First Nations communities getting something - we're all getting something. We've been allowed to share this land with [Indigenous] people, but we have reciprocal obligations." He says, "that's the basis of the relationship that began from the 1500s onwards; this was supposed to be a parallel journey where there was going to be a respect for differences and it would be mutually beneficial." "Treaties are being violated in almost every imaginable fashion in the country," he says. He would like to see "Euro-Canadians really understand what was the spirit behind the Treaties...[because] a just society starts off with us acknowledging, understanding, and revitalizing the treaty relationship." For Rick, this means "we are occupying the same territories together," that "First Nations communities have a right to construct their own ways of development...and political control based on their cultural values," and that we work alongside each others as "partners, neighbors, and relatives."

Rick uses his gifts of listening, conflict resolution, facilitation, and peace-building to enhance his work as an educator. This work involves "facilitating group processes, developing consensus, helping people critically inspect difficult issues,... creating spaces to have good conversations,...[and] creating space to allow voices to be heard and for others to simply be able to just listen." He uses personal stories that "make it real [and] engage people [so] it doesn't become this abstract issue." Rick notes that this focus on stories is a move away from the anti-racism work he was involved with twenty years ago, which was more about critiquing one's self rather than changing the relationship. In addition to educating students from Canada and other countries, Rick makes it a point to talk with his family, friends, and others he comes across. He once spoke with a taxi driver who held misconceptions about Indigenous peoples getting free

education and not paying taxes. Rick described colonialism in Canada, drawing on international parallels the driver might be familiar with, and described the meaning of treaties. He says,

It's one of those opportunities where somebody's willing to listen, and you can make a bit of an educational intervention moment and relate it to experiences where they empathize really dramatically and quickly; and you can also dispel some of the prevalent misconceptions...that typify a lot of Canadian discourse.

In his teaching, writing, publishing, and speaking, Rick seeks to create momentum and expand the capacity of larger groups to be good allies and Treaty partners. Rick's PhD work, and the subsequent book developed out of it, *Merging fires: Grassroots Peace-Building Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples*, involved interviewing 80 Anishinaabe or non-Indigenous community activists about decolonization, developing alliances, and creating different relationships. In this work, Rick learned from Indigenous research scholars, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, about strategies that disrupt mainstream academic research and are more empowering and beneficial to those involved. Rick has used his book to raise awareness among readers and to speak to international audiences about some of the issues faced by Grassy Narrows First Nation and the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation, all of which might contribute to developing solidarity support systems and greater international support. The profits from his book go to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) for the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women campaign.

Rick says, "In many ways, decolonization comes because we're in relationship with each other." Thirty years of relationships with Indigenous peoples has taught him much. Three of his friends, who are sisters from Grassy Narrows, have been particularly close with Rick, who has hung out with them, lived with them, and taken care of their kids. Rick says, "We talk about everything, and I feel like we talk honestly, and I take risks, and they take risks, and I'm constantly confronted with different ways of seeing the world." He says, "white people have to

start understanding how the world is seen from a First Nations perspective.” He has been transformed by the cultural and spiritual teachings he has received by listening to First Nations community members and stories they have shared. Rick also learns from “listening to various Cree song-writers in Toronto, or Inuit singers...[and attending the] ImagiNative Arts Festivals.” He learns by watching films by Indigenous filmmakers, by reading books by Indigenous authors such as Thompson Highway, Thomas King, and Joseph Boyden. He says, “I don’t know how many events I’ve [attended] at the Native Canadian Center,” sometimes as the only non-Indigenous man present learning from Indigenous activists who share their stories. Rick also reads academic books by Indigenous scholars such as Marie Battiste, James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, Taiaiake Alfred, Kim Anderson, and Bonita Lawrence, and says, “my work clearly owes a huge debt to these people.” Rick says, “participation in ceremonies is a really good pedagogy.” Having been invited to attend Indigenous ceremonies such as sweat lodges by his then-partner, Rick found he was entering very different spaces within the context of a community of people, and understanding in a more profound way Indigenous relationships with the world, beyond the intellectual realm. He says, “They have different reference points...ontologies, and belief systems about what’s real in the world, and they’re all quite valid.” Because these systems are different from Rick’s own, he’s had to listen and consider:

What are some Anishinaabe views on how the world works, both family relationships, community relationships? What’s their paradigm on how community functions? How do they see themselves in connection to the land, and how do they see their own spirit, and what does spirit mean?

He learned about Indigenous relationships with the land, which are based on:

Balance, reciprocity, and guardianship; the way in which life is intimately connected to the land, and by the land they mean all that around them, all their relatives. Participation in ceremonies is something that’s in my body, it demands me to participate in my heart, ... it’s an experience into something that’s sacred, and that’s not a terminology we typically used in the environmental movement or the social justice movement.

He says,

Ceremony is...a call for one to be connected, respectful, and to be embraced by something much larger than just our own little selves. I think that what's imperative to decolonizing and social justice activism is a belief that keeps us going in a much wider way than just simply, "Are we going to change this policy? Are we going to resolve this treaty issue?...I think decolonizing work is really, in many ways, about building relationships beginning with our heart and being connected in a spiritual way with each other, because that's the most profound relationship, and that's where we need to really anchor what we're doing.

Rick believes that a truly transformative and hopeful decolonization process goes beyond being an intellectual exercise, a policy change, or even an emotional process: it becomes a spiritual journey of increasing gratitude and connection to history, life, and interdependence.

Rick believes, "if there is one act of solidarity that would probably be the most useful here, [it] would be us as Euro-Canadians talking with other Euro-Canadians to help critique our history and our relationships," in order create space for the creation of better relationships. He has deeply considered the history of his own culture, including major historical paradigm shifts and collective traumas that we're still grappling with that enable colonial dynamics. For example, he says, the European Enlightenment makes possible an economic theory that "believes that we can have exponential growth without there being any limitations--we think it's okay to extinguish animals, to make them extinct." We have a "materialistic, scientific way of seeing the world," in which we are lords over the natural world. Rick also reflects on historical social traumas such as emigration. He asks, "Could you imagine leaving your family in the eighteenth, nineteenth century, and you're not going to see them again? Moving to a different land that you're not connected with--you don't know the stories, you don't know traditions? I think it's all very traumatizing." We can't rely on "policies, expertise, or mechanical solutions," Rick says, when we really need to change our paradigm. For Rick, colonialism has meant "I live in an unsustainable city, I live in a neighborhood where I don't know my other neighbors, I'm a person

who barely knows his family history, and barely knows his cultural history of these territories.”

It is a massively disconnected and arrogant way of being. Rick says, “it’s created systems which I don’t enjoy, it’s abolished a sense of social and familial memory, and it puts me in a very odd position of wanting to resist and fight it, and yet being a participant in it at the same time.”

Rick’s family history has alerted him to the debts he seeks to repay, in part through his decolonization work. He discovered that some of his family wills document armed conflicts with Indians and involvement with slavery. He says,

One could say that we have a debt to the land... When my family, in the 1600s, decided to be part of this continent, it doesn’t sound like they necessarily had permission, and certainly not for the scale that probably happened. Then you have destruction, underlaid by a sense of racism, towards the communities there who then become displaced and dispossessed... Part of [my ancestors] ended up in Nova Scotia in the 1750s, 1760s, [on] Mi’kmaq territory. Once you start to know the history... this horrific history of how we just kept invading and blockading and dispossessing and impoverishing other communities; somehow the family farm has a wholly different story to it. So it’s about the recovery of a different narrative about what goes on, but then it’s not just an intellectual narrative--that’s where my grandfather was, that’s where my grandmother was, that’s where relatives still live, that’s in part where I’m from. So when I look at that sense of debt, it’s not that I know all the actual stories, it’s that I can put it in a much larger narrative of which I know we were a part of. And I know the ongoing consequences of it, so that’s why I’m saying that’s a debt. I can’t speak for my ancestors, as to how they understood what their motivations were, what their relationships were like... but the systemic sense of relations was extremely negative. So when I talk about a debt within my family, it is taking a spiritual responsibility for my ancestors and looking to help them, and looking to help the present so that we right this relationship.

There have been times when Rick has been colonial in his attitudes, assumptions, and words. There were moments in which he should have taken more time to learn about the issues before organizing events, and moments when he held paternalistic attitudes about helping Indigenous communities akin to charitable international aid to developing countries. He has also underestimated the capacities and knowledge of Indigenous peoples while overestimating his own. While talking with some Indigenous friends about writing to raise awareness about the oppressiveness of the Indian Act, one of them pointed out a community member who is a

specialist that had written many articles on the topic. The friend asked Rick “Why are you waltzing in here thinking you’re going to be the great white knight to save anything, getting people writing something on this when *he’s* been writing tons of stuff on it?”

Rick’s decolonization journey has brought up a variety of emotions. “Sometimes its really easy to get angry about the history,” he says, “there is this sense of outrage that can come, of anger, of non-comprehension.” Although he has experienced guilt, Rick has not found it useful to take on collective guilt for what his ancestors have done because it is a whole lot of weight that makes it hard to keep enthusiasm and energy in his work. Rick says,

I guess the emotional journey is to just see ourselves as actually relatives, sisters and brothers, friends who are all struggling with this stuff. This is part of an identity and structure over here, but we’re all struggling with stuff. But I think that makes a much easier place to enter into an authentic relationship, so that emotionally I feel prepared to have that relationship, so that’s been part of the journey.

Rick has felt apprehensive at times when doing his research: “I’m meeting Elders, I’m meeting people I’ve never met before, I’m not really familiar with this community. I’m walking into people’s houses, asking them to talk with me, a white guy from Toronto doing his PhD.” “Why should they talk with me?” Rick wonders, “Can I understand what they’re saying? Am I being patronizing? Arrogant?” At the same time, Rick has grown to have confidence in his own emotions as inner guidance for his work. Rick continues to struggle with questions such as,

Should I buy a house in Toronto? Should I buy land up by Bancroft, treaty land that really belongs to somebody else? By Cape Croker, the reserve is 1000 acres; their territory was a million and a half acres, there’s cottages all around them. Should I be buying a cottage up there, when really this land belongs to the people of Cape Croker?

He notes the potential of work done between the city of Kenora and Treaty 3 to “develop a working relationship on land that they both claim in common.”

Rick has experienced small successes in his solidarity work, but it can become frustrating when headway is made under one set of politicians, and then the leadership changes or the



stakeholders change. Among settlers, Rick says “it’s hard to really know what is the catalyst for social change and personal change. The more I do this, the more I don’t understand—why are some people engaged, while other people want nothing to do with it?” Rick wonders, “how can we build this into a much wider decolonization movement?” He notes that *Idle No More* has generated engagement, and he wonders, “how do we sustain that dialogue and move it forward?” He says, “it’s a very difficult situation. Everybody’s over-extended, we have this massive land space, we have communities all over the place, activists are involved in so many things, there’s not great funding.” Rick suspects part of what will sustain engagement will be a long-term, spiritually based vision of “reconnecting to a much larger sense of society, ourselves, life, [and] the earth, than we normally think about.” All of this said, the discussion is different from where it was thirty years ago, and Rick attributes this to “the strengths of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities.” He says, “That’s where the real drive for social change is coming from, and the question is how can others like myself support that.”

Rick says,

My real commitment to this comes out of a place of love, but also comes out of a place of connection to spirit... And that gives me a certain strength, that I’m not alone and that it’s not all on my shoulders-- that I’m a part of this transformative change. Decolonization isn’t something that just happens in structures and mentalities and policies and courts and the way things are lived. We’re not separate from those things. We are experiencing decolonization. We are embracing our connection with spirit in a deeper way that opens up so many more possibilities for us to actually have an authentic, and not separate relationship with the world around us that exists in the moment and...work from a place of love rather than a place of fear.

Rick does decolonization work out of caring for his friends, for his family, for the land, and for himself. He says, “I do it for the 7 to 15 generations prior and subsequent to me... I have a responsibility as part of this extended historical family, to make something right.” He does his work out of his own desire to have a better world: “I don’t think people should experience

violence. And colonialism is an ongoing form of violence... fundamentally it's creating a more loving world that has social justice as the foundation with which we interact with each other." He says,

We do have these responsibilities and these issues are not going away. In fact, they continue to fester. And when you can see an epidemic in front of your eyes, infecting your friends, affecting us, and affecting the very land... we're not allowed really to close our eyes... I can't get involved in every issue to the same degree. I will fluctuate in and out of my direct involvement because other things in life come up. But what keeps me motivated is that this is completely unfinished... and I can directly see the impacts on people I know... What I'm really trying to say is that I stay here because this is where my heart tells me I should be.

### **Victoria Freeman**

**Identity and early influences.** Victoria Freeman is a Canadian writer, educator, historian, and community organizer of British heritage who grew up in an economically and politically privileged family in Ottawa, unceded Algonquin territory, not knowing any Aboriginal people. She has been shaped by the many generations of experience in colonization her family carries. She absorbed

the do-gooder, leftover missionary attitude of "how can I help you," the indifference of the general society and absolute obliviousness, and the stereotypes of alcoholic Indians living in poverty on isolated reserves or drunk Indians on the street.

Victoria's early consciousness was also influenced by growing up in the sixties during times of race riots, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and political assassinations.

Victoria's anti-colonial work has been infused with greater meaning by her experience of witnessing the way her sister, who had Down Syndrome, was treated. Victoria says,

I was so harmed by the attitudes to her, by the decision to institutionalize her. [It] still really hurts. I knew in a really gut way what exclusion was, and what it means to be thought of as sub-human, and what it means to lose somebody into a system that does not value that person enough. And how your love for someone like that can be so buried and deep and shameful, and all that mess of emotion... So I think there were resonances for me with Indigenous people ... that allowed me to have some kind of empathy, a certain kind of sharing. Even if I didn't always recognize it, that's where some of my stuff was

coming from. So I think it makes it very meaningful for me to fight against those issues of exclusion, and attitudes of superiority. I have a terror of experts because it was “experts” who put my sister in that institution. When it comes to residential schools, there’s a lot I don’t understand because that was an assault on a community, on a whole nation, on language, on culture, on everything – it’s different from what happened to my sister, and yet, there’s some similarity too. It’s very personal in some ways.

**Learning and early activism.** Victoria’s anti-colonial learning began when she heard Métis writer and activist Maria Campbell speak in 1980. She reflects,

She was probably the first Aboriginal person who I really heard speak. And hearing her was very profound. She was so eloquent, just talking about her own experience, ... I think she really kind of woke me up to colonialism in that way...I had been quite active in the feminist movement...[and] meeting her just blew it open. I saw another kind of systemic oppression, so I would credit her with really opening my eyes.

Victoria further understood the systemic oppression of Indigenous women by researching racial and sexual discrimination in housing through the Vancouver Downtown East Side Women’s Centre. Around this time, Victoria co-organized *Women and Words*, a major feminist literary conference that intentionally included Aboriginal women writers. She says, “hearing Aboriginal women’s voices just talking about their own experience really deepened my awareness and made me want to work on those issues.” “That was really when the whole question of racism in the women’s movement came out,” says Victoria, “and there were Black women there, there were Native women there, and I was trying to work out my relation to them.” While attempting to co-organize a second *Women and Words* conference (which never took place), Victoria was confronted by some of the Black organizers who expressed pain and anger about something she had done. This, Victoria says,

Forced me to really look at racism and to try and understand my own relationship to it, and to look at it in terms of attitudes I had inherited, and the subtle ways that racism plays out and power plays out. And questions of voice, and the complicatedness of it, especially in friendships and in relationships, and how people hear each other--how their experience shapes how they hear each other.

Victoria built friendships with several Indigenous women as she did volunteer publicity for First Nations owned and operated North American publisher of Indigenous authors, Theytus Books. Her friendship with activist Dorothy Christian (Secwepemc-Syilx) would survive painful conflicts and become a vehicle of and impetus for aspects of Victoria's decolonization journey. An argument with Dorothy led Victoria to "the 7 years of research for my book *Distant Relations*." Through this work, Victoria says,

I tried to understand my own family's involvement in colonialism: from when they were back in Britain, why they came here, whose territory they came to, how they ended up with the land, what their relationships were with Indigenous people at the time they were living... trying to understand what had I inherited. What privileges [and] benefits had I gained through that whole process? What attitudes had been passed down to me?... What was my responsibility towards that history?

Victoria found that she had ancestors who had been missionaries, diplomats, a fur trader, a woman who had been scalped at twenty-nine years old, and a residential school administrator. She wondered what attitudes and fears may have been passed down to her. Victoria reflected,

I had been carrying this really queasy, uneasy, guilty feeling that had affected my relationships with people of color generally, but especially with Indigenous people... And I felt threatened, because when you start to really consider what colonialism is and has been, it affects how you look at your own family, it affects how you feel about your country, it affects how you feel about your house, where you live, whose land you're on. And I felt very conflicted about all that, and I'd get mad at Aboriginal people for raising all those issues—"go away, don't make me uncomfortable!"

Her discomfort had been partially related to not knowing the history, and doing the research for her book helped. Victoria says,

I think that was a really critical period of both learning the history, and owning my connection to the history so that it wasn't something happening over there, but that I was implicated, I was involved with it and shaped by it, and that decolonization wasn't something that just happened for Indigenous people, it also involved people like me.

**Decolonization work and continued learning.** "Because decolonization is a transformative process," Victoria says, "we need relationship with each other in order for that

transition to happen.” She says, “It’s not just ‘let’s do this one project together,’ it’s ‘we are in this relationship for life, how are we going to live it?’” Indigenous women have told Victoria, “You’re a *relative*, and you have to think of yourself as a relative.” According to this perspective,

We are all connected, we are all related... For non-Indigenous people to change the way we behave towards Indigenous people, we have to think of ourselves as relatives. Not just in some structural way, as allies of other people; it’s where we are all people trying to create a future together where we can be relatives-- a relative being someone who carries out responsibilities to others in a loving way... It’s not just political protest, we’re relatives. And in fact, that’s what treaties do, in Indigenous understandings, is you’re creating a kinship relationship. Obviously the British really didn’t get that, but that is the Indigenous understanding as far as I know... Your relatives can be really pissed off at you, and really angry at you, but they don’t necessarily hate you and want to annihilate you, which I think a lot of non-Indigenous people fear... Taiaiake Alfred has spoken about how one of the difficult things for Aboriginal people to accept is that their ancestors *did* make treaties with non-Indigenous newcomers, and that as a result, there *is* a way for us to be here legitimately, if we carry out our responsibilities.

For Victoria, there is no one right way to do decolonization work. She says, “colonialism affects us on every level and we can address it on every level.” She says,

What scares me the most are people who think that they know the right way, whether they’re Indigenous or they’re non-Indigenous... I’m wary of people who talk like that because it’s often a way to assert power over other people, or it’s just a limited vision that excludes so many other people and disempowers people and disrespects people... I think there are all kinds of people who do really interesting things who don’t have the full analysis, or haven’t read all the books... I’m also wary of people who think you have to have the full analysis before you can do anything. Because how do you learn, except by getting your feet wet and your hands dirty. It would take all our life to figure out what’s the correct thing to do, and then you die, and you haven’t got anything done!

Personal decolonization is one level of Victoria’s work, which focuses on

trying to undo the colonial programming that I was socialized with, and trying to understand the ongoing-ness of colonialism—the structure of it, how I benefit from it, the privilege I have as a result of it, how it shapes me and affects my relationships with Indigenous people, with non-Indigenous people, with the past, with the future... How do we embody [colonialism]? How we feel it-- how it comes out unconsciously in our body language, our expressions, our moments of fear. Who we feel threatened by or who we just don’t like—it’s paying attention to all of those reactions in ourselves... trying to understand the relations of power that I’m embedded in and that are around me.

She says, “I was raised with certain attitudes and behaviours that are quite unthinking, and to unpack them takes a lot of time, and it’s imperfect, and I still do things, but there’s so much to be learned in that process.” Victoria believes an important decolonization initiative would be learn together as non-Indigenous people with regards to how we parent our children. She says, “that’s a pretty important one because we look at what our children learn at schools, but so much is learned in the family, and that is largely unexamined.” Victoria wonders how to teach them about their implication in colonialism in empowering rather than guilt-inducing ways, so that they understand the needs and possibilities of transformation. Victoria says,

My children certainly saw me in relationship with a lot of people, and I had First Nations friends living here at various times with us in our house, and we visited people. They’ve come to some of the events that I’ve been involved with, but it’s not their primary interest. I do remember one time, when as a family we were visiting Lake Superior Provincial Park, and visited Agawa Rock, which is a place where there are rock paintings on a cliff face, right beside the water. To get there, you go through this amazing forest. You just know it’s a sacred place when you walk through that area, and my daughter really felt it, to the point where she was crying and didn’t really know why. But she also, I think, in that moment was really overwhelmed with the narrative of being a white person and what does this mean. And I could see that I didn’t know how to talk to her about it very clearly, very well, and that maybe she was feeling that she shouldn’t be in North America. I tried to talk with her, but it’s such a complicated situation...I found it really hard as a parent, because I don’t want to hurt my child, I don’t want her to feel disempowered, and yet at the same time, she has to understand the responsibilities that she has, as a person of Euro-Canadian background on this land.

Another part of decolonization, for Victoria, involves “supporting healing processes for Indigenous people who have been so profoundly affected by these dynamics--the incredible losses of family, community, language, culture, life, wealth.” She says, “it’s learning when to stand back and when to stay out of something, and sometimes it’s how to support a process that needs to happen.” Decolonization can mean “engaging in public dialogue for political change—discussing structural change, restitution, land,... and creating the public spaces so that Indigenous people’s voices are heard, their own leadership is heard, their own solutions are

proffered.” Decolonization means “ending Indian Act domination, federal government domination, the paternalism that is so prevalent still—building a network of people to challenge those structures.” Internationally, Victoria says,

As a global community, we’re only starting to come to terms with the colonization of Indigenous peoples. And the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is really, really important, even if it seems toothless in some ways. But even as a statement of principle, it’s hugely important. Shifting the terms of dialogue internationally is really important. And there’s so many ways that international pressure can shame Canada into doing some things, and we have to do that... Seeing it all in terms of this national state that is Canada instantiates and perpetuates a colonial state, so we have to allow ourselves to think differently about transnational processes, and Turtle Island as opposed to Canada, we have to think about territoriality so differently.

Another realm of decolonization work involves “alliances working together in protection of the land.” Victoria says, “Not just land as territory, but land as sustenance. Land as the ground of our being, land as who we are ultimately.” She says, “Reconciliation is not just a matter of human beings. It’s with the land. To really be able to have a relationship that’s honorable and just, all of those other beings have to be part of it too.”

Victoria has continued to work in collaboration with Indigenous people on a number of projects including Indigenous- and alliance-focused conferences and workshops, a project that fostered writing and publishing in Inuktitut or from an Inuit perspective (Baffin Writer’s Project), and a website called *Turning Point: Native Peoples and Newcomers Online*, whose goal was to share information and get people talking with each other. During her work on the steering committee for Beyond Survival, an international conference of Indigenous writers, artists, and performers, Jeanette Armstrong said to her, “What we really need *now* is for people like you to help us understand white racism, and to help address white racism so it’s not just us doing it.” Victoria noted that until then, she had focused on supporting Aboriginal-led initiatives, and she took Jeanette’s challenge seriously, to educate white and non-Indigenous people.

If Victoria's first book asked, "How did my ancestors get me into this colonial situation?" her PhD studies asked, "Where am I?" Victoria wrote her PhD on the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto. She sought to learn about the deep history of the place—the history of the land, how Indigenous people lived on it and newcomers gained control of it, what Indigenous people are doing there now, and their perspectives on this history and the arrival of newcomers, including Victoria's ancestors. Victoria says,

I was in history and I really wanted to learn the history as much as I could, and I wanted to look not just at Canada's history, but I also looked at Australia, New Zealand, and the US. I needed to look comparatively. I just needed to know what is academically known about this topic. I needed to read the books and do research in that, and learn what academic research was, and also figure out my own place in academia.

Victoria found it difficult to work in her collaborative community-based ways within an academic context. Nonetheless, the community connections she developed through the process of her PhD led to her involvement in First Story Toronto, a project started by Anishinaabe activist Rodney Bobbiwash and his partner Heather Howard through the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. The project aims to change people's perspectives of place and the relations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through a smart phone app, and walking, bike, and bus tours of the city, among other activities. Through the app, "wherever you are in the city, different sites will come up with 11,000 years of history from different perspectives--Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Mississauga/Anishinaabe, or Métis." The project has involved various Indigenous activists as well as the stories of Elders. While at U of T, Victoria coordinated events and conferences. She says, "that brought me into larger networks of people, and also into that whole interface between universities and communities, where I still am, in a lot of ways." Within the academic and intellectual realms, Victoria was increasingly frustrated by how difficult it was to



engage with Indigenous issues holistically, which led her to also pursue artistic mediums such as poetry and theatre.

Victoria's current focus, and the realm where she most flourishes, is assisting other Canadians in gaining anti-colonial understandings through her writing, university teaching, and speaking engagements. In addition to teaching several other courses, Victoria worked with Lee Miracle on a course called *The Politics and Process of Reconciliation*. She describes:

We were able to really use Indigenous methodologies and blend them... Lee and I had a basic trust. We developed the course together, we co-taught it, we marked everything together, and we agreed about how to go about doing it. So we would lecture in the first hour of every week, and then we did a sharing circle, every single class... And it was the most transformative experience for everybody, including Lee and myself, to be able to actualize those Indigenous values and philosophies about how people learn, how people change, what transformation is, and creating a space where people could bring all of themselves together – their heart, their spirit, their emotions, their intellect, their physical beings--where you didn't have to park some of that at the door because academia didn't allow it. I learned a lot through that experience and through working with someone who had such a strong grounding in the oral tradition. And for students to hear both perspectives--and both of us are pretty forthright people, so we could talk about our emotions and our feelings and we could cry. So could everybody else. It created an extraordinary sense of community... While that in itself doesn't change the structure of colonialism, it sure can change the will of people to keep working at changing it, it deepens your commitment... it's those human relationships that nourish that process.

Victoria also teaches a course on the history of Indigenous peoples of Canada in which students are asked to reflect on “their own relation to colonialism and how they've been shaped by it, wherever they or their ancestors have come from in the world, or if they're Aboriginal, where their people originally lived and perhaps how they've been displaced.” Students share their reflections, and

the most amazing connections come out, because people start to realize that we've all been shaped by colonialism,... Many of our families have both experiences of being colonized and colonizer, or being enslaved, or being brought involuntarily, or immigrating because of poverty,... or benefitting, being on the colonizer's side.

Victoria sees her teaching as one of her most valuable contributions, as significant decolonizing work often occurs amongst her fifty to sixty students every year.

*Dimensions of the journey.* “Emotions of colonization and decolonization are really tricky to deal with... denial and fear, and rage and guilt... shame. All those feelings play such important roles in how we relate to each other, or don’t relate to each other,” says Victoria. In the earlier parts of her journey, Victoria was afraid of Indigenous people. Victoria didn’t want to offend anyone, was afraid of making mistakes, and would bend over backwards to be nice. Victoria would get angry and defensive or would fall apart when she was challenged about her behaviour or thinking. She felt very isolated during those early years, “not knowing another ally,” and her work “originally felt very traitorous.” She found it scary to take a stand, and had an “amorphous sense of guilt, feeling “responsible for absolutely everything.” “Learning the history of [her] own family’s involvement with colonialism” is what shifted her sense of guilt to “a more connected sense of responsibility.” During this process, she says,

[A relative] got kind of irritated with me and she said, “you’re just wallowing in guilt.” I thought about it, and I said, “Actually, no, what I feel isn’t guilt, at least not anymore now that I know what my ancestors did. What I feel is grief.” And that’s an entirely different emotion, and it’s completely appropriate to grieve the horrible damage, the incredible waste of people’s lives, the wreckage of the land, all of those things, and what it did to us... And I realized that my book was in part a process of mourning. The good thing about most grief is that you can move through it ... For me, acknowledging the grief let me acknowledge the truth of the history... Sometimes it’s very appropriate to sort of sit in grief with someone... because a lot of the stories are really hard... And sometimes all you can do is just be present and acknowledge how bad it was, how bad it is, without rushing to somebody’s defense. It’s such a Euro-Canadian, Western approach to things to be all focused on action way before it’s appropriate, without thinking things through, without feeling things through. We really need to sit with all of that, and just be with it, and then find what we’re called to do, as opposed to making busy work about how we should fix things, because there have been tons of white people running around trying to fix things, but the results have been pretty disastrous, so I think we need a different approach.

Victoria has experienced anger at her ancestors and at the government. Also, she says,

I definitely am angry at myself when I screw up, when I just don't articulate myself, or I am just insensitive or unthinking or haven't thought something through enough, or make an ignorant comment or behave in a way that betrays my utter unconsciousness of my privilege, or when I just say something that really hurts somebody –that's awful.

She feels angry with Indigenous people when she has felt judged or misunderstood. She says, “you get tired of having your guilt impulse triggered, or your shame impulse triggered-- who wants to feel those things? So of course you're angry when it happens.” Victoria says,

We all have our own particular issues. For me, sometimes I'd be reacting to something and have no idea why I was so upset, and I'd realize it had something to do with my sister and her institutionalization-- not even really the situation at hand. Many of us have stuff like that, just traumatic things that happened to us, and so the deeply personal gets all mixed up with the political, and that's a real challenge to unravel.

As Victoria grew in her work, she began to set more boundaries, becoming less defensive and “not absolutely giving up my own interpretations of things.” She says, “It's become more important for me that the process of our working together...be a respectful process for all.” In the beginning, Victoria knew few Indigenous people, and would work with anyone. She says,

I'd end up in relationships with people who were totally inappropriate, who did not have the skills or had not worked through their own inner baggage so that they could work with me-- let alone, I hadn't done the same. I can't work with all kinds of people, for various reasons – we just don't click, or I really don't like their politics. Initially, I was so un-critical, and afraid to criticize an Aboriginal person...Now, because I've been connected to this community for a while--this person, I really trust, this person has other things going on, and I don't really want to be around them, and I think it takes time to develop that kind of judgment, and for them to make those same judgments about you.

When there is a solid foundation of trust, it is possible to talk through issues that arise. She says,

There are times when it's appropriate to question, to think for yourself, you don't just always act in the supportive role. And it's tricky because you can also get smacked down. ...With some groups I'm just acting in support, and in others I have more of a leadership role in certain areas because over time, people have trusted that I'm not going to run off and enrich myself, or claim all the credit, or do it all my way without consulting—but they also value my ideas and input. I think it's dishonest to sort of park yourself at the door, or leave your own reactions out of it...To me it's been important to find people who want my genuine reactions, and appreciate my directness, or my candor. Some people just want me to support what they're doing, and then I have to make a choice – is that what I want to do? And sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't – depends how I'm

treated, partly. There's all kinds of things that happen in these relationships and if Euro-Canadian allies are feeling really guilty and everything, you can actually be abused because you're not bringing yourself to the table. That's as much a stereotype that you're operating with as anything—that Indigenous people are all-knowing. That's not using your gifts, including your gifts of discernment... I [also] have to do my own creative work that is in my own voice, my reality--that grounds me in my experience.

When she feels angry after being confronted or feels misunderstood, rather than denying it, she now usually says, “I need to go think about that,” and not to say yes or no immediately, just to give myself time to react, and get through the reactions.” She says,

I've been very lucky in that I've had certain Indigenous friends who have really been willing to work through all the messiness of those emotions with me, and in particular Dorothy Christian who has said “we're in this for life and we're just going to keep working away at it and trying to figure it out,” There have been times when it felt like we just can't sort out of difficulties, we trigger each other too much. And that's one of the difficulties, is that we do trigger each other, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, especially white people, we do that to each other. All our vulnerabilities get so triggered, and our fears get so triggered by each other and it's really a minefield, and that makes it so hard to work together. And so, if you can find people who are willing to try and go through the unpleasantness of sorting it out, you can really learn things that you wouldn't learn any other way... I don't think, unless you've gone through some of those layers of feeling, that you really understand how deeply colonialism has shaped us on both sides. But I also don't think it's something you ever kind of master.

Victoria says,

There are times where I've just had to go and work in the garden and do something totally different... I think it's natural to go through cycles of feeling burnt out. You just come to the end of a certain way of doing things, or a certain way of thinking, or a certain relationship, or you go as far as you can, and then it doesn't work anymore. I think the key is not to blame yourself, and just to say, okay, well this particular combination doesn't work anymore, so I'm going to do something else, and something else will happen. It always does.

Despite her growth, Victoria acknowledges that she continues to make mistakes. For example, during a recent talk Victoria had homogenized settlers in terms of racialization. She says,

Even though I know that stuff-- I've read the debates, I'm very conscious of [the issue]-- yet somehow it just didn't come out of my mouth in the appropriate way at the right time. So suddenly there I am, I'm the white person doing it again. Which is so humbling, and embarrassing, especially when you know better. But sometimes you do it. You're just not quite careful enough in what you say, or not conscious enough, or you're a little bit tired,

or your knowledge of it is up here [points to head], it's not deep enough, and you've got to move it further into yourself to really incorporate it into how you do everything. There have been many, many times I've done things like that, and those are by far the most painful parts of the process, but also the most transformative, ultimately, because you don't make those mistakes again, or at least not in the same way. You find a new way to make them [laughs].

Because Victoria has “been too well socialized as a settler person, as a white person, as a person of economic privilege,” she accepts that she is going to make mistakes, even as she continues to counteract her conditioning. She says, “I've had to learn to forgive myself for making those mistakes, and not obsess about how I screw up, and what people will think of me.” She says, “it can be really embarrassing and awful, and it's not always fair...because people carry around their reservoirs of anger and frustration.” She says,

I think I've got a little tougher over the years at surviving those sorts of situations and not hating myself for it, and not getting stuck in feeling guilty about it. It's going to happen, all I can do is learn from it, and try to make amends, in whatever way I can.

Victoria's growth has involved learning about Indigenous perspectives and knowledges by listening to Indigenous peoples—“to their stories, their interpretations, their concepts, their language,” reading their works, attending ceremonies, and learning about the land she lives on from them. She says, “It was really through Indigenous people that I began to understand what spirituality might mean outside of the concept of organized, institutionalized religion.” Upon having a dream that felt spiritually important, she discussed it with Jeanette Armstrong. She says,

I remember afterwards, this feeling...like all the breath came out of me, and I realized that we had been talking on a level that I never experienced before. And that something was touching me in a really deep way. That made me aware that there's a lot more going on here than I understand, and...these people I'm working with seem to be much more comfortable with it and fluent. It was really through them that I began to be involved in ceremonies, began to know myself as a spiritual person. Even now I can't say exactly what I mean by that, I don't have the same understanding as Indigenous people of what spirituality is, but I know there's a way of being that you get to in your most meditative places, in just the most profound moments, and that connectedness.

She says,

It's been really important for me to be able to engage on that level with the people I'm in relationship with, and it feels definitely more whole and more complete than if we were only engaging politically or intellectually, or even just emotionally...For non-Indigenous allies who have been deeply, deeply influenced by all of that, there's a funny in-between state that you're in that's very hard to articulate and to honor, because you're not Indigenous, it's not your culture, and yet you're so influenced by certain aspects of it...I am in some way bicultural. It doesn't mean that I understand everything, but I've been so changed by what I've experienced with Indigenous people that I cannot say I only speak or think within the Euro-Canadian framework I was born into.

Victoria has been invited to ceremonies that take place on the land, and has fasted. She says,

On a purely personal level, if I don't spend some time outside of cities, in forests, by water, there's a part of me that doesn't feel healthy. And when I go to those places, I'm rejuvenated. So I know that all of us need some kind of connection to nature. The disconnection that so many non-Indigenous people have is part of the problem, and that when you think of non-Indigenous people in North America, on Turtle Island, we've all come from somewhere else and our connections to those lands have been severed. We've lost both the memory connections and the sentient connection.

However, Victoria says,

It's a tricky balance. A whole lot of white people going camping, well how is that decolonization? Is it just taking over land and "indigenizing" ourselves? There's that tendency to want to be Indigenous, and that's premature, for starters. I mean we can be invited to be relatives or to *be* of this land, but I think that's a very delicate relationship to negotiate. At the same time, I'm very mindful of something Lee Maracle said, which is that in her culture, at least, everyone has a right to a home, so it's not the case that non-Indigenous people are not entitled to live here or have a home. The issue is greed, taking more than one needs personally, and obviously dispossessing Indigenous people from *their* connection to land. We get tied up in knots around land as property, thinking in terms of boundaries. And different Indigenous people will talk about that in different ways, so I can't say that I fully understand what land means for Indigenous people.

Victoria envisions a future in which Indigenous peoples have the freedom and resources to choose their own futures that sustain and nourish themselves, their families, and their communities. She suspects that some form of nation-to-nation negotiation or treaty process may be necessary to create the political structures that will ensure this. She says,

There's going to be a lot of talking to sort this all out, and there obviously has to be resource transfer, land transfer. There have to be incredible education efforts, there has to

be restitution...non-Indigenous people [will] have to give up some things...I see all of those as elements, but exactly how that's going to play out, God knows. I just want a world that makes room for the diversity of solutions that people are going to come up with and the creativity of all kinds of people to make it happen.

Victoria does decolonization work, she says, because

I don't like the feel of being here illegitimately, so partly it's paying my rent in some way. I have to do my part to try and make an honorable outcome for this colonial situation. We have to find a way out of it. So partly it's for me, it's for my children, so that they can feel that they can be here in a way that is ethical, which I don't really feel is fully possible at the moment.

Victoria's personal relationships with Indigenous people sustain her commitment. She says,

Sometimes before I give a talk, I just really flash on different people I've known--the stories they've shared with me, the incredible strength they've shown. Or the people who have not survived, the people who have been really damaged and died. I carry a lot of people's memory--and also the encouragement of those people who have really appreciated things I've done, and who have wanted to work with me--so I don't want to let them down, and I want to honor what they've taught me.

Victoria is so excited and hopeful when she sees what the younger generation is doing.

She says, "a young person today starts in an entirely different place than I did growing up." She says, "what I think is so wonderful now is that no non-Indigenous ally needs to have that feeling of isolation...you can get connected so much more easily, and in so many different ways." She thinks of the amazing resources available now by Indigenous writers. She says, "I think it's a really exciting time...things are actually moving more quickly than they have at any other time... no one can squelch it at this point, the cat's out of the bag."

## **Reflections and Discussion**

When I sat with each participant for their interview, I was so moved and inspired. I could feel the spirit of what they were sharing and could feel myself evolve and grow by listening to them. When I went through the process of making sure the interview transcriptions matched the spoken words from the interviews, there were many times when I sat in the coffee shop moved to

tears by what I was hearing, and wanting to reach out and hug each participant. Being witness to what they shared cultivated within me a love for each of them. I hope the rendering of the narratives has preserved some of the spirit and love with which they were shared by the interviewees and received by me. Although much could be said about the striking similarities and differences between participants, cross-case comparison is not my choice of method here. Rather, without expecting or wishing that the reader necessarily learn what I learned, or be touched by what I was touched by with regard to these stories, here I narrate some of my own reflections.

Monique Woroniak's narrative emphasized the racial divide she grew up with, and the grief and anger she experiences as a result. She mourns the absence of Indigenous peoples from her early life and rages at the information that has been denied her. I appreciated the step-by-step-how-to-get-involved process she outlines and the courage with which she has implemented it. I was inspired by both her relational approach, and by her localized land-based approach to her work and to her learning. I also appreciate the way Monique has used her gifts and skills as a librarian to focus on information-sharing aspects of decolonial work. I respect Monique's honest sharing of her areas of struggle in the work and the dissonance she experiences regarding land return. I can learn from her approach of listening to Indigenous peoples regardless of whether they align with her views, and the impact this can have on broadening one's understanding. I am on board with Monique's desire to explore land justice and land sharing as a next area of growth.

John Doe was one of the few interviewees whose childhood transcended the all-too-common racial divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, which allowed him later in life to feel very comfortable making solidarity connections with Indigenous communities. I have to say I envy this and also the role modeling he had in his parents. John's path into the



work has been very different from my own, and he has deepened and widened my knowledge of entry points. In receiving his description of the way art has impacted his journey, I was impressed by the amazingly different way his mind works from my own. I have a lot of respect for the conclusions he came to in his transition into anti-colonial and decolonization work. I also admired the awareness of injustice and the processes of questioning and seeking out knowledge that began in childhood and increased over time. I admire the courage, love, and humility with which John does his work. Direct action and support of Indigenous resurgence and land defence feature prominently in his narrative, as do the meaningful relationships he has cultivated with Indigenous peoples. I also admire the work John has done to address his own colonial socialization, and his openness to receiving and reflecting on correction and direction from Indigenous peoples.

I was struck by how much of Joy Eidse's journey, as described in the narrative, has involved a deconstructing, examining, and making choices in relation to her religious socialization. Although she describes salvaging some gifts from it, she has discarded much, and continues to dislodge residues such as its paternalism and fervor. I admire Joy's courage in deliberately challenging and re-arranging the foundations of her life. From personal experience of transitioning out of the religious tradition of my childhood, I know how painful this can be and how much it can affect family relationships. I also admire Joy's intentional balancing of her decolonization work with her relational responsibilities and connections and her caution about anti-colonialism becoming her new message for evangelism. These are two areas Joy is strong in that I wish to do further reflection and growth around. I was struck by the discernment of Joy and her partner in realizing they needed to seek out connections with Indigenous peoples outside of the 'helper' role. Joy is someone I can learn from in the ways she seeks to do her work within

herself and her family life. As someone not artistically inclined, it is interesting for me to hear about people developing in their journeys through art, which is strong for Joy. I am perhaps most inspired by Joy's thinking of what it means to be a land owner, what her responsibilities are in this, and by her contemplation of land return.

Murray Angus is a natural storyteller. When interviewing him, I found myself hanging on to his every word in order to hear more about where the quest he described would take him. His description of the land he grew up on and the connection between his relationship with that land and with the Indigenous friends he grew up with on the reserve side of the river was compelling, and I imagine it to be an unusual gift among settler/colonizers. When Murray described his rage at the Presbyterian Church and the colonial socialization of his youth, and by the colonial practices he observed in non-Indigenous communities and on the part of the government, I seethed right along with him. If anyone has difficulty recognizing ongoing colonialism in Canada today, Murray's narrative lays it out step by step. I was also struck by how Murray's reflections on Treaties gave him a sense of urgency around doing what he could to support Inuit Land Claim agreements because there appeared to be one chance to get things right, and the agreements made would set into motion a relationship for many years to come. When Murray described his work with Nunavut Sivuniksavut, his face would light up and I could feel the love and pride he has for his students. I respect the pro-Inuit stance they take at the school, and the focus they take around colonization and decolonization in the North. I also respected Murray's honest questioning around the impact on his activism of having worked in the program for so many years, and the cushy lifestyle this afforded him. As I completed writing his narrative, I tried to contact Murray so that he could review and comment on the draft. His answering machine told me that he has now retired. I, for one, cannot wait to see what Murray does in his retirement!

Kathi Avery Kinew seems to be the most assimilated person I interviewed. Having married into an Indigenous family and community her ties are incredibly integrated into her daily life. Before interviewing Kathi, I worried that inviting her as a research participant might coerce her into a more binary self-identification than the fluid one I imagined to be operating for her. I was put at ease when she clarified that she feels very Anishinaabe but respects that she is not. When Kathi described the impact the words written by her uncle in the cottage had on her as a child, I remember thinking that a lot of children wouldn't be phased by that, that it says something about her as a child that she was impacted by its meaning. Perhaps what I loved most about Kathi's narrative is what it has taught me about Canadian history from her unique vantage point of involvement. Having grown up in the U.S., I have had to work for any understanding I have of Canada's history with Indigenous peoples, so through her interview, Kathi dropped a beautiful gift into my lap. I found myself googling right and left in order to understand more about a number of events. I was also struck by her description of the dirty dealings Kathi found in the archives when researching land claims. Kathi's narrative caused me to reflect that in some ways people currently beginning their decolonization journeys have more access to guidance from others, whereas, as Kathi describes, she just jumped in with little opportunity to process some of her own colonial socialization.

Of all the folks I interviewed, Franklin Jones appears to have grown up in the most overtly racist community. It was painful to hear about the impact of this socialization on his openhearted childhood self. I also noted in his journey the childhood feeling of not belonging, in contrast with healing and belonging he has found with Indigenous friends and ceremonial communities. Franklin's experience of the connections between activism and mental health really made me think about whether people involved in this work have particular sensitivities in

comparison to the average settler/colonizer, or whether it is more about the set of opportunities and experiences that have come our way. Maybe both? I was impacted by his description of his relationships with the Indigenous men living on the streets, and all he learned from them as well as the internal struggles these relationships brought him. I love the way Franklin's platform as a musician is used by him for decolonization work. A prominent part of Franklin's decolonization as expressed in his interview has been his involvement in Indigenous ceremonies. I have personally heard a number of different positions from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples regarding non-Indigenous people attending Indigenous ceremonies and issues around appropriation (e.g. Nii Gaani Aki Inini, 2016b; Waziyatawin, 2009), and I was glad that Franklin described the impact of his involvement and how he came into it. Discussions of appropriation are important and I respect the boundaries Franklin has for himself around this. As someone who has been involved with ceremonies myself over a number of years, Franklin's interview as well as the interviews of others have helped me to clarify some of what I have felt and experienced around this involvement. I appreciated what Franklin shared about finding a balance between asking for direction and taking responsibility for our own work. His thoughts resonated with the literature I reviewed in an earlier chapter (e.g. Indigenous Action Media, 2014; Xhopakalxhit, 2014). This is important to consider, and I am pleased that a number of perspectives on this have come up in the interviews.

I was so pleased to be able to interview Paulette Regan, who I consider to be so influential and groundbreaking in her work regarding settler colonialism (Regan, 2006, 2010) and her consideration of settler responsibilities for changing our oppressive relationships with Indigenous peoples. A number of other participants mentioned her influence on them during their interviews. I was struck by the holistic modeling of her mother, and the teaching that truth and

justice come from the heart. I was also struck by her description of the way her work with residential school survivors brought her from an intellectual to a heart-level understanding. I also found useful her reflective question of whether our actions or thinking are *decolonizing* or *re-colonizing*. Another strength of what Paulette shared was her emphasis of the pedagogical importance of *unsettling*. Paulette, as a historian, gives a compelling description of the importance of historical understanding to motivate decolonial work. I appreciated Paulette's focus on dialogue and relationship, and was inspired by her ability to stand strong in her own gifts and roles as an educator, admiring but feeling no pressure to engage in direct action.

I so appreciated Steve Heinrichs' perspective as someone who is both rooted in, and able to challenge his own faith tradition. Steve is not threatened by other religions and spiritual understandings, but rather, seeks to learn from them. An interesting feature of his narrative was the Mennonite myth, and its potential role as a barrier for the ability of Mennonite people being able to see their roles in oppression (although it is in some ways not so different from other mythologies around early pioneers and settlers). I was impressed by Steve's ability at such a young age to challenge the idea of *terra nullius* in relation to the various places his ancestors had fled to. I was moved by Steve's ability to see both the problematics and the opportunities inherent in the adoption of his two daughters. Steve's thoughtfulness in navigating difficult and complex terrain within the church, and his courage in doing so were remarkable to me. I am also moved by Steve's focus on land as a primary site for decolonization, and by the striking story of the land dispossession and settlement that connects him with his daughter. Although Steve has much to offer any settler person pursuing decolonial work, I am also aware that for many in Christian communities, it may only be someone like Steve who will be able to help bridge their entry into anti-colonial work.

Some of the most prominent features of Adam Barker's narrative, for me, were the role of university education in his journey, and the way he articulates the reflection and processing he has done around the emotional dimensions of his journey. So much of Adam's profound learning and experience has occurred within academia, and this gives me hope for the role universities can have in the movement. Adam was so courageous to share with me (and us) so deeply about the mistakes he has made in his work, as well as his insights into his motivations. I am also struck by Adam's courage in facing himself. Adam's description of going back to England to find his roots presented an important counter-narrative to the experiences and urgings shared by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples around this issue (e.g. Ward, 2015). I have been urged to do this as well, and have perhaps done so in small ways (without having yet travelled to my ancestral homelands) with some good results, but also with much frustration. Although this work is something I intend to continue in various ways, I respect what Adam has found in his journey, and I see a number of serious pitfalls of doing this type of work. Adam has a great deal of clarity around the vision of his work being the restoration of Indigenous nationhood, including what this will mean for the land. This is an important vision that not everyone doing this work shares, and Adam has inspired me. Because much of my decolonization work has been within colonial systems, I also appreciated Adam's framing of such work as harm-reduction work. I found useful Adam's framing of the decolonization work of the settler as a fundamental reorientation to the land we live on.

Josephine's interviews clearly tied the development of her quest for justice with regard to colonialism to the legacies of her identity as an immigrant from Eastern Europe as well as her tarnished identity as a Canadian. Josephine's description of what she saw in her new city reminded me in a profound way that this is not normal and it is not okay. Josephine strongly

articulated the privilege inherent in being a settler involved in anti-colonial work and the ability to withdraw if one wishes, an option not available to Indigenous peoples. The way Josephine described her experience being taught using Indigenous pedagogies, and how this informed her reflections on hegemonic Eurocentric pedagogies operating in universities was also striking. I was inspired by the way she took this insight and determined to create a classroom atmosphere that will nurture Indigenous student success (some of this narrative material is located in the next chapter). Also inspiring to me were the varied and deliberate efforts she has made to learn. I resonated with the way Josephine experiences her work as spiritually sanctioned.

This spiritual sanction, or calling, was also reflected in Susanne McCrea's journey. I related to the role of dream and vision in her work. She also had the opportunity, fairly unique among the participants of this study, to have a great deal of freedom in pursuing an intuitive spirituality. Her narrative caused me to reflect more on the role of pre-Christian spirituality of peoples of European descent in decolonization work. This is a pathway a number of people I have known or have read about have taken. In my understanding it is a challenging path because, as Susanne notes, of the lack of access to living and historically continuous traditions. Of the people I interviewed, Susanne was one of the strongest in her background in and focus on environmentalism. Interviewing Susanne really educated me more deeply about the blockade in Grassy Narrows, and the impacts of Manitoba Hydro in Northern Manitoba. The description she shared of what she had seen and heard in South Indian Lake First Nation were incensing. I was inspired by her description of the cross-cultural community skills sharing work she had been a part of through Garry Raven, and found useful her description of roles for non-Indigenous peoples in Indigenous land occupation actions.

Perhaps what struck me most about my interviews with Dave Bleakney was the deconstruction work he has done of the ridiculousness and harmfulness of the mainstream culture. He speaks with such lucidity of the hypocrisy and imprisonment of this society. One of my favourite passages from his narrative is about our societal delusions of freedom, in the form of being “free to choose Pepsi or Coke.” Dave has such clarity about the insanity around him, the value of life, and the respect he has for the dignity of human beings, which can be seen in much of what he shared, including his description of the way he teaches. I was moved by Dave’s description of what makes him angry, and of what gives him joy. I was also very inspired by the work he has done within CUPW to engage workers in learning about colonialism and decolonization.

Rick Wallace’s interview conveyed a deep understanding of the treaty relationship, including settler benefit from treaty, and the roles of treaty in relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as well as the relationships between non-Indigenous peoples and the land. Rick articulates the treaty relative relationship in ways that connect with the literature shared in an earlier chapter (e.g. Craft, 2013; Johnson, 2013; McAdam, 2015; Sinclair, 2014). He also articulates the sense of disconnection from history and land endemic among settlers, and the losses this entails. I appreciated his focus on the importance of decolonization strategies being localized rather than universal, and that they will be dictated by the unique ontologies and protocols of specific Indigenous nations. I was inspired by the way Rick tied his work to a larger spiritual purpose, to love, to his historical family-based spiritual debts, and to his need to right these historical relationships.

I was deeply touched by the description Victoria Freeman shared of the connection between the institutionalization of her sister and her resonance with Indigenous peoples and



decolonization work. Another feature of Victoria's narrative is her description of the tangible role of her friendships and relationships with Indigenous and racially marginalized peoples on her decolonization work and understanding (see also Christian & Freeman, 2010). Out of all those I interviewed, Victoria appears to have done the most work understanding the specific history of her ancestors' involvement in colonialism (see Freeman, 2000), something that has propelled her forward in her emotional work. Also prominent was her description of kinship treaty relationships. Victoria was also one of the few who spoke about the work of non-Indigenous people in supporting Indigenous peoples' healing processes, something important to me as a therapist, although complex in its implications. I could relate to Victoria's articulation of the difficulties in doing collaborative and community-based work in an academic setting, as these challenges have impacted my work in this research. Also, as someone who has taught/will teach in university settings, I was inspired by her description of the co-teaching approach she and Lee Maracle developed in teaching a course together. Finally, I found Victoria's description of the ways our past emotional experiences can trigger reactivity in our decolonization work, and the way we are at risk to make more blunders in our work when we are tired or stressed to be very insightful and worthy of reflection.

I have described some of what has moved and inspired me about each of the narratives. What inspires you? I wish to close this chapter with an honouring of those whose lives are shared with us through these narratives:

*I honour their strength, sensitivity, and questioning as children; their abilities to spot BS  
and the observations of injustice that took root in their young lives.*

*I honour the mentors, teachers, and experiences  
that have caused them to grow in their understanding and in their work.*

*I honour the openness of their hearts to look at what is not right in the world,  
and their determination to work for something better.*

*I honour their anger about the sickness and greed they witness around them  
and inside them.*

*I honour their grief, guilt, anxiety, confusion, shame, insecurity, and pain.*

*I honour their dignity, their sacredness, and their humanity.*

*I honour their hope, their joy, their liberation, their learning, and their healing.*

*I honour the gifts and the uniqueness they bring to their work,  
sometimes engaging in ways that I could not have imagined or for which I lack the skills,  
yet ways that contribute to the whole.*

*I honour their courage in sharing their mistakes and vulnerabilities  
so that we can learn from them.*

*I honour the love they have for the life around them, for the earth, for Indigenous peoples  
and for other settler occupiers that inspires their commitment.*

## Chapter V

### Social Work Findings and Discussion

Much of this dissertation has been written in coffee shops, and I now have many acquaintances among the regulars in some of these. One day when working on my dissertation in a coffee shop, I happened to be wearing t-shirt with the word “decolonization” on it. A regular, a non-Indigenous young woman, approached me and asked me if I am a social worker. She shared that she is working on her BSW degree; and she thought I must be a social worker because of the words on my t-shirt. I was astounded. I knew from my previous work and from some of the activist circles I am engaged with that social work and social workers are highly suspect, that our roles in surveillance and child welfare are seen as part and parcel of historic and contemporary colonial assaults to Indigenous communities. Why would social work be associated with decolonization? After some thought, I wondered whether, from the perspective of non-Indigenous people who might not otherwise encounter anti-colonial and decolonial theory but for their social work education, social work just might be associated with decolonization. This gave me hope. In a previous chapter, I noted some of the literature emphasizing social work’s historical and contemporary colonizing practices and dynamics, and some of the Indigenous social work literature that points us toward decolonizing practice. In this chapter, I discuss content from five of the research participants who have completed or are completing a social work degree. The research participants were asked about the connections between their anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work and their social work education and practice. I present and discuss the research findings regarding these connections.

## **Social Work Education**

Was my experience in the coffee shop an anomaly? Was my reflection accurate? My own BSW and MSW programs were completed while I lived in Minnesota. I don't recall hearing the words colonialism or decolonization during my BSW program. However, as was noted in the *Introductions* chapter, having attended a small Baptist university in the early nineties, I had the unlikely fortune to be introduced to anti-racism and structural racism theory and to be mentored by an African-American theorist and professor, Dr. Nicholas Cooper-Lewter. Dr. Cooper-Lewter had studied the psychological effects of slavery and racism on African-American peoples. His influence no doubt laid groundwork for my future anti-colonial work. Although I do recall anti-oppression content while completing my MSW program at the turn of the century, the words colonialism and decolonization were not part of the curriculum. Because I had already worked in an Indigenous alternative school, had taken a keen interest in scholarship about intergenerational trauma, had read Frantz Fanon, and had begun to focus on understanding the pathologies of my own culture, I followed my own interests in school.

A number of my academic papers were focused on social work with Indigenous people and the oppression faced by Indigenous communities. My thesis focused on intergenerational and collective trauma and healing, as well as change processes needed in Euro-Americans. Still, I was not aware of the language of colonialism and decolonization. It was not until shortly before I began my doctoral program that I was introduced to the concept of decolonization and the possibility of it being applied to non-Indigenous peoples. During my doctoral program, content about colonialism and decolonization was not strong in most of my courses, but I often chose to develop my knowledge by researching and writing papers related to these topics. I also had an opportunity to choose elective coursework on issues in colonization offered by the Department

of Native Studies, and a social work course, *Indigenous ways of Healing*. Due to the knowledge and support shared by Indigenous faculty members, some of whom have become mentors, and the flexibility and support of many of the non-Indigenous faculty members, through this degree, I was able to further my own decolonial understanding and practice.

What was the experience of the five research participants of the connections between their social work education and their anti-colonial/decolonial learning and practice? Kathi Avery Kinew completed her BSW and MSW in the late 1960s. She identified with the community development stream as someone who “was out there to follow the people and support the people.” There were a few progressive professors Kathi was able to learn from and work with, and she focused on learning community development techniques. She says, “the people I identified with were the settlement workers in the inner city, at the turn of the century, of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; they’re the ones that were out there with the people.” There were aspects of Kathi’s MSW program that she loathed such as the focus on professionalism, which Kathi “wanted nothing to do with.” Kathi found that after she graduated, she had “to take off the shackles of oppression from graduate school, and the way that they want to make you into a professional social worker.”

When Murray Angus was completing his MSW degree at Carleton in the late 1970s, “it was full of Marxists.” He says, “It was quite a radical school in those days, so that was comfortable to me.” Murray was in the policy stream, and he took what he learned in his program about processes of policy making in the federal government, the language policy makers use, and the forces that influence policy and applied these in his quest “to account for why Indians were at the bottom and kept there.” Murray says,

I was pretty much self-directed with it-- there was not anybody at the school that had those interests at the time, but I was motivated to answer my own question and the thesis

gave me the room to name my question and go after my answer. So I'll always be grateful for that space...A lot of what I was doing as part of my research was political theory, economic theory, stuff that might not sound like it's social work, but it was. It was all about understanding the context for a certain kind of policy that shapes social relationships, and has a potential to shape them for a long time to come.

Murray describes his thesis work, which was focused on the federal government's Land Claims Policy that came out in 1973 and was "the heart of what the federal government was doing in the North":

They brought out a policy for comprehensive land claims to negotiate with all those people that didn't have treaties. And essentially what they did, as bureaucracies often do, "Have we done this before? Okay let's start from there." So they dusted off the approach that worked in the 1800s, which is – "well okay, guys, we're going to negotiate with you, but here's what it's going to look like." This is the scenario they had for the North. "We'll give you guys little bits of land you call your own and you can have the right to hunt and fish and all of that other stuff, because we don't give a shit about all of that anyways, so no sweat off of us, and we'll give you lots of money. How much do you want?" That's what we're negotiating. How much? Because they knew they weren't going to get away with \$5 a year. So, to their shock and dismay, people didn't jump at the offer. And you know that the slogan in the 70s was *this land is not for sale*; people were wanting power, or a share of it, because they could see where that formula led everywhere in the south. So it was a hard one to sell, but that was the government's starting point, and that was the focus of my thesis, just trying to account for why that policy had the shape it did at that time.

As has been noted in Murray's narrative, he concluded that these policies reflected the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples for the purpose of corporations and the government accessing Indigenous lands and resources for their own profit. Murray was delighted to find after ten years of working to answer his questions, that what he learned about politics and economics helped him to understand many other things about society. He says, "I'm still standing on that one, I'm still drawing from the thinking I did around that... it stands the test of time in terms of my framework for understanding how the world works, so it was very formative."

Josephine began her social work education in the early 1990s and completed her last social work degree in 2009. Although it was social justice that drew Josephine to social work,

she was exposed to very little content on anti-oppressive social work throughout her education. She says, “In three social work degrees...I never heard the word *colonization* mentioned once. There was never a single mention about Indian residential schools or anything else.” Thus, her education regarding colonialism and Indigenous peoples has been largely self-directed. Nonetheless, Josephine is grateful for having had the experience of being in multiracial social work classrooms because this exposed her to debates and viewpoints from racially marginalized students who challenged her ignorance and contributed to her growth.

Joy Eidse’s social work education began with an access-based Bachelor of Social Work program for students with life experience of being marginalized or living in the inner city. Her classmates were primarily mature students coming from Aboriginal communities and from countries all over the world, and white students were uncommon. Joy became friends with Aboriginal students in the program and had Aboriginal teachers with whom she could process her learning. A number of class readings have impacted Joy’s decolonization journey. She says,

An article was passed out, by Cindy Blackstock, called *The Unintentional Evil of Angels*. And that summarized everything for me, and was a very defining moment in my life going forward in terms of looking at decolonization and anti-colonial practice. I realized I’ve always had good intentions. Lots of people have had good intentions, and through history there’s been good intentions, and that’s not enough.

Reading Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* in class was also pivotal, causing an existential crisis for Joy. She says,

I felt very vulnerable in that class. The textbook was basically saying, “If you’re a colonizer who refuses, you either need to go back to your country of origin, or you’ll probably be in jail or executed when the revolution happens.” And I just said to the professor, “What hope is there? What am I to do? My country won’t let me back.”... And [the professor] said, “I think at this point, there’s an acceptance that we’re all here to stay, and that the job going forward is to figure out how to stay here together respectfully.” I was grateful for her because that was actually quite a deep issue for me. It was helpful to have that relationship with her and have that kindness.

Joy says her BSW program “just added in leaps and bounds to [her] understanding of the [decolonization] process.” Having relationships with students with lived experience of colonization and decolonization and hearing them speak in class was huge for Joy, as was having instructors with some awareness of these issues. Joy has now begun an MSW program, which is “compounding [her] awareness of things.” For her thesis, Joy plans to do participatory research with non-Aboriginal social workers as co-learners looking at the

process that needs to happen for the social worker in terms of understanding their identity and the face that they are presenting to the client; and the culture, the attitudes, the language, and all the things that they are putting out there towards the client and how that could be re-impacting the client again.

Although Franklin Jones began his anti-colonial journey before he enrolled in his BSW program, it has deepened his understanding and connections. Franklin is a student in an access program, and his diverse cohort includes numerous Indigenous students. Building friendships with Indigenous peoples through school has changed his life. He says,

Being part of a cohort and getting to know folks in a real way, develop real friendships-- and none of that means I am any less privileged or less implicated in any of the oppressive elements of colonialism. But I don't feel as scared to come to things because I have friends, and I want to see them, and they want to see me. And it really goes a long way.

Franklin's BSW program includes a number of Native Studies courses, which have given him the “time and energy to really delve into the history.” Reading Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, which deconstructs the colonial relationship, helped Franklin to “deepen my understanding of what it means to be a privileged person and my responsibilities.” While writing a paper for class about the role of blockades in halting colonial expansion, Franklin had a profound realization. He says,

The tone of how I had written that paper...romanticized these blockades and wasn't effectively, or respectfully, capturing the difficulty and the loss...As an academic I took this and that, and reshaped it to fit my thesis. And actually, I have no idea what those



things actually meant. Those aren't mine. But as people who are students, you take. And I think as settlers, we're so used to just taking anything. And that's one of my biggest criticisms of being involved in social work, or academia, is trying to find that balance.

When Franklin realized his mistake, late the night before the paper was due, he rewrote it. He learned, "As a white person even writing about this, I need to be very respectful and careful... as a person of privilege, you can do harm by just not putting the proper effort in... Because we've always had it that easy."

**Reflections and discussion.** The information shared with me by these research participants got me thinking. The social work education of some participants has been an integral part of their anti-colonial or decolonial journey, while others seem to come to their awareness and work despite their social work involvement. It was interesting to hear about experiences in social work education so many decades ago. What participants shared was consistent with my suspicion that 1) historically, social work education in Canada (and the U.S.) has paid little attention to colonialism in society in general, and to social work's role in colonialism specifically, and 2) social work offers a number of tools that can be used in the pursuit of decolonization. Structural analyses, such as those that were likely taught in Murray's Marxist-dominated program, no doubt proved useful in Murray's anti-colonial development. Further, Murray found the policy tools he needed to analyze and impact colonial policies. Although Kathi was turned off by the focus on professionalization in her program, she was nonetheless inspired by what she learned about social work's history with the settlement house movement and with the community development/community organizing knowledge she gained. Recalling Kathi's narrative in the previous chapter, she did connect with activism while a student, through CASNP, and there is no indication that her social work program facilitated or encouraged this connection. Both Kathi and Murray were able to use their social work education to gain skills that would

help them in their work but found little mentorship and support specific to decolonization or colonial analysis in school. What they learned in these areas was self-motivated. Apparently, social work, as evidenced by their education, was no better than society at large in its willful ignorance and lack of response to the foundational injustice of Canada. It was missing a golden opportunity to uphold its social justice mandate. All of this seemed equally true of Josephine's experience in the 1990s.

The experiences of Joy and of Franklin were categorically different. Their social work programs had specific content regarding colonialism and decolonization, and required curricular Native Studies courses. Joy mentioned content specific to social work's roles in colonialism. They were in classes with many Indigenous and racially marginalized students with whom they developed relationships and from whom they learned. Joy specifically mentioned the presence of at least one Indigenous instructor who had a big impact on her. From an anti-colonial perspective, it appears that access programs, although not necessarily designed for students with white privilege, appear to have been very good for the anti-colonial development of both Joy and Franklin. Their experiences make me hopeful that social work education can make meaningful contributions to decolonization in many ways, and specifically in the development of white settler/colonizers for whom decolonization work is a major life focus. It appears that tools present in social work education and discourse such as structural analyses, community organizing skills, policy intervention skills, and a social justice orientation can be built upon and harnessed in order to contribute to decolonization work and movements. It also appears that, at least for Joy, Josephine, and Franklin, being in class with Indigenous and/or racially marginalized students and instructors made a big difference in their education, which highlights the importance of diverse classrooms and faculties for everyone, including white students. It also

appears that Native Studies, colonization, and decolonization content in social work education can make a big difference in the lives of students and in inspiring and supporting growing numbers of people in their work toward decolonization. When I reflect on content from some of the other narratives, I recall the role university education played for other participants. Adam Barker comes to mind, and the way he has been profoundly shaped by Indigenous studies courses and by his Masters program in Indigenous governance. I think about Indigenous-focused social work programs. Although I believe it is appropriate that these centre Indigenous peoples and students, the information shared with me by the participants in this research supports my belief that such programs can be profoundly beneficial for the journeys and work of white settler/colonizers engaging in anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work. Such programs need not be seen as a threat to Euro-Canadian social work students and educators, but as a gift (Kuokkanen, 2007) that can only serve to benefit us all if we are open to learning.

### **Social Work Practice**

My own process of beginning to integrate anti-racism and anti-colonialism into my social work practice occurred only after years of doing colonial harm through my social work practice. During my early years as a social worker, my thinking was quite permeated by my socialization as an Aamitigoozhi/Wasicu. I carried the paternalism of my culture in addition to the paternalism that can be found in social work. I carried an emphasis on enforcing the law, as well as practices of coercion with which I was socialized. Some of the first ways in which I began to practice anti-colonially involved supporting the access of Indigenous youth to cultural and ceremonial events. As a school social worker in an Interlake, Manitoba school division, I sat on committees for equity and committees in support of Aboriginal achievement, helping to organize anti-oppressive and diversity training for school staff. I remember being frustrated in my involvement with a

provincial union, as discussions of change were limited to what I saw as window dressing. I longed for dialogue regarding deeper structural change. It was not until I began my doctoral program that I grew in my ability to articulate ideas for working for anti-colonial structural change within organizations. I continued to gain awareness of my own socialization and worked to understand the ways in which I perpetuated colonialism through the values and practices I utilized in social work. I had the (good)(mis)fortune to, out of financial necessity, go back to being employed as a practicing clinical social worker mid-way through my doctoral program. I am grateful for the opportunity to apply my growing knowledge of anti-colonialism and decolonization in practice. I have been able to work with a group toward structural change in one organization. Myself and my colleague, Troy Fontaine, have developed and presented a two-day training for all staff in the organization about colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and decolonization. We have also developed and offered a grief therapy group for the youth, the majority of whom are Indigenous, in which we shared both Western and traditional Indigenous teachings about grief and healing from grief. We invited local Elders to teach the youth and we offered opportunities for the youth to participate in traditional Indigenous ceremonies.

I have integrated anti-colonial practice into therapy settings through respect for autonomy, flexibility, and the practice of exploring together the impacts of intergenerational trauma, colonialism, and other structural oppressions in the lives of those with whom I have worked. I assisted those interested to connect to Indigenous communities, groups, events, and ceremonies. I discussed, in therapy, Indigenous practices as legitimate and very effective ways of healing. In my practice teaching social work counseling courses, I worked hard to integrate anti-colonial perspectives. This was reflected in the class readings I assigned, the pedagogical non-ceremonial circle class discussions, the assignments in which students were asked to look at how

their cultural values might impact their counseling practice, and other course content. I have also sought to articulate the colonizing dimensions of social work in my writing, pointing to ideas for decolonization. In spite of the gains I have made integrating anti-colonial knowledge and practice into the work I do as a social worker, I know that, hopefully to a lesser degree, I continue to also cause colonial harm. Therefore, practicing in anti-colonial ways requires, for me, an ongoing process of self-examination, dialogue with Indigenous peoples, and learning.

What did the five social work research participants share about their social work practice? With direct ties to decolonization, Murray Angus's social work practice consists of his land claims policy work with Peter Ittinuar, his work educating and empowering Inuit youth for leadership in land claims negotiations, and more recently, his work empowering youth towards the decolonization of their peoples and lands. Murray describes his work with Peter Ittinuar:

I fell into that job in the last months before the constitution was patriated. And you talk about a fascinating political time to be on Parliament Hill, where Peter Ittinuar was the only Aboriginal Member of Parliament and he was dead center in all of that stuff. He just took me to all sorts of meetings. I was just an observer in the room. And it wasn't pretty, but it was fascinating, and it sure was history. One of the other things that working for him allowed me to do was go sit in on land claims negotiations that the Inuit were engaged in here, because the negotiations got going in 1980 in an active way, and most often they were happening here in Ottawa, in a windowless room down on Kent Street. But I had a license to go there and just sit in on them to monitor them and brief Peter on it. So this was really my stuff, because I understood the issues on that more than any other issues. I was just glad to have the [opportunity]. It put me in the circle of people who were working on land claims here in Ottawa, from the Inuit organization, and there weren't a lot people, it was just a small team, and so we all know each other.

Murray's work with Nunavut Sivuniksavut has already been described in his narrative. Further to this description, Murray shares the importance of relationships and caring in his work there:

We're interacting at every conceivable level all the time with students, so we get to know the students...It's the glue, and it's the mortar...if they know we care for them, and if they know that we know who they are, and what their story is, and we're going to stand with them, doesn't matter if we're white, black, yellow or whatever, it's a relationship. It's human relationship. But you got to back away from entering the room with all the

answers. Just enter the room and sit down quietly. Let people give shape to the relationship.

Despite having social work degrees, Kathi Avery Kinew does not identify as a social worker. She says,

I would never want to be a registered social worker. They're too allied to status quo. They're a social control mechanism. I admire people's clinical skills if they use them properly, but most often they're not fighting the war that needs to be fought. I don't want to be a fucking professional. I want to be out there with the people, standing on the front line and changing things... I don't care if I make 50,000 or 20,000. I never at any time cared... You have to be part of society; you can't put yourself as an elite. That's the way I see social workers.

Kathi has used the community development skills she learned during her social work education in her work over the years, including her recreation work building connections between the YMCA Geneva Park Camp and neighboring Indigenous children living on the reserve. Much of Kathi's community development work has involved working for First Nations and Indigenous organizations, as was discussed in her narrative. Kathi writes and does social research in hopes that it will be carried forward to create change. She has occasionally taught social work courses, hoping to create change within students. She is hopeful when she sees the work some Indigenous social workers are doing, and the Indigenous social work collaborations, gatherings and conferences. These are the types of social work groups Kathi will support and with whom she becomes involved.

Josephine's practice as a social work professor is likely to give students an entirely different education with regard to colonialism and Indigenous knowledges than the one she experienced. To decolonize her teaching practice, Josephine researched Indigenous pedagogies and began to incorporate them into the classroom. Josephine uses an Indigenous-inspired non-ceremonial circle pedagogy in her classroom, which she sees as important decolonizing work because it subverts power structures and teaches students to listen to each other's voices, build

relationships, and equalize power dynamics. She invites Indigenous Elders into her classroom to lead sharing circles and to teach students how to be participants. She understands that both mainstream education and social work models are colonizing tools, and engages in dialogue with students to deconstruct these and find ways to minimize the damage to themselves and the damage of their practice. Josephine also teaches students to see critical problems such as the under-representation of Indigenous students in their classrooms and field placement agencies, and to apply anti-oppressive and anti-colonial theory in order to become change agents with the analysis to understand and address such structural problems.

When she sees students in the hallway, she stops them to ask how they are doing. She is particularly dedicated to the success of her Indigenous students. She says, “We have an [Indigenous] student lounge where I regularly cruise by, I go in and I say hi to students there. So I do that outreach because I understand the importance of relationships.” She communicates caring to her students, helps them through crises, and mentors them. By listening to students and building relationships, Josephine has been alerted to structural barriers Indigenous students face and has worked with her faculty and with student supports on campus to address these. Because many racially marginalized students entering social work expect its social justice values to create an anti-oppressive environment, Josephine has observed that when students experience racism during their social work education, “it is really extra hard...it’s such an enormous betrayal because it’s a betrayal of the basic values of social work.” They often end up in tears in her office. In response, Josephine is developing a “unique form of educational counseling” that teaches students how to apply anti-oppressive and anti-colonial theory to their educational experiences and to engage their supports in the hope that they will stay in school and graduate.

Josephine teaches students that “Indigenous social work is good for all social workers and all clients,” encouraging social work practice that is more relational, holistic, and community-based rather than fragmented. She seeks to support the transformation and decolonization of non-Indigenous students also, both personally and professionally, and is researching how to do this more effectively. Josephine accompanies students during marches and demonstrations. She says, “I love getting out on the streets with the students, and that’s some of what makes me happiest as a social work educator is being out there on the pavement on some issue with students and with community members.”

Josephine says, “I’m trying to change my institution that I’m in and the institutions I connect with--that’s where a lot of my work is.” When an opportunity came for her faculty to take responsibility for its role in residential schools through an apology project, she spoke up during a meeting and provided leadership to the process. After researching Truth and Reconciliation processes, Josephine searched scholarly literature regarding social work’s role in residential schools. Through conversations, Josephine learned from her Indigenous colleagues that the apology project must include action, and that although apology is a settler responsibility, “settlers who are doing this work have to stay in dialogue with Indigenous people.” Josephine seeks to subvert colonialism in her research practice as well. She is committed to anti-oppressive perspectives on aging, and to learning about Indigenous methodologies and anti-oppressive ways to do research. She focuses on Indigenous literatures, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous action research when she works on research with Indigenous colleagues. Rather than using Eurocentric methodologies that fragment, she seeks to maintain the wholeness of her data. Josephine uses her academic tools to “theorize colonial realities that are in [her] immediate and larger environment.” She says, “That is a passion I have, is that link between theory and practice;



between having an experience and theorizing that experience.” Josephine does educational work with her non-Indigenous colleagues, decentering western academic standards. She also supports Indigenous and racially marginalized faculty members through mentorship, assisting them in navigating white institutions.

Joy Eidse struggles with the convergence of her decolonization work and her social work practice. As a community development worker in a North End Winnipeg neighborhood, she had difficulty engaging the Aboriginal community due to strong divisions in the neighborhood, and due to the neighborhood program’s structure whereby involvement would mean that those most marginalized in the community volunteer their free time. Thus, the neighborhood volunteer board members did not represent the community. Joy says, “I just had so much ambivalence that I ended up not being able to continue working there because I couldn’t quite resolve all of those pieces.” Joy then began to work in mental health crisis services, and found this system lacked a “meta-perspective on the issues facing Aboriginal people.” The only support particular to people from Aboriginal backgrounds and perspectives is a residential school hotline phone number given if somebody says the words “residential school” when receiving services. Joy suspects that her systemic perspective impacts how she speaks with and understands Aboriginal clients. She says,

I look at the files and I see the same last names for entire extended families that are facing these things, and it’s just so clear to me that this is a systemic issue. These are not individual mental health problems. It’s systemic trauma and broad historical issues that are happening.

Joy is still working out how to integrate these observations in her workplace. She wonders, “How much do I bring up, when do I bring it up, and what do I say?” when others working in the health care system, even new graduates, do not share this understanding or analysis. Joy is concerned when, in light of social work’s roles in colonization, “people coming for help, having

experienced trauma, often at the hands of social workers in the past, and as a result of social workers' role in the past" have had to come back to social workers because there was no where else to go. Even now, most social workers

are not super aware of the history and of the impact that [social work] has had in the lives of these people, and could potentially be re-traumatizing because of that lack of understanding that they are the face of the oppressor in many ways. Many of my coworkers are of European descent, coming from middle class backgrounds with very little connection with the Aboriginal community.

Despite the education, coaching, support, and mentoring she had in her undergrad program, when Joy got into the workplace, she found

It was really difficult to figure out how to apply [anti-colonial perspectives] in that setting, just really unclear. It was not something that was really understood by coworkers or management necessarily. [You were] given odd glances when you ask those kinds of questions or make comments around those issues.

Joy believes it would be a big accomplishment toward decolonization if social workers were aware of who they are, where they come from, and the impact this knowledge has on their decisions, ways of beings, and ways of practicing. This would enable social workers to make more conscious choices about their actions. She says, "As a profession of social work, there's a big gap in our practice being social-justice oriented. The whole colonization-decolonization piece is missing in our practice." Although Joy is starting to hear it addressed as a student, when she talks with other students in her MSW program who are practicing as social workers, she realizes "they're not seeing it."

Franklin Jones notes the importance of social workers building relationships with Indigenous peoples outside of the helping relationship. He says, "There are so many white social workers I know where the only Indigenous people they have in their entire lives are the people that they think are stealing from EI or something—their 'clients.'" Franklin believes that relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities can't be located in just one part of one's

life. One of his professors asked, “Do you want to be a part of this community? Do you want to actually be helpful? Do you want to develop real, honest, genuine relationships and friendships, where people trust each other?” If so, the professor continued, “you have to be around. People need to know you.” Currently, Franklin is employed doing educational trainings and workshops for youth. In his work, he has lobbied for a decolonization approach to their curriculum, and was part of a group that pushed the program to acknowledge Indigenous territory as a matter of practice during their workshops. In his youth educator work, Franklin has learned from his mistakes. When he had presented the idea of the decolonization approach to their curriculum, his Indigenous colleague had “basically suggested the same thing not long before and was not listened to.” Yet when it came from Franklin, the others said, “Oh yeah, that’s a good idea, we should do that!” Franklin had unintentionally taken credit for the idea, and he later reflected that this was a result of the privilege that “bleeds into it hard,” even in “so-called progressive groups.” When his organization holds anti-discrimination workshops, they explicitly discuss colonization, white privilege, and police racial profiling. Discussions with youth include the way Indigenous peoples are more likely to be profiled, to be charged, and to be arrested; while they are “less likely to be paroled,” noting that this cycle impacts generations. Franklin observes that “a lot of times, when we do trainings or workshops, [it’s] actually the first time people have heard of colonization, or heard the word.” During workshops, Franklin tries to work from the heart. When he teaches young people, he says, “I want to show them that I care about them, and that I respect them, and that I honor what they bring and what they have, and who they are.” Franklin works out of the understanding that he doesn’t know what is best for people, and he says, “I’d way rather be in someone’s corner than in the system’s corner, and if that ever happens

to me, I'll quit." He has observed social workers who lose themselves and disconnect from their hearts. He says,

That's why someone might work for CFS for 30 or 40 years is because maybe they have a family and kids and a house, and they can't bend a rule or they're overburdened so they just get burned out and they stop caring about people, or have those walls are up.

To avoid this, Franklin feels it is important to "seek and find a place to work for that does the work in a way that you feel good about it, that fits with your approach." He feels it is important to "find those ways to be present with somebody, but not carry home other people's trauma." It is important to realize that "as a white person, or as a helper, these stories—other people's pain is not your pain. We do not have rights to that pain or rights to those stories." Franklin says, "I guess it remains to be seen if I can be a social worker or not, I guess we'll just find out."

**Reflections and discussion.** Receiving what was shared by these participants, I am impressed by the many ways they have found to integrate social work knowledge and anti-colonial theory in their social work and anti-colonial practice. Although it has not always been easy for them, and they may not have been taught how to apply their anti-colonial knowledge in practice, they have found ways to practice in increasingly anti-colonial ways. Many have become conscious of the dangers of social work practice colonizing those we seek to serve, and some have found ways to create change in and through their own work and in their practice settings. The interviews with these individuals caused me to reflect on the importance of providing as many principles for, and examples of, anti-colonial social work practice as possible to social work students, as this will help them with their processes of linking theory to practice. The tensions between social work as colonizing, and social work's potential to be anti-colonial were evident to me from the participant's stories. The tension between social workers as elite professionals, and social workers as *of and with the people* was also evident, particularly in

Kathi's and Franklin's interviews, to the point where Kathi does not identify as a social worker, and Franklin wonders whether he is capable of being a social worker given his values. Some use social work skills and knowledge in more overtly anti-colonial practice positions, such as Kathi and Murray, while others such as Joy, Josephine, and Franklin work in mainstream settings, finding ways to integrate anti-colonial perspectives into their work. In closing this chapter, I have created a chart, which, for me, represents the collection of ways of engaging anti-colonialism with social work practice as discussed by the research participants. I frame these not as a checklist, but as ideas for social work students, practitioners, and educators to consider.

**Table 1**

*Ways Research Participants have Integrated Anti-colonialism into Social Work Practice*

Personal Work	Relational Work	Support Work	Teaching Work
Identifying and transforming our own colonial socialization and colonial practices (e.g. listening rather than thinking we have all the answers, give credit to Indigenous peoples for their ideas)	In social work practice, emphasizing relationships, care, and working from the heart	Supporting decolonization and resurgence processes of Indigenous peoples, students, youth.	Inviting Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to share Indigenous knowledge
Learning about Indigenous social work	Facilitating connections between Indigenous peoples and settlers	Supporting the anti-colonial policy work of Indigenous Peoples	Engage Indigenous-inspired pedagogies
Understanding who you are, where you come from, and how this impacts your decisions and ways of practicing, Using this awareness to make conscious anti-colonial choices	Resist being a social control mechanism	Supporting the work of Indigenous nations, groups, and communities	Teaching others to deconstruct colonial systems and models
Learning about and engaging Indigenous literatures and methodologies	Being in relationship with Indigenous communities and peoples outside of the helping relationship	Supporting Indigenous social work gatherings, conferences, and groups	Teaching critical anti-colonial analyses
	Being around Indigenous communities and developing genuine relationships and friendships	Supporting Indigenous students' and peoples' success	Teaching anti-colonial theory
	Staying in dialogue with Indigenous peoples regarding our work	Providing emotional and material support to Indigenous students	Teaching people how to apply anti-colonial theory to their experiences in colonial institutions
			Teaching people how to address structural colonial barriers and problems

<p>(Personal Work continued)</p> <p>Taking responsibility for our roles in colonial processes</p> <p>Finding social work employment that fits with your anti-colonial approach</p>		<p>(Support Work continued)</p> <p>Supporting the decolonization of non-Indigenous students</p> <p>Mentoring and/or supporting racially marginalized colleagues</p> <p>Advocating for people in the face of oppressive systems</p>	<p>(Teaching Work cont.)</p> <p>Teaching about Indigenous social work</p> <p>Educating non-Indigenous colleagues</p> <p>Explicitly discussing systemic injustice such as colonization, white privilege, and police racial profiling</p> <p>Integrating decolonization approaches and content into curriculum for youth</p>
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Direct Action Work	Structural Change Work	Policy Work	Deconstruction Work	Acknowledgement Work	Research Work	Power Dynamic Work
<p>Working on the front lines for social change</p> <p>Engaging in direct action such as marches and demonstrations (with students),</p>	<p>Addressing structural colonial barriers and problems</p> <p>Working towards institutional change</p> <p>Decentering Western academic standards</p> <p>Striving for Indigenous community representation, especially where there can be reciprocity</p>	<p>Working against colonial social policies</p> <p>Supporting anti-colonial policies</p>	<p>Deconstructing colonial systems and models</p> <p>Understanding social work's role in creating harm and trauma</p>	<p>Acknowledging Indigenous territory publicly</p> <p>Engaging a systemic perspective of colonialism and historical trauma in work with Indigenous peoples</p> <p>Respecting that we don't have rights to the pain or stories of Indigenous peoples</p>	<p>Facilitating anti-colonial social research</p> <p>Engaging anti-colonial ways to do research</p>	<p>Attending to and subverting power dynamics</p> <p>Avoid associating as a professional elite</p>

It is important to understand the ideas in this table not as an exhaustive representation of what is possible, but rather some thoughts for those wishing to begin this work. Additional, and often more advanced, ideas can be found in some of the social work literature by Indigenous social work scholars. For example, I refer the reader back to Yellow Bird and Gray's (2008) challenge that social workers serve Indigenous communities' "drive for self determination, empowerment, and the complete return of their lands and other resources illegally stolen by colonial societies" (p. 59) and speak the language of the Indigenous nations with whom they work. Although the ideas for anti-colonial social work outlined in this chapter that have been practiced by myself and by the research participants are important, I think Yellow Bird and Gray's (2008) challenge pushes us further into framing our work in Indigenous sovereignty and addressing, in our anti-colonial/decolonial social work, the repatriation of Indigenous lands (Tuck & Yang, 2012). I also believe it will be important to engage more deeply as social workers with what it means to be a relative to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands (Craft, 2013; Hubbard, 2013; Johnson, 2007; Sinclair, 2014). As non-Indigenous social workers continue to listen to Indigenous social work scholars and take responsibility for our own work, it is my hope that together we will make increasing advances in anti-colonial social work practice, and that each person, with her/his own gifts and skills, will make contributions from which we can all learn. In this chapter, I have presented narrative content regarding the social work education and social work practice of five research participants as it relates to their anti-colonial and/or decolonial learnings and work. In the next, and final, chapter I describe what I have learned about living and doing research in Indigenous sovereignty, make recommendations, describe limitations and evaluation of the study, describe the study's contributions, and share thoughts on future directions for research based on my experience with this study.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusions**

In the previous chapters, you have read stories of white settler occupiers who have taken up the call to engage in anti-colonial activism and decolonization work. You have read biographies of those who grew up segregated from Indigenous peoples and biographies of those whose early lives were intertwined with Indigenous communities. You have read narratives of those whose observations raised questions in their young hearts and narratives of those who saw discrepancies between what was espoused and what happened in practice around them. Research participants shared stories of things that influenced and triggered their involvement, their insights, and their struggles. They shared accounts of the varieties of spheres in which they do their work, the types of work they do, and the ways they conceptualize their work. You have read stories of those who have learned about colonialism and resistance to it both inside and outside of the academy and stories of those whose activism occurs primarily within, primarily outside, or both inside and outside of the academy. Research participants have shared the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of their work. You have read narratives of those who grew up with little direct influence of organized religion, of those whose critical questioning would lead them away from organized religion, and of those who are strongly connected to an organized religion and work from within to transform it. Research participants have shared the reasons why they do their work, and what they have learned and gained through their involvements. You have read about their doubts, fears, and commitments. You have read stories of those who have engaged in their work with a grassroots and/or direct action focus, and those who have deconstructed and started to rebuild their own socialization. You have read stories of those participants whose work focuses on supporting Indigenous actions and stories of those who work



to educate and challenge non-Indigenous Canadians. You have read accounts of getting it wrong and accounts of getting it right. You have read narratives of re-colonization despite intentions of doing otherwise, and stories of learning from these errors and commitments to do better.

In this chapter, I go back to my research questions to discuss what I have learned about living in Indigenous sovereignty from these stories and from the research. I go back to and discuss learnings about my question regarding doing research in Indigenous sovereignty in the context of this study. I discuss recommendations that come out of this study both generally for white settler occupiers, and specifically for social work. I describe the limitations and evaluation of the study. I close by discussing the contributions of the study as well as future directions for this type of academic work.

### **What I have Learned about Living in Indigenous Sovereignty**

A primary research question of this study was: *what can we learn about living in Indigenous sovereignty from the lives, thoughts, and work of white settler occupiers who have engaged deeply in anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or solidarity work?* As I participated in research consultations and was immersed in literature, gatherings, and relationships, I realized that it really is up to each individual what they will learn from the narratives shared in this study. What I can more appropriately comment on is some of what *I* have learned. Although I have doubts about my ability to recall all of my learnings, as they occurred during hundreds of moments and contexts, a number of learnings do come to mind.

By engaging with this research, being present during interviews, reviewing interview data, and constructing the narratives, I learned that living in Indigenous sovereignty has far more to do with the earth/land and far more to do with an embodied (not abstract) love than I could have predicted. I grew in my understanding of treaty relationships as kinship relationships with

Indigenous peoples and as involving relationships with land, based both on responsibility and love. Despite my previous opportunities to hear and experience Indigenous knowledges and protocols through the ceremonial community I had been invited into, I came to understand my relationship with these knowledges and protocols differently. I now know more clearly that learning about and respecting these knowledges and protocols is an important way to relate to Indigenous lands and sovereignty.

I, like many of the research participants, have struggled with the weight and implications of my participation and the participation of my ancestors in perpetrating colonial harm. I was familiar, on some levels, with concepts and literatures around the importance of humility and following the lead of Indigenous peoples in decolonial work. I have increasingly understood the importance of ongoing dialogue and checking in with Indigenous peoples as we do our work. Although these represent important truths and practices of the work without which we'd be in real trouble, this research has offered a counterpoint of balance in its focus also on our own sacredness as white settler occupiers, having spirits that have a purpose and work to do that is between us and spirit. I became intrigued with and convinced of the importance of honouring and integrating paradox and tensions between complementary (although sometimes seemingly opposing) perspectives and elements of anti-colonial and decolonial work for white settler occupiers. In some ways, this research has been therapy for me. It has been an appropriate venue, I believe, for continuing to work through my emotional struggles in the work. I have heard, by listening to research subjects, that my struggles are not unusual, and I have learned new ways to consider and work through these emotions.

During my engagement with this research, I was exposed to oral and written Indigenous literatures emphasizing the centrality of land and land return for the healing of Indigenous

peoples and for meaningful decolonial work. I listened as research subjects shared their struggles and fears around this, as well as their limitations. I listened as many described land return and land reparation as a critical focus, and as an area they would like to grow into engaging more deeply. A desire developed within me to have a more prominent focus on land reparation and land return in my own work, although I do not yet know what forms this may take.

### **What I have Learned about Doing Research in Indigenous Sovereignty**

A sub-question that evolved during this research was: *how can one do research in Indigenous sovereignty, when the research involves a white settler occupier researcher, white settler occupier research subjects, and anti-colonial aims?* My doctoral studies as well as my time engaging this research have given me an opportunity to look more deeply at the colonizing dynamics of mainstream research, seeking to understand particular processes and choices that impact these. I had the opportunity to more closely examine Indigenous and anti-oppressive methodologies and methods and to better understand ways of disrupting oppression in research. As will be noted, I believe a contribution of this research is the anti-colonial research methodology I articulated and used in this study. Although some settler occupiers will opt to use Indigenous methodologies in their work, I articulate an alternative for those who resonate with Kovach's (2009) perspective on this, and for those who resonate with my process and reasoning. Although the limitations of the dissertation regulations, academia in general, as well as my own personal limitations have meant I was not able to embody the methodology as fully as I would have liked, I generally feel good about the ethics I enacted in my research. I have received positive feedback about this from research subjects, those who consulted with me, and from local community members. I have also learned some things about the challenges of taking the approaches I did. They are definitely more time consuming, and require greater resources and

funding. But in my opinion this is as it should be. Reciprocity is not cheap, nor should it be. Ethical research is not bargain shopping in which you try to get as much as you can while giving as little as possible. I recall a teaching shared with me by one of my early Anishinaabe mentors, Lorraine Derman, when I was purchasing and sewing gifts to offer to Nii Gaani Aki Inini to ask for his help when I developed rheumatoid arthritis: how much it means to you is how high you pile the gifts. Anything less than this would risk extractivism and exploitation. I have also learned about the rewards of doing research in this way. I cannot quantify the number of ways I have been gifted in the process. I have new and strengthened relationships, deeper community ties, and much more knowledge than I had previously. I have the satisfaction of knowing I did the best I could toward ethical (although imperfect) work and the good feelings that come with that.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendations for white settler occupiers.** Using literatures and narratives, this study has emphasized that the only ethical ways for white settler occupiers to live on lands occupied by the Canadian state is through the frameworks of Indigenous sovereignty and of upholding treaty obligations and relationships. Our relationships with colonialism, Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous lands are central to our existence here. As such, I recommend that white settler occupiers learn from the literatures and narratives shared here and initiate and/or deepen our own anti-colonial/decolonial work. I recommend that white settler colonizers enter into or deepen respectful, reciprocal, and caring relationships with Indigenous peoples and lands. I recommend we find our own pathways in this work, reflective of our own gifts, spirits, and experiences. I recommend we engage this work in relationship and dialogue with Indigenous peoples, the caretakers of their lands. I also recommend that white settler occupiers working

toward decolonization support, care for, and inspire one another in our work. I recommend that settler occupiers listen to what Indigenous peoples are saying and find ways to support their efforts and see ourselves in their stories. I recommend that we continue to educate ourselves and one another. I recommend that we keep moving forward in our work in healthy and balanced ways, never giving up.

**Recommendations for social work.** As a collection of systems that have operated for too long in ignorance of the colonial harm it perpetuates, even as it claims to value and work toward justice, there are signs that social work is just beginning to wake up. This is in no small part due to the work of Indigenous social workers and Indigenous social work scholars. When I began my doctoral studies and shared with social workers and social work professors what my dissertation focus was, it was not rare to be asked, “What does that have to do with social work?” I believe colonialism and decolonization have everything to do with social work. If social work is about respecting the dignity and worth of persons, how can we comply with systems that devalue Indigenous peoples and perspectives and operate as if Indigenous peoples and Indigenous sovereignty do not even exist? How can we justify our inattention to disrupting these? How can we not know that, as Manuel and Derrickson (2015) say, “It is the loss of [Indigenous peoples’] lands that has been the precise cause of our impoverishment” (p. 7)?

Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write,

Our lives are seven years shorter than the lives of non-Indigenous Canadians. Our unemployment rates are four times higher. Their resources to educate our children are only a third of what is spent on non-Indigenous Canadian children. Our youth commit suicide at a rate of more than five times higher. We are currently living the effects of this dispossession every day of our lives, and we have been living this misery in Canada for almost 150 years. (p. 8)

Upon learning this, how can we not, as social workers, engage in concerted efforts toward land return and reparations? If social work is indeed about justice, how can we not address the most

foundational injustices of these lands? If social work is about competence, how can we so incompetently relate to Indigenous peoples and perspectives? If it is about integrity, how can we be so unethical in our relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands? I base some of these questions on the espoused values of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). It truly appears to be the case that social work and Indigenous peoples are speaking different languages (Yellow Bird & Gray, 2008).

My recommendations for social work include an overhaul of the interpretation of our codes of ethics to centre Indigenous interpretations and sovereignty. They include framing our entire discipline in the context of Indigenous sovereignty. What flows from this will be major changes in practice expectations, curricula, decolonization work for social work students and practitioners, and decolonial and/or anti-colonial social work practice. The words of the social work-related research subjects of this study offer just a few ideas for change. I refer readers back to Table 1 on pages 329-330, which lists practices the research subjects have integrated into their own social work. The narratives of a number of participants make clear the neglect of social work education historically to focus on colonialism and decolonization. The social work students interviewed who got more of this content were those that attended access programs with specific Native studies course requirements. The narratives make clear the impact social work curriculum can have on the decolonial learning of students. Knowledge about Indigenous peoples, colonialism, and decolonization can be integrated into all courses. Also, one research subject articulated her difficulty in finding ways to apply the anti-oppressive knowledge she gained in her social work program to her workplace once she got out into the field. I recommend that social work programs provide more focus on translating these skills in their work educating students. Social work has an opportunity, responsibility, and even relevant tools to become a

decolonizing force in Canada. As came through in the narratives, structural social work analyses, reflexive practice tools, community development, and policy knowledge can all contribute toward anti-colonial change if taught and practiced from these perspectives.

Other, perhaps more important ideas for change come from grassroots Indigenous communities and Indigenous social work scholars. Increasing national attention is being drawn to the inequities in Indigenous child welfare, due in part to the advocacy work of Cindy Blackstock (2011). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015) include recommendations for child welfare, which social workers are well positioned to support and integrate. Yellow Bird and Gray (2008) describe a decolonized reorientation to social work as practiced by non-Indigenous peoples with Indigenous communities. I would challenge social work readers to familiarize themselves with what local Indigenous communities are saying and requesting, and with what Indigenous social work scholars are saying about priorities for change.

### **Limitations and Evaluation**

**Limitations.** As has been noted, this study is not without its limitations. It has been limited by the colonial environment of the academy, by the time restrictions of a doctoral program, and by requirements for individualist scholarship. I explained previously that it would have been my preference, based on the value framework of this study and my own personal values, to have a co-authored work, and to engage Indigenous scholars, activists, and Knowledge Keepers in more aspects of the study, particularly the data analysis. Although this was not possible within the context in which I have undertaken this study, I hope to engage more of this participation with the material after my doctoral requirements are met. This study has been limited by my own colonial socialization, which means that I am enacting colonialism in ways I

am aware of and in ways I am blind to. It has been limited by my inability to imagine more anti-colonial and decolonial alternatives during the research process.

**Evaluation.** In evaluating this study, I draw from concepts used in Indigenous, narrative, and participatory action research. Kovach (2009) relates the truthfulness of knowledge to the integrity of the one sharing knowledge, and emphasizes the role of community in determining this. Similarly, Hart (2009) writes that *trustworthiness*, a value used for evaluation in an Indigenous research paradigm, is strengthened when those persons who contribute knowledge to the research are known in the community as persons whose lives reflect the teachings they share (Hart, 2009). In choosing the people I would invite to be involved with the research, as both participants and consultants, I did rely on community input. Although those who shared their knowledge as participants and consultants are not perfect, I have experienced and have heard positive things about them in various circles.

From her perspective on Indigenous research methodologies, Kovach (2009) indicates that assessing research in relational ways means looking at the relevance and accessibility of the research to the community, the way the research gives back to community, and the way the research creates relationships. Although I am not in a position to assess the research from the perspectives of those in the community, I can say that I have received positive feedback from many community members of varying social locations. Indigenous peoples have told me that the research gives them hope for the future of their children, and have expressed appreciation for the ethical practices of the research. Non-Indigenous community members have expressed enthusiasm for the project. For myself, the research has created and deepened numerous relationships. I have observed participants and consultants meeting one another during the research feast and engaging in conversation and co-learning. Giving back to the community has



been an ethic I have tried very hard to uphold, which can be seen through the gifts and food shared in consultations and interviews, through the research feast and giveaway, and through the film project that disseminates aspects of the research in accessible ways. The film project, *Stories of Decolonization*, is conceptualized as involving a number of short films (around 30 minutes long each), and a longer feature film. In addition to research interview footage that may potentially be included in each of the films, video recorded interviews have also been completed with Indigenous scholars and activists, and with racially marginalized settlers. The first short film, *Stories of Decolonization: Land Dispossession and Settlement*, has now been completed<sup>2</sup>, and utilizes research footage from five of the research participants. The current project plan involves several additional short films with themes such as identities in relation to colonialism, contemporary manifestations of settler colonialism in Canada, and decolonization work of peoples with various identities. The longer feature film will involve in-depth content on the decolonization work of white settlers.

Hart (2009) indicates that trustworthiness develops when the researcher applies “one’s inner-space discoveries” (Hart, 2009, p. 167), and when the community expresses trust in the researcher’s “intent to move forward in a way that will reinforce the community’s wellbeing” (p. 167). As I hope has been evident in what I have shared of my own learnings, experiences, and understandings throughout this dissertation, I have applied my own personal reflections and learnings to the research study. Although I cannot be certain of the way I am perceived by community members as a researcher, I do feel that the agreement of so many to participate in and provide consultation for the research reflects, at least somewhat, on their trust in me to do research that will be of benefit to others beyond myself.

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<sup>2</sup> This film can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTruP6r2cAA>

Riessman suggests evaluating narrative research using the concepts of *correspondence* and *coherence*. Correspondence, most important for realist research projects, evaluates the degree to which events described in personal narratives more or less match the evidence from other sources. Although I did not set out consciously to evaluate the historical accuracy of the content shared by research participants, I nonetheless engaged in practices that would ensure correspondence. Many, many times during the process of constructing the narratives, I found myself either relating the information from participants to what I already know about events and processes in Canadian history, or seeking information online and in literature when I was unfamiliar with events, people, places, and processes described. In the majority of cases, the information I sought was easily obtained, added to my own learning, and corresponded with what was shared. Although my process originated more out of necessity, so that I would have the context, correct spellings, and chronology in mind in order to construct the narratives more accurately rather than out of distrust regarding what was shared with me, the result was that I gained confidence in my own understanding of what was shared, and I gained transformative knowledge of which I had previously been unaware.

When it comes to evaluating the researcher's representation of participant narratives, Riessman's (2008) strategy involves examining its coherence, persuasiveness, emotional/aesthetic factors, and usefulness in both academic and social change senses. She asks: "Do episodes of a life story hang together?...are there major gaps and inconsistencies? Is the interpreter's analytic account persuasive?" (p. 189). Coherence has to do with understandability, and "validity can be strengthened if the analytic story the investigator constructs links pieces of data and renders them meaningful and coherent theoretically" (Riessman, 2008, p. 191). I note here, as was suggested by a dissertation committee member, that one's sense of coherence may

be very much culturally bound. However, as a white settler person constructing narratives of other white settler peoples, with the inspiration of a white settler audience in mind, this may be less problematic.

Riessman says, “a good narrative persuades readers...[narratives are presented] in ways that demonstrate the data are genuine, and analytic interpretations of them are plausible, reasonable, and convincing” (p. 191). Drawing on the work of Ellis and Bochner (2000), Riessman discusses emotional and aesthetic dimensions, such as whether the narrative draws the reader into the world of the story, fosters empathic engagement, and causes one to consider the implications of the perspectives offered. Finally, narrative research can be evaluated through the pragmatic use of the narrative study. Riessman explains that this use can be academic—as a basis for further work by others, and it can also be political and ethical, considering how a narrative study contributes to social change and fosters social justice.

Although I do not know how the narratives will be perceived by other readers, my own observation and the limited feedback I have received suggests they are well-constructed, convey a wholistic life story regarding the research focus, are understandable, and are compelling and interesting. I believe my extensive use of quotations and paraphrasing demonstrates the consistency of the narratives with the data. For me, persuasiveness is also strengthened by my practice of requesting input and revisions from research subjects regarding the narratives I constructed based on their data. This means they were able to clarify or correct elements that were unclear or inaccurate. The narratives are personally inspiring to me, and I believe the way I have constructed them allows for emotional engagement and inspiration. I believe that the study may be a useful tool for academia as it moves further toward decolonization. I also believe academic instructors and professors will find within the narratives ideas to further their own

decolonial practice in their work. Of course the primary objective of the research has been to contribute to decolonial social change. It has been my hope that this research would be anti-colonial in content and process; and that it would be an agent of transformation for those who have been involved with it. I know I have been changed through the research toward this end, and I believe that white settler occupiers who engage the research will find something within it to contribute toward their growth. I have had feedback from research subjects and others involved with the research about the positive effect the research has had on their own well-being and work.

Watkins and Shulman's (2008) recasting of validity in the context of participatory action research relies, in part, on evaluation based on the perceptions and experiences of those involved in the research. Although I don't know fully how these aspects are perceived by others, here I focus on my own perceptions. I believe the *contextual* validity, or fruitfulness of the research project, questions, and data collection, is strong in this study. The research was framed in a way that produced deep and rich data, so much so that I was unable to accommodate all of it into this study. I believe the *interpersonal validity*, the openness and trust established between those involved in the research (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), was also strong. Doing the interviews felt good relationally, and the quality, depth, and vulnerability of the data suggests the participants trusted me as a researcher and the research process we were engaged in. The *interpretive validity* of the study was also strong, in that I was offered feedback by participants that the narratives I constructed were, by and large, accurate and respectful. The interpretive validity was strengthened when participants corrected and clarified any minor aspects of the narratives, such that they were involved in dialogue regarding the interpretations of their data. The interpretive validity would have been stronger if Indigenous peoples had been involved directly in the data

analysis. As Watkins and Shulman (2008) note, the participation of people of varying social locations in the interpretive process raises the level of interpretive validity. The perspectives of Indigenous peoples are key for this study's focus on colonialism and on living in Indigenous sovereignty. Nonetheless, the consultation with Indigenous scholars that occurred with regard to the analysis shaped the value system I used when I framed the analysis and wrote the discussion sections. I believe the *catalytic validity*, the degree of transformative potential of the research (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), is also strong. That certainly has been the intention, and the limited feedback I've received would suggest this is true. Of course, the potential of one research study to change the world is limited, but I do believe this study can make a difference for some, and that it functions as part of a larger movement with many contributors.

### **Contributions of the Study to Knowledge**

In addition to the contributions of this research to social change in the people involved in the research, and to transformative social movements, the contributions of the research to scholarly knowledge in its area are important. As has been mentioned, I believe the research methodology itself is a contribution as it demonstrates anti-colonial ways of doing research in Indigenous sovereignty apart as a settler occupier researcher with settler occupier research subjects. This is a niche for which there has been little offered previously. As was noted in the introductions chapter, there have been studies and literatures that are connected to the concept of stories of anti-oppressive white people. There are a number of studies and/or books, mostly from the U.S., that share narratives of white anti-racism activists. Although there are Canadian studies that utilize the stories of anti-colonial or decolonial settler peoples, the majority I have seen have different approaches, differing populations, and/or differing goals than the present study. Also, most of these are not occurring in the context of a social work program. Hiller's (2013) study

takes part within a social work doctoral program, includes narrative, and even includes a common research subject. She draws on *settler narratives of coming to consciousness*, developing a model that can inform both informal and formal pedagogies toward settler transformation. Although much is similar, there are major differences. A unique contribution this dissertation makes in comparison is the presentation of whole narratives, themselves sites for the inspiration of transformational work. I do not use the narratives as vehicles to analyze particular phenomena. The narratives *are* the analyses and the change agents. Further, the present study overtly addresses connections with and recommendations for social work.

### **Future Directions**

There are many areas touched upon in this research that could be more fully developed in future studies. For example, future studies might focus on the religious and spiritual aspects of the work, deepening understandings around appropriation and ways to relate with Indigenous knowledges and protocols when living on Indigenous lands. A future study might take up the theme of naming ourselves in Indigenous sovereignty, perhaps developing a sovereignty-based map as a reference for settlers whose identifications will change as they travel. I believe there is a need for future studies regarding the roles of settler emotion in the work, sticking and unsticking points, and ways to support each other's emotional processing. For social work, I believe more research is needed regarding how to assist social work students in understanding the importance of anti-colonialism for their practice, and pedagogical studies are needed to assist social instructors in inspiring change in students. I believe future studies will be important in learning how both Indigenous and settler social workers have integrated, and can integrate anti-colonialism in their practice. I believe further research connecting social work to decolonization movements will be important. I also believe it will be important to do research connecting social

work more fully to Indigenous sovereignty and land return. All of these areas interest me. The focus on land and land return I am listening to through Indigenous peoples and literatures has inspired a desire to better understand what land return could look like on national and personal levels, and levels in between. After doing this research, it is clear to me the fear and dissonance around land return (Lowman & Barker, 2015) that operate in even advanced settler decolonizers, and I wish to explore ways to communicate possibilities around land return that demystify it, rendering it reasonable and attainable in the minds of Euro-Canadians. I want to find ways to inspire more settlers to consider and engage in processes of land return.

I wish to close this chapter by once again acknowledging the insightful and instructive words by Indigenous activists, scholars, and Knowledge Keepers that I have learned from throughout the process of this research. I also acknowledge what was gifted to us by the research subjects of this study. It is my greatest hope that (white) settler occupier readers who are beginning their decolonization journeys will find something in the words shared here to inspire them. I hope they will find something from the story of another with which to identify and through which to find encouragement. It is my hope that those who have been doing their decolonial work for some time will find inspiration to deepen, expand, and continue their work. It is my hope that Indigenous-led anti-colonial social movements around the world will find greater understanding, respect, support, space, and solidarity from non-Indigenous inhabitants on their lands.

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## Appendix A

### Community Consultations with Indigenous Scholars, Activists, and Knowledge Keepers

Several years ago, I met with Leona Star-Manoakesick, who I have known for a number of years, about my preliminary thoughts regarding this study. Leona has expertise in OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles and ethics regarding research with Indigenous peoples. Although I did not yet know to what extent my research may involve Indigenous peoples (my thought was that white settler occupiers would be my research subjects), I was nonetheless interested in OCAP ethics in whatever capacity they might apply to my research since they subvert colonialism in important ways. Leona suggested that according to OCAP principles, it is important to involve the community in which you are conducting research from beginning to end, and that the research should be reflective of the community's needs and interests. She said that perhaps in my case, a community relevant to my research consists of white people. We also discussed my desire that the research include dialogue with, and accountability to, Indigenous peoples due to the relational nature of colonialism, treaties, and decolonization. Leona seemed to agree with this thought and added that accountability to Indigenous peoples would also include accountability to the land because of the roles of Indigenous peoples in connecting with and protecting the land. This seemed important to me, although I did not yet know how accountability to the land would look in a research study. When Leona suggested that I involve white people as a research community, I was skeptical. I wondered how their guidance would help with the anti-colonial aims of the study when we are so heavily socialized into colonial ways of doing, being, knowing, and relating. Wouldn't this just reinforce colonialism?

Throughout the time of preparing for and engaging this doctoral study, my understanding of the importance of dialogue with and accountability to Indigenous peoples has increased. I continued to have conversations with Leona and a number of other Indigenous scholars, activists, and Elders who had been my friends and acquaintances over the years. They have had a great influence on my thinking regarding a number of aspects of the research. In addition to my committee members, Yvonne Pompana and Michael Hart, input was given in various ways and on various issues. Those who helped me with Anishinaabemowin conceptions of white people were Nii Gaani Aki Inini (Dave Courchene, Jr.), Rose Roulette, Niizhosake (Sherry Copenace), Daabaasanaquwat 'Lowcloud' (Peter Atkinson), Byron Matwewinin, and Pebaamibines. Zoongigaabowitmiskoakikwe, a dear friend and helper, assisted with personal and research guidance throughout, and led a ceremony to initiate my work on the research. Rosemary Christensen has shared valuable guidance and stories over the years. Chickadee Richard shared what would become important values and perspectives to guide the research as well as suggestions for interview questions and interview participants. Other Indigenous scholars, activists, and/or knowledge keepers who provided guidance, input, and encouragement regarding the research methods and process included Belinda Vandenbroek, Don Robinson, Aimée Craft, Louis Sorin, and Manito Mukwa (Troy Fontaine). Whenever I requested help from a member of this group, I offered them tobacco, food, and gifts, many of which I had sewn myself. During the consultations, I asked about their views of decolonization, settler roles in decolonization, Indigenous roles in decolonization, and collective roles in decolonization. I asked how they have seen white settlers go wrong in their decolonization work. I asked who they suggested I interview, what criteria for research subjects they suggest, and what questions they suggest I ask

of research subjects. I also asked for their thoughts on how I might involve relational accountability throughout the research.

Later in my research process, I invited Aimee Craft, Dawnis Kennedy, and Leona Star-Manoakeesick to gather in order to engage in dialogue regarding the data analysis. As has been noted, they shared beautiful thoughts about respectfully engaging and framing the data, and settler decolonization in general. This process and their input is shared throughout the dissertation, and particularly in the section: *Narrative analysis, anti-colonial style*. Here, I focus on sharing input from pre-research consultations. Among the recommendations given during these consultations were:

1. The importance of being with Indigenous peoples and learning who they are, talking and sitting together on equal terms, creating common ground and kinship, and being together in ceremony to protect, serve, and learn
2. The importance of giving and gifting
3. Attention to spirit, protocols, and feasting throughout
4. Recognizing multiple valid ways of decolonizing
5. Decolonization as the freedom to be who we are
6. Importance of longevity in decolonization work
7. Attending to the transformation that is happening in me through the research and making the research a decolonizing process in itself
8. The importance of treaty relationship, kinship sharing, and coming together in mutual understanding
9. Accepting uncomfortableness as a creative opening
10. The importance of asking and not imposing
11. The importance of seeing myself as equal and not expert, and seeing participants as the subjects of their own lives rather than objects of study
12. The importance of avoiding token consultation and rather having ongoing meaningful consultation that is heeded, giving Indigenous people the steering wheel. Perhaps meeting four times, with the seasons of the research
13. Avoiding doing *fly-by-research* that takes and leaves nothing in return
14. Understand that we each have our own journey, put my own journey into the work
15. Learning through Indigenous languages to understand the people and the land here
16. Decolonization is about the restoration of balance. It is in motion and growing. It's about relationships, gift-giving both ways, and is circular. It creates common ground

17. The importance of balancing individual work with collaborative and dialogue work
18. The importance of taking my questions to ceremony
19. Live your own personal dreams and vision. Use your gifts
20. As Indigenous people move forward and tell their stories, non-Indigenous people will start to wake up
21. Make things simple
22. Learn from both resistance and the maintenance of traditions
23. Undo the mindset that was brought here and overrode our ways
24. Our way of thinking as stewards and keepers of the land
25. Recommendations of who to interview

Suggested interview questions:

1. Why are you engaging in decolonization? Who is it for?
2. What were some of your most difficult lessons?
3. What do you think will come out of your work? What is your vision for your work?
4. What are you gaining from the work? How does it nourish you?
5. How are you contributing to decolonization?
6. How does your work relate to Indigenous peoples?
7. How do you maintain balance in your work?
8. How far will you go with your work? What's your limit? What are you willing to lose?
9. How do you understand yourself, your history, and your colonizing ways?
10. What brought you to work on decolonization? The feelings and circumstances.

## Appendix B

### Community Consultations with White Settler Occupier Activists

Leona Star-Manoakesick's question about who comprises my research community stuck with me. As time went on, I realized that if I hoped to inspire white settler occupiers to initiate and/or deepen their involvement with anti-colonialism and decolonization, their voices would be important in constructing the research. I recalled that several years back, as I had begun to conceive of my research, I had gotten helpful advice and a blessing from a group of white anti-racism activists of whom I had been a part (Tom Simms, Silvia Straka, Joy Eidse). The advent of Idle No More (with the help of Kate Sjoberg) made possible the organizing of a network of local (Winnipeg) white settler occupiers working on settler decolonization and solidarity with Indigenous peoples in order to collectively support Idle No More's local initiatives. I had found my community—local white settler occupier activists—and received direction and input from this group through multiple conversations during which I generally offered them food as reciprocity (Input was given in the past months and years by Monique Woroniak, Linda Goosen, Kate Sjoberg, Thor Aitkenhead, David Camfield, Leah Decter, Lark Gamey, Joy Eidse, Chuck Wright, and others). Among the questions asked were: What do you wish to learn about settler decolonization? What dimensions are important to you? What kinds of knowledge would inspire and guide you toward an ever deepening, ever expanding journey of decolonization? What criteria do you suggest for research subjects? Who are examples of people you suggest as subjects? What questions should I ask in the interviews? What follows is some of the input they provided. These white settler activists:

1. Thought personal stories of white settler peoples engaging in decolonization of a variety of ages and lengths of time engaged in the work would be helpful
2. Emphasized the importance of learning the colonial histories of the particular lands where we reside, to find the forgotten stories of specific lands

3. Emphasized the importance of sharing the research results broadly, through video, public forums, and public talks
4. Suggested names of folks they thought I should interview
5. Were interested in learning the following from research subjects:
  - a. Wanted to know what motivates the work of the people who will share their stories
  - b. Wanted to know about their successes, and when they have messed up--they felt it would be helpful if folks share the truth about their failures
  - c. Wanted to learn about the ways they have been doing their work, what forms of work do they do, and what strategies they use
  - d. Wanted perspectives on what seems to work and what does not
  - e. Wondered about their vision of a just future that guides their work
  - f. Wanted to know how these people work through the difficult emotional aspects of their journey
  - g. Wanted to hear about transformative factors and 'aha' moments in their lives
  - h. Wondered how they maintain a long-term commitment to the work
  - i. Wondered how their analysis has shifted over time
  - j. Wondered how they frame their struggle
  - k. Wondered how they feel colonialism impacts them
  - l. Wondered how their needs for control and comfort influence the choices they make in their work
  - m. Wondered what they will give up of their material base for the work
  - n. Wondered how important relationships with Indigenous people are to their work, and how their work relates to the decolonization work of Indigenous people

## Appendix C: Consent Form



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### Research Project Title: Euro-Canadian Peoples, Anti-Colonial Activism, and Decolonization

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**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

#### 1. Research Purpose:

Currently, national and global shifts are occurring whereby anti-colonial social thought, conscience, and action are increasingly entering the public sphere and collective consciousness. These shifts are exemplified by the Idle No More movement and are led by Indigenous peoples who are often inviting non-Indigenous peoples to support and take part in the movement toward decolonization and to change their colonial ways. Increasing numbers of Euro-Canadian peoples are becoming involved in transforming their personal and collective ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating, are engaging in anti-colonial, decolonizing, and solidarity work. They are often looking for guidance regarding ways to engage in this transformation. The purpose of this study is to learn from the lives and thoughts of Euro-Canadian peoples who have engaged in anti-colonial activism and/or decolonization work over time as a significant life-focus. It is hoped that through this research, peoples who are engaging in or wish to begin engaging in anti-colonial activism and/or decolonization work can be exposed to examples of pathways this work can take and issues the work can entail. It is hoped that the study will contribute to more people engaging

in the work, and doing so effectively and respectfully. It is also hoped that the study will support anti-colonial movement building. This study is guided by principles of working together to transform colonialism, giving and sharing, participation, equality, relational accountability, and choice and control for participants, and self-reflection which form the core values of the anti-colonial methodology used in this study. This study has been designed with input from Indigenous activists and knowledge keepers as well as Euro-Canadian anti-colonial activists in hopes that it will be useful to and congruent with the needs of a larger number of people.

## **2. Research Procedures**

Along with approximately ten others, you have been invited to take part in this research study as an interview participant. You are being asked to take part in two individual interviews (or one longer interview if it is not feasible to take part in two). The interview(s) will be audio and/or video recorded (you will be able to choose whether or not your interview is video recorded). You have been or will be provided with a list of potential interview questions in advance. After your interview is completed, it will be transcribed into a text document. You will be given a choice of whether you wish to have your name and identifying information revealed or disguised in the research materials, including the text document and the final research report or dissertation. The text document will be sent to you by email within two to four months of your interview and you will have an opportunity to participate in the process of creating a shorter narrative from the document. If you opt that I create the narrative, you will receive a draft of it within four months of your interview, and you will have an opportunity to revise the narrative to your satisfaction. I will also be analyzing your interview data according to themes that have been developed with the input of Indigenous activists and knowledge keepers, and with the input of non-Indigenous anti-colonial activists. When a draft of the dissertation/research report is completed, I will send you a copy of the content that involves yourself, including the data analysis. You will have a chance to suggest edits to the draft and to respond to the data analysis involving yourself. Your response can be included in the revised dissertation. When the research is completed, you will be invited to attend a community feast and gathering during which I will discuss the research and findings and engage a community dialogue about the research (your attendance of this gathering is optional).

## **3. Recording devices**

At a minimum, you are being asked to allow your interview to be audio recorded using a small digital voice recorder. You will be asked to decide whether you consent to have your interview video recorded as well. If you opt to have the interview video recorded, the video data will be used for clarification regarding the words and meaning of your interview content through your body language and through lip-reading.

There is a separate film project occurring regarding a topic related to this research. If you choose to, you may consent to be contacted later about the possibility of having some of your interview video data used in the film. If you wish to participate in the research study, you are under no obligation to agree to be contacted about the film project. Please make these decisions of your own free will. I will feel no bad feelings toward you for declining to participate in either project.

## **4. Benefits of Participating in the Research Study**

There are a number of potential benefits to participating in this study. One potential benefit is the opportunity to articulate and share your life experiences and thoughts regarding anti-colonialism



and decolonization in a dialogical interview setting which may assist you in clarifying, resolving, and furthering your thoughts and activism in this area. The Euro-Canadian interview participants have been invited to take part in the study due to their lives and words demonstrating their significant life commitment to anti-colonialism and/or decolonization. Participating in this study may increase the impact a participant has in these areas such that they can help to provide further guidance and inspiration to other Euro-Canadian and non-Indigenous peoples who desire to also engage in this knowledge and activism. Participants may have an opportunity to meet and dialogue with other Euro-Canadian and Indigenous peoples who are engaging in similar work during the community feast at the conclusion of the research.

As has been indicated, this research has the potential to contribute to anti-colonial social movement building and has the capacity to be of benefit to non-Indigenous peoples who seek to engage in anti-colonial work and activism by inspiring them and by providing examples of respectful and effective pathways for the work. It has the capacity to contribute toward more just and equitable relationships and structures.

## **5. Risks of Participating in the Study**

While I recognize that the significant work interview participants will likely have already done in processing the difficult emotions that can arise for Euro-Canadians who engage in anti-colonial thought and activism; it is a risk of the study that discussing some of the interview questions could lead to feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, or defensiveness. You are encouraged to discuss any difficult feelings that may arise during the short debriefing period at the end of each interview, with your natural support networks, and/or with counsellors through the agencies from the list you are being provided with.

Although you are being given an option of whether or not to have your name and identifying information included in any written research materials, there is a risk of identification and negative social impacts that relate to this study. Even if your identity is disguised to your satisfaction and your name is not used, it could be possible that those who know you and your story and thinking well will be able to detect your identity based on your narrative and interview content that appear in the dissertation report and any other research dissemination.

Furthermore, those who wish to be identified, and those whose identities are detected despite their wish to be anonymous may face social judgment from others who do not agree with their thoughts and their work. Although you will have an opportunity to edit any of your material before it is presented in the final dissertation, it is possible that your material in the dissertation and resulting publications will be debated and judged by others which may be difficult emotionally or in terms of your social status.

## **6. Confidentiality and Data Storage**

As a participant of this study there will be people who have knowledge of your identity. I, as the interviewer and principal researcher will know your name and identity. The film crew members who will be present if you consent to have your interview video-recorded will be aware of your identity and will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which will cover your data and identity if you are wishing to be unnamed as a study participant. The transcriber will also have access to the full audio file(s) of your interview(s) and will probably hear your name and identifying information as they are present in the recordings. This transcriber will also be asked sign a confidentiality agreement. It is also possible that the research advisor and the University of

Manitoba Research Quality Assurance Office will see research materials in their efforts to oversee the research and ensure the research ethics are followed.

As has been indicated above, you will have an opportunity to indicate on this consent form or in any other correspondence hereafter whether you wish to have your identity disguised in the study or whether you wish to be identified by name. If you wish to have your identity disguised, I will remove your name and identifying information from any research materials and you will have an opportunity to approve that your identity has been sufficiently disguised to your satisfaction before any materials are shared beyond the peoples listed above. Your audio and/or video recordings will be encrypted and stored in a password protected hard drive. These will be destroyed by the year 2029.

As a research participant, you will be given copies of your own data to do with as you wish. It is my wish to retain interview recordings until 2029. After this time, identities of all participants will be disguised in the typed transcripts of the recordings (which have been edited by participants who chose to do so) that will be kept indefinitely for educational purposes. Until the recorded data destruction dates, audio and/or video data will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected laptop, or encrypted and stored on a hard drive kept in a locked file cabinet. Any written data will be kept in a locked file cabinet. For participants who wish to be unnamed, your identifying data will be coded and stored separately from your interview data in which your identity has been disguised. Your identifying data will be destroyed in 2029.

Although no concrete plans have been made, it is my hope that this data be used in a future study that includes more dialogue with Indigenous activists and scholars about Euro-Canadians engaging in anti-colonialism and/or decolonization work. This is the reason I wish to retain interview recordings and consent forms until 2029. If this were to happen in the future, you will be contacted and will have the choice of whether or not to allow your data to be used in any additional study.

## **7. Study Reciprocity**

In appreciation of your participation in the research interviews, you will be presented with a few small gifts. These will be shared with you along with the story of their significance when the interviews conclude. You will also receive the transcription of your interview to be used as you wish, and a copy of the dissertation in digital or paper form.

## **8. Withdrawing from the Study**

If you wish to withdraw from the study at any point, you may do so without explanation and without any negative consequences. Simply inform me of your decision.

## **9. Debriefing**

At the end of each interview, there will be a short debriefing process during which I will ask you how the interview went for you, what your thoughts and feelings were after the interview, and whether there are any aspects of your experience of the interview that you would like to further discuss. In the event that you find that troubling emotions arise as part of the interview process, I will encourage you to discuss these with myself, members of your support system, or a counsellor which you may find from the list of counselling services that I will provide you with.

## 10. Research Dissemination

The research results will be shared in a number of ways. The dissertation will be given in digital or paper form to the research participants. A copy of the dissertation in digital form will also be available from the University of Manitoba Library. I will send a pdf copy of the dissertation to anyone who requests it. In order to reach a wider audience, after the dissertation is complete I will seek to have aspects of it published in journal article or book form. If it is published as a book and there are any proceeds, I would offer these to an Indigenous-led organization such as The Turtle Lodge in Sagkeeng, Manitoba.

Finally, a community gathering/feast will be held in Winnipeg to share the research results with local Idle No More activists, research participants, those who had input into the research design, and other invited guests.

## 11. Receiving Research Results

As has been mentioned, you will receive research results in a number of ways. You will receive your interview transcription and will be invited to participate in the construction of a narrative from it within two to four months of your interview (In 2014). You will receive your research narrative (if you have asked that I construct it rather than yourself) within four months of your interview (in 2014). If you opt to attend the community gathering/feast, you will have an opportunity to hear research results at that time (in 2015). You will have an opportunity to receive a draft of your material that I wish to use in the dissertation (in 2015 or 2016) and have an opportunity to suggest revisions and give responses, and you will also be offered a final copy of the dissertation either in digital form that will be emailed to you or in paper form that will be delivered or mailed to you (in 2016 or 2017).

## 12. Choices

Please check the appropriate boxes, fill in the spaces, and or circle the words indicating your preferences regarding the research study.

- I consent to having my interview(s) video-recorded.
- I consent to **being contacted** about having my interview footage used in an outside film project. I understand that I am in no way obligated to do so.

**Choose one of the two following options:**

- I would like to be identified by name in the research process and dissertation.
- I would **not** like to be identified by name in research process and final report. Please keep my identity confidential and remove or disguise all identifying information from my transcription and narrative, and from research materials and the dissertation itself and any methods through which it is disseminated.

**Choose one of the following three options:**

I would like to construct my own summarized narrative (3-5 pages) from my interview transcription. I understand that the researcher may wish to negotiate revisions of this narrative with me if she feels that some information important to the study has not been included.

I would like to work together with the researcher in order to construct a summarized narrative (3-5 pages) from my interview transcription. I would like to do this by (circle one):

**Email**

**Phone conversation**

**In-person meeting**

I would like the researcher to construct a summarized narrative (3-5 pages) from my interview transcription. I understand that I will have an opportunity to revise the narrative the researcher constructs according to my wishes.

**Chose one of the following two options:**

I would like a digital copy of the dissertation emailed to me at: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a paper copy of the dissertation delivered or mailed to me at:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.**

**This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board—Fort Garry Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Interview Questions

**1. Who are you? How do you identify? How do you identify in relationship to colonialism in Canada?**

**2. How did you come to be involved in anti-colonial activism and/or decolonization work?**

Possible follow-up questions:

- How long have you been engaged in this work? What were some pivotal or epiphanal moments or experiences in your life that led you to engage with anti-colonial activism or decolonization work?
- Why are you engaging in this work? Who is it for? Why is it important to you?
- For those involved for a long time, why are you still involved?

**3. Please describe the anti-colonial activism and/or decolonization work you have been involved in.**

Possible follow-up questions:

- What are the elements or strategies involved in your work?
- Why have you chosen these ways in which to engage in the work?
- How do these ways reflect your personality, gifts, skills, and perspectives?
- How do these ways reflect your own comfort zone and how might they be related to potential vulnerability and control?
- What initiatives have you been involved in that have been particularly successful? What do you think made them successful?
- What are the key things you've learned about what works and what doesn't work from your perspective and from what has been shared with you by others?
- Please describe times that you feel you have messed up in your anti-colonial and/or decolonial work.
- What are the limits of how far you will go and how much of your material base you will give up for the work (examples: giving up time, money, land, going to prison, risking your physical self)?
- What do you think will come out of your anti-colonial and decolonizing work?
- Based on your experience, what are good ways to build effective bridges, connections, and relationships; operate collectively as white peoples (our side of treaty); engage a greater number of white peoples; and create conditions whereby white folks will be better able and willing to deepen their understanding and activism?

**4. What is your vision of the just future you are fighting/working for?**

Possible follow-up questions:

- How do you frame the struggle? What is it really about?
- How do you think anti-colonial change can happen?
- What does decolonization mean to you? What does it make you think of?  
How does it make you feel?
- What do you think decolonization and anti-colonial work mean for Euro-Canadians?
- What elements, aspects, and strategies do they include?
- What do you believe are future directions for yourself and other Euro-Canadian peoples to engage individually and collectively in anti-colonial or decolonial work?

**5. Please describe your journey in this work with regards to your emotional, thought, and spiritual processes.**

Possible follow-up questions:

- What are the most important things you have learned through your work?
- How do you understand colonial history, the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the history of the land you live on in relation to colonialism?
- What do you know about yourself—who you are, where you are from, and your ways, including your colonizing ways? How do you understand your own role here?
- Can you share an experience in which you learned that your words or actions were perpetuating colonialism?
- How has your thinking or analysis shifted over the years?
- How has colonialism impacted you?
- What is your faith or spirituality and how has this been connected to your decolonization or anti-colonial work?
- What have been some of the most difficult lessons or aspects of your anti-colonial work?
- How have you managed the emotional, physical, and time commitments you give to your work such that you are able to continue this work over the long haul?

**6. How has your journey and work been connected to relationships with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous lands, Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous activism, and Indigenous teachings, theories, and literatures?**

Possible follow-up questions:

- What do you do when you find yourself disagreeing with Indigenous peoples on matters related to anti-colonial or decolonial work?

**7. Is there anything more you would like to share that you have not yet had the chance to share?**